

3.5.2 Study of the Bible in the First Half of the 19th Century

In the previous section we have noted that the religious-philosophical awakening of the 19th century Russia formed the intellectual focus on the questions of adequate knowledge and stimulated the scholarly search in many domains including the biblical studies. In addition there was, as never before, the awareness of the exegetical and critical methods, recently developed in the West. It seems that directly or indirectly these circumstances contributed to the fact that as early as the beginning of the 19th century, in the Orthodox Church there was the growing scholarly and theological interest in interpreting the Bible.

In addition, in 1814 the constitution of higher theological education announces the top priority for teaching Bible and exegesis in the Orthodox Academies. At this period of the history of the Russian Church, every doctrine was expected to be proven by the Scripture¹ and it was hoped that the Orthodox theology would be enriched from exegetical study of the Bible. If prior to 1808 the subject of Biblical interpretation was not obligatory in the Orthodox schools, then now the efforts were dedicated to the discipline of Bible interpretation.²

Moreover, if before 19th century, the interpretation of the Bible in the Russian Orthodox Church “has been generally constructed as a clear and comprehensible restatement of the Slavonic text by using the commentaries of the Church Fathers and attaching to it moral instructions,”³ then in the early part of 19th century, there was the motion toward a more determined and independent study of the Bible. This course was undertaken by the Metropolitan of Moscow Filaret (Drozdov; -1783-1867), archbishop Alexander M. Bukharev (1822-1871), and archbishop Gerasim Pavskii (1787-1863). These Orthodox scholars are distinguished as “true founders of Russian biblical studies”.⁴ The work and contribution of these scholars, therefore, demands our reflective attention.

¹ Cf. Florovsky, *Puti*, 364.

² Cf. F. G. Eleonskii, “Otechestvennye trudy po izucheniiu Biblii v XIX v.,” [“The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical Studies in XIX c.”] *KhCh* 1 (1901): 6.

³ F. G. Eleonskii, “The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.,” 1 (1901): 7.

⁴ *Men'*, 274.

3.5.2.1 *The Metropolitan of Moscow Filaret (1783-1867)*

Filaret was one of the most prominent teachers of the Bible in the 19th century Russian Orthodox Church.⁵ He was originally named Vasily Drozdov and took the name Filaret when he became a monk in 1808. A noted preacher and biblical scholar, he promoted the translation of the Bible (previously available only in Church Slavonic) into the more modern Russian. As the Metropolitan of Moscow (1821-1867), he was an influential member of the Holy Synod. His *Catechism* (1823) became a standard textbook for the Orthodox schools. Filaret also drafted the manifesto of 1861, signed by Tsar Alexander II, which emancipated the Russian serfs.

Filaret's books *Interpretation of Psalm 67*, *The Interpretation of Psalm 2* and *The Exegetical Notes on the Book of Genesis* [*Opyt tolkovaniia psalma LXVII, Tolkovanie vtorogo psalma, Zapiski na knigu Bytiia*] are the main works in his exegetical theory and practice. *Zapiski na knigu Bitiia* is contemplated as "the first contribution of a scientific interpretation [Ru: *nauchnii opyt*] of the Holy Scripture in Russia"⁶ that has "not only historical, but also a directing significance for Russian biblical studies."⁷ Simon Novikov appropriately emphasizes the Filaret's premium role among the Orthodox biblical scholars by characterizing him as "the founder of Russian Biblical Science and Exegetical School."⁸ After Filaret's death, it seems that "every research, book and article in the Russian literature of biblical studies is linked with the works of Filaret."⁹

For Filaret, Scripture is historically preserved by God's order within the Church - a corporate Body of Christ that holds a dwelling revelation of God himself; and, the power of

⁵ About Filaret see N. I. Korsunskii, "Filaret: Life and his contribution for the translation of the Bible," *PO* III, (1884): 561-587; 750-786; I (1885): 535-569, 666-698; III, (1885): 533-568, 657-692; D. I. Vvedenskii, *Metropolit Filaret kak Bibleist* [*Metropolitan Filaret as Biblical Scholar*] (M.: 1918); N. I. Troitskii, "Metropolit Filaret kak istolkovatel' Sviashchennogo Pisaniia," ["Metropolitan Filaret as Interpreter of the Holy Scriptures,"] in *Sbornik Dukhovnogo Prosviashcheniia*, Vol. 2 (M.: 1883).

⁶ A. Galakhov, *Sbornik izdaniia obshchestvom liubitelei dukhovnogo prosviashcheniia po sluchaiu 100-go iubileia so dnia rozhdeniia Filareta mitr. Moskovskogo* (M.: 1883), vol. 2, 198.

⁷ I. Solov'ev, *Chteniia v Moskovskom obshchestve liubitelei dukhovnogo prosviashcheniia* September (1888): 458.

⁸ Simon Novikov, "Filaret Mitr. Moskovskii: Osnovopolozhnik Russkoi Bibleiskoi nauki i Ekzegeticheskoi shkoly," ["Filaret, Metropolitan of Moscow: The Founder of the Russian Biblical Science and Exegetical School,"] *JMP* 2 (1968): 59.

⁹ H. Troitskii, "Metropolit Filaret kak istolkovatel' Sviashchennogo Pisaniia," *Sbornik izdaniia obshchestvom liubitelei dukhovnogo prosviashcheniia po sluchaiu 100-go iubileia so dnia rozhdeniia Filareta Mitr. Moskovskogo* (M.: 1883), vol. 2, 200-201.

the biblical truth or its understanding derives from God himself through the body of Christ.¹⁰ By applying this hermeneutical presupposition Filaret stresses that an accurate and truthful interpreter of the biblical passages is: “(1) the Holy Scripture itself and concurrently with it (2) the Church tradition, determined by the Creeds, the dogmas, the rules and definitions of Sts. Ecumenical Councils¹¹ and by Church Fathers.”¹²

On the ground of these presuppositions, Filaret, throughout his studies, outlined several methodological and hermeneutical principles (much the same as his predecessor the Metropolitan of Moscow Platon (Levshin)).

Firstly, the literary meaning (*bukval'nii smisl*) of the Bible is the groundwork of its interpretation.

Secondly, the meaning and the interpretation of canonical books of the OT must be found on the ground of Hebrew philology; and therefore, the detailed study, comparison and reconstruction of Hebrew Bible, Greek LXX, and the other ancient documents are obligatory for the exegete.

Thirdly, the interpretation of a single biblical text must involve the testing of the other parallel or similar texts of the Scripture.

Fourthly, the interpretation of a certain text must consider their literary features. In his exegesis on Psalms or elsewhere, Filaret stresses that “the understanding [of any passage] depends on the understanding of its the literary characteristics.”¹³

Fifthly, an exegete has to base his theological framework on the works of Church Fathers.

Finally, an interpreter has to consult with the ancient and modern studies by the Christian and secular scholars, especially when the interpretation of the text required the knowledge archeology, geography and ethnography.¹⁴

¹⁰ See Mitr. Filaret, “Zamechaniia na Rukovodstvo k germenevtike,” [“The Observations on the Guide to Hermeneutics,”] in *ChOLDP* (M.: 1892), 160.

¹¹ The considerations of the issues related to Scripture and the decisions of Seven Church Councils are given in Michael Prokurat, “Orthodox Interpretation of Scripture,” in *The Bible in the Churches: How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures*. Ed. by Kenneth Hagen. 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 70-75.

¹² See Filaret, “The Observations on the Guide to Hermeneutics,” in *ChOLDP* (M.: 1892), 161-162.

¹³ Filaret, “An Introduction to the New Testament,” in an appendix to *RKCB* 6 (1891): 1. He, however, does not explain what the literary characteristics are.

¹⁴ F. G. Eleonskii, “The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.,” *KhCh* 1 (1901): 8-9.

