

3.4.4 Development of Theological Education in Russia

The early history of the theological education is too complex to establish if during the lifetime of the Metropolitan of Kiev Peter Mogila (1632-1647), the Kiev College (later Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy) was a theological school. George Florovsky stresses that only towards the end of the seventeenth century a special theological class was introduced there into the curriculum; and, that never before had theology been taught as a separate discipline.¹²⁸ S. Askochenskii, the historian of Kiev academy, however, confirms that from the beginning Peter Mogila regarded both philosophy and theology as subjects of the highest priority. Askochenskii writes: "Among the other disciplines of the Kiev college, the subject matter of theology was the uppermost; and it characterizes the focus of this college."¹²⁹

Many of the faculty members of this school were educated abroad. The school was greatly affected by the Roman methods of instruction and by the Roman ways of theological thought.¹³⁰ From the historical point of view it was "the first encounter with the West."¹³¹

In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the most progressive Orthodox bishops and priests were zealous to open schools that would be envisaged as the centres of Orthodox thought for the entire Orthodox world and that train young people in theology, Bible and church practice.

In 1685 the brothers Sofronii (1652-1730) and Ionnakii (1633-1717) Likhud (of Greek origin) who had been educated in Italy, came to Russia to organize theological education. They were recommended to the Russian czars Ioann and Peter by the Eastern Patriarchs as capable to establish schools for the Church and nation.¹³² In the same year they started to operate the instructional programs in Bogoiavlensk monastery.¹³³ This educational institution initially specialised in teaching Greek rhetoric and philosophy, but was later

¹²⁸ Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 78 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 51].

¹²⁹ S. Askoshentsev, *Kiev's Academy* (K.: University Press, 1856), vol. 2, 139. Cf. Jablonowsky, *Akademia Kievsko-Mohilianska* (Kharkov, 1899-1900).

¹³⁰ For the background on Kiev's school and the Western influence it experienced see Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 78-85 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 44-56]; W. Medlin, *Renaissance Influence and religious Reforms in Russia: Western and Post-Byzantine impacts on Culture and education: 16th and 17th cc.* (Geneva: Droz, 1971).

¹³¹ Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 85 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 56].

¹³² Cf. I. N. Economttsev, "The Pre-history of founding Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy in relation with a public activity of the Likhud brothers," in *Bogoslovskie Trudi* (M.: 1986).

¹³³ See on their lives and work in M. Sventsovskii, *Brat'ia Likhudy* [*The Likhud Brothers*] (SPb.: 1899); Sergei Smirnov, *Istoriia Moscovskoi Slaviano-Greko-Latinskoi Akademii* (M.: 1885).

transformed into Slavonic-Greek- Latin Moscow Academy and then into the Moscow Theological Academy¹³⁴ - a graduate school of theology (the other three Orthodox academies were founded in St. Petersburg, 1809; Kiev, 1819; Kazan', 1842).¹³⁵ As long as the Likhud brothers were working at the school, the New Testament was read and studied in Greek. The Likhud brothers gave serious consideration to the works of Maxim the Greek on the Bible interpretation and correction of the Russian translations of the Holy Scriptures in the school of Bogoiavlensk monastery. However, they had very limited influence, for they had no time either to develop biblical studies at their school or prepare the theological learners for a more advanced investigation of the Bible. After the circumstances forced the Lukhud brothers to leave the school, the teaching of Greek soon was abolished and the character of the school was changed.¹³⁶ When czar Peter the Great (1672-1725) invited the West-Russian instructors of Kiev's Theological Academy to lead the Orthodox theological education in the Moscow Academy, this school was latinized. Most of the subjects were studied in Latin. The perplexity of this situation for the Russian Orthodox Church was unveiled later when at the beginning of the 18th century when many of the Russian clergies were linguistically not ease either reading the Greek New Testament or the Greek Church Fathers, nor at for pastoral or educational activities in their own language - Russian.¹³⁷

3.4.5 The Epoch of Disputes

From the time of Christianisation until the 17th century the Russian Orthodox Church has always seen itself as the organic continuation of the original apostolic community and as holding a faith fully consistent with the apostolic message. In the 17th century some Orthodox Christians have, however, adopted different attitudes through the contacts with Roman Catholicism. Always rejecting doctrinal relativism, the defensive Orthodox authorities, reacted against active proselytism by Westerners and declared Western

¹³⁴ See: Sergei Smirnov, *Istoriia Moscovskoi Akademii - 1814-70* (M.: 1879), 3.

¹³⁵ Cf. S. Askoshentsev, *Kiev's academy*. 2 Vols., (K.: 1856); S Ternovskii, *The History of Kazan' Ecclesiastic Academy: 1870-1892* (Kazan': 1892); I. A. Chistovich, *The History of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy* (SPb.: 1857).

¹³⁶ Cf. I. K. Korsunskii, *K istorii izycheniia grecheskogo iazyka i ego slovestnosti v MDA [The History of the Study of the Greek Language and Literature at the Moscow Theological Academy]* (M.: Sergiev Pasad, 1894).

¹³⁷ Cf. Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 113-114 [Russian ed. 134-135].

sacraments invalid and demanded re-baptism of any convert from the Roman and Protestant communities.

As noted above, the Likhud brothers were not successful in developing biblical studies at Moscow school of theology. They also had no time to prepare the school for the contact with the Latin spirit that began to infiltrate at the beginning of the 18th century, when the teachers of Kiev's Theological Academy, invited by czar Peter the Great, appeared in the Moscow academy.

When the Moscow Academy and many other theological seminaries were all stuffed with pupils of the Kiev Academy, then a new generation of clergy was brought up on textbooks written in Latin and impregnated with a queer mixture of Protestant and Roman theology, which grew in strength during Peter the Great's reign.¹³⁸ As a result, for example, the Orthodox theologians Epiphanius and Simeon Polotskii (Satianovich, 1629-1680) initiated a prolonged dispute by actively advocating two different theological positions. The first belonged to the Eastern tradition and held a Byzantine scholarship as its ideal; the other derived much from the outlook and spirit of the West. Simeon held the Catholic point of view, that the transubstantiation took place when the priest pronounced the words of institution of the Lord's Supper. Later, in 1690, a Counsel in Moscow condemned the views of the Westernizing group.¹³⁹

The seventeenth century is also known for so-called *Raskol* "schism", which took place within the Russian Orthodox Church as the result of the Church reforms forwarded by czar Alexis and Patriarch Nikon (1652-1658).¹⁴⁰ The main idea of this reform was introducing corrections into its service books and rites. Patriarch Nikon who insisted on reconstructing the religious literary corpus of the Church by standardizing the Russian liturgical books according to the Greek sources and to "adjust" specific ceremonies and practices, which were historically fixed in the Russian Orthodoxy, made a great contribution to this. The reformers stressed the infallibility of ancient Greek manuscripts and lectionaries

¹³⁸ Meyendorff states that the Kievan theologians "brought along with them Latin methods of instruction and Latin ways of thought, which had a lasting effect on Russian theology." John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, Trans. from French by John Chaplin (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 113.

¹³⁹ Zernov, 115.

¹⁴⁰ On the schism see, esp., I. M. Gromoglasov, *O sushchnosti i prichinakh russkogo raskola* [*On the Essence and reasons for Russian schism*] (M.: Sergiev Pasad, 1895); B. P. Kutuzov, *Tserkovnyi raskol XVII v., prichiny i tseli* [*The Church Reform of XVII c.: Its Authentic Reasons and Goals*] (Riga, 1992).

as having an apostolic merit and undertook the editing and translating activity to accurate the Church Bible and liturgical books. Patriarch Nikon also insisted on certain new practices during the Church services. Since the meaning associated with powerful symbols of rituals was accepted historically and in the contexts of the traditional Russian Orthodox values such meaning cannot be removed from the structure and order of rituals, Nikon's potential and his recreational concerns to modify the form and content of Orthodox ritual activities, were disputed by Avvacum (Petrov, 1621-1682)¹⁴¹ and the others.¹⁴² Many clergymen and lay people did not understand and did not accept the liturgical reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon and refused to obey the church authority. Despite the opposition to the newfangled ideas the Church Councils approved the reform in 1667-68, and Avvacum was exiled to Siberia and then died at the stake.¹⁴³ Consequently, the Old Believers' movement emerged and the schism became an unsettling reality of the Orthodox life in Russia. In 1721, Tsar Peter the Great abolished the patriarchate, and thereafter the Church was governed through the imperial administration.¹⁴⁴

