

(c) *The case of Ivan Korsunskii (1849-1899)*

After Prof. Pavel Savvaitov and Arch. Antonii (Khrapovizkii) had published their studies, the other Orthodox scholars soon joined these pioneers in a systematic search for the Orthodox hermeneutics and in relating it to the legacy of Church Tradition. In this connection one particular scholar remains to be mentioned. In his monograph, *A New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament*, published in 1885<sup>119</sup>, Prof. of Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy Ivan Korsunskii (1849-1899)<sup>120</sup>, stated a legitimacy of a *new testament interpretation* (adjectival form!) of the Old Testament<sup>121</sup> over against the allegorical interpretation.

In the first part of the book (pp. 1-39), he accentuates the force of the ancient methods of Bible interpretation and characterizes the typology as appropriate for the Orthodox study of the Bible. For Korsunskii, typology is a correspondence between patterns of events, not simply ideas.<sup>122</sup> It represents a parallel, analogy or correspondence between historical events, whereas allegory, which was abandoned by Korsunskii, is “an accommodative interpretation, suggested by the exegete,”<sup>123</sup> which represents the extension of textual meaning in terms of parallels and analogies. In rejecting the allegory, Korsunskii argues that the allegorizing exegete usually discovers such meaning, which “has no sufficient bond either with what the text says or with what it means.”<sup>124</sup> Yet, the typological interpretation is a key for understanding the Old Testament. Korsunskii defines a *new testament interpretation* (or typological interpretation) not as “merely application or adaptation of the Old Testament passages to the New Testament, but as... rooted in the

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<sup>119</sup> It appeared three years later after the publication of the study which offered a careful analysis of Judeo-Palestinian hermeneutics in intertestamental period. See Ivan Korsunskii, *Iudeiskoe Tolkovanie Vetkhogo Zaveta* [*Jewish Interpretation of the Old Testament*] (M.: 1882).

<sup>120</sup> On Korsunskii see, N. Kolosov, “Prof. N. I. Korsunskii,” in the book *U Troitsy v Akademii* (M.: 1914), 722-724.

<sup>121</sup> Ivan Korsunskii, *Novozavetnoe Tolkovanie Vetkhogo Zaveta* [*A New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament*] (M.: 1885).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>124</sup> *Idem.*

nature of things - in the natural and historical types.”<sup>125</sup> He says,

A new testament interpretation includes all the most important moments of the old testament history... the most important events, figures and their acts; and explain them in such typological meaning that well corresponds with the New Testament.<sup>126</sup>

Korsunskii stresses that the types indicate the typological relationships of being to the historical existence. He says, “the Spirit of God directs all things in such a way that what precedes in time pre-describes by itself the things that follow... The events of the past evidently and clearly reflected at the later episodes, the destiny of known individuals of the past is remarkably repetitive in the destiny of the others at the later time.”<sup>127</sup>

Presupposing that the whole Old Testament looks beyond itself for its interpretation, the scholar, however, stresses the historical dimension in typology and places typology over the allegorical interpretation, which “sees the Old Testament as a book of manifold meanings that can be discovered by the interpreter.”<sup>128</sup> The typological interpretation, for Korsunskii, detects “a true word of God”, yet “the allegory bears the fruits of human imagination.”<sup>129</sup>

For Korsunskii, influenced by the Antiochian Fathers, typology is not merely method of interpretation - it is the understanding of the nature of the Bible. For him, just as the prophets made the predictions, so the other Old Testament writer understood and restated what they wrote with a view to the future, then the New Testament writers, who believed that God was working in their own time recognized in the Old Testament the prefigurative descriptions of Jesus and his Church. Presupposing the link between the patterns of events, Korsunskii considers the Old Testament historical events as having a

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<sup>125</sup> “...новозаветное типологическое толкование не есть простое применение или приспособление ветхозаветных мест к новозаветному, а имеет свое глубочайшее основание в самой природе вещей и свои ступени - в естественной и исторической типике.” Ivan Korsunskii, *A New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament* (M.: 1885), 26.

<sup>126</sup> “Новозаветное толкование обнимает все важнейшие моменты ветхозаветной истории с самых первых зачатков ея, касается затем всех важнейших событий ея, лиц и их действий, и объясняет ее как в собственном буквальном смысле, так и в типологическом значении по отношению к Новому Завету.” Ibid., 39.