Filaret, for the first time in the Russian Orthodoxy, stressed that the most important factor and hermeneutical skill is that one both knows the linguistic usage of the Bible and the historical background of biblical discourses. He argued that any effort to construct a Biblical theology and then to apply it to the beliefs and practices would be useless unless the work rested on solid historical foundations. Thus, his works indicate the convictions that every biblical book: (1) is subject to an investigation of the historical circumstances under which it was written; and (2) has its continuous worth for the further religious development in the Orthodox Church. He also advanced the thesis that there is but one fashion of understanding of all the biblical writings - the *dogmatical-grammatical-historical understanding*, which attempts to conceive the author's thoughts after the author himself. For example, Filaret suggested, "the interpreter will never understand the writings of the Apostle Paul, until he will grasp Paul's own thinking and Paul's own heart."¹⁵

Filaret captured the attention of many by his little book *On a Dogmatic Significance and Protective Usage of the LXX and Slavonic Translation of the Holy Scripture (O Dogmaticheskome dostoinstve i okhranitel'nom upotreblenii grecheskogo teksta semidesiati i slavianskogo perevoda Sviashchennogo Pisaniia)* published in Moscow in 1858. On the one hand, this book was part of an ongoing dispute between those who opposed the Hebrew text and favored translation of the Old Testament from LXX and those who suggested to translate into Russian directly from the ancient Hebrew.¹⁶ On the other hand, in this book Filaret demonstrated how and why the exegete must consider the best text not only from a philological point of view, but also from the view of its dogmatic worthiness. Filaret, for the first time, manifestly related the exegetical methodological direction to the Orthodox dogmatical teaching: (1) made a distinction in the meaningfulness between the biblical text of the Hebrew Old Testament and LXX for the Orthodox; and (2) insisted that only the text of LXX can do justice to the theology of the Russian Orthodox Church by challenging the validity of the Hebrew texts for the understanding of the Old Testament. The LXX, for him, represents the harmony for the whole Eastern Orthodox Christianity. While the books of the

¹⁵ Filaret, "An Introduction to the New Testament," in an appendix to *RKCB* 6 (1891): 1.

¹⁶ This debate goes back to the time of the Sts. Cyril and Methodius, who were accused in the "tree-languages heresy" for following the Constantinople beliefs of theological validity of the use of Hebrew, Greek and Latin - three languages in which Pilate wrote a title for Jesus [*Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews*] and put it on His cross (cf. Luke 23:38; John 19:20). Cf. Dimitry Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500-1453* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1971), 200ff. In the time of Filaret, Bishop of Vladimir Feofan Govorov (d. 1894) strongly believed that the Masoretic text should be rejected in favor of the LXX, for the first has been corrupted by many generations of Jewish scholars who tried to cover the evident Messianism of the Old Testament. Cf. Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 125. Among those who accepted the Hebrew text's authority particularly known P. I. Gorsky-Platonov (1835-1904), the professor of Hebrew at Moscow Academy. About him see the article in *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* #1 (1905).

LXX are valid source of the Orthodox doctrines, the Hebrew texts may lead the interpreter to the conclusions that they contradict and are derived from the ecclesiastical dogma. Although Filaret prepared the way of recognition of a theological character and significance of the LXX texts for the Orthodox Church, he admittedly denied, however, that it is possible to interpret the Old Testament without considering the Hebrew text.¹⁷

It is also important to note, that Filaret, in laying the foundation for the Old Testament interpretation with its comparative study between the textual readings in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Slavonic Bible, expressed the Orthodox assertion toward the canonicity of any particular text of the Bible. He says, that the Orthodox Church canonized the books of Scripture, but “it did not canonize any particular wordings.” According to him, the Church “did not determine to which reading or reading variant a given passage existed, the interpreter has determine which to follow and which readings to rule out.”¹⁸ This, at the end, postulated the possibility for the Orthodox bible interpreters to practice the work with different biblical texts and the reconstruction of the original textual reading.

To conclude, if Filaret’s predecessors were more preoccupied with the issue of clear conveyance of Scripture through its translation into Russian language and the exposition of Biblical texts through restatement of the Church Fathers commentaries, then Filaret’s exegetical works proposed to concentrate on more scientific (esp. linguistic) investigation of biblical texts.

3.5.2.2 Aleksandr Matveevich Bukharev (1824-1871)¹⁹

Aleksandr Bukharev (Archimandrite Feodor) was a pupil of Filaret. He taught the Bible and Biblical Languages at Moscow and Kazan’ Orthodox Academies. During 1850-60s he published several monographs (on books of Job, Prophets and Apostles). These and the other studies,²⁰ which were intended to be a bridge between the Bible and daily life of Russian society, provoked “the most notorious episode in the history of religious journalism

¹⁷ Cf. Filaret, *O Dogmaticheskome dostoinstve i okhranitel'nom upotreblenii grecheskogo teksta semidesiati i slavianskogo perevoda Sviashchennogo Pisaniia* [On a Dogmatic Significance and Protective Usage of the LXX and Slavonic translation of the Holy Scripture] (M.: 1858), 10-15.

¹⁸ Mitr. Filaret, “The Observations on the Guide to Hermeneutics,” in *ChOLDP* (M.: 1892), 157.

¹⁹ About Bukharev see Florovsky, *Puti*, 344 ff; A. P. Kozirev, “Bucharev,” *Russkaia Filosofija: Slovar'* (M.: Respublika, 1995), 70-71.

²⁰ Especially see the collection of his articles, published in one volume. Arch. Feodor, *O Pravoslavii v otnoshenii k sovremennosti* [About the Orthodoxy in Relation to Contemporary Life] (SPb.: 1860).

during the 1860s²¹ - the clash with Victor Askonchenskii on the subject “Orthodoxy in Relation to Contemporary Life.”²²

Bukharev’s love for the Alexandrian mysticism was developed in his book on Revelation.²³ In this book, Bukharev dismissed a historical relevance of Revelation neither to the first century nor to his own time and insisted that the book of Revelation is “a complex symbolic system about the Church and salvation, that can be understood only by those who live out their monastic vows and concern with a spiritual exploits.”²⁴ In the interpretation of the book as a whole, there is a praise of supremacy of dreams over the historical reality. Bukharev’s mystical approach emphasized an immediate, direct, intuitive knowledge of God or of ultimate reality attained through personal religious experience, through personal encounter with God and His Word.

Bukharev was not interested in the historicity of the Bible, but stressed imaginative, mystical interpretation of “strictly spiritual texts.”²⁵ Many of his contemporaries accused him of being non-historical.²⁶ Bukharev could not bear this cross and left to Kazan’ Ecclesiastic Academy, where the majority of the professors “were suspicious toward an academic and historical nature of bible interpretations.”²⁷ He offered the written notes on the New Testament to Prof. Grigorii Poletaev, who was greatly impressed by Bukharev’s writings. Poletaev introduces a new synthetic method of interpretation to this school, which completely contradicted to analytic explanation of the Biblical text. A mystic exposition of the text was validated over historical-grammatical investigation and even dogmatic interpretation.²⁸ This was precisely Bukharev’s assumption that disturbed many progressive Orthodox scholars. Some, therefore, suggested to stop publishing Bukharev’s writings.²⁹ As

²¹ Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 117.

²² An overview of debated issues in this clash see in Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 117-122.

²³ A. Bukharev (Arch. Feodor), *Issledovaniia apokalipsisa [Investigation of the Apocalypse]* (M.: Sergiev Pasad, 1916).

²⁴ A. Bukharev, *Investigation of the Apocalypse* (M.: Sergiev Pasad 1916), 23.

²⁵ A. Bukharev, *Investigation of the Apocalypse*, 9.

²⁶ Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 120-121.

²⁷ P. V. Znamenskii, *The History of Kazan’ Ecclesiastic Academy: Part I* (Kazan’: 1892), 184.

²⁸ Cf. P. V. Znamenskii, *The History of Kazan’ Ecclesiastic Academy: Part I*, 185.

²⁹ See Golubev’s criticism who advised to delay the printing of Bukharev’s writings. M. A. Golubev, “On the First Epistle of the Apostle John the Theologian,” *KhCh* 2 (1889): 461-487.

a result of many disputations and accusations, Bukharev left his monastic life, married and even reversed to a non-religious life.³⁰

As noted above, Bukharev has been noted as one of the founders of Russian Biblicism.³¹ However, many studies on 19th century Orthodox theological development, do not even mention Bukharev among the biblical scholars.³² Because his writings had only superficial influence, it seems, to be impossible, to consider Bukharev as the founder. Nevertheless, Bukharev's ideas, constructed a certain direction in biblical studies (esp. in case with Poletaev's writings). For the majority of scholars, Bukharev's ideas were neither new nor accurate. Still, what is important, Bukharev, perhaps quite extremely, underscored living characteristics of the Orthodox interpretation - love for mysticism and visions, a cry for a spiritual illumination on the mind of exegete, understanding of the interpretation as the work of the Spirit through the Church. Nevertheless, his main contribution (indirectly!) was to stimulate a more attentive thinking about the possible ways of Bible interpretation from the Russian Orthodox Church point of view.