These and the other disagreements and confrontations in Russian religious consciousness painfully resonated in a further development of Russian Orthodoxy in general¹⁴⁵ and in a biblical study in particular. "It was particularly tragic, that at the decisive hour in Russian history, the leadership in the Church should be in the hands of men who overstressed the importance of ritual."¹⁴⁶ More than a century the Orthodox theologians and teachers of the Bible were more preoccupied with defending or overcoming scholasticism and *new-old-* and- *non* orthodox doctrines, than with the problems of the Bible

¹⁴¹ See his autobiography, composed in 1673, Avvacum, *Zhitie Prototopa Avvakuma* (M.1960); cf. N.S. Demkova, *Zhitie Prototopa Avvakuma* (Leningrad, 1974). The English translation by Jane Harrison, *The Life of the Archpriest Avvacum, by himself* (London, 1924). See also A. N. Robinson, *Bor'ba idei v Russkoi literature VIII v. [The Clash of Ideas in Russian Literature of XVII c.]* (M.: 1974); N. S. Demkova, *The Works of Avvacum [Sochineniia Avvakuma]* (SPb.: SPbSU, 1998).

¹⁴² In the opinion of the opposition, this particular type of performance, in which the Orthodox participants carry out a standardized statement that represents the Church's fundamental teachings on Jesus Christ as of both two wills and two natures (formulated by the Sixth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 680 AD) should be stable and invariable.

¹⁴³ Cf. *Zernov*, 105 -109.

¹⁴⁴ The Patriarchate was reestablished only in 1917, at the time of the Russian Revolution.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Florovsky, *Puti*, 104 ff.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *Zernov*, 104.

interpretation. The controversies were attempted to be solved chiefly on the basis of the Church Councils articles and the writings of the Church Fathers. The Bible has been out of the focus directly or indirectly, because in the theological debates the principle of the faithfulness to the doctrinal authority of the Church Fathers was decisive. It corresponds with the conclusion of Prof. Glubokovskii, who stresses that the Russian Orthodox Church has traditionally used the Patristics as “a dogmatic-doctrinal guide which regulates the freedom of theological creativeness.”¹⁴⁷

From the very beginning of the Russian Christianity until the middle of eighteenth century the factors such as widespread illiteracy, the mentality of the people to express their erudition through the art of painting and music rather than through a literary statement, the deficiency of biblical texts and biblical canon as the whole, lack of stable theological training in the Bible, political confusions in the nation all prevented the raise and development of Biblical scholarship during the early period of the Russian Orthodox Church.

During this time, however, the Orthodox educators and priests wrote several expository commentaries on the biblical books. Although, the majority of these studies were never published, the historians suggest that the authors of these studies, in nearly all the arguments heavily relied on Latin and German sources. Often, “the ideas and conclusions of others were presented as their own.”¹⁴⁸ The retelling or even a direct translating from the Western theological literature became a habit of many Orthodox writers during this and following periods of time. Commenting on the state of biblical studies in the Russian Orthodox Church during the first centuries of its history, an eminent Orthodox scholar well concludes, “the efforts of our biblical studies in this period were no more than rare lights in a dark night and not all of them were bright.”¹⁴⁹

3.4.6 Toward the Biblical Studies

In the eighteenth century, the course of history of Bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodoxy was proposed by three particularly positive factors. *Firstly*, some of the leaders of the theological education were striving “to introduce Russian as the teaching language in

¹⁴⁷ N. N. Glubokovskii, *Russkaia Bogoslovskaia Nauka v ee istoricheskom i noveishem sostoianii* [*Russian Theological Discipline in its historical development and present state*] (Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1928), 38.

¹⁴⁸ Florovsky, *Puti*, 354; cf. *Men'*, 275.

¹⁴⁹ *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 115.

the theological schools in the place of Latin¹⁵⁰ as well as to introduce an advanced study of the biblical languages.

Secondly, because of the renewed interest in the Church Slavonic Bible, a final revision of the Church Slavonic Bible (known as *The Elizabeth Bible*)¹⁵¹ ordered by Peter the Great (1672-1725) in 1712, was finally finished and printed in 1751 (long after Peter's death, during the reign of Peter's daughter Elizabeth Petrovna (1741-1762)). This authorized standard version of the Bible Scriptures for the Russian Orthodox Church of 18th century was prepared and published in St. Petersburg in 1751 (a second slightly corrected edition appeared in 1756).¹⁵²

Next, the foundation of an agency of the British Bible Society in Russia (in 1810), which as an interdenominational association, objected to diffuse the Scriptures and disclosed the second progressing step of the Bible study during this period. As the Russian Bible Society, founded in 1813, promoted the translation and distribution of the Bible in many languages of the Russian Empire, many Orthodox scholars were involved in the projects of new translations. In this process, as they were observing the changing nature of language (from Old Slavonic to more modern Russian) they discovered new manuscript evidence and had the desire to read and to understand the Bible. The expertise and proficiency of the Orthodox translators and the teachers of the Bible became as sufficient as never before. The work of preparing a new Russian translation of the Bible and of translating it into the other languages, indirectly produced the people who were potentially able to study Scripture on a more sufficient and erudite level.

¹⁵⁰ Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 139, (Russian edn. 159).

¹⁵¹ On the Church Slavonic Bible the most essential works were done by the Russian scholars of the mid-nineteenth century. Among many others see: A. Gorskii and K. Nevostruev, *Opisanie slavianskikh rukopisei Moskovskoi sinodal'noi biblioteki* (M.: 1855-1862); A. Chistovitch, *Istoria perevoda Biblii na russkii iazyk* (SPb.: 1899); Viacheslav Strezhetskii, *Drevnii slavianskii perevod Psaltyri: Issledovanie ego teksta i iazyka po rukopisiam xi-xiv vv.* (SPb.: 1877); Ivan Evseev, "Zametki po drevne-slavianskomu perevodu Sv. Pisaniia, I-II," *Izvestia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk*, 8, 5 (1898): 329-344. The more recent works are: Mickail I. Rizhskii, *Istoriia perevodov Biblii v Rossii* (Novosibirsk, 1978) [atheistic point of view]; K. I. Logachev ed., "Dokumenty Bibleiskoi komisii, 1. Rukopisnyi material dlia nauchnogo izdaniia slavianskogo perevoda Vetkhogo Zaveta," *BT*, 14 (1875): 160-165. What exists in English on the Church Slavonic Bible is to be found in Henry R. Cooper Jr, "Bible, Church Slavonic," *The Modern Encyclopedia of religion in Russia* (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1991), vol. 4, 75-89.

¹⁵² Archimandrite Feofilact Lopatinskii (d. 1741) and Hieromonk Sofronii Lochud (1652-1730), a Greek, who revised and retranslated each biblical book completed their task by 1723, but Peter's death delayed the printing of their labours.

important prerequisites for all theological graduates in Moscow. In 1786, the systematic exegesis of Scripture, oriented on “the best Church teachers-exegetes”¹⁵⁹ was offered for the students of the Moscow Academy. In the next decade, by the decree of the Holy Synod of 1798, the biblical hermeneutics was introduced as a separate discipline. It was required to be utilized in all the Orthodox schools of higher theological education in order “to benefit an accurate interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.”¹⁶⁰ This momentum can be considered as the origin of the biblical studies (scholarship) in the Russian Orthodox Church.

As the interpreter of the Bible and teacher of exegesis, Platon phrased nine principles of interpretation. These guiding principles, which Platon gave to the teachers of the Bible at Moscow Theological Academy in 1876, were obligatory and later considered as “the establishment of Orthodox hermeneutics.”¹⁶¹ The significance of his rules for analysing the biblical text, demands their full citation and inquiry.¹⁶²

The teachers and interpreters of the Bible must follow nine rules of interpretation¹⁶³:

Rule 1. Open literal and historical meanings, and where it is dark¹⁶⁴, because of translation or an ambiguity of the language, explain it in a such way that no passage is left for the students as being difficult for understanding, apart from the most extraordinary texts which are too perplexed to comprehend. [Ru. – “Открыть буквальный смысл, и где темно, или от перевода или по свойству языка, объяснять так, чтобы не осталось места, которого бы студенты не разумели, включая некоторые весьма редкие места, кои на удобь не понятны.”]

