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Bogomilism — An Important Precursor
of the Reformation

Is there a connection between Bogomilism and the Reformation? This is not an unusual question, it has already been asked. American Methodist historian Linus Brockett, remembered for his voluminous research¹, published in 1879 a small book with the provocative title “The Bogomils of Bulgaria and Bosnia (The Early Protestants of the East: An Attempt to Restore Some Lost Leaves of Protestant History).”² It should be noted that besides allowing for the connection between Bogomilism and Protestantism the book presented interesting and suggestive facts in its support. In the first third of the 20th century Leo Seifert observed that Wycliffe drew very close to the views of dualism³. A similar opinion on a larger scale is also expressed by the famous Bulgarian literary scholar Ivan Shishmanov: “Our Bogomils are, so to speak, the first

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¹ Brockett, L. P. and Mary C. Vaughan: *Woman's Work in the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism and Patience*. With an introduction by Henry W. Bellows. Illustrated with sixteen steel engravings. Philadelphia, Zeigler, McCurdy & co.; Boston [etc.] R. H. Curran, 1867. Brockett, L. P. *The Cross and the Crescent*. Published by Hubbard Bros. Company., USA. 1877. 594 pages. The book has 46 full-page size wood block engravings, and one foldout colour map.

² Brockett, L. P. *The Bogomils of Bulgaria and Bosnia (The Early Protestants of the East: An Attempt to Restore Some Lost Leaves of Protestant History)*. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society. 1879.

³ Зайферт, Л. *Световните революционери (от Богомил през Хус до Ленин)*. София, 1994, с. 49. Original title: Seifert, J. Leo. *Die Weltrevolutionäre. Von Bogomil über Hus zu Lenin*. Wien, 1931.

Protestants in Europe — not because the priest Bogomil preceded Wycliffe, Hus and Luther by several centuries, but also because his teaching spread quickly westwards and found favourable conditions to develop in Italy (especially in Lombardy), France (in Provence), Belgium, the Netherlands, the Rhine Valley, Metz, Strasbourg, Cologne, Bonn, Trier, etc., and even in England.”⁴ In the limited space of this paper we are going to look at this influence through the Reformation triad John Wycliffe (c. 1328–1384), Jan Hus (1369–1415) and Martin Luther (1483–1546). There are also some associations that have already been voiced. First, John Wycliffe became known as the Morning Star of the Reformation. Anne Hudson, an eminent English researcher, defined his work and that of his followers — the Lollards — as premature Reformation.⁵ Moreover, John Wycliffe and Jan Hus have been called protestants before Protestantism emerged as a movement. It is also known that Martin Luther (1483–1546) took special interest in the work of Jan Hus. There is even medieval woodcut that we append to our report, it shows how Wycliffe with flint and steel starts the fire of the Reformation and Hus takes the flame with kindle wood, while Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchton use torches to turn it into a strong and sustained fire. We will now add facts to this image. There are studies of John Wycliffe's influence on Jan Hus, but the organic continuity between the three figures, Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, so far has not been thoroughly studied.

And a great cultural work it is. The 14th century in England saw the flourishing of the literature and iconography of the Lollards, the followers of John Wycliffe, which was paralleled by the academic achievements of the Oxford Lollards. All this was crowned by the courageous reformist and civil thought of John Wycliffe, who translated the New Testament into Middle English (1381). From there dualist ideas included in the reformation theology of John Wycliffe were conveyed to the Kingdom of Bohemia and Jan Hus, who protected and adopted them as the basis of his reformation activity including his own translation of the Bible into

⁴ Шишманов, И. Литературна история на Възраждането в Италия. София, 1934, с. 119.

⁵ Hudson, A. *The Premature Reformation* Oxford, 1988.

Czech. Jan Hus was called a champion of Wycliffe's views. Later, Martin Luther expressed his admiration for the sacrifice of the Bohemian reformer and declared himself successor of Jan Hus, a continuing his reform by translating the Bible into German. Thus, reformist activities across Europe became the medium for personal development, development of the vernacular, as well as national and cultural progress.

Our particular task here is to give proof of the presence of Bogomil and Cathar ideas and motivations in the works of the brightest reformation triad: John Wycliffe — Jan Hus — Martin Luther, by means of facts, documented links and associations.

And since John Wycliffe was at the beginning, we should first prove that his ideas were influenced by the Bogomil and Cathar theology. A comparative analysis shows strong similarity between the latter and his main theses. His famous sentence "God must obey the devil" (Deus debet obedire diabolo) puzzles English scholars to this day, but in fact is almost direct translation of the basic Bogomil assertion that "the devil is the master of this world."⁶

Open any modern official edition of the Bible in English (for example *The Holy Bible. New Revised Standard Version*. Oxford, 1989) and read the Lord's Prayer and you shall see that there God is asked to give [us] "this day our daily bread" (Math. 6:9–13). In Wycliffe's English versions of the Scriptures however, begun about the year 1380, one finds a rather different text, i. e. "**ouere breed ouer othir substaunce**" [give us this day our daily bread over another substance].⁷ Why the difference? Why such an unusual sounding in which, besides the translation, there is obviously a small comment of the translator himself? The answer on principle was indirectly provided by Yordan Ivanov, a noted Bulgarian philologist and historian. In his well-known book, *Богомилски*

⁶ "To those who say that the devil is the ruler of the world — thrice anathema." — Boril's Synodicon — in: *Държава и църква през XIII век*. София, 1999, p.76.