3.5.2.3 Gerasim Pavskii (1787-1863)

Gerasim Pavskii is known as the Bible translator³³ and biblical scholar.³⁴ He is regarded as "the founder of historical-philological analysis of the Bible and the originator of Biblical-historical school in Russia."³⁵

Indeed, he was the first, who pointed out a wide range of genres in biblical literature and stressed the importance of recognition and study of the genre in the process of interpretation. For Pavskii, it was clear that for every text, the interpreter must seek out the

³⁰ Cf. *Men'*, 277

³¹ Cf. *Men'*, 277.

³² For example *Mikhail (Luzin)*; F. G. Eleonskii, "The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.," *KhCh* 1 (1901): 5-28; 5 (1901): 633-660; N. N. Glubokovskii, *Russkaia Bogoslovskaiia Nauka v ee istoricheskom i noveishem sostoianii* [*Russian Theological Discipline in its Historical Development and Present State*] (Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1928).

³³ Prior to the publication of Synodal Bible, Pavskii privately attempted to translate the individual books of the Old Testament. His translations appeared in the journal *Dukh Khristianina* [*Spirit of a Christian*] in 1862 and 1863.

³⁴ The list of Pavskii's writings is found in A. C. Rodoskii, *Bibliographical Dictionary of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy* (SPb.: 1907), 343 ff.

³⁵ See *Men'*, 277-78. Also see A. B. Rodoskii, "Protoerei Gerasim Pavskii: Theology Versus Philology," <http://www.orthodox.spbu.ru/p-k.htm>.

approach and method best suited to it. Hence, he established that biblical hermeneutics is either general or special, according to the character of the exegetical rules it contains: it is general if its rules are applicable to the whole Bible; it is special if they are intended for the explanation of particular books only, e.g., the Psalms or the Pauline Epistles. Of course, Pavskii was conscious that special hermeneutics contain all the exegetical rules of general hermeneutics, and so does particular hermeneutics embrace all the laws of interpretation imposed by universal hermeneutics. Therefore, Pavskii underscored a scholarly engagement with the text, not only a systematic study of ancient history, grammar, meanings of the words, purpose of the passage etc., but also critical problems of the authorship and text sources.

The scholar also suggested quite radical ideas. In his dissertation *A Survey of the Book of Psalms* (SPb.: 1814) he concluded that some Psalms, assigned in the text to king David, are of doubtful authenticity. It was the first precedent in the Russian Orthodox Church to question the authenticity of the biblical book. Besides, Pavskii was defending the theory of the second Isaia and thought of two authors in the book of Zechariah. These arguments were regarded as fundamental to the western biblical critics and as the result Pavskii was accused in the non-orthodoxy.

On the one hand, the majority of Pavskii's colleagues and the Orthodox authorities did not understand the importance of Pavskii's contribution to the biblical scholarship, and consequently, he was subjected to the ecclesiastic tribunal. Later, however, Ivan Evseev (1868-1921) did recognize that actions, taken against Pavskii in so-called "The Pavskii's case", negatively echoed on the development of the biblical studies in Russia³⁶ (see the further comments on "The Pavskii's case" below). On the other hand, among few, Fr. Mikhail (Luzin) (1830-1887) defended Pavskii's contribution, as "a careful scientific investigation that do not avoid the issues omitted or inadequately considered in the Orthodox scholarship."³⁷

Despite the inconsistent acceptance, Pavskii's scholarship, particularly from the historical and philological point of view, served as a platform for the progress of non-traditional Bible scholarship.

³⁶ See *Men'*, 277-78.

³⁷ Cf. Mikhail (Luzin), *Stoletie iz istorii tolkovaniia Biblii v Rossii* [*A Century of Bible Interpretation in Russia*] (M.: 1878), 23.

3.5.2.4 Deficit of Further Developments

From about 1820 a new spirit of inquiry was clearly discernable in Russia. Mental horizons were expanding. The development of a more personal spirituality inside the church created a new intellectual and spiritual climate. It seemed, that following the advanced studies of Filaret and Pavskii a healthy expansion of the field of biblical studies could be expected. Nevertheless, very few and insignificant studies were produced and published by the Orthodox scholars during 1815-1860.³⁸ The most progressive Orthodox Bible teachers, observing the developments of the indigenous biblical scholarship during this period, recognized it in several publications.³⁹

The whole matter can be brought into the open if the following factors are considered. *Firstly*, the Orthodox Church was still lacking a proper training that could produce a sound biblical scholarship. This should not be a surprise, for, as noted above, prior to 1808 the subject of Bible Interpretation was not obligatory in all major Orthodox Theological Schools.⁴⁰ Luzin well observes the situation, “when the expertise was in demand, there were relatively no prepared people.”⁴¹ Indeed, there was no critical study made by the Russian Orthodox writer, especially that would engage into point by point *pro and contra* discussion with the critical questions raised by critics in the West (esp. in Germany, between 1830s-1860s).⁴² The works that have been written, in many cases ignored such issues. Such negligence has not been beneficial either for the safekeeping of the Biblical studies in Russian Orthodox Church or for the increase of knowledge in biblical hermeneutics. Lack of proper theological education and insufficiency of experience, needed for scientific and apologetic dialogue, postponed an adequate scholarship. This had a long and strong affect on the whole Orthodox theology. Hence, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann firmly

³⁸ Archbishop Mikhail (Luzin) offers a short review of the literature and gives the list of books published by the Orthodox scholars during 1815-1860. See *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 126-127.

³⁹ For example, see Mikhail (Luzin), *A Century of Bible Interpretation in Russia* (M., 1878); S. Sol'skii, “Obozrenie trudov po izucheniiu Biblii v Rossii,” [“Review of the Studies in the Bible in Russia,”] *PO* I, 6 (1869): 814.

⁴⁰ Cf. F. G. Eleonskii, “The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.,” *KhCh* 1 (1901): 6.

⁴¹ Cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 136.

⁴² See standard treatment of German critics by Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972/London: SMC, 1973). See also Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1996); W. Baird, *History of New Testament Research. Vol. 1: From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

concludes, "Orthodox theology has never felt "at home" in modern biblical scholarship and has not accepted as its own the biblical problem as formulated within western theological development."⁴³

Secondly, some time after 1880 it became apparent that the whole world in which the Orthodox biblical scholarship had lived for some time was no longer the same. The giants of serious study of the Bible, who had been trained from the classical sources, began to die off. The people who did not share the same concerns took their place. Some of the arguments now appeared to be irrelevant. It gradually became clear that religiously committed scholars were divided among themselves and that the conservative revival of the doctrinal orthodox scholars once more were fighting for survival of their own argument and for their academic monopoly. Indeed, once the Church doctrine was established it could be used as rule to govern biblical interpretation among a wide range of alternatives. The texts of Scripture, especially puzzling parts of Scripture, were regarded as presenting Christian truth known only to the Church. Subsequently, this principle led several authors to emphasize an importance of the vast store of patristic exegesis, which they believed were of permanent value; and to stress the significance of Scripture for edification of the soul rather than for an academic critical scholarship. These concerns, for example, are documented in the series of articles, published by unknown author(s) in the Orthodox academic journal *Khristianskoe Chtenie* of St. Petersburg Academy.⁴⁴ In the form of general rules for the readers of the Bible, the author gives preference to the readings which conscientiously and wholeheartedly keep and hold the authority of the Church in the understanding the text. One of the rules affirms,

Read the Holy Scriptures in humility, *i.e.* in reading it humbly follow the teaching of the Church..., because we search a truthful clarification of the mysteries filled in the Scriptures not in our own mind, but in the mind of the Church. Woe who understands Holy Scripture differently from the Church!

Further, according to these rules, the understanding of the Bible is possible only for the saintly people who are longing for a spiritual self-cleansing and moral integrity. It was interdependent on the momentum of monastic revival that by 1840 began to influence the Russian society.⁴⁵ In other words, without obtaining spiritual potency in prayer and

⁴³ Alexander Schmemmann, "Russian Theology: An Introductory Survey," *SVTQ* 16 (1972): 177.

⁴⁴ "O chtenii Sv. Pisaniia," ["On the reading of the Bible,"] *KhCh* (1833) 3: 100-13; "Ob izuchenii Sv. Pisaniia," ["On the Study of Scripture,"] *KhCh* 3 (1833): 61-70.