Rule 2. Interpret spiritual and mythical meanings, especially in the Old Testament, in those passages, where such meanings are clearly hidden. In doing this, one has to be careful, not to do this compellingly. Thus, one ought not to search for mythical

¹⁵⁹ S. Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi Slaviano-Greko-Latinskoi Akademii* (M.: 1885), 295.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁶¹ Cf. M. S. Ivanov, “Academy’s Theology: For the 300th Anniversary of the Moscow Theological Academy,” *JMP* 1 (1986): 76

¹⁶² Almost all the succeeding Orthodox studies do mention Platon’s rules at the foundation of the Orthodox hermeneutics, but without analysis. See *Men’*, 275; M. S. Ivanov, “Academy’s Theology: For the 300th Anniversary of the Moscow Theological Academy,” *JMP* 1 (1986): 76; the others allude to, but only to some measure - cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 119-120. There is no evidence that the following generations of the orthodox interpreters referred back to Platon’s rules. The *argumentum e silentio* cannot be used here to indicate that the scholars did not consider these rules. It shows only that they used the instructive principles of interpretation non-expressively.

¹⁶³ Platon (Levshin), *Polnoe Sochinenie [The Complete Works]* (SPb.: Soikina, 1913), Vol. 1, 691.

¹⁶⁴ The terms “darkness” and “dark”, in Platon, stand for a difficulty to understand the text in its literal meaning.

meaning where it is not obvious (even if it is forced, as with many interpreters is noticeable), but where links and the parallel passages follow directly from the words. [Interpret spiritual and mythical meanings] by holding an agreement with the best interpreters. [Ru.- “Истолковать смыслы духовный и таинственный, особливо в Ветхом Завете, в тех местах, где оный прямо сокрывается. При сем надобно остерегаться, чтобы сего не делать с принуждением, то-есть, о том искании таинственного смысла, где онаго нет, разве по некоторому натягиванию, как у многих толковников сие примечается; но где оный прямо и из слов, и из связи, и из параллельных мест следует, держась притом наилучших толкователей.”]

Rule 3. For the better understanding of dark passages, find and link the parallel passages, for this will make comprehension easier; since that what is said in one place, is often said ambiguously and briefly in another place, and despite the similarity between the two texts, the one differs in terms of a more detailed and clearer account. [Ru. – “Для большого разумения темных мест надобно сводить места параллельные, ибо сие весьма облегчит понятие: поелику очень нередко, что в одном месте сказано темно и кратко в другом тоже, но уже ясно и пространно.”]

Rule 4. In interpreting [*Scripture*], the moral teachings flowing from it should be formulated with great regard. [Ru.- “Не забывать при толковании, чтобы выводить и нравочение, прямо оттуда следующие.”]

Rule 5. In interpreting the books of the Old Testament prophets, indicate clearly in which circumstances their prophecies were fulfilled [in the Old Testament or the New Testament]. [Ru. – “Пророков толкуя, надобно показывать, когда их пророчества исполнились и при каких обстоятельствах.”]

Rule 6. Where the passages of the Holy Scriptures seem to contradict each other, explain these texts by using published sources that contain general agreement.¹⁶⁵ [Ru. – “Где места Св. Писания найдутся, из коих одно, кажется другому противоречит, те объяснять и соглашать с помощью на то изданных гармоний.”]

Rule 7. Whichever part of the Bible passages containing interpretations which once were fabricated and subsequently led to schisms or heresies, be obliged to clearly indicate the right and true meaning (of these passages) and invalidate the opinions and arguments of heretics and schismatics. [Ru. - “Где найдутся места, из коих некоторые выводили превратные толкования, и что подавало случай к расколам и ересям, надобно тех мест прямой и истинный смысл показать и опровергнуть мнения и доводы еретиков и раскольников.”]

Rule 8. Where the passages of the Holy Scriptures seem to have been objected by the wisdom of man, it is obligatory to mention these objections. It is imperative though, to offer a clear and adequate solution. [Ru.- “Где найдутся такие места, на которые мудрование человеческое может делать некоторые возражения,

¹⁶⁵ It is not clear whether or not Platon is speaking about published harmonies on the Gospels (The Synopsis) here.

таковые возражения не скрывать, но их решать ясным и удовлетворительным образом.”]

Rule 9. On behalf of the teacher, it is critical to consult with the Church Fathers, to read scrupulously the best Church teachers and interpretators and Church historians; but, above all, often and diligently beseech the Father to open eyes for understanding miracles from His Law. [Ru.- “Для помощи и всего того надобно учителю прилежно читать лучших церковных учителей и толковников, хорошо знать церковную Историю, а паче всего молить часто и усердно Отца светов, да откроет очи его к разумению чудес от закона Его.”]

It is unknown where he got these rules from and why he had stated them in such way. On the outside, the rules seem to be an adopted summary of a common for early biblical interpretation approach, known to Platon. It is also possible that Platon presents these rules as a system, which was brought into existence from his own erudition and exegesis.

Platon’s mandate to the teachers and interpreters of the Bible allows offering several conclusions. *Firstly*, these principles of Bible interpretation underline Platon’s desire to establish the learned and cultured enterprise of clergies who will be able to exegete the text of the Bible for the Church.¹⁶⁶

Secondly, Platon encourages the interpreters of the Bible, to search primarily for the literal and historical meaning of the text. Acknowledging that the practice of an allegorical interpretation in the Orthodox exegesis was still common, Platon does not dismiss allegorical interpretation, but stresses that Scripture is the book of Sacred History¹⁶⁷ and should be understood in context to the time and place of their authors.

Thirdly, Platon recommends understanding the Scripture literally - without searching a mysterious meaning where there is no such thing; and suggests the techniques how to solve the seriously contradictive passages in the Bible. Platon is aware that the reader of the Bible (or exegete) is capable to bring his own pre-supposition into the text and therefore Platon urges the interpreters to be alert in discerning the meaning of the text¹⁶⁸ and not to

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Florovsky, *Puti*, 106.

¹⁶⁷ From this point on the Bible was primarily understood by the Russian Orthodox, above all, as history. Cf. Florovsky, *BCT*, 21.

¹⁶⁸ Acc. to Stanton’s formulation, “the personal factors which affect the judgments of interpreter” are prejudices, and “the philosophical or theoretical starting points which an interpreter takes and which he usually shares with others” are presuppositions. See. G. N. Stanton, “Presuppositions in New Testament Criticism,” in I. Howard Marshall, ed. *New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 61.

unnecessarily allocate allegorical meanings to the text where the author does not expect readers to pick up another meaning after the literal.

Fourthly, these rules demand from the Bible interpreter to be familiar with the best works of patristic heritage. On the one side Platon stresses the role of the Church in the interpretation as the warrant of right interpretation. On the other hand, he requires from the Bible interpreter: (1) precisely discern the superb works among a vast number of secondary sources; and (2) be critically minded rather than blindly follow the teaching of any Orthodox teacher and interpreter. This means the Bible can be properly understood and elucidated if the interpreter consents with the exegetes who stand nonnegotiable firm solely within the theological integrity of the Church.

Fifthly, in interpreting the Bible, Platon emphasizes the significance of prayer for the illumination of the readers (interpreters). This, of course, corresponds to the Orthodox doctrine of the Scripture. According to Platon, “the creator of the Holy Scripture is the Holy Spirit”¹⁶⁹ who has “illuminated the minds of the prophets, apostles and other writers of the Scriptures and revealed to them the mysteries and amazing prophesies.”¹⁷⁰ The same Holy Spirit is able “to open eyes for the understanding.”¹⁷¹

Further, Platon points out the unity of the Bible and its capacity to explain itself when the books are taken in their totality and interconnectedness. Scripture interprets Scripture.

Lastly, the practical applications and apologetic character of the Bible, according to Platon, is the most meaningful end of the Bible interpretation. He is convinced, that the exegete must always place a high premium on the practical and theological weight of the biblical text.

On the whole, Platon’s rules have significant hermeneutical implications. Admitting the legitimacy of a figurative reading, the rules give emphasis to the control over a figurative reading by way of: (1) a harmonized reading of Scripture; (2) the supremacy of Church interpreters (*i.e.* the Fathers); and (3) and the importance of a doctrinal deliberation. Since the interpreters might come to different conclusions or even to a false understanding, the direction that the Church provides, is of vital importance. The relevance of the biblical texts to the reality of reader presupposes that the Bible is a moral guide. All these resonate biblical

¹⁶⁹ Platon (Levshin), *The Complete Works* (SPb.: Soikina, 1913), Vol. 718.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 716.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 691.

interpretation in the West without maintaining an extreme critical approach from 18-19th centuries.