⁷ The New Testament in English, according to the version by John Wycliffe (about A. D. 1380) and revised by John Purvey (about A.D. 1388). Formerly edited by Rev. Josiah Forshall and sir Frederic Madden. Oxford, MDCCCLXXIX, p. 10.

книги и легенди (*Bogomil Books and Legends*), he wrote that the Bosnian Bogomils read the Lord's Prayer in just such a way, pronouncing "give us our daily bread of another substance."⁸ A similar version can be found in the Lyonnais rendition of the *Albigensian Scriptures*: "E dona a noi lo nostre pa qui es sabre tota cause" ["the bread that is above all else"].⁹ In an old Italian translation we find a complete match of Wycliffe's phrase "**oure breed ouer othir substance**": "Il pane nostre sopra tucte le substantie da a nnoi oggi" ["our bread over any substance"]. **As we can see John Wycliffe replicates the phrasing of Italian Cathars, in other words the Italian Cathar translation and Wycliffe's own translation contain the same interpretation.** The "supernatural bread" in question stands for the Word which Bogomils and Cathars see as the true nourishment for the soul. Following their example John Wycliffe lays the emphasis accordingly. Substantial evidence for the understanding of the Bogomils for the word of God as a transcendental spiritual bread can be found in Euthymius Zygabenus: "τον αρτον γαρ, φησι, τον επιουσιον."¹⁰

Here is another comparison proving the identical understanding of Cathars and John Wycliffe for the Word as a spiritual bread:

<i>Albigensians</i>	<i>John Wycliffe</i>
Verbum Dei esse ille panis. The Lord's Word is this bread.	...Restat igitur ut panem cotidianum acceptamus spiritualem, praecepta divina cotidie oportet meditari et operari.
("Acta inquisitionis Carcassonensis contra Albigensis, a. 1308 et 1409". — Döllinger, T. II, p. 28)	... Thus, it remains to accept our daily bread as spiritual, [as] it is God's daily precept that we contemplate and act. (<i>Operis evangelici</i> . Lib. III et IV. London, 1896, p. 285)

We can also add some more ideas and suggestion of John Wycliffe which repeat crucial aspects of dualist theology. Even more revealing is that fact that they were included in Wycliffe's theses condemned by the London synod:

Rejection of transubstantiation:

⁸ Иванов, Й. БОГОМИЛСКИ КНИГИ И ЛЕГЕНДИ. София, 1925, с. 113.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Patrologia Graeca 130, col. 1313

That the essence of material bread and wine remains [the same] after their consecration at the altar.

Quod substantia panis materialis et vinum maneat post consecrationem in sacramento altaris.

("XXIV Conclusiones Wycclif damnatae Londoniis in synodo.")

Rejection of confession (Only God giveth absolution, to Him we confess without a Mediator):

That if one is forced to confess any exterior confession is superfluous or useless.

Item quod si homo fuerit debite contritus, omnis confessio exterior est sibi superflua, vel inutilis.

("XXIV Conclusiones" — *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, p. 278).

Sinner priests have no right to officiate:

Thus it should be accepted that none may be a lord, none may be a bishop, none may be a priest while in a state of mortal sin.

Item asserere quod nullus est dominus civilis, nullus est episcopus, nullus est prelatus, dum est in peccato mortali. ("XXIV Conclusiones" — *Fasciculi zizaniorum*, p. 280).

Rejection of liturgy:

Item pertinater asserere non esse fundatum in evangelio quod Christus missam ordinavit.

(XXIV Conclusiones — *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, p. 278, p. 281).

Rejection of oath:

...see now that it makes sense to ban the oath for one can see that the oath is superfluous among the perfect.

... videtur ad sensum suum prohibere simpliciter iuramentum, quia videtur iuramentum superfluere inter perfectos.¹¹

Rejection of indulgencies

There are no indulgences other than those given by our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹¹ Johannis Wyclif. Operis Evangelici. Lib. III et IV. London. 1896, p. 188.