⁴⁵ Cf. Dmitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 136-137.

watchfulness, a man is powerless in grasping the teaching of the Bible.⁴⁶ The personal spirituality was to be one of the chief distinguishing marks of reading the Bible. The main stress of reading should be the learning from Scripture so that the reader may grow in faith and love, in humility and spiritual assurance. The principle says, “Read Holy Scripture plainly, i.e. with a single and most important purpose - to edify and multiply your spiritual rightness.”⁴⁷ Accordingly, the reader has to read the Bible with a complete trust toward the text. “Read Holy Scripture with faith, i.e. read without doubt that everything what is written comes from God, it is imperatively true, essentially holy, and exclusively needed.”⁴⁸ Directly, by this rule the author emphasizes the significance of the Bible as the written Word of God, the divinely-inspired true and genuine expressions of His Truth and His will for the people of the whole world. Indirectly, however, he warns that the authority or validity of the Bible to the believing community is above reproach. Therefore the reader should not challenge or mistrust the authentic Word of God produced in the Church by and for the Church.⁴⁹

When considering the above rules of biblical interpretation, commonly used in the Orthodox Russia (even prior to the nineteenth century), the following issues can be set out as follows: - The orthodox scholars understood the importance of the Bible if applied to the Christian everyday life, because the Bible provided a means for spiritual experience to hear and learn from God. In addition the longing for the unity of the Church led the scholars to provide an emphasis for the preservation of an authoritative doctrinal interpretation of the Bible. Nevertheless, for one reason or another the biblical scholarship that can help men to understand its divine context and meaning through the archaeological, historical, and literary studies was not welcomed. In the article “On the Reading of Holy Scripture” the author says “no one should read the Bible in order to be recognized as a specialist in the field of biblical studies.”⁵⁰ In other words, biblical interpretation existed in a pure theological context and the Orthodox Church was not yet prepared to unconditionally welcome such scientific steps of exegesis such as the grammatical functions of words and sentences, the historical, social and geographical context or determination of the original wording, etc.

⁴⁶ Cf. “About study Holy Scripture,” *KhCh* 3 (1833): 63-65.

⁴⁷ “About reading Holy Scripture,” *KhCh* 3 (1833): 109.

⁴⁸ “About reading Holy Scripture,” *KhCh* 3 (1833): 110.

⁴⁹ “About reading Holy Scripture,” *KhCh* 3 (1833): 110-111.

⁵⁰ “On the Reading of Holy Scripture,” *KhCh* 3 (1833): 112.

Thirdly, from about the end of 1840 there was a new troublesome factor in the way of the development of biblical studies in the Orthodox Church. At the end of the third decade, the Holy Synod⁵¹ has published *Gramoti Vostochnikh Patriarkhov* [*The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs*]. By utilizing these documents, one of the uppermost Church authorities demanded: (1) to prohibit the reading and interpretation of the Bible by any person, except when the intentions of reading and interpretation are examined by the Church authorities; and (2) to stress the highest ecclesiastic authority and importance of Church tradition (Ru.- *predanie*) in the understanding of the Bible.⁵² From 1840, numerous Orthodox clergies tried “to elevate the Tradition as of a similar significance as that of the Holy Scriptures; and even prefer the Tradition to the Holy Scripture in the issues about the authenticity of a Holy text and about its accurate interpretation.”⁵³ Among the supporters *The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs*, Fr. Afanasii (Drosdov) the Rector of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy is especially noticeable. His position was defined in the book *Sokrachshennaia Germenevtica* [*A Concise Hermeneutics*]. He proposed to ratify a constitutional principle in interpreting the Scripture on the assumptions that: (1) the biblical doctrines are “intentionally covered with darkness” in the biblical texts; and (2) “the Scripture, frequently, does not present a kind of rightful (Ru.- *zdravogo*) teaching.”⁵⁴ Fr. Afanasii denied the Bible as a starting point (or point of regulation) in a true understanding of the Scripture and suggested to use the works of the Holy Fathers and the Church canons as a decisive factor of all Bible interpretations.⁵⁵ Fr. Affanasii’s book, intended as a standard textbook for the Orthodox Theological Academies, initiated for the Orthodox Bible interpretation the same methodological surmounting of *The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs* tendency, by furnishing an answer to the question of the Role of Tradition. He emphasizes: (1) because “the Bible does not contain all the doctrines of the Church” the Bible cannot be considered as “a beginning and canon of an accurate

⁵¹ The clergy of the Orthodox Church, convened for the purpose of discussing particular matters of doctrine, liturgy, and administration.

⁵² Acc. to I. Chistovich, *Rukovodiashchie deiateli dukhovnogo prosviashchenia v Rossii* [*The Leading Figures of Religious Education in Russia*] (SPb.: 1879), 338.

⁵³ F. G. Eleonskii, “The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.,” *KhCh* 1 (1901): 25.

⁵⁴ Afanasii (Drozdov), *Sokrashchennaia Germenevtica* [*A Concise Hermeneutics*] (M.: 1894).

⁵⁵ Afanasii (Drozdov), *A Concise Hermeneutics* (M.: 1878), 15.

understanding”; and (2) “an understanding of the Bible is possible only after the rules of the Church, the liturgical books and the Church Fathers are consulted.”⁵⁶

By the middle of the 19th century it was considered just as important to quote the interpretative authority of the ancient biblical scholar, as it was to quote the biblical canon itself. Views like these in the words of a distinguished Orthodox scholar Feodor Eleonskii, “placed the Bible as a secondary” and therefore “an appeal for a scientific study of the Bible was restrained.”⁵⁷ On the one hand, publications similar to Afanacii’s, guided the Bible interpretation toward a confessional Orthodox setting. The parameters, given in these studies, set to guard the exegetes against the conclusions, which might be perceived from the standpoint of the Russian Orthodox Church as heresy. On the other hand, when the tradition was taken as a constitutional principle and determining factor in true understanding of the Bible, then the answers were sometimes offered before questions were asked, creativity was threatened and the challenges were met with anti-intellectual or separatist responses. Accordingly, the Metropolitan of Moscow Filaret argued, that the Bible should not be taken only as secondary, otherwise it would freeze the development of biblical studies in the Orthodox Church.⁵⁸ Although, Filaret officially condemned the extremes of Fr. Affanissii’s book,⁵⁹ damage has been made to a free discussion of the problem arising from a critical and historical approach to the Bible during and after 1840-1860.

Lastly, the circumstances that surrounded co-called “The Pavskii’s case” (during 1840-1860) additionally affected the progress of biblical studies in the Russian Orthodox Church.⁶⁰ The case was initiated by the Church judicial agency, soon after Fr. Agafangel (of Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy) denounced about the distribution of the lithographic copies of newly translated books of the Old Testament, which embodied Pavskii’s critical comments.⁶¹ Pavskii’s observations have reflected his interest in Historical-Critical

⁵⁶ Afanasii (Drozdov), *A Concise Hermeneutics* (M.: 1878), 24-25.

⁵⁷ F. G. Eleonskii, “The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.,” *KhCh* 1 (1901): 26

⁵⁸ See Mitr. Filaret, *Sobranie mnenii i otzyvov Filareta* (M.: 1897), vol. 3, 70ff.

⁵⁹ A critical analysis of *A Concise Hermeneutics*, expressed by Filaret, is found in “*Sobranina mnenii i otzyvov Filareta, mitr. Moscovskogo* (M.: 1897), vol. 3, 70 ff. See also the critique by I. A. Chistovich in his *Istoria perevoda Biblii na russkii iazyk* (SPb.: 1899); 165 ff.

⁶⁰ Cf. Mikhail (Luzin), *The Century of Bible Interpretation in Russia* (M.: 1878), 33; Fr. Innuarii (Ivliev), “Vklad Sankt-Peterburgskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii v Russkuiu Bibleistiku,” [“Contribution of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy for Russian Biblical Scholarship,”] *A Jubilee Edition of Theological Works* (M.: 1986): 193.

methodology. Pavskii, as mentioned above, was accused of heretical tendencies and of following a corrupt model of the Western Protestant critics. Because of “the Pavskii’s case” in the Orthodox theological schools inspections, searches, reproofs teaching and even persecutions were conducted.⁶² Of course, such steps, taken by the Church authorities, frightened a free discussion of biblical scholarship. The scholars preferred to be silent. They hesitated to publish their studies. This predicament, in the words of Fr. Mikhail (Luzin), “weakened the energy in literary development of biblical scholarship ... the preparatory tutorial potential was paralysed.”⁶³

To conclude, then, the slow developments in a proper academic training of Orthodox biblical scholars, an extreme stress on the role of *Paradosis* and the pressure from the ecclesiastic censorship, were the factors which were about to prevent a healthy growth of the Russian Orthodox biblical scholarship after the first half of the 19th century. The interpreters of this age almost all believed that the Bible had to be read in a theological context, and their commentaries were full of debates about doctrinal questions of one kind or another. This conservatism was maintained alongside with a defensive mentality. It ensured that any originality of thought would be suspected of heresy. In such a climate, biblical scholarship was still a dangerous activity. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that this state of affairs began to change and then it took a generation for real biblical scholarship to be more acceptable in the Orthodox circles.