The limitations of Platon's instructions, however, are obvious. Neither does he stress philological or linguistic study of the text (or study the text in the original language) nor the study of textual variants.¹⁷² The other shortcoming is the lack of distinct explanation of these rules. Of course, Platon is very brief in all his points, but the lack of further clarification on these principles could be a stumbling block in the application. Although Platon introduced the ways of interpretation in both academic and Church settings (after his Rectorship at Moscow Academy he became the Metropolitan of Moscow and spoke on the topic publicly), it is very difficult to establish how decisive his role was in the development of the Russian Orthodox biblical scholarship.¹⁷³ In his collected works of total 1500 pages, there is only one page specifically concerning the subject of Bible interpretation. Moreover, it was written just before Platon retired from his rectoral post and it is difficult to establish whether or not the professors of the Greek-Latin Academy in Moscow have faithfully followed his recommendations. In his study, Luzin indicates that the scope of Platon's rules of interpretation was so advanced that even the succeeding generation of the Orthodox interpreters was not yet ready to grasp it.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, by the middle of the 19th century Platon's influence was fading.

Still, his contribution to Russian Orthodox scholarship and historical thought is significant. Platon's directives are at the cornerstone of the origin of a careful examination of the biblical text in the Russian Orthodox Church and in this endeavour many have followed the Metropolitan Platon.

¹⁷² Possibly, because the knowledge and techniques of textual criticism and the other important exegetical steps were not yet known among Russian Orthodox interpreters of the Bible as it was in the West. It is known that the Western scholars employed critical methods in the NT studies and contributed to the rise of the field of textual criticism in a short time after the first editions of the Greek Text of the NT were published in 1514-1516 (first in Spain [in a polyglot edition of the University of Complutum (Alcalá)] then and 1516 in Basel by Erasmus (c. 1466-1536). Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972/London, 1973), 40.

¹⁷³ *Contra Men'*, 275.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 119.

3.4.6.2 *Platon's Followers*

As we concluded above, Maxim the Greek and later the Metropolitan Platon contributed to the laying of the foundation for biblical scholarship. Metropolitan Platon, especially, stressed a cautious approach in reading the Bible. Platon's associates further undertook his work. Among them were the Professor of Greek-Latin Academy in Moscow Amvrosii (Andrei Podobedov, 1742-1818), later the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, who in 1799 published *Guide to the Reading of the Bible* -the first textbook on the questions of introduction in the Orthodox Russia.¹⁷⁵ In 1808, the Archbishop Feoktist (Mochulskii; 1832-1818) published "the first ever textbook on Biblical Hermeneutics."¹⁷⁶ The book, based on the Patristics, covered certain rules for the discovering the meaning of the Holy Scripture. There is no evidence that the book was well received or widely used. Possibly, this is why the historians who do mention its publication do not offer a proper analysis.¹⁷⁷ The understandable attempts to secure the copy of Feoktist's work, in the Orthodox archives, unfortunately, prevent us from undertaking such critical examination in the scope of present study.

Nevertheless, looking into the core of literature produced at that time, one may conclude that among the Orthodox teachers of the Bible there were many who made an effort to advance the Orthodox exegesis, but these were "the autonomous workers on the non-cultivated field."¹⁷⁸ Bearing this in mind it is acceptable to conclude that the question of how to interpret Scripture has been raised in the Russian Orthodox Church. The answer, however, was not yet fully to be found, although the predominant voices stressed an accurate investigation of the biblical text, careful examination of the textual difficulties and necessity of adequate response to non-orthodox objections.

¹⁷⁵ Amvrosii Podobedov, *Rukovodstvo k chteniiu Sviashchennogo Pisania Vetkhogo i Novogo Zaveta* (SPb.: 1799). The second time it was published in 1811.

¹⁷⁶ *Men'*, 275.

¹⁷⁷ See F. Titov, "Feoktist Mochulskii, Archbishop of Kursk," *TKDA* 1-2 (1894).

¹⁷⁸ The anonymous author, "Itogi XIX veka dlia nashei Bogoslovskoi Nauki," [The results of XIX Century for our Theological Discipline] *KhCh* 1 (1901): 3.

3.4.7 Conclusion

During the XV-XVIII cc. the biblical studies had no self-confident progress. The fall of Constantinople, that brought the Byzantine Empire to an end in 1453, was perhaps the most obvious tragedy that affected Russian Orthodoxy. The relationships with the Greek Orthodox Church became fragile. When the Russians lost a former fellowship with theological and educational tradition of the Mother- Church, the Russian Orthodox educators, with granted autonomy, “were still not able to undertake either theological education or a true scientific study of the Holy Scripture.”¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, this period has been significant for learning from the exemplified exegesis of the Church Fathers. It is also legitimate to establish that from 1750 the Russian Orthodox exegetes took the first significant steps towards the foundation of the study of the Bible as a specialized academic discipline (of course, in the 18th century there was also the multiplication of exegetical works in Western Church). Yet, the discipline of Bible interpretation within the Orthodox academic circles was not adequately shaped compared to the western developments, because the Orthodox academics mainly utilized the works of ancient Church interpreters of the Bible and did so more willingly than utilizing the works of their contemporary Western interpreters. Attention still needed to be drawn to the philological (linguistic) aspects of the text which was not in the focus yet. Rather the drafted exegetical studies mainly contained theological or ethical remarks. True to their faithfulness to the Orthodox Church and to the writings of the Church Fathers, the paraphrases of the Church Fathers commentaries still prevailed over the point-by-point interpretation of the biblical texts.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ S. Sol'skii “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO* I, 2 (1869): 191.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 124-125.

3.5 Biblical Interpretation in the XIX c. Russia

From the beginning of the 19th century the main circumstances of the Orthodox Biblical interpretation in Russia included: (1) the religious philosophical awakening and the process of creation of a theological consciousness of Russians; and (2) the exegetical and hermeneutical debates of the Western biblical scholarship. In analysing the field of Bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church during this time, the inquiry into the effects of philosophy on the Orthodox religious thought and scholarship cannot be avoided. In addition, due to many factors, in the 19th century Russia the Orthodox biblical interpretation stood before the major disciplines of biblical research that have been produced in the West (since the 16th century). The aim of the following section, therefore, is briefly to point out these two coexisting processes and to highlight how these developments have influenced the course of the Orthodox biblical interpretation in the 19th century Russia. After that, in the following sections of this chapter, we will give the specifics of the developments of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church in the first and second halves of the 19th century.

3.5.1 Creation of the Orthodox Theological Consciousness

3.5.1.1 The Religious-Philosophical Awakening

In the 19th century Russia many of the Russian philosophers and thinkers were at the same time noted theologians (or vice versa). That is why Fr. George Florovsky combines the history of Russian philosophical thought and the course of Russian Orthodox theology.¹⁸¹ Since the Russian philosophy is unique in its devotion to the goals of practical transformation of life and society and in recognizing God as the substantial factor, then the problem that lies at the heart of this study is the frame of reference exposed by Russian religious philosophy on biblical scholarship in the 19th century.

There is no simple and universal definition of philosophy and many thinkers consider the task of such a definition to be impossible. If this is true, then the Russian religious

¹⁸¹ Florovsky, *Ways: Two*.

philosophy must be viewed as something that is also difficult to define.¹⁸² The questions of social ethics and political philosophy, of an individual's relationship to the Russian State, of adequate knowledge and virtuous behaviour, of wisdom and power, of religious and aesthetic values, of ideas and ideals as guidelines for human life - all of these are central to Russian religious philosophy.

It is beyond of scope of this study to investigate all the philosophical ideas that matured into well-balanced, self-sufficient systems in 19th century Russia. However, the overview of the philosophical developments, will allow us to indicate the intellectual environment in Russia.