Non sunt indulgencie nisi a Domino Jesu Christo.¹²

The question arises whether there is evidence of John Wycliffe and the Lollards' connections with Bogomil-Cathar culture. Yes, there is such evidence and it is very likely that more proof will be discovered by subsequent research. Different sources indicate that Lollardy was not limited to the British Isles but was rather related to the Continent and rooted in the Cathar tradition. Here we will have to go through a labyrinth of facts and links which prove this relation. One of the greatest authorities in the study of dualist movements, Ignatz von Döllinger, refers to a number of documents regarding the presence of Lollards in Europe, quoting a Bull of Pope Boniface IX, which explains that the "popularly called Beghardi or Lolhardi and Swestriones", spread in various parts of Germany, were "actually poor — *Fratricelli*."¹³ This occurred in the very beginning of the 15th century as Boniface IX was Pope in the period between 1389 and 1404. This text provides several pieces of important information. The first is that the Lollards were a variety of Beghardi and Fratricelli, and the second that the Lollards were in the sights of his predecessor, John XX (1316—1334).¹⁴ In other words, the Lollards were definitely a phenomenon in the system of medieval heresies in Europe. The third is that, since the German Lollards were Beghards, then their origin lies in the 12th century, as Malcolm Lambert has had good reason to point out in his book *Medieval Heresy*.¹⁵ Following similar research the renowned historian Mosheim concludes that the English Lollards, the followers of Wycliffe, were called with an imported Belgian term — "be a vulgar term of reproach brought from Belgium to England, Lollards."¹⁶ It turns out that Lollards, Beghardi and Fratricelli are

¹² Wyclif's Latin Works. Opus Evangelicum. I, II. London. 1895, p. 480.

¹³ Döllinger, Ign. Dokumente vornemlich zur Geschichte der Valdesier und Katharer. München. 1890, p. 381.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Lambert, M. *Medieval Heresy (Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform of the Reformation)*. Oxford. 2002. 3rd edition, p. 200.

¹⁶ Murdock's translation of Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History from the Birth of Our Saviour to the Eighteen Century*. Book III. Part II. Chap. II. Boston and London, p. 393.

either different names for one and the same movement or different varieties of the same movement.

It is known that Beghardi are a sect of the Cathars. Another source discovered by Ignatz von Döllinger, namely a document from the State Library in Frankfurt, contains important characteristics concerning the creed of the Beghardi: some of the heretics were literate and won the sympathy of masters of theology and learned men. The heretics say they follow the life of Christ and the apostles and, what is specific, that they do not “accept any saints.”¹⁷ Moreover, they deny the right to consecrate of any priest who commits a grave sin.¹⁸ The last three facts characterize the Cathars who called themselves new apostles, rejected the existence of saints and the right of any priests who had committed a sin to officiate in church. The document then features other familiar Cathar characteristics, including that confession should be made directly to God and that indulgences do not count.¹⁹

In surplus, the English reformer is so overwhelmed by the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, circulated and disseminated by Bogomils and Cathars, especially by the scene of Christ’s descent into hell, that he translates it and claims that it could be included in the *New Testament*.

Jan Hus: Successor and Protector of John Wycliffe’s Ideas

There is ample evidence of John Wycliffe’s strong influence on Jan Hus. The synodal documentation included in the Mansi Collection shows that the charges pressed against Jan Hus were the same as those against John Wycliffe.²⁰ Hence John Wycliffe and Jan Hus were seen as two figures who shared the same heretical views.²¹

¹⁷ Döllinger, Ign. *Dokumente...*, p. 408.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.410.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Mansi, vol. 27, col. 592: ...videant super material Johannis Hus, hic propter errorem ipsuis Johannis VVyclef detenti...; col. 594.

²¹ Mansi, vol. 27, col. 594: ad doctrinam Joannis Wyclef, nec non Joannis Hus & suorum sequacium; col. 1234: Non fuit igitur praecipua indicendi consilii causa, haerese & factio Bohemorum ex Wycliffi doctrina exorta, also col. 919 Mansi, vol. 27, col. 592.

The personal engagement of Hus with the dissemination and protection of Wycliffe's books in Bohemia has been documented. In 1403 the Charles University in Prague, following the exigencies of the Vatican, denounced the work of John Wycliffe in 45 theses. In 1410 many volumes of Wycliffe's works were burned in the courtyard of the Prague bishopric. Jan Hus surrendered the books that he owned but declared that a terrible mistake had been made and that this act was immoral and unjust. In fact, in his own works he often writes in defence of Wycliffe and his persecutors in England and on the Continent.²²

A whole chapter in Jan Hus's *Polemica* is directly dedicated to John Wycliffe.²³ In his warm-blooded defence Hus delivered a true apology for Wycliffe (as we will see later Martin Luther in turn delivered an apology for Jan Hus) implying a similarity between him and Christ: "How silly is this conclusion: in the English, French and Bohemian kingdoms many prelates and clerics consider Master John Wycliffe to be a heretic, therefore Master John Wycliffe is a heretic. If this be the case, it can be claimed that since in the Turkish, Saracen and Tartar kingdoms they believe that Jesus Christ is not God, therefore Jesus Christ is not God."²⁴

It remains to demonstrate the ideas that Hus adopted from Wycliffe. Since there is quite a few of them, and this has been and will be the subject of other studies, we will just highlight the most important ones.