<sup>127</sup> “Дух Божий направляет так, что предшесвующия по времени предизображают собою последующее...События прежних времен нередко с поразительною точностью отображаются в позднейших событиях, судьба известных лиц прежняго времени с удивительным сходством повторяется в судьбе позднейших лиц и пр.” Ibid., 27.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 327.



present significance in the time of the New Testament and the future meaning in the history of the Church.

Speaking about *a new testament interpretation* of the Old Testament, Korsunskii uses typology, as means of access into the things enclosed and inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Bible, for the interpretation itself is “a spiritual perception energized by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>130</sup> Such discernment, or understanding, for Korsunskii, is preconditioned by two particulars. *Firstly*, there was a visionary experience of the Old Testament writer, who received it, through the revelation of God’s Spirit, and preserved it in the messages of specific forms. The fixed message was not limited to a sole situation or time, for it served as a prototype of the things which were later disclosed by the Holy Spirit as they were fulfilled in Christ. *Secondly*, the inspired New Testament writers discerned and disclosed the meaning (spiritual sense) inscribed in the messages of the Old Testament writers.<sup>131</sup> The role of the Christian exegete, then, is to inquire into both the ontological and pragmatic sense in the correspondence between the patterns of historical figures and events in the Old Testament and in the New Testament era. The perception of the modern exegete, for Korsunskii, is conditioned by the nature of an inspired Bible and by the inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit who illuminates the typological relations of the Old and New Testament.<sup>132</sup>

The second part of the volume (pp. 39-327), is a practical application of typological interpretation for: (1) the Old Testament history (pp.39-183); (2) the Old Testament law (pp. 184-285); and (3) the Old Testament prophesy (pp. 286-327). Korsunskii exposes the multitudinous types that in general were earlier dispensed in the Patristic literature.

Conclusively one can formulate the hermeneutical principles that Korsunskii perceives, in addition to typology as a spiritual perception, as essential in bible interpretation. *Firstly*, by defending the typology as a key for understanding, Korsunskii stresses the continuity and harmony between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In his Orthodox conscience, the biblical writings are of a non-disputable *wholeness*. The root of all understanding, for him, is “in the idea of interrelatedness between the biblical testaments.”<sup>133</sup> Korsunskii demonstrates a profound penetration of the bonds that link the Old Testament with the New Testament by moving toward the contact with the Patristic thought and by exploring the possibilities inherent to Scripture.

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<sup>130</sup> Ivan Korsunskii, *A New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament* (M.: 1885), 24.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 9-14.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

Secondly, Korsunskii sees the biblical witness to Christ as the “centre” of the biblical texts and their subsequent interpretation. For him: (1) the Old Testament constitutes a definite context of understanding within which the events of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are to be interpreted; and (2) the New Testament provides or facilitates understanding of the Old Testament, because it declares the highest exclusive idea for both Testaments - the idea of Messiah and salvation of the world by this Messiah.<sup>134</sup>

The arguments advanced by Korsunskii, were based solely on the works of Church Fathers. The Patristic nature of interpretation implies, for him, a creative continuation of the interpretative practice. Yet, in devotion to an interpretative spirit of the tradition, Korsunskii does not uncritically reproduce the traditional ways of interpretation. He attempts to clarify the validity of typological perception and warns that the exaggerations within pre-established harmony between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between the historical events with Israel and life of Jesus could become an arsenal and ground for prooftexts.

### 3.5.3.2 Textual Criticism

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the task of investigation of the available manuscripts by attempting to reconstruct the non-preserved original texts of the Old and New Testament, has not been undertaken by the Russian Orthodox scholars at all. It was despite the fact that: (1) an extended list of ancient Greek and Hebrew MSS were available in Russian archives and libraries;<sup>135</sup> and (2) many textual critics of the nineteenth century West published the Greek editions.

Textual criticism, as a theory and practice that analyses the features, involved in the reconstruction of the original texts, was “principally concerned with the textual problems of the Old-Slavonic Bible.”<sup>136</sup> The main collaborators in this field were Alexander Gorskii, Ivan Evseev and Grigorii Voskresenskii (1849 -1918).<sup>137</sup> Ivan Evseev, while teaching at St.