There were three fundamental moments, three epochs that progressively describe the motion of Russian Philosophy in the 19th century. The first epoch, so-called *Russian romanticism and idealism*; spans from the mid-1820s to the mid-1850s. The ideas of love, unity and the welfare of the nation were the major concerns in those years. The second epoch in the history of Russian thought - a time of great social and socio-political awakening,¹⁸³ - nearly coincides with the second half of the nineteenth century. This was the time of so-called "Great Reformers" followed by the reaction of *Russian nihilism*. From one side it was the time when "everyone in Russia wanted to recover their senses, begin to think, read and study."¹⁸⁴ On the other hand the nihilists negated and rejected both their own given and obsolete past and any "past" in general and overwhelmed the society with an anti-historical utopianism. It was a return from the "objectivity" of idealism in ethics and science to "subjectivity" and "dogmatism" - a step back to the authority and general suspicion. The third epoch in the history of the Russian idea spans from the mid-1890s to the first decades of the 20th century and was characterized by *Russian Maximalism* - an exaggerated sense of freedom and independence by attempting to dissolve the Church or the state dogmas.

The Russian religious philosophy of the 19th century raised many significant questions. It was interested in the philosophy of history and compared Western and Russian rationale. It challenged Western logical thought and stressed the unity of man with God, the

¹⁸² See the standard books on the topic N. Berdiaev, *Russian Idea: The Basic Problems of Russian Thought XIX c. and beg. XX c.* (Paris, 1946); N. O. Losskii, *The History of Russian Philosophy* (M.: 1991); *Zen'kovskii*.

¹⁸³ From 1853 to 1856 Russia was involved in Crimean War. She was defeated. After the death of Tzar Nikolas I (in 1855) his son Alexander II immediately turned his efforts to wide ranging reforms of the Russian social, political, legal, educational, and military systems. In 1881 Alexander II was assassinated and his reforms were not sufficiently applied to solve Russian problems.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 54.

unity of the Church and Russian nation as one entity. The philosophers both elevated and dismissed the Bible, as the Revelation of God that gives the answers to peculiar questions in the Russian society. In the earlier stages, it was clear to them, that the revival of the Russian society “was possible only on the ground of religion”¹⁸⁵ and they stressed the role of the Church in the society and cried for the need of moral force in Russia, for there was the struggle between good and evil. Only Christianity, according to many of the philosophers, was able to convey the ethical ideal of the Bible and bring the message of salvation. Later, especially in the beginning of 20th century, the philosophers attempted to synthesize religion, scientific knowledge, and mystical experience and established the foundation for scientifically-oriented thinking in the sum and substance detached from the dogmatism of the Church. The Russian Orthodoxy, although important in itself, became only one of many environmental factors that construct the frame of reference for the philosophical thought. It was neither the source nor the goal of progressive Russian thought.

Excursion: *The Main Figures of the Religious- Philosophical awakening.*

Without supplying the details in the analysis of philosophical awakening within these epochs, our task is to particularize the main figures of the movements and to contour the background of intellectual life in Russia during 19th century that may bring the light on the developments within the Russian Orthodox biblical scholarship.

The beginning of original Russian religious philosophising has been laid down by two originators of Slavophilism - Ivan V. Kireevskii (1800-1856) and Alexey C. Khomiakov (1804-1860). The direction and program of philosophy, proposed by both of them, has been advanced by Vladimir Solov'ev (1853-1900), who represents an extensive achievement of the Russian religious philosophers in XIX century.

*Ivan Kireevskii*¹⁸⁶ is the Russian cofounder of the Slavophile movement, which asserted the superiority of Russian Orthodox culture and autocratic government over Western European rationalism and liberal government. He stands at the starting point of the development of the philosophy of history where Russian philosophers tried to find answers for the question on the meaning of life.¹⁸⁷ Kireevskii distinguished the Bible (esp. the New Testament) among the other sources of knowledge, for “only the Bible contains the all needed answers for sincerity of human soul and life.”¹⁸⁸ For

¹⁸⁵ B. A. Ternavtsev, “The Russian Church in front of a Great Task,” in *Zapiski Peterburgskikh religiozno-filosofskikh Sobranii: 1902-1903* [*The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg; 1902-1903*] (SPb.: 1906), 7.

¹⁸⁶ Ivan Kireevskii, *Collected Works*, 2 Vols. (M.: 1911); On him among others see Liaskovskii, *The Life and Works of the Kireevskii brothers* (SPb.: 1899); A. G. Luzhnikov, *Ivan Kireevskii* (Kazan', 1918).

¹⁸⁷ H. Losskii, *Conditions of the Absolute Goodness* (M.: 1991), 261.

¹⁸⁸ Ivan Kireevskii, *Collected Works* (M.: 1911), Vol. 2, 38.

him, the experience of the Holy Fathers, who established the most important issues for the Orthodox tradition, teaching and dogma, had to be combined together with the experience of contemporary learning and modern philosophy. If before, among the reflective Orthodox thinkers there has been a general effort to achieve an ecclesiastic self-awareness, heightened by a feeling for the Church, accompanied the restoration of sensitivity to the historical dimension of the Church, then after the legacy of Kireevskii the philosophers acknowledged that the Patristic literature, measured against the Bible “does not give an answer to the numerous questions,”¹⁸⁹ and supplemented the efforts of the Orthodox self-awareness by utilizing all the means of knowledge to restore the sensitivity of the Church to the modern Russian society and thought.

After Kireevskii visited Germany, where he studied metaphysics and attended the lectures of G. Hegel (1770-1831) and F. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), he became attracted to the dissimilarities between the western and Russian rationale. He challenged the western and concluded that the Eastern Orthodox theology in Russia had not been based on the pluralism of logic thought, but was seeking the wholeness of the truth that requires wholeness of the spirit and unity of the mind. According to him, the unity and harmony of the Church is not only the foundation for the idea of unity of human mind, but it is the place designated for realization of such unity. Only in the accordant body of the Church, could men disclose the potential of their minds in searching the truth.

The Russian Orthodox theology, as Kireevskii demands, is always preoccupied in developing the wholeness of the spirit by concentrating all human powers of the soul into a single power, to seek out the apprehension of truth in unity and harmony. If any man understands that in his inner self dwells a living essence of all powers of comprehension, such man, according to Kireevskii, must humble himself, for his inner self enters the unity with the other Christians and above all with God, through faith.¹⁹⁰

In suggesting that every man, by realizing that in his inner self dwells a living essence of all powers of the unity with God, is able to contribute to the common knowledge of God, Kireevskii concluded that “all the thinkers and all the believers together have to develop the original Orthodox conscience.”¹⁹¹ This became the frame of reference for the succeeding generation of the Russian “thinkers” who sincerely believed that they all have to contribute to the process of formation of the religious-national mentality.

Alexey Khomiakov¹⁹² is known as the Orthodox theologian and philosopher, although he did not receive any specialized formal education. Like Kireevskii, Khomiakov was

¹⁸⁹ By this remark the Russian philosopher Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdiaev (or Berdyaev) (1874-1948) describes a general position of the majority of religious philosophers (of 19th century) toward the Church Fathers. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Tipy religioznoi mysli v Rossii* [*The Types of Religious Thought in Russia*] (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), 19.

¹⁹⁰ N. Berdiaev, *Russian Idea: The Basic Problems of Russian Thought XIX c. and beg. XX c.* (Paris, 1946), 38.

¹⁹¹ Ivan Kireevskii, *Collected Works* (M.: 1911), Vol. 1, 270.

¹⁹² His works A. Khomiakov, *Collected Works*, 8 Vols. (M.: 1900-06); About him see, among others, B. N. Liaskovskii *A. Khomiakov* (M.: 1879); N. L. Brodskii, *The Early Slavophiles* (M.: 1910).

very intensely concerned in the welfare of the Russian Church and Russian nation. Through all his writings he expresses the difference between the West and the East and the idea of national community. Khomiakov's theological writings were first published only posthumously. They were allowed into theological circles much later, for many mistrusted him. "A mistrust and caution fully explained by his novelty"¹⁹³ in presenting the ideas.

For Khomiakov, God created the Universe. The Spirit of God holds this Universe in the order and harmony. If the world is the incarnation of spiritual *first-going free will* of God, then the Church (both invisible and visible) as the spiritual body of Christ is the *first-going cause* in the life of the Christians. Because divine Church "lives not under the law of slavery, but under the law of freedom"¹⁹⁴ it gives a real freedom for all its members to experience unite life as a divine conciliarity [*sobornost'*]¹⁹⁵ - the characteristic that describe the wholeness of the people, but differ from the human idea of corporate body or commonness. The Church, then, furnishes a spiritual union of all the orthodox people, when they "bounded in love find the harmony in mode of thought."¹⁹⁶ *Sobornost'* is not a collective reality which stands higher than man and controls him. It is the highest spiritual reality of men. *Sobornost'*, for Khomiakov, is an objective reality and it is also spiritual reality, the mysterious life of Christ within a human communion with Christ. The Church is not a reality in relation to which human personality would be a subordinate part. There is no existential centre of the Church except Christ himself.