Above all, just like Wycliffe, Hus defended preaching in the vernacular, the right to translate, preach and read the Gospel in the native language of the congregation. Hus regarded the books written by Wycliffe in English as an asset that had to be defended

²² For example he engages in an argument with the Englishman John Stoke, an opponent of Wycliffe's — see Chapter "Contra Iohannem Stokes" in *Magistri Johannis Hus Polemica. Tomus XXII. Pragae. Academia. MCMLXVI.*

²³ Chapter "Defensio articulorum Wyclif" in *Magistri Johannis Hus Polemica. Tomus XXII. Pragae, MCMLXVI.*

²⁴ *Magistri Johannis Hus Polemica*, p. 63: *Nimis ergo stulta est hec consequentia: In regnis Angliae, Franciae et Bohemie multitudo prelatorum et clericorum habent magistrum Iohannem Wiglef pro heretico, igitur magister Iohannes Wiglef est hereticus. Ac si arguetretur: In regnis Turcorum, Saracenorum et Thartarorum Iesum Cristum habent pro non-deo, igitur Dominicus Iesus Cristus non est Deus."*

from Catholic clergymen,²⁵ just like the Bohemian and German people had defended their native tongues.

John Wycliffe and Jan Hus's admiration, even adoration, of the Word was inherited from the Cathars and the Bogomils. We should recall here the records of the Byzantine historian Euthymius Zigabenus who reports that Bogomils used to say that Christ nourished them with His Word, that the Lord's Prayer was their spiritual food. Let's remind that such an exclusive emphasis on the Word is also laid by John Wycliffe when he translated the Lord's Prayer from Latin, calling it "ouer breed ouer othir substaunce."²⁶ In his interpretation of the Lord's Prayer Jan Hus too explains that the phrase "our daily bread" should be construed not only literally as "bread for nourishment of the body"²⁷ but also figuratively as "the bread of the sacred teaching of God's word."²⁸

Bogomils, Cathars and Lollards deny the structure and institution of official churches. John Wycliffe and Jan Hus did not go as far as to totally deny the use of churches, but oppose the accumulation of riches, the improvidence, corruption and the complex hierarchy of official ecclesiastical practice. Jan Hus was of the opinion that the simple adherence to the law of Jesus Christ (i. e. the Gospel) and the original Christian community are the appropriate model of the Christian Church.²⁹ Similar to the Cathars, Lollards and John Wycliffe who rejected the authority of the Pope and called him an antichrist, Jan Hus systematically questioned papal supremacy. The Latin content of one of his foremost works,

²⁵ Ibid. p. 62: Ecce, arguit manifeste magister Iohannes Wicleff, quod Anglici libros, quos ipse fecerat in anglico, debent contra clericos propter lingwam suam defendere ex pari racione, qua Bohemia et Theutonici defenderent lingwam suam.

²⁶ The New Testament in English, according to the version by John Wycliffe (about A. D. 1380) and revised by John Purvey (about A. D. 1388). Formerly edited by Rev. Josiah Forshall and sir Frederic Madden. Oxford, MDCCCLXXIX, p. 10.

²⁷ "chléb tělesné potřeby" in Magistri Johannis Hus Opera omnia. Výkladi tomus I. Academia Praha, MCMLXXV, p. 652 (280b), Ibid. p. 679.

²⁸ "chleb svätého naučenie slova božieho" — Ibid. p. 652.

²⁹ Lex Cristi est regula efficacissima — in Mistr Jan Hus. O Cirkvi. Praha, 1965, p.238. See also De sufficientia legis Christi ad regendam Ecclesiam — in Бильба-сов, А. „Чехъ Янь Гусъ изъ Гусинца“, С-Петербургъ, 1869, с. LVII.

De ecclesia, (written in Czech) includes antipapal subtitles such as “The antichrist somehow may become a Pope,”³⁰ “The Pope may err”³¹ and his strong conviction is that “Opposing a Pope abusing his mandate is obeying Christ’s will.”³² Cardinals and prelates are also criticized: “Every bad prelate is an antichrist,” “The liturgy of immoral priests should be ignored,” “Bad prelates are not true vicars.” The importance of *De ecclesia* is summarised concisely by V. Bilbasov: “Hus’s teaching for the Church demolishes the whole Catholic system and the Papacy: the Church is a communication between the faithful; it embraces all peoples on the face of the earth; its head is Jesus Christ without any legate on earth...”³³ Jan Hus indicates the source of his opinions: in his *Polemica* he quotes Wycliffe’s famous phrase: “No one can be master, clergyman, or bishop, if he is living in mortal sin.”³⁴

Similar to the Cathars, Lollards and John Wycliffe, the Bohemian reformer denounces the sale of indulgencies and the trade in holy objects characteristic of the Papacy.