<sup>134</sup> Ivan Korsunskii, *A New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament* (M.: 1885), 327.

<sup>135</sup> See the information in the archives in *Materialy i soobshcheniia po fondam rukopisnoi i redkoi knigi Biblioteki Akademii Nauk SSSR* (SPb.: 1978).

<sup>136</sup> *Men'*, 280.

<sup>137</sup> A. Gorskii and K. Nevostruev, *Opisanie slavianskikh rukopisei Moskovskoi sinodal'noi biblioteki* (M.: 1855-1862); G. Voskresenskii “O zaslugakh Gorskogo dlia slaviano-russkoi istoriko-filologicheskoi nauki,” [Gorskii’s contribution for Slavic-Russian philological discipline] *BV* III #11 (1900): 442-455; Ivan Evseev, *Zapiski o nauchnom izdanii slavianskogo perevoda Biblii* [*The notes on a scientific edition of the Old-Slavonic Translation of the Bible*] (SPb.: 1912); *Ibid.*, *Ocherki po*



Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy, developed the four-steps approach to correct the text of Old Slavonic Bible- “a national Bible.” His work *The notes on a scientific edition Old-Slavonic Translation of the Bible* (SPb.: 1912) discloses these phases: (1) through the philological investigation of the ancient Slavonic manuscripts to establish those textual modifications that were embraced in the versions of the Old-Slavonic Bible; (2) by applying the external and internal criterion, consider which reading might be the original one and on the basis of conclusions to reconstruct an ancient Old-Slavonic text created by Sts. Cyril and Methodius; (3) in case of the New Testament, prepare a new Russian translation from available Greek manuscripts; and (4) if the readings of the Greek manuscripts are diverse, a scholar has give preference to the reading that does not contrast with the reconstructed text of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. Evseev assumed that Sts. Cyril and Methodius, by using the best available manuscripts for their translation and by employing a doctrinal teaching of the Early Church Fathers, probably produced the most reliable text which may be used as the canon for evaluation of textual variants (see step # 4).

Obviously, such methodology with its limitation can be applied to reconstruct the edition of a particular Bible translation; yet not the original text of the New Testament. In a strict historical view, however, Evseev and the others have prepared the Russian biblical scholarship to consider the Biblical text in the so-called field of textual criticism – which might be considered as a meaningful notion about the reconstruction of the original texts of the Bible.

The first, yet not effective, attempts to consider a peculiar nature and historical origins of the Greek and Hebrew texts were made by the Bishops Simon (Todorskii, d. 1754) and Porfirii (Uspenskii, 1804-1885). With a particular interest in the ancient MSS, Bishop Porfirii travelled through the East. Alexander Men assumes (although it more than indefinite) that Porfirii has “a priority in discovering the Codex Sinaiticus,”<sup>138</sup> which was brought to Russia and later was published by Constantin Tishendorff (1815-1874). Nevertheless, Porfirii investigated the text of LXX and published several new translations

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*istorii slavianskogo perevoda Biblii* [The essays on the History of Old-Slavonic Translation of the Bible] (SPb.: 1916); See also 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* (1986): 192-198; Fr. Alexii (Makrinov), “Vklad Sankt-Peterburgskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii v razvitie bibleistiki: Perevody i bibliiskaia tekstologija ,” [“Contribution of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy for Biblical Scholarship: Translations and biblical textual criticism,”] *A Jubilee Edition of Theological Works* (1986): 199-210; A. A. Alexeev, “O grecheskoi osnove slavianskikh Bibleiskikh perevodov,” [“On the Greek core for Old-Slavonic biblical translations”] *Starobolgarika* VIII, #1 (1984): 3-22.