3.5.3 Study of the Bible the Second Half of the 19th Century

After many debates, the decree of the Holy Synod of March 20th 1858 ordered to complete the new translation of the Holy Scriptures into Russian. The directive demanded to invite the experts in Hebrew and Greek and theology, carefully chosen by the Synod, for the translating work and to start the translation with the New Testament books. Four Orthodox Academies were motivated to prepare proposals and sources for the translation

⁶¹ On the nature of these comments, the description of the prosecution, conducted by the Church judicial agency, see I. A. Chistovich, *The History of Bible Translations: Part I* (SPb.: 1899), 197-226.

⁶² See F. G. Eleonskii, “The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.,” *KhCh* 1 (1901): 27. It is possible that the Church authorities inherited a firm control upon ‘academic theology’ from the Byzantine Christianity. See the comments on the theological training in ancient Byzantine in Cyprian (Kern), *The Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1950), 35.

⁶³ Mikhail (Luzin), *The Century of Bible interpretation in Russia* (M.: 1878), 33-34.

and to select the most enlightened, progressive biblical scholars to initiate the project.⁶⁴ The Metropolitan of St. Petersburg Isidor (Nikol'skii, (1799-1892) was elected to supervise the group of scholars-translators.⁶⁵ Consequently, several corrected editions of the New Testament were published during 1862-68.⁶⁶ Finally, in 1876, *Sinodal'nyi Perevod Biblii* [Synodal Bible] - the new Russian translation was published and soon became the common Russian Bible for many following decades.

Of course, "the Synodal edition was not received favorable by all,"⁶⁷ especially because the Hebrew Bible rather than the text of LXX was used in translating the Old Testament. For example, Kostantin Ikonomos (1780-1875) a Greek writer, who resided in Russia openly opposed to the new translation for it deviates Russian Orthodoxy from the tradition of the Greek Orthodox Church and brings disunity among the Orthodox Churches.⁶⁸ Among the Church leaders, the same position was taken by bishop Feofan (Govorov) (d. 1894).⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the *Synodal Bible* prepared the next stage of the development of Bible interpretation in Russia, for over and again, as the new translation of the Bible became available to the Russians, the Orthodox theologians immersed themselves in writing biblical commentaries and essays relevant to the Bible interpretation. The printing of authorized standard versions for the Russian Orthodox Church was indeed a positive factor for the development of the Russian Orthodox scholarship in the study of the New Testament and marks a rise of the distinctive progress of biblical scholarship in the second half of 19th century.⁷⁰

The other positive effect for the development of biblical scholarship may be seen in the imperial confirmation of a new *Academic Constitution* proposed by an Educational

⁶⁴ See N. Astaf'ev, *Opyt istorii Biblii v Rossii* [The History of the Bible in Russia] (SPb.: 1889); Konstantin Logachev, "Russian Translation of the New Testament," *JMP* 11 (1969); *Ibid.*, "The editions of Russian translation of the Bible," *JMP* 7, 11 (1975).

⁶⁵ The most important figures are Evfragaf Loviagin (1822-1909), Pavel Savvaitov (1815-1895), Daniil Khvol'son (1819-1911), Moisei Guliaev (d. 1866).

⁶⁶ Cf. I. A. Chistovitch, *Istoria perevoda Biblii na russkii iazyk* [The History of Bible Translations into Russian Language] (SPb., 1899), Mikhail I. Rizhskii, *Istoria perevodov Biblii v Rossii* [The History of the Bible translations in Russia] (Novosibirsk, 1978).

⁶⁷ Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 125.

⁶⁸ See his essay in the journal *Strannik* July (1860): 1-23.

⁶⁹ See his articles in the journal *Reading Useful for the Soul* (1875-76). Among those who defended the Hebrew text's authority and challenge bishop Feofan see esp. I. I. Gorskii-Platonov (1835-1904), "Contra Bishop Feofan: On Authority of LXX and the Hebrew Bible," *Reading Useful for the Soul* III (1875): 342-352, II (1876): 3-21; *PO* November (1875): 505-540; and several short essays in *PO* January-April (1877).

⁷⁰ *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 115-116.

Committee to the Holy Synod (on May 30, 1869). The academies in St. Petersburg and Kiev were obliged to start their improvements at the time of the fall and those of Moscow and Kazan' in the following year.⁷¹ The status of these schools was about to be changed, from purely theological schools that prepare the clergymen, to the higher pedagogical institutes of the religious departments, that would prepare teachers for schools, granting advanced degrees in many fields. Consequently the schools divided into the faculties. In the end, in the departments of theology were created two faculties in Biblical studies (for the Old Testament and the New Testament) and the faculty of biblical history and archaeology. The faculties had to enlarge the number of subjects associated with the field of Biblical study and consequently, the number of the teachers and students increased.⁷²

The Educational Committee promoted new academic requirements. Of all the students of the Orthodox Academies were expected to have an academic degree.⁷³ After three years of study, the students were prepared for their master's degree examinations while also working on a dissertation. Only after the dissertation had been published, its public defence was possible. The authors of the best papers were financially awarded.⁷⁴ Then, all the instructors and administration of the academies were urged to obtain the doctoral degrees from the accredited faculties. These structured rules and the anticipation from the master's student to do private lectures, were designed to strengthen the academies scholarship and to improve it to an equivalent level of the non-religious universities in Russia and abroad.⁷⁵ The results and general evaluation of the effects of the academic reforms on the Biblical studies were far from easy. It was still too soon to judge the new

⁷¹ Cf. B. V. Titlinov, *The History of Ecclesiastic schools in XIX c. Russia* (Vil'na: 1908-1909). On the development and historical path of these Academies see: Sergey Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi Akademii - 1814-70* (M.: 1879); Ibid., *Istoriia Moskovskoi Slaviano-Greko-Latinskoi Akademii* (M.: 1885); Beliaev, "K Istarii Moskovskoi Slaviano-Greko-Latinskoi Akademii," *BV* 2 (1897); M. S. Ivanov, "Academy's Theology: For the 300th Anniversary of the Moscow Theological Academy," *JMP* 1 (1986): 65-75; S. Askoshenzev, *Kiev's academy*, 2 Vols., (Kiev: University Press, 1856); S. Ternovskii, *The History of Kazan' Ecclesiastic Academy (1870-1892)* (Kazan': 1892); P. V. Znamenskii, *The History of Kazan' Ecclesiastic Academy* (Kazan' 1891-1892); B. V. Titlinov, *The History of Ecclesiastic schools in XIX c. Russia* (Vil'na: 1908-1909); I. A. Chistivich, *The History of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy* (SPb.: 1857); Ibid., *The History of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy during last 30 years* (SPb.: 1889).

⁷² Cf. F. G. Eleonskii, "The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.," *KhCh* 5 (1901): 637.

⁷³ Cf. Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 134-35.

⁷⁴ For the first time, such practice was established by Mitr. Grigorii (Postnikov) in St. Petersburg Academy. Cf. "The Documents of the Academy's Council," *KhCh* 5 (1876): 10. Eleonskii, indicates that "the institution of the awards had a very positive consequence for the development of biblical scholarship in Russia." F. G. Eleonskii, "The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.," *KhCh* 5 (1901): 638.

⁷⁵ Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 135.

state of schools by its fruit. However, it is obvious that the reforms brought an era of practical enthusiasm, when love of learning and curiosity were expressed in the numerous studies in Bible Interpretation.