On the other hand, Jan Hus is trying to observe religious rituals in order to prove that his objections to the Church are of moral and not of doctrinal nature. Although Bogomils believe that baptizing infants in water is unnecessary (according to them the true baptism in the Holy Spirit can be achieved only by adults), in *De ecclesia* Hus writes that baptism is not harmful. Nevertheless, in his writings occasionally transpire ideas belonging to the familiar dualist theology of Bogomils and Cathars. In his first letter included in the brochure, compiled by Martin Luther, he defends the Prague church “Bethlehem” where he preaches against the advancement of Satan, against his attempt to establish his own kingdom: “it was there that Satan was infuriated and restored to their offices priests and prelates because he noticed that it was precisely from this place there will emerge a force that will weaken his king-

³⁰ Anticristus quomodo potest esse papa (15k in fine) — in Mistr Jan Hus. *O Cirkvi*. Praha, 1965, p. 238.

³¹ Errare potest papa (16e et 18n), *ibidem*, p. 239.

³² Rebellare papa in malo mandato est Cristo obedire (18p), *Ibid.*, p. 241.

³³ Бильбасов, В., *op. cit.*, c. 73.

³⁴ Nullus est dominus civilis, nullus est prelatatus nullus est episcopus, dum est in peccato mortali. — in: *Magistri Johannis Hus Polemica*, p. 205.

dom.”³⁵ The idea of Satan’s kingdom on earth is dualist. Whereas Orthodox and Catholic Christians believe that everything on heaven and earth is God’s creation, Bogomils, Cathars and Lollards think that besides God’s heavenly kingdom there is also Satan’s earthly kingdom. Moreover, in his works Jan Hus demonstrated an awareness of the Manichean theory of the two deities — a good and an evil one³⁶ — masterfully avoiding the necessity to discuss it personally. Hus was not very specific whether he discussed the old or the new Manicheans and resorted to the familiar Augustinian conclusion that evil is not God’s creation but a material consequence of the workings of the devil and sinful people. Similarly, he used the theses of St. Augustine to delicately contest the Manichean idea of the apparent, docetical body of Christ.³⁷ Adopting this cautious, officially accepted doctrinal position Hus evidently avoided disclosing his position on the new Manicheans — the Bogomils, Cathars, Lollards, who were ruthlessly persecuted by the Catholic Inquisition and whose views were shared by his predecessor John Wycliffe. Thus, Hus demonstrated knowledge of dualist doctrines while at the same time avoiding the danger of subscribing to them.

Unlike the Bogomils, Cathars, Lollards and Waldensians, Jan Hus was not interested in creating a separate, alternative, religious community, he is a proponent of the evolutionary development of the Church, its internal purification. This demonstrates the reformer nature of his actions undertaken in a peaceful way through dialogue. Another important characteristic feature of Hus’s thought is the fact that his views are marked by Renaissance breadth. His opinions rest on the antiquity, he refers to Aristotle and Alexander the Great, Asclepius, Pliny, Cicero, he quotes concrete works by Plato, Theophrastos, Hermes Trismegistus, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazali.³⁸

³⁵ Бильбасов, В. *op. cit.*, c. 19.

³⁶ ...id est duos deos, unum malorum and alium bonorum, posuerunt. Malum vocant deum tenebreum, bonum vocant vero deum lucis. — in: *Magistri Iohannis Hus opera omnia. Lectionarum bipartitum. Tomus IX. Pragae 1988*, p. 294.

³⁷ Jan Hus. *Českà nedělni postila. Tomus II. Praha MXMII*, p. 108.

³⁸ *Magistri Iohannis Hus Quodlibet (Disputationis de quodlibet in facultate atrium mense ianuario anni 1411 habitae enchiridion). Pragae. 1948.*

What did Martin Luther take from Hus?

The ideological connection between Jan Hus and Martin Luther is familiar but it has so far been described in general terms: either through Luther's famous exclamation: "We are all Husites," or the legend that when he was to be burned at the stake Hus prophesied: "You are going to burn a goose, but in a century a black swan will come that you can neither roast nor boil." The wordplay in this phrase pivots on the fact that the name "Hus" means "goose" in Czech, while Luther's coat of arms features a swan.

Our task here is to indicate Martin Luther's borrowings from the theological heritage and practice of Jan Hus. We are aided by an extraordinary brochure, published by Luther in Wittenberg in 1537, which contains a selection of Hus's letters, compiled by Luther himself.³⁹ In the introduction and afterword Luther used strong emotional words to express his profound sympathy for Hus and anger for his executioners⁴⁰ and also made important theological comments on his ideas.

Furthermore, Luther explained that at his request the letters had been translated from the original Czech into German in order to expose the injustice and violence of the Council of Constance. He highly praises John Hus's sacrifice: "truth had won a victory holding her head high"⁴¹ and continues his eulogy: "the illustrious and great spirit of this man — Jan Hus — who writes in so Christian a fashion..."⁴² Martin Luther supports his position with the

³⁹ Although this brochure is included in Martin Luther's collected works, it seems to have been disregarded by researchers: it is rarely quoted and somehow remained nearly lost in the bulk of his work. For the purposes of this article we use an interesting edition in German and Russian, entitled: *Нѣскольکو писемъ Яна Гуса..., писанныхъ изъ Констанцкой темницы къ чехамъ с предисловіемъ Доктора Мартина Лютера*, and included by V. Bilbasov in his book *Чехъ Янъ Гусъ изъ Гусинца* (С-Петербургъ, 1869). English edition: *Letters of John Huss Written During His Exile and Imprisonment*. Edinburgh, 1846.