In addition, this harmony is not authorized by the spirit of slavery (like in the West), but is available in *the spirit of mutual agreement of all the orthodox people*. In oversimplified point of view Khomiakov understood, that in the Western Church the obedience is required through the discernment of reason, in the East the Church, as the free first-going cause, carries to Russian nation the choice to receive the highest form of freedom to live in one community based on the power of reciprocal love. The Roman Catholic Church, in Khomiakov, is the unity without freedom, the Protestantism offers freedom without the unity, and only in the Eastern Church there

¹⁹³ Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 43.

¹⁹⁴ A. Khomiakov, *Collected Works* (M.: 1900), Vol. 2, 237

¹⁹⁵ *Sobornost'* (a non-equivalent term to the other European languages) is a specific term that is based on the text of a late medieval Slavonic revision of the creed of Nicaea-Constantinople (in designating the Church the term *kafolicheskaiia* was changed for *sobornaiia* i.e. gathered together. Since that the term was used to depict the essence of a national church policy. See A. Gegen, *The History of Translation of the Creeds [Istoriia slavianskogo perevoda simbolov very]* (SPb.: 1884), 90-102. In Russian philosophy, firstly, this term was used by Khomiakov to express the unity in plurality as the essence of the Orthodox Church. If Khomiakov and Fr. Sergey Bulgakov used this term for the idea of the Church [cf. A. Khomiakov, *Collected Works* (M.: 1900), Vol. 8, 312; S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodoxy* (M.: 1991), 145-150], later, by K. S. Askakov, it is used for description of the common spirit of the people united by one ideal [like socialism] (cf. V. V. Zen'kovskii, *The History of Russian Philosophy* (Leningrad, 1991), Vol. 1, part 2., 18.). C. Frank uses the term as the inner element needed for the unity of the public and of family life. See C. Frank, *The Spiritual Grounds for the Society* (M.: 1992), 58-59.

¹⁹⁶ A. Khomiakov, *Collected Works* (M.: 1900), Vol. 1, 183.

is the unity of freedom. He reasons:

“...The people of the West can neither understand nor take part in the Church, since they do not renounce the schism which is the negation [of the unity]; in fact the Latins think of a unity of the Church in which is no trace of Christian freedom, while the Protestants argue for a freedom in which the unity of the Church literally disappears.”¹⁹⁷

Thus, the Russian Church, as depicted by Khomiakov, is above all unity - the unity [*edinstvo*] of divine grace living among the plurality of rational creatures who are in the submission [*pokornost'*] to this grace is the ground for the unity of society in Russia. Of course, even such short outline of Khomiakov's thought shows his idealistic beliefs in the Russian Orthodox Church. That is why Fr. Pavel Florenskii, reflecting back to Khomiakov's idea, sensitively rephrases him, saying “*sobornost'* or *kafolichnost'* [the designation for the Orthodox Church] is “the authentic for Orthodox Church in its essence, not in [the historical] reality, but only in the probability.”¹⁹⁸ Still Khomiakov's doctrine of the Church was regarded as “completely true to fundamental and ancient tradition of the Church.”¹⁹⁹ To conclude, Khomiakov's ecclesiology is directed against the spirit of contradiction and schism within the Eastern Church, within the Russian nation, but at the same time, he prepared the preformed antagonistic thinking of the Russian Orthodoxy for the polemic against ‘the western confessions’ or against the rational, critical thinking in the West.

Vladimir S. Solov'ev (or *Solovyov*),²⁰⁰ in his turn, attempted to synthesize religion, scientific knowledge, and mystical experience in one system based on the idea of “Godmanhood”. Greatly influenced by the 19th-century German philosopher G. Hegel, Solov'ev emphasized the gradual integration of the human spirit with God through historical process. He also believed in the incarnation of the “divine wisdom” (Grk., *Sophia*), a concept that is described in his mystical poems, *Three Meetings* (1899). In *Russia and the Universal Church* (1889; trans. 1948), Solov'ev appealed for the establishment of a universal Christian theocracy, implying a union of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and the joint world leadership of the pope and czar. Other writings, such as *Three Conversations on War, Progress, and the End of History* (1899; trans. 1915; 1990), influenced by the book of Revelation, however, suggest that theocracy was more of an apocalyptic vision than a practical program.

As the Orthodox thinker, Solov'ev tried to integrate the religious spirit of the Church Tradition with the critical spirit of positive science which is contra to the

¹⁹⁷ A. S. Khomiakov, *The Works* (M.: 1884), 109.

¹⁹⁸ P. A. Florenskii, “The Understanding of the Church in the Holy Scripture,” *BT* 12 (1974), 129.

¹⁹⁹ Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 43. See also Aleksii I. Osipov, “The Theological Conceptions of the Slavophiles,” in Giuseppe Alberigo and Oscar Beozzo, eds., *The Holy Russian Church and Western Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 33-48.

²⁰⁰ Vladimir S. Solov'ev, *Collected Works*, 10 vols. (SPb.: 1911-1913). The studies of his biography and writings see in E. Trubetskoi, *The World View of Vladimir Solov'ev*, 2 vols. (M.: 1913, 1995).

negative criticism. He professed the tolerance and tried to validate a sensitive character of non-biased apologetic notion in any polemical and serious controversy. The synthesis, as a safe core for science, did not have room for intellectual neutrality according to Solov'ev. It presupposes the highest form of integration of the partial into the whole, even if the whole is only probable. This, in analysis, spelled out the intellectual mentality of 19th century Russia: (1) a basis for theorizing; (2) the prospect of interdisciplinary studies; and (3) an openness for the new solutions.

The peak of the problematics of Russian philosophy is not achieved only in a "pure" philosophy, but also in Russian literature.²⁰¹ In addition to the "pure" philosophers Russian novelist and religious thinker *Leo Tolstoy* (or *Lev Tolstoi*, 1828-1910) must be mentioned. He was influenced by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) [esp. by his idea of criticism of the civilizations] and by the philosophy of pessimism of German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). In the uniquely candid and powerful *Confession* (1882), Tolstoy described his growing spiritual turmoil, castigated himself and his class for leading a selfish, empty existence, and started his long quest for moral and social certitudes. He found them in two principles of the Christian Gospels: love for all human beings and opposition to war and other violence. He expanded those and illustrated his new radical faith in eloquent essays and tracts, including *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1894). From within an autocratic Russia, Tolstoy fearlessly attacked social inequality and coercive forms of government and church authority, urging freedom from hatreds and a purer life dictated by one's own moral conscience. He preached a universal love ("tolstoism" - a Russian version of Christian evangelism).

"The life itself," for Tolstoy, "has no meaning in any given time or space."²⁰² From this presupposition Tolstoy reinterpreted the Christian ideas of "eternal life," "kingdom of God" and "the life after death." He rejected the resurrection of the dead and the judgement as future apocalyptic actuality, for, according to Tolstoy, Christ himself did not teach about his own resurrection or about the eternity of human soul. He professed that the eternal life is realized in an earthly life of men who obey the commandments of Christ and love the other people. These experience the eternity right here on the Earth (esp. in his *The Kingdom of God is Inside Us*, 1893). Tolstoy made no difference between the religions and considered any sacred writing as equal. He suggested that in using reason, by reasoning what is applicable and what is not, every person can choose what he likes - Jewish, Christian, Moslem or Buddhist books. These radical views led to his excommunication from the Church in 1901. His mode of thinking and his conclusions puzzled the brains of many both the Orthodox and non-believers. The message of Tolstoy, of course, contradicted with the Church teaching and it challenged the Orthodoxy to give a proper response, which, unfortunately, was pre-biased in the fact of his excommunication.