The studies that were published by the Orthodox scholars, after the appearance of the Synodal Bible and subsequent to the reforms in the Orthodox academies, are vast in number. To overview the literature and to trace the developments is an unfeasible task that goes beyond the purpose of this dissertation. Nevertheless, by making use of a thorough selection of the authors and their studies, the next part of this chapter will describe the Orthodox biblical scholarship by presenting the developments in several specific areas of Biblical studies that represent its achievements or failures: (1) biblical hermeneutics; (2) textual criticism, (3) the questions of introduction (4) the orthodox response to biblical-historical criticism; (5) the exegetical works.⁷⁶

3.5.3.1. Biblical Hermeneutics

Published in St. Petersburg in 1903, *The Orthodox Theological Encyclopaedia* gives an explicit definition for hermeneutics. It states, “The hermeneutics is the discipline about the methods of interpretation of Sacred Scripture. By itself, at this moment, this discipline does not exist in the system of our Orthodox theological education.”⁷⁷ In other words, hermeneutics, in the Russian Orthodox theological development was not yet considered as the study of the theory of understanding or the theory of interpretation. Commonly, the Orthodox scholars determined biblical hermeneutics as a designation for the process of biblical interpretation - exegesis.⁷⁸

If, as already mentioned, by the decree of the Holy Synod, the biblical hermeneutics was introduced in the Orthodox theological schools in 1808, then why does *The Orthodox Theological Encyclopaedia* indicate that hermeneutics did not exist in the system of the Russian Orthodox theological education in the beginning of 20th century? There is no inconsistency. Indeed, the hermeneutics was instructed in the schools, but only as the equivalent for the discipline of biblical exegesis. As a more theoretical discipline that looks

⁷⁶ Alexander Men’ suggests that in the course of 1850-1917 there were also some developments in biblical theology, biblical history and as he calls it “Russian biblical-historical school.” See his short and general insight into these areas, in *Men’*, 283-285.

⁷⁷ *Pravoslavnaia Bogoslovskaiia Entsiklopediia* (SPb.: 1903), Vol. 4., 297.

⁷⁸ *Men’*, 281.

into the problems of meaning and into the process of understanding, it was not part of an academic program (even till the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917).

Contra to the western theological development of the 19th century, where hermeneutics already tended to include philosophical and psychological theories of meaning and understanding,⁷⁹ the Orthodox scholars entitled hermeneutics to the formulating of rules for the understanding of an ancient text, especially in linguistic and historical terms.

The leading figures in biblical research, during these times, were to be found in the Orthodox Academy faculties of Russia. Only a short list of specific literature in Biblical hermeneutics, published by the Orthodox scholars in the second part of the 19th century exists. Among these works are the books written by Prof. Pavel Savvaitov (1815-1895),⁸⁰ Arch. Antonii (Khrapovizkii, d.1936),⁸¹ and Prof. Ivan Korsunskii (1849-1899)⁸² deserve to be mentioned and examined in the succeeding subdivisions.

It appears that since about 1830 we are entitled to regard the framework of Orthodox hermeneutics, in a fundamental sense, as a requirement for the reading of the Bible. Our study shows that the discipline of hermeneutics, pursued by the Russian Orthodox scholars from about the mid-nineteenth century was not without antecedents in less critically oriented times. Therefore, before analysing a series of arguments, developed by Savvaitov, Antonii and Korsunskii, let us make an attempt to recompile standard outlines of the Orthodox hermeneutics, established in the beginning of the 19th century.

⁷⁹ Among many western nineteenth-century hermeneutic theorists selectively name only two Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). See esp., Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*. Ed by H. Kimmerle (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977); *Ibid.*, *On Religion, Speeches to its Cultural Despisers* (New York: Hapen, 1958); Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 5 and 7 (Berlin: Teubner, 1927); *Ibid.*, "Types of World-View and their development in the Metaphysical Systems" (1911) in David E. Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry* 2 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

⁸⁰ Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Pravosvalnoe uchenie o sposobakh tolkovaniia Sv. Pisaniia [The Orthodox teaching on the methods of Bible Interpretation]* (SPb.: 1857); *Ibid.*, *Bibleiskaia Germenevtica [Biblical Hermeneutics]* (SPb.: Treia, 1859).

⁸¹ Antonii (Khrapovitskii), "Concerning the Rules of Tichonii of Africa: Their Validity for a Contemporary Exegesis" in Tyconius of Africa, *The book about seven rules for investigation and determination of the meaning of a Sacred Bible*. Trans. into Russian from Latin *Liber de septem regulis ad investigandam at inveniendam S. Scripturae intelligentiam* in *Patrologiae cursus competus* (Lugduni, 1677) (M.: 1891), 1-22; see also his *Dogmaticheskoe Bogoslovie [Dogmatic Theology]* 8th ed. (SPb.: 1862), 6-13.

⁸² Ivan Korsunskii, *Novozavetnoe Tolkovanie Vetkhogo Zaveta [A New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament]* (M.: 1885); see also *Ibid.*, *Iudeiskoe Tolkovanie Vetkhogo Zaveta [Jewish Interpretation of the Old Testament]* (M.: 1882).

(a) *Savvaitov's Biblical Hermeneutics*

The professor of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy Pavel Savvaitov (1815-1895) was mainly known as an archeologist and historian.⁸³ He also was attentive to the methods of Bible interpretation.⁸⁴ In 1844, shortly after the appearance of the abovementioned Synod's publication *The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs*, Savvaitov prints his⁸⁵ first edition of *Biblical Hermeneutics (Bibleiskaia Germenevtika)*.⁸⁶ Consequently, this study reflects the frame of mind, endorsed by *The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs*. Still, *Biblical Hermeneutics* was far more advanced than any other study on the topic which was previously printed in Russia. Several features of this book underline its significance in the development of biblical scholarship within the Russian Orthodox Church.

Firstly, Savvaitov brings forward a new understanding of hermeneutics in order to replace a more typical assessment for the Russian Orthodox scholars. Rather than speak with reference to hermeneutics in terms of the process of interpretation or exegesis, Savvaitov puts forward that hermeneutics is the discipline about the methods of Bible Interpretation. He says, "Biblical hermeneutics is a discipline, which set forth the rules how to discover and explain an authentic (*podlinnyi*) meaning of the Holy Scripture."⁸⁷ The author considers Biblical hermeneutics as the most essential discipline among the other

⁸³ Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 348-349, n. 43. On him see the journal articles in *Istoricheskii Vestnik* № 9 (1895); *Zhurnal Ministerstva Obrazovaniia // Journal of the Ministry of Education* №9 (1895).

⁸⁴ See Pavel I. Savvaitov, *The Orthodox Teaching on the methods of Bible Interpretation* (SPb.: 1857).

⁸⁵ Due to a heavy reliance on the studies of others, the authorship of this book is disputed. Feodor Eleonskii, for example, disagrees that Savvaitov wrote *Biblical Hermeneutics*. He believes that Savvaitov translated and adjusted this work from *Delineatio Hermeticae Sacrae, ad usum studiosorum Sacrae Scripturae accommodata*. See F. G. Eleonskii, "The Russian Indigenous Works of the Biblical studies in XIX c.," *KhCh* 1 (1901): 12. Chistovich, on the other hand, suggests, that *Delineatio Hermeticae Sacrae* was initially published in Russia anonymously and later it was assigned to Arch. Ioann (Dobrozrakov). See I. Chistovich, *Istoria Peterburgskoi Akademii* (SPb.: 1857), 278, 334.). Although the question of the authorship of *Biblical Hermeneutics* is crucial, this study has no intention to solve the perplexity and simply assumes Savvaitov as a responsible person for writing (and perhaps adapting) *Biblical Hermeneutics* for the Russian Orthodox readers.

⁸⁶ Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics*(SPb.: 1859), 59.