⁴⁰ This is what V. Bilbasov writes concerning Luther's feelings: "Germany should know how one of her sons stood up for Hus, what boiling anger did Luther have for those who executed the great Czech reformer for preaching the essential dogmas of the Christian faith." *Чехъ Янъ Гусъ изъ Гусинца*, с. V.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, cc. 6—7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, с. 3.

opinion of Erasmus of Rotterdam: “Jan Hus was burned, but not convinced.”⁴³

However, besides a considerable emotional sympathy, there are also many intellectual connections between the Czech and the German reformer. In order to demonstrate this we will highlight some crucial ideas inherited by Luther from Hus.

1. The letters are published by Luther in order to persuade clergymen and princes to give up the path of the devil but pray to “our gracious Lord Jesus” to endow them with “his Holy Spirit”.⁴⁴ In fact, this is also the intent of the appeal-persuasion in Hus’s first letter, in which he calls upon the leaders of the Catholic Church “to adhere to God’s truth that I wrote about and preached, deriving it from the Gospel and the teachings of the Holy Fathers”⁴⁵. Clearly, Martin Luther borrows Hus’s stylistic approach.

2. Hus’s criticism of the rampant corruption of the Catholic Church is literally repeated by Luther: “And the Papacy while recovering from the schism quickly filled the churches all over the world with terrible injustices, indulgencies, corrupt liturgies and other tradable items sold by priests and monks.”⁴⁶

3. Luther supported the main thesis of Hus: “If the Pope is not righteous, he is not the head of the Holy Church...”⁴⁷ This thesis is a transformation of the familiar Bogomil-Cathar opinion, endorsed also by John Wycliffe, that a man of the church who is living in mortal sin does not have the right to preach to others.

4. Luther knows and highly values Jan Hus’s book *De ecclesia and his sermons*.⁴⁸ This is of paramount importance because Hus followed John Wycliffe (who also wrote a similar treatise about the church) in creating a model of a church that is open to the public, preaches in the vernacular, practically without special hierarchy, in which access to the sacred mysteries is offered to everyone in the congregation. A similar urge for the simplification and democrat-

⁴³ Johannem Hus exustum quidem, sed non convictum esse. *Чехъ Янъ Гусъ изъбъ Гусинца*, с. 49, с. 88.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, с. 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, с. 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, с. 7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, с. 43.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, с. 53.

isation of the church can be seen in Martin Luther's 95 theses, nailed on the door of the Wittenberg cathedral on 31 October 1517. Moreover, the German reformer goes on in his apology for Jan Hus: "Evidently, everyone, even his adversaries, admitted that he was a very learned man who surpassed in erudition all the doctors of divinity composing the Council (I heard this thirty years ago from several able theologians)."⁴⁹ Luther shared how much he was surprised as a divinity student in Erfurt when in a public library he came across a copy of the *Sermons of Jan Hus* which had survived the fire, how he was astonished that such "a man — a doctor so worthy of veneration and so powerful in expounding the Scripture" could be burned to death.

5. Finally, glorifying Jan Hus and condemning the cruel and erroneous decisions of the Council of Constance, Martin Luther admits that the predictions of Hus have been fulfilled and names himself one of the persons that have facilitated this process, i. e. he saw himself as a follower of Hus: "Events have... either by me or by others verified the predictions of Jan Hus."⁵⁰

Thus, Martin Luther's texts in the brochure containing the four letters written by Jan Hus give us reason to conclude that the German reformer adopts some of the basic ideas of his Czech predecessor: preaching in the native language, translating the Bible into German, confiding in the Gospel and not in the clergy, rejecting papal supremacy and corruption, building a democratic and modest church with sacred mysteries that are accessible to everyone in the congregation. By declaring himself one of the executors of Jan Hus's predictions, Martin Luther expresses his involvement in it. By the way, this is also confirmed by some of his opponents. For example the Dominican Johann Eck from the University of Ingolstadt accuses Luther of disseminating the "poisonous" heretical teaching of Jan Hus.

Of the three reformers discussed in this article Martin Luther is the one that diverges most from the tenets of dualism — for instance he allows the "co-presence" of Christ in the Eucharist and baptism. His distance can also be observed in the way he communicates with "heretical" Waldensian communities — he does not

⁴⁹ Ibid., c. 55.

⁵⁰ Ibid., c. 9.

see them as part of the prehistory of the Reformation, but merely as allies.⁵¹ One of the reasons why Luther opposed little the official church rituals is that he focused his energy in the battle for the rejection of papal canon law which provided for the authority of the Catholic Church over the secular society. It is not accidental that in response to the bull of Pope Leo X, by which he is declared a heretic, he burns the document along with works in ecclesiastical canon law.