<sup>138</sup> Men', 280.

of the Old Testament books by using the Masoretic biblical Hebrew texts, created in the 5th century AD.<sup>139</sup>

During the years of his rectorship at Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy (1835-1841), Archimandrit Filaret (Gumilevskii, d. 1867) introduced the graduate students to the theory and practice of textual criticism. His innovation was in encouraging the student to begin with an ancient text namely with its possible readings and to evaluate them: (1) on the basis of the particular character of the manuscripts (*external data*); and (2) from the philological point of view (*internal evidence*).<sup>140</sup>

Later in 1915, at the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy, the so co- called *Nauchnaia Komissia* [*A Scientific Group*] was organized to continue a highly specialized nature of research in textual criticism. Yet, the major target of these investigations still remained the reconstruction of the Old-Church Slavonic version and the study of lectionaries of VI-IX cc.<sup>141</sup> The Russian Orthodox scholars paid little attention both to the task of reconstruction of Greek Text of the New Testament and to the engagement with a theory and practice of textual criticism.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, professor Sol'skii demandingly appealed to the Orthodox scholars by saying "for a creditable and prosperous study of the Bible and for the development of our Biblical Science, the task of publishing critical editions of Greek and Hebrew writings of the Bible in Russia remains as substantial as never before."<sup>142</sup> His appeal has not been heard.

### 3.5.3.3 *The Questions of Introduction*

In the study of the Orthodox biblical scholarship during the second part of 19<sup>th</sup> century, this section will concentrate on the issue of approaching the biblical writings with the specific preliminary questions, that interpreter of the Bible need to answer as starting point. An attempt to give the answers to the questions, such as: What is the context or the

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<sup>139</sup> See his biography and the description of his accomplishments in Agafangel (Savvin), "Bishop Porfirii (Uspenskii)," *JMP* 5-6 (1975); M. Yastrebov, "Bishop Porfirii (Uspenskii)," *JMP* 8 (1957).

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Sergey Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi Akademii* (M.: 1879), 20ff.

<sup>141</sup> K. I. Logachev ed., "Dokumenty Bibleiskoi Komissii: Rukopesnyi material dlia nauchnogo izdaniia slavianskogo perevoda Vetkhogo Zaveta," *BT* 14 (1975), 160-165. See also the material in *BT* 15 (1975).

<sup>142</sup> S. Sol'skii, "Review of the Studies in the Bible in Russia," *PO* I, 6 (1869): 822.



background (various possibilities) of a particular biblical writing? Who is the author and who are the recipients? What is the date and the purpose of composition? Does the writing reflect a single literary unity or does it contain separable fragments that were originally not one? etc., formed a specific part of the Orthodox-biblical literature known elsewhere as “*Introductions*” (esp. in German biblical scholarship).

The start of the introductory issues among the Russian Orthodox scholars dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before the second part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the questions of *Introduction* were limited to a short prolegomena incorporated into the new published editions of the Bible and to a comment of what the Church or tradition says in regard to the origin, authorship, purpose, etc., of the biblical book.<sup>143</sup> *The Guide to the Reading of the Bible* of Mitr. Amvrosii (Andrei Podobedov, 1742-1818), published in 1799,<sup>144</sup> was almost a single published book in Russian that specifically addressed some of the introductory issues. In the second part of 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Orthodox scholars have no longer been indifferent to the relevance of the biblical text and its historical context. The Russian Orthodox scholars wrote two types of “*Introductions*”. On the one hand, there were the popular-exegetical introductions that restated the basic and well-known information to the readers.<sup>145</sup> Rather than simply retelling the story as the Bible presents it, some scholars such as Archbishop Innokent (Boris), Profs. S. Sol’skii, Nikolay Drozdov (1849-1920), D. A. Khvol’son, A. N. Khergozerskii (1812-1891), A. A. Zhdanov (1860-1909), D. Nartissof (1860-1920), P. F. Coliarskii (1803-1890), Archimandrite Nikifor (Bazhenov, d. 1895), A. T. Verkhovskii (1803-1890),<sup>146</sup> and many others have produced multitudinous works in which they investigated and summarized the findings according to above mentioned questions on a deeper level. This constitutes a rather difficult task of grasping the understanding of the issue among the Orthodox scholars, as is expressed in part of this chapter. Nevertheless, a brief overview of the shift that took place, as the introductory issues showed, seems to be appropriate to mention. To make the point, several selected studies for such observation, are presented below.

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<sup>143</sup> S. Sol’skii, “Is lektzii po Novomu Zavetu,” [“From the Lectures on the New Testament”] *TKDA* (1887) 8: 282.

<sup>144</sup> Amvrosii Podobedov, *Rukovodstvo k chteniiu Sviashchennogo Pisania Vetkhogo i Novogo