⁸⁷ "Библиейская Герменевтика есть наука, в которой преподаются правила, как узнать и изъяснить подлинный смысл священного Писания." Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (SPb.: 1859), 3.

fundamental disciplines of the Christian theology,⁸⁸ for the rules of interpreting the Scriptures are the starting point that every theologian must be familiar with.⁸⁹ He says,

[In biblical hermeneutics] is offered groundwork constantly needed throughout the interpretation of Scripture. The legitimate margins of investigation are outlined here. Here the tools for a correct understanding of the truths, revealed to the people in a Sacred Scripture are given.⁹⁰

Thus, the hermeneutics as the discipline, for Savvaitov, frames lawful limits for the investigation of any given biblical text and gives the tools to discover an accurate understanding of the Biblical truths.⁹¹

Secondly, the author discusses (although briefly and not in depth) the issues that were never mentioned by his Russian Orthodox predecessors. The spectrum of the topics is apparent from the framework of a threefold division of the book. The *Part One* deals with: (1) the manifold meanings of the Holy Scripture which are catalogued under two categories: literal and mysterious meanings (pp. 14-36)⁹²; and (2) the main principles in Bible interpretation - both the Scripture and the holy tradition (pp. 47-53). The *Part Two* points out to: (1) the significant textual elements that have to be considered for the understanding of the text (such as the word usage (pp. 47-53), the types of speech (pp. 53-59, the intent of the text (pp. 59-64), the historical framework of the text (pp. 64-77) and the parallelisms as common patterns in the biblical literature (pp. 77-97); (2) the need and importance of applying the information of such disciplines as Morphology and Syntax, Rhetoric, Logic, History, Geography, Chronology and Genealogy (pp. 97-108); (3) to the ancient Western and Slavonic translations of the Bible (pp. 108-115); (4) the commentaries on the books of the Bible written by the Church Fathers, Roman Catholic and by the Orthodox scholars and theologians (pp. 116-123); and (5) the significance of the ancient Jewish and Rabbinic literature for the understanding of the Holy Scripture (pp. 124-125). The *Part Three* gives

⁸⁸ Cf. Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (SPb.: 1859), 6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁰ “[В Библейской Герменевтике] предлагается начало, к которому должно обращаться постоянно при изъяснении Писания; здесь назначаются законные пределы для изысканий; здесь указываются средства к правильному уразумению истин, открытых людям в божественном Писании.” *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹² The Russian Orthodox theologians of the first part of 19th century were accustomed to speak of literal and mystical meanings of the Holy Scriptures. Dmitrii Donskoi, for example, says, “In the God’s Scripture, including both the Old and New Testaments, there is a twofold meaning: written and spiritual, e.g. literal and mystical.” See Dmitrii Donskoi, *Rozysk* (M.: 1824), 366.

two practical instructions: (1) how to submit the results of the exegesis to the translation, paraphrase and footnotes (*i.e.* thought the additional explanations) (pp. 127-139); (2) how to move on in actual procedure of interpretation (exegetical steps) (pp. 139-141).

The third preeminence of Savvaitov's book over the previous studies by the Russian Orthodox scholars relates to the fact of providing the list of literature recommended for the exegetes. Savvaitov faces the Orthodox students and teachers of the Bible with the biblical scholarship which was modern for their time by supplying the next generation of the Orthodox exegetes with Latin, German, French and English sources, which could introduce them to a free discussion of the problem arising from a critical and historical approach to the Bible. Savvaitov does this, of course, hesitantly, because, as he states, all the Western books are "written outside of the Orthodox Church and therefore among the writers there is no one who is free from the control and devotion of his own beliefs or not hostile to the beliefs of the others."⁹³ Nevertheless, Savvaitov presents to the Russian Orthodox Church an opportunity to identify the biblical problematics formulated within western theological development of the 18th -19th centuries.

Further, the other characteristic, that indicates an outstanding place of Savvaitov's book in comparison with the others, relates to the substance of hermeneutics. The author presents the principles of understanding and interpretation of certain types of biblical texts. For instance, Savvaitov raises the question of understanding of the Parables of Jesus as the literary deposit of the New Testament. He not only describes the two-fold character of Jesus' sayings (as having both literal and mysterious meanings), but also documents three fundamental principles to study the Parables of Jesus. In order to understand an authentic meaning in any particular Parable, Savvaitov recommends: (1) to find its intention; (2) to locate the designator (people, things and acts) and the designated (intended ideas or persons) and to form a clear understanding of these two; and (3) to compare the designator and the designated in such manner that the corresponding links will not be preposterous.⁹⁴ Reacting to the historical difficulties, Savvaitov refers to multiple meanings of the Parables. On the one hand, a two-fold nature of the Parables (with literal and mysterious meanings of the Parable) is obvious to Savvaitov. On the other hand, he warns against a too general and subjective understanding and suggests treating every Parable in such way so as to cohere a single meaning from it. His hypothesis that "the mysterious and literal meanings are

⁹³ "Все они [т.е. сочинения иностранных авторов] написаны вне православной Церкви, и следовательно между писателями их нельзя найти ни одного, которым бы не управляла либо особенная привязанность к своему вероисповеданию, либо нерасположенность вероисповеданиям других...." Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (SPb.: 1859), 11.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

subjects for explanation and proof⁹⁵ seems to be attractive, but remains unclear and undeveloped in the rest of the book.

In the conclusion of the book, Savvaitov forms *Six Rules for the Interpreter*. There are six basic rules that actually stand for the methodological steps of research. According to Savvaitov, the Orthodox interpreter of the Bible has to do the following:

(1) Compare the textual variants and to conclude which reading is the most probable to be original. [Ru. - “Он должен снести различные чтения... рассмотреть значение и достоинство этих чтений, чтобы с несомненной достоверностью или с большей вероятностью можно было отличить подлинное чтение от того, в котором заметно или прибавление к нему или убавление от него.”]⁹⁶

(2) Examine all the textual difficulties related to linguistics, archaeology and hermeneutics. Explain the passages with attention given to the usage and etymology of words, the flow of author’s thoughts, the parallel passages, etc. [Ru. - “Он должен с особым вниманием рассмотреть все, что может показаться непонятным в филологическом, археологическом, или герменевтическом отношении, изъяснить неопределенность или неясность слововыражений этимологиею, направлением и составом речи, целью писателя, параллельными местами и т. п., так чтобы толкование было вполне достаточно для точного уразумения подлинного смысла изъясняемых мест.”]⁹⁷

(3) Review and determine the best interpretation in the secondary literature in case it offers various interpretations on the text. [Ru. - “При изъяснении тех мест, на которые сделано несколько различных толкований, необходимо указать главнейшие из них и определить степень достоверности на стороне того или иного толкователя.”]⁹⁸

(4) Document all the bibliographical data of any secondary reference used for the explanation of the text.⁹⁹

(5) Establish whether or not the events reported in the historical account represent supernatural acts of God; if yes, defend the historicity of supernatural occurrences and oppose to all the false opinions about the miracles of God. [Cf. Ru. - “При изъяснении сказаний исторических толкователь должен обращать внимание на то, о естественных или сверхъестественных, чудесных событиях говорит священный писатель. В последнем случае на толкователе лежит обязанность

⁹⁵ Cf. Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (SPb.: 1859), 23.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 140-141.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

оградить истинность чудесного события и опровергнуть возражения лжеименного разума. Подобным же образом должно поступать и при изъяснении мест догматического и нравственного содержания.”^{100]}

(6) Offer the results of interpretation of the texts to benefit both the doctrine of the Church and practical life of the people.¹⁰¹

From the book as the whole, it is clear that the main intention of Bible interpretation, for Savvaitov, is not just an academic venture. Biblical exegesis serves the Church. The main purpose of exegesis is to achieve the harmony with the rule of faith. The author's position on the providing source of “rule of faith”, however, is uncertain. On the one hand, Savvaitov declares, “it is obligatory to understand and interpret the Holy Scripture according with the holy tradition (Ru. - *predanie*), which has been accepted by the universal Church as an equal to the Scriptures and in accordance with the holy Orthodox councils and with the Church Fathers.”¹⁰² Here and there, Savvaitov underlines the binding power of the Tradition in interpreting Scripture and the legislative authority of the Church in establishing a final statement of the theological truth of the Bible. On the other hand, in the process of defying the origin of “rule of faith”, Savvaitov refers exclusively to the text of the Bible and points out - “even early Church Fathers and teachers used Scripture as the confirmation for their arguments.”¹⁰³ With regard to paradoxical arguments, two possible explanations are suggested: (1) Savvaitov, perhaps, had not been persuaded by either point of view on the source of “rule of faith” and personally hesitated to emphasize the Bible over the Tradition or vice versa; (2) the scholar could be cautious in stating his own point of view; and therefore, without selecting a sole option, left the way open to two possibilities. Even a third explanation might be considered concerning the source for “rule of faith”: - Savvaitov might have assumed that in achieving the harmony with “rule of faith” the interpreter has to consider both Scripture and Tradition as infallible, for these two construct a sole hermeneutical criterion of the consciousness of the Orthodox Church.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (SPb.: 1859), 141.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁰³ *Idem.*

(b) Antonii's "Concerning the Book of Rules of Tyconius"

In 1891, by the decree of Fr. Antonii (Khrapovitskii) the Rector of Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy the book of a fourth century Donatist theologian and exegete Tyconius of Africa (d. in about 391)¹⁰⁴ was translated from Latin into Russian and published in Moscow.¹⁰⁵ Tyconius' book is "the first treatise on biblical hermeneutics in the Latin West."¹⁰⁶ It presents the author's description of the seven "mystical rules" to investigate Scripture so as to determine its precise meaning. Fr. Antonii wrote an *Introduction* to the substance of this book [named *Concerning the Book of Rules of Tyconius of Africa: Their Validity for a Contemporary Exegesis* (pp. 1-22)], which due to the antiqueness of *The Book of Rules* well reflects the hermeneutical theory in the Ancient Church. An *Introduction* argues for the need of a contemporary reappraisal of the functional hermeneutics of the Church Fathers as "an authoritative for every Orthodox theologian of 19th century Russian Church".¹⁰⁷