Nevertheless, in Luther's work we can identify many dualist concepts probably inherited from Wycliffe and Hus, it is also possible that some of these echoes owe to Luther's interest in Meister Eckhart (in whose works there are Cathar reminiscences). It is possible that there are other sources, so far unfamiliar to us, which remain to be investigated.

Yet:

— Similar to the Cathars, Luther firmly rejects the sale of indulgences and his 95 theses are dedicated precisely to this.⁵² His reformation activity begins with these theses;

— In the 95 theses and also in other works he subjects the Catholic concept of Purgatory to such criticism and derision that his position practically coincides with the Cathar denial of the existence of Purgatory;⁵³

— Similar to the Dualists, Luther pays special attention to the Word. In his commentary to the Lord's Prayer he notes that in order to secure our daily bread we need to live in peace, i. e. he adds a spiritual condition. Furthermore, in his *Small Catechism* when commenting on the mystery of the Eucharist, he adds that it is not

⁵¹ In his Letter to Picardi of 1533, Luther admits „they were skilled and ready in Scriptures“ and sees a possibility of convergence with them, in order to merge reformers and Waldensians into a common congregation of Christ. A Testimony taken out of Dr. Martin Luther's Preface before the confession of the Waldenses, anno Domini 1533 — The History of Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piemont, Vol. I., p. 58. Waldensians or the Poor Men of Lyons are a folk reformation movement founded by the Lyon merchant Peter Waldo (1140 — c. 1218).

⁵² Орагори на немската реформация. София: Мартин Лутер, Томас Мюнцер, 1984, сс. 31—37.

⁵³ “Empty human talk preach those who claim that when the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.” Ibid., c. 33.

eating and drinking that achieve the blessed sacrament, but the most important part of the mystery are the words that accompany the ritual,⁵⁴

— Similar to the Bogomils and Cathars, Luther denies that saints may advocate people's cases before God and function as intermediaries to Him because they can neither be more merciful than God nor better advocates than Christ himself. In his interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in the *Large Catechism* he states: "My prayer is as worthy, sacred and dear to God, as that of Saint Paul and all other saints." (paragraph 16);⁵⁵

— In the same work, similar to the Dualists, Luther rejects icons and liturgies as idolatry and reducing God to an idol;

— In the *Large Catechism* Luther uses words similar to those of the Bogomils to reject the adoration of saints' relics, pointing out that their "bones" can not help anyone because the true temple is the sanctity of the Word of God and it stands above all;

The list of the dualist views adopted in the works of Martin Luther can be continued further. Again in the *Large Catechism* as a resonance of the traditions of Bogomils, Cathars and Lollards, Luther expresses his skeptical opinion concerning the giving of oaths and recommend that this should be done only if it is needed in order to effect a good deed. But because we have already provided sufficient proof for the existence of dualist theses in the thought of the German reformer, we will formulate our main conclusion: Martin Luther makes part of the triad Wycliffe-Hus-Luther, which absorbed in terms of motivation and argumentation for its reformer activity many points of the Bogomil-Cathar theology and religious practice.

Here is a table of some fundamental ideas shared by the three reformers demonstrating the conceptual continuity between them:

⁵⁴ Quotations from the Small Catechism are according to the edition Издигајки се до Христа. Малък катехизис с обяснение от Мартин Лутер. София, 1994.

⁵⁵ This and all other quotations from the *Large Catechism* are according to the electronic version of The Large Catechism by Dr. Martin Luther. Translated by F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau Published in: Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921.

Preaching in the native language

Cathars	John Wycliffe (c. 1330–1384)	Jan Hus (1369–1415)	Martin Luther (1483–1546)
First translations of the New Testament in Provençal	Translation of the New Testament	Translation of the Bible into Czech, author of the <i>Czech Orthography</i>	Translation of the Bible into German

Denying the authority of the clergy and the Pope

Bogomils, Cathars, Lollards	John Wycliffe	Jan Hus	Martin Luther
Bogomils deny priesthood and all hierarchies of clergy. Presbyter Cosma	Calls the Pope antichrist.	Rejects the authority of the Pope, if the Pope is not righteous.	Rejects corrupt papal authority.

The Word of God as spiritual food

Bogomils, Cathars, Lollards	John Wycliffe	Jan Hus	Martin Luther
Call the Word of God "food."	Defines the idea of "bread" in the Lord's Prayer as spiritual nourishment over all other substances.	Defines the idea of "bread in the Lord's Prayer" as "daily bread" and "bread of the holy Gospel"	Explains that eating and drinking in the Eucharist amount to a mystery only if accompanied by the Word.

This great triad is the vehicle of the Bulgarian exterritorial factor for European change in the Reformation and the English Renaissance.

The folk enlightenment of Bogomilism as a continuation of the work of the Saints Cyril and Methodius

The line of continuity between these fundamental theological concepts is beyond any doubt although it has to be acknowledged that there are also developments and subjective nuances. Jan Hus and Martin Luther pay more attention to the social aspect of reforming the church, they leave aside many aspects of dualist theology — more typical for Bogomils, Cathars, Lollards and John Wycliffe. John Milton, who eulogises John Wycliffe just as Martin Luther does Jan Hus, takes the opposite approach. He taps unrestrainedly dualist mythology and theology. He borrows magnificent imagery for *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* from Bogomil apocrypha.⁵⁶

He also uses dualist theology, as well as the democratic organization of the Cathar and Waldensian churches, to argue and support his ideas about the development of the Reformation in England.⁵⁷ Tying up these parallel histories we should draw attention to another interesting fact. V. Bilbasov notes that the work of Jan Hus should be placed in the context of the heritage of Cyril and Methodius because it has been influenced by their Orthodox tradition.⁵⁸ American theologian D. Hulme sees this connection even more specifically: “The work of Cyril and Methodius has exerted influence on the Czech reformer Jan Hus, follower of Wycliffe. Hus uses Czech manuscripts [i. e. manuscripts from the Moravian mission of the Saints Cyril and Methodius — author’s note] in order to produce an updated translation of the whole Bible into Old Church Slavonic.”⁵⁹

This is a portentous phenomenon. The practice of European dualists — Cathars, Lollards, Beghards to translate and use the

⁵⁶ The Argument of the First Book of *Paradise Lost* begins with a summary of the Bogomil myth about Lucifer’s rebellion against God and the fall of the rebel and his angels in the abyss, where Satan conceives his own creation. This myth is repeated several times in the poem.

⁵⁷ For example in *Eikonoklastes*... Amsterdam, 1690, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Бильбасов, В. op. cit., c. 11: “The history of the Czech Republic is unknowable without the history of these Orthodox seeds, planted in it by the sermons of the Saints Cyril and Methodius, and watered with the blood of St. Ludmila и St. Vyacheslav, and lighted by the stakes on which burned Jan Hus and Hieronymus of Prague.”

⁵⁹ Hulme, D. In *Other Words* — In: *Vision*, quarterly international companion journal. Spring 2004 Issue.

books of the Bible, especially the New Testament, in their native languages — a practice they inherited from the Bogomils — later in history, through the work of Jan Hus, is again connected to its original roots in the tradition of Cyril and Methodius. Thus, the Bogomils and their European followers are legitimised as pursuers of the work of Cyril and Methodius. In relation to this we should recall the words of the great Bulgarian writer and thinker Stefan Gechev who saw in the life work of the venerable brothers not only a tendency to overcome the three-language dogma, but as a “true spiritual revolution on the Continent, the thing that guarantees the survival of the Slavs and their Renaissance.”⁶⁰

The evidence presented here illuminates ideas that originated from Bulgaria, were transformed during the controversial European medieval cultural communication into fundamental impulses of the Reformation, into influences on the Renaissance spirit of John Milton. We have reason to say: Yes, the South Slavonic Proto-Renaissance of the 14th century, ruthlessly demolished by the Ottoman conquest disappeared on the territory of Bulgaria, but spread in Central and Western Europe as a major factor of religious reformation of the Continent. It remains as a Bulgarian capital invested there. Thus, we could expand D. S. Lihachov’s phrase that Bulgaria under Ottoman rule has survived as a “state of spirituality” by adding the observation that at the same time **the work of Cyril and Methodius and especially the folk enlightenment of Bogomilism have existed as an extraterritorial Bulgarian factor in the Reformation and humanization of Europe.**

And an important historical moral coming from the practice of Bogomils, Cathars and Lollards. They prove right to create their own religious community — different from the official church. The honest and open striving for reform of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus were rejected by the Catholic Church, the reformers were persecuted and repressed.⁶¹ Martin Luther understood this and there-

⁶⁰ Каракостова, А. Срещата на Стефан Гечев с Народния театър „Иван Вазов“ — in: *Метафизика и култура (Погледи към света на Стефан Гечев)*. София, 2003, с. 28.

⁶¹ The Council of Constance which condemned Jan Hus to be burnt at the stake decided also to exhume the bones of the “heretic” John Wycliffe and burn them.

fore built and alternative church, which develops after attracting the better part of German feudal lords. In other words, the Reformation in practice replicates the model of the alternative church — used first by the Bogomils, and disseminated in the west by Cathars, Lollards and Waldensians. In Bulgaria the necessity for an alternative church disappears when the Ottoman rule crushes the structure and the institutions of the official Orthodox Church (the Patriarchate, the Temples, the Monasteries) and forcefully turns it into a church for the oppressed, without internal hierarchy and divisions, expressing to a larger extent our cultural identity.

Passing the flame of the Reformation



The triad of the Reformation:

John Wycliffe making sparks, Jan Hus lighting a small torch from him, Luther taking the flame from Hus. Afterwards he is passing a huge torch to his successor, **Philip Melancthon**. Reformation woodcut. Source:

personal.stthomas.edu/plgavrilyuk/.../101/101%20L18%20Luther.ppt

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