In addition, *Feodor M. Dostoevskii* (1821-1881, or *Dostoevsky*) deserves to be mentioned. He was one of the greatest of all novelists, who penetrated the human mind and heart with exceptional insight and whose fiction has had profound influence on the Russian intellectual climate. If in his early writings (esp. *Poor Folk* (1846)) he explores the social factors - humiliations and consequent behaviour of the underprivileged and persecuted in czarist Russia, then later, in the novels *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Gambler*, *The Idiot* (1868-1869), *The Possessed* (1871-

²⁰¹ Nikolai Berdiaev, *The Types of Religious Thought in Russia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989),

²⁰² Lev Tolstoy, *Collected Works* (M.: 1928-58), vol. 26, 400.

1872), *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-1880), Dostoevskii explores the conflicting drives, motivations and justification for human existence. Here the writer stresses the expiation of sin through suffering, the need for a moral force in an irrational universe, the struggle between good and evil, the supreme value of the individual and freedom, and a religious conscience of the Russian soul. The ultimate question, he raised, was of how one is to live and what one is to live by—to which, according to Dostoevskii, only fragmentary answers are given. Since Christ's teachings became the supreme affirmation of the ethical ideal and of the possibility of salvation through suffering to Dostoevskii his influence on most serious Orthodox theologians and writers was tremendous.

Still there are some other Russian thinkers, who contributed to the philosophical era in 19th century Russia. Among others are: (1) Mikhail Bakunin, the father of anarchism; (2) Petr Chaadaev, the first original Russian thinker, from whose love-hate for Russia, both Westernizers and Slavophiles originated; (3) Nikolai Fedorov, the founder of Russian "cosmism" and the doctrine of the "resurrection of the dead"; (4) Vasilii Rozanov, the most original existential thinker, inspired by Dostoevskii, a philosopher of sex, marriage, and everyday life; and later in XX c.; and (5) Pavel Florenskii, a theologian, priest and mathematician, a philosopher of the Orthodox rituals and universal symbolism.

3.5.1.2 *Response to the Philosophical Awakening*

The philosophical awakening in 19th century Russia, of course, had a profound influence on the Orthodox intellectual and religious climate. The response of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Religious-Philosophical thought, however, was diverse. While, the majority of the Orthodox theologians and, unfortunately the greater number of biblical scholars, nearly ignored the philosophical thought, the other distinctive group indicated an antagonistic approach to the philosophical movement. These motions have been especially reflected during the formal encounters between the Orthodox theologians and the religious philosophers in Moscow and St. Petersburg.²⁰³

Many theologians of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy favoured the encounters and joined the gatherings of *The Religious-philosophical Meetings*. These gatherings revealed the differences between the philosophical and Orthodox theological ideas. Several issues can be marked down to show the distinct positions. *Firstly*, the questions of social ethics, political philosophy and of an individual's relationship to a State as the central to Russian religious philosophy were unlikely reflected by theologians and philosophers. The

²⁰³ See "Zapiski Peterburgskikh religiozno-filosofskikh Sobranii," [The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg] *Novyi Put'* № 1-12 (1903); № 1-2 (1904); J. Sherrer, *Die Petersburger Religiös-Philosophischen Vereinigungen* (Berlin, 1973); Nikolai Berdiaev, *The Types of Religious Thought in Russia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989).

notion of the Church leaders was contrary to the thinking of the Russian *intelligentsia* (the class of educated intellectuals), for the first were (1) lacking religious-social concepts...; (2) concerned only with the life beyond the grave, and therefore did not stress the message of Christ for the contemporary Russians and did not converge with the people; and (3) defending the monarchy as only optional for the Russian state.²⁰⁴ The philosophical assumption, however, was that “the light, which comes upon the highest leaders of organized religion must shine toward the lower horizons of the society,”²⁰⁵ i.e. the Russian philosophers stressed the contextualisation of the Church actions and its move from a pure religious piety (a customary activity) to an innovative program of the Church influence in the existed issues of 19th century Russian society and State.

Secondly, while the philosophers aimed for a freedom of speech and non-biased research, the Church was not tolerant to open-mindedness and critical thinking that contradicted the doctrine of the Church (like in the case of Leo Tolstoy), and even persecuted the sceptics by using the governmental police and army forces. The Orthodox theologians argued that the Russian society is at an infant level and therefore it needs both the guardianship and control of the Church.²⁰⁶ Count C. M. Volkonskii, among others, wholeheartedly challenged such practice by arguing,

The force and compulsion in the matters of faith are contrary to the spirit of Christianity. The Church that gladly receives the people, but restricts them to withdraw from it demolishes, its own essential strength. The pressure to embrace the beliefs of a dominant religion deprives the energy of society’s conscience. Then, man’s affair becomes an external imitation, rather than an internal quality. The prohibition of separation from the Church simply encourages the hypocrisy.²⁰⁷

Thirdly, the questioning of the idealised system of the Church teaching and the possibilities of a progressive revelation, raised the disagreement over the issue of the Church doctrinal authority that has been historically accepted by the Church. Among the other philosophers, D. S. Merezhkovskii (1865-1941) suggested the subjectivity of divine

²⁰⁴ B. A. Ternavtsev, “The Russian Church in front of a Great Task,” in *The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg: 1902-1903* (SPb.: 1906), 7-42.

²⁰⁵ Nikolai Berdiaev, *The Types of Religious Thought in Russia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), 39.

²⁰⁶ Note the reasoning of Prof. Lebedev and Archimandrit Sergii in *The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg: 1902-1903* (SPb.: 1906), 184, 191.

²⁰⁷ C. M. Volkonskii, “On the characteristics of public opinion to the freedom of conscience,” in *The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg*, 132.

revelation, for he perceives the revelation as “every-second, every-hour movements within human hearts.”²⁰⁸ For him, the revelation is like a kingdom of God carried out in the hearts of men, and consequently, the questions about new revelations are reasonable and relevant. Such reality, then, presupposes a continuous shape and modification of the Church dogmas.²⁰⁹ Of course, these conclusions originated from the pessimistic perspective toward “the historical Christianity” most clearly formulated by Vasilii V. Rozanov (1856-1919) who declared the active progression of religious ideals rather their passive preservation.²¹⁰

The Orthodox biblical scholars firmly opposed to such views, postulating the independence of the doctrine from any human element and by indicating that any revelation (or teaching) should be in accord with Scripture and the Church Fathers. For them, although the supernatural revelation was transmitted in the history, especially in the time of Apostolic Church, lies not within the power of “contemporary” individuals to continue or discontinue it.²¹¹ Besides, the development of the Church teaching can be welcomed as possible, but only in a sense of a deeper understanding of divine truth that has been historically accepted and preserved by the Church. For them, the Church dogma as the essence of Christian faith is steadfast.²¹²

Archimandrite Sergii concluded that the Church and Russian religious philosophy are not identical in their concepts and therefore they both should anticipate hostility towards each other. He felt that the theologians and philosophers should find “the way for harmony so to live together in unity and to work for the common Russian gain.”²¹³ Nevertheless, some philosophers and theologians saw the creation of such harmony as a perplexing task and wondered if in the Orthodox Russia the forces of human comprehension (theology and

²⁰⁸ D. S. Merezhkovskii, “Gogol’ and Fr. Matfei,” in *The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg*, 436.

²⁰⁹ D. S. Merezhkovskii, “Gogol’ and Fr. Matfei,” in *The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg*, 436.

²¹⁰ See esp. V. V. Rozanov *Apokalipsis nashego vremeni [The Apocalypse of Our Time]* (Sergiev Pasad, 1917-18); *V. V. Rozanov: Pro et Contra*. Compiled by B.A. Fateev 2 vols., (SPb.: 1995).

²¹¹ Cf. A. V. Kartashov in *The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg*, 435.

²¹² A. I. Brilliantov, *The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg*, 448.

²¹³ See Sergii’ speech in *The Notes of the Religious-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg*, 3-4.

philosophy) are ready to be incorporated. This became especially evident during the later religious-philosophical meetings, conducted by the newly instituted *Religious-Philosophical Society* (1907-1917) in St. Petersburg and *Vladimir Solov'ev Memorial Religious-Philosophical Society* (1905-18) in Moscow when the questions and issues for dialogue as suggested by "the philosophical coalition", were disconnected from the Church interests and became unsympathetic toward "the Church party".²¹⁴ The relationships between the Church and the Russian philosophical thought became fragile. Then, as soon as the radical philosophers of so-called "new religious conscience" suggested that there is no true Church and opposed to the dogmatism of the Church by taking into account that "the reasonable philosophy is contra to the idea of revelation from the above, i.e., idea of receiving the truth from outside - from God"²¹⁵ and started "to profess an ungodly philosophy and to conduct antichurch agitation"²¹⁶, the dialog was over. Perhaps there was a fear of being mistakenly associated with non-orthodox ideas. This, once again, showed that a scope of the Orthodox thought is dogmatically preconditioned.