In the attempt to understand the purpose and the significance of a sevenfold hermeneutical system of Tyconius, Fr. Antonii underlines the following as very substantial for the Orthodox interpreter of the Bible. *The Book of Rules*, for Antonii, affirms three essential realities: (1) the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture and only under the grace of the Spirit that the interpreter reaches the goal of truth, or unlocks the treasures of truth; the guidance of the Spirit also protects the interpreter from straying onto a wrong path; (2) the Scriptures are given to the whole Church and therefore there is an exclusively ecclesiastical understanding of spiritual truths of Scripture; and (3) all the Scriptures are to be interpreted "spiritually" (lat. - *omnia spiritaliter*) in "types" that point forward to the Church. The

¹⁰⁴ During latest decades, there has been the growing awareness among the biblical scholars of the place of this African theologian in the history of Christian exegesis. See the recent studies, D. L. Andersen, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius* (D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1974); Pamela Bright, *The Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); Charles Kannengiesser, *A Conflict of Christian Hermeneutics in Roman Africa: Tyconius Vs. Augustine* (Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1989).

¹⁰⁵ Tyconius, *The Book of Rules*, trans. from *Liber de septem regulis ad investigandam at inveniendam S. Scripturae intelligentiam* in *Patrologiae cursus competus* (Lugduni, 1677) (M.: Volchaninova Press, 1891). See a critical edition *Liber Regulum (LR)* F. C. Burkitt, *The Book Of Rules of Tyconius* (Cambridge: University Press, 1894, reprint 1967).

¹⁰⁶ Pamela Bright, *The Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 2.

¹⁰⁷ Antonii (Khrapovitskii), *Concerning the Book of Rules*, 4.

essence of the hermeneutic theory that was welcomed by Antonii, underscores the activity of the Spirit in the Church as an interpretative agent, for the Spirit of God speaks spiritually to *mundum spiritalem* (“the spiritual world”) of the Church.¹⁰⁸

In addition to underscoring that the understanding of the Church, the communicative role of the Holy Spirit, and the theory of interpretation are interrelated, Antonii formulates the hermeneutical perspective for the Orthodox Bible interpretation. This perspective, as such, is expressed in several arguments.

Firstly, “the Biblical text has not to be considered in metaphysical or historical-empirical essence, but in its dynamical and ethical character.”¹⁰⁹ For Antonii, the grasp of the indispensable quality and fundamental nature of inherent characteristics of the biblical texts is not grounded in the historical observations or empirical experiments, not in theory, for the interpreter cannot derive the knowledge of the Bible from the experience alone. Rather than to approach the Bible mainly empirically, the interpreter has to look for dynamical, energetic or motive forces, endowed by the divine power that will disclose the truth of any given passage. The understanding of the text can be achieved, not by mechanically impelling the historical data as the agent of understanding, but through the appealing to an energizing force of God-inspired text, for the revelatory nature of the biblical texts does not convey “any kinds of pure historical directives.”¹¹⁰ Hence, according to Antonii, one has to approach the text by striving for an inspired vision of truth, rather than to establish the truth in the event itself, grounded in history. This, of course, as it stands, reveals the de-historicizing tendency of Antonii’s hermeneutics which is obviously follows from the notion of some Church Fathers.¹¹¹

The second argument stresses that the Biblical texts, which are difficult to interpret, should be understood from the metaphoric, prophetic and typological point of view.¹¹² To come to a conclusion of this kind, Antonii considered the frequent occurrences in the Bible of: (1) the applications of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively, but not literally applicable; (2) the meanings or messages which are represented symbolically; and (3) the representation or interpretation of an object, person, event or action in types.

¹⁰⁸ Antonii (Khrapovitskii), *Concerning the Book of Rules*, 1-4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹¹⁰ *Idem.*

¹¹¹ Cf. John Breck, “Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation,” *SVTQ* 40 (1996): 90.

¹¹² Antonii (Khrapovitskii), *Concerning the Book of Rules*, 14.

Since the metaphoric, prophetic and typological ways of understanding could solve the ambiguity of biblical text, a certain vision, a God-given quality of illumination is crucial as well. One can say that for Antonii, the understanding of the Scripture can be achieved through the attention paid to the textual divine-enclosed figures of speech.

Thirdly, the understanding of the Bible does not lie in the external historical data, but only in internal theological-textual evidence.¹¹³ Antonii argues, that the biblical authors acquired the source of knowledge not from the external circumstances of life, but from internal"; and, in striving to convey the truth "they often set apart the details of factuality."¹¹⁴ This argument peculiarly suggests disregarding the historical context in which a text was written as a valuable a source for understanding. It also, indirectly, implies the dismissal of usefulness of such evidences as the determination of authorship, time of composition, socio-historical situation of the readers, the historical context in general. Of course, here Antonii takes a as a guide the conviction of the majority of the Orthodox scholars and the Church masters - to understand a given text, ask the text itself for information. The contrast in Antonii's argumentation is obvious. While he disregards the external data as a vehicle for understanding the text he still argues for the validity of Church Tradition in understanding the text. Of course, if he assumes the Tradition to be a part of "Church Scripture", then it could be qualified as internal evidence.

Further, the forth argument maintains that, despite the validity of philological knowledge (historical-grammatical method), the understanding of the theological and moral meaning of any passage cannot be captured from the reconstruction of a word's semantic meaning by viewing its origin and development, or by considering its expressive significance, employed in the linguistic signs.¹¹⁵ This statement concerns hermeneutical questions related to the nature of language: does a word carry the associations and connotations, or only within a given context? And what is the relation between a word and the concept for which it stands?¹¹⁶ Antonii does not answer these questions, nor does he elucidate the problematics of "word meaning." He does, however, aptly point out to the problem of both lexical and etymological analysis as a sole agent for the understanding the

¹¹³ Antonii (Khrapovitskii), *Concerning the Book of Rules*, 17-18.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹⁶ In a recent biblical scholarship these questions have been put into the focus, esp. after specific studies on the topic were published. Cf. J. Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

meaning of any given text, and protest against the practice of unfolding the meaning of the texts by merely tracing the etymology of words.

Finally, Antonii refers to the hermeneutical dynamics of the patristic tradition. The argument incorporates two reflections on the patristic hermeneutics: (1) in their interpretative activity, the Church Fathers did not narrow their way of interpretation to one special form of procedure (method); and therefore, the patristic tradition communicate the open-endedness of methodology; (2) despite the discord in methodology, the Church Fathers had an inner unity of the Christian spirit. In the words of Antonii, “the symphony of patristic exegesis was not a fruit of conscientiously adopting certain rules, but [it was effected by] a natural expression a harmonious Christian spirit..., and by an accord with a the biblical spirit.”¹¹⁷ These conclusions clearly indicate that Antonii stresses the agreement of Bible interpretations with the Church dogma (for him, it is an alliance of “a Christian spirit” and “spirit of the Bible”) and elevates the concern for formulating the results of interpretation rather than for the methodology of interpretation. This argument well corresponds with the Patristic notion of rule of faith. An acceptance of the Orthodox concept of the *pronema ekklesias*, the “mind of the Church” to which the Orthodox exegete is obliged to submit his reflections is found here.¹¹⁸ Of course, the argument is valid only within a certain community of readers that has set of a common, well determined and established assumptions and beliefs - the Church tradition.

From statements like these, it appears, that the Orthodox hermeneutical position in regard to the understanding of biblical text, as formulated by Fr. Antonii, opposes a pure empirical historical-grammatical inquiry that presupposes the external historical data or the linguistics as a key for understanding. The Orthodox viewpoint, according to Antonii, conveys the notion of energizing a God-revealing force in understanding the Bible (*pneumatology* is in emphasis), the consideration of God-enclosed figures of speech and symbols in the text, the self-explanatory nature of the Bible, and the controlling factor of the *pronema ekklesias*.

¹¹⁷ Antonii (Khrapovitskii), *Concerning the Book of Rules*, 3.

¹¹⁸ Cf. John Breck, “Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation,” *SVTQ* 40 (1996): 88.