As noted above, there is no evidence that the Orthodox biblical scholars actively responded to the 19th century philosophical concepts raised in Russia. An exception was in the case of Lev Tolstoy. His views of faith, revelation, and his attacks on the historical and traditional understanding of the Gospels were carefully examined and disputed by the scholars in the field of the Bible.²¹⁷

Although in general the Orthodox Church was suspicious toward the logical-philosophical enterprise in Russia and reacted against the progressive thinking,²¹⁸ the teachers of the Bible perhaps were not quite sure if the polemics with the philosophical ideas directly involved their sanctions or approval. Hypothetically, of course, there could be more

²¹⁴ Cf. with the arguments of A. V. Kartashov, presented in his address on 3rd October 1907 in *The Notes of St. Petersburg Philosophical Society* 1 (1908): 2.

²¹⁵ A. A. Meier, *The Notes of St. Petersburg Philosophical Society*, 2 (1908): 13.

²¹⁶ E. B. Bronnikova, "Petersburg: Petersburg Philosophical Society," *The Philosophical Questions* 6 (1993): 121.

²¹⁷ Among the others see D. Bogdashevskii, "On the Gospel miracles: Contra Lev Tolstoy," *TKDA* 8 (1900): 473-493; A. F. Gusev, "The confession of L. Tolstoy...," *PO* (1886): I, 1: 131-163; 2: 287-336; 3: 507-551; 4: 739-776; II, 5-6: 306-351; III, 9: 148-182; 10: 242-269; A. F. Gusev, "Lev Tolstoy...," *PO* (1889-1890); N. Eleonskii, *About a new Gospel of Lev Tolstoy* (M.: 1887); G.P Smirnov-Platonov "New writing of L. Tolstoy...," *BV* II, 4 (1896): 129-140; see also N. Berdiaev, "The Old and New Testaments in Religious Conscience of Lev Tolstoy, " in his *The Types of Religious Thought in Russia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), 119-144.

²¹⁸ N. Berdiaev, *The Types of Religious Thought in Russia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), 19.

than one reason why the Orthodox biblical scholars did not directly respond to the 19th century Russian philosophical concepts raised in Russia.

Indirectly, however, during the 19th century the process of creation of a philosophical consciousness, of course, shaped the state of Orthodox Biblical interpretation in Russia. This process constructed the frame of reference for all systems of knowledge. The Russian philosophy formed the intellectual focus on the practical issues of life and society and it raised the questions of adequate knowledge. The ideas of love, unity and the welfare of the nation, the Russian “nihilism” and a sense of freedom and independence directed the Russian intellectualism in 19th century and it, of course, was not indifferent toward the biblical scholars. On the one hand, the philosophical thought furnished an antagonistic thinking of the biblical scholars for the argument against “the Western rational and critical thinking.” For the Church, the genuine nature of the Orthodox faith and religious experience were basic and therefore do not need to be supported by rational arguments. The Church felt it is inappropriate to base belief in God on reason. Instead she emphasized the necessity of irrational leaps of faith and claimed that religious belief is a passionate and unconditional commitment to God that not only transcends reason and evidence but also stands in direct conflict with it.

On the other hand, it provided them with a basis for theorizing and openness for new solutions. In contradiction to the Church teaching (in some points), the Russian religious philosophy challenged the orthodox teachers of the Bible to response and defence of the Church traditional dogma on a more sophisticated and advanced level.

3.5.1.3 The Consequences of Biblical Criticism for the Orthodox Church

It is known, that in the West, from the time of the enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bible came to be examined in a truly critical fashion. After the Protestant reformation had reintroduced serious study of the Bible the new critical methods were developed in historical and literary scholarship.²¹⁹ The main hermeneutical point of departure

²¹⁹ For this period of the western New Testament criticism see standard treatments by Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972/London: SMC, 1973); W. Baird, *History of New Testament Research. Vol. 1: From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). See also F. F. Bruce, “The History of New Testament Study,” in I. Howard, Marshall, ed. *New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 21-59; Leonard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament: Vol. -1.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982); Anthony C. Thiselton, “New Testament Interpretation in Historical Perspective,” in

was that the Bible must be studied as literary and historic book in order to communicate to the “modern” readers.

First, the western critics felt they had to go back to the earliest available form of the texts in order to determine their original reading and consequently the original meaning. From their examinations and from newly discovered manuscripts in the 18th century the methods of textual criticism developed. A further development in the critical study of the Bible (so-called higher criticism) emerged during the 18th –19th centuries (mainly in Germany). The historical-critical method emphatically raised questions of historic process of formation of literary documents, the questions of interpretation and relevance of biblical texts, because it is concerned with such problems as the following: Who wrote the book? On what sources did the author depend? Were the sources reliable? What happened to them in the process of transmission and editing? How has the message of the biblical word been altered through this process?

Further dimensions of the historical-critical method assumed: (1) the development of the religions (Judaism and Christianity) in a total historical perspective, that the understanding of the historical person and transition of his teaching or proclamation (as in case of Jesus) is reflected in the tendency of every single book of the Bible; the historical situation has to be reconstructed in a such way as to see the confronting parties and opinions that caused further activities within the religion; (2) literary statements can be made in different forms; each literary form has its own kind of validity and after the forms have been identified, the critic then has to ascertain the historical situation, or *Sitz im Leben* (“life situation”), that gave rise to certain biblical texts; and (3) the role of the editors who worked on a text over a period of time and which examines their procedures and motivation. The meanings of the texts developed at various stages in the history of the community of faith that produced the biblical text and the task of the interpreter, therefore, was to decide to which stage of development the ultimate sense of the text should be assigned.²²⁰

Joel B. Green, ed. *Hearing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 10-36; Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996); J.C. O’Neill, *The Bible Authority: A Portrait Gallery of Thinkers from Lessing to Bültmann* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991); Henning Graf Reventlow and William Farmer, Eds., *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of the Paradigms, 1850-1914* (JSOT, Supplement Series 192, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

²²⁰ The great influence for the meaning of the Old Testament is set by Jilius Wellhausen (1844-1918) [see J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschishte Israel* (Berlin: Remer, 1905⁶ [*Prolegomena to the History of Israel*] (trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzines; Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885)]. On him see J. Coppens, *The Old Testament and the Critics Paterson* (NJ: 1942) 30ff. In the New Testament studies, Adolf Harnack’s influence was very effective.

Biblical Criticism in the West raised also a question of the role of the Church in Bible interpretation. Some critics note that the vitality of the biblical exegesis is often obscured by a domination of the Church over a scholarly examination of the biblical texts. In some cases the critical scholars were thrown out of Church.²²¹

The presence of a rich and creative exegetical life in the West had a negative as well as a positive significance for the Orthodox biblical interpretation in the 19th century. The following sections (esp. 3.5.3.4) will demonstrate that by the end of the 19th century among the Russian Orthodox scholars there was a tremendous opposition toward the biblical criticism. The majority of the Orthodox exegetes and theologians felt that the spirit and truth of the biblical material was obscured by critical study of the Bible.

On the one hand, in uniting themselves to respond to the historical-critical exegesis of the West, the Orthodox interpreters seemed to block their own ascent to the heights of interpretative thought and practice, and instantly lost themselves in the complex problems of free academic investigation of the Bible. Thus, in bible interpretation, original creative work was very much hindered in the Russian Orthodox Church by what Russians found in the West. On the other hand, the Orthodox bible interpreters were captured by the West, following its creation and quests in responding to the life of the Western scholarship.

In the following sections it will be demonstrated that the bible interpretation, in the 19th century Orthodox Church, was both: (1) alienating itself from the West by devoting itself to the elements of the Orthodox dogma and tradition; and (2) learning from the West. As the result, the combination of these two elements of interpretative creativity in the biblical studies signify the strength of the Orthodox own genius to live by its own inspirations, its own problems and solutions.

²²¹ See Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972/London: SMC, 1973); W. Baird, *History of New Testament Research. Vol. 1: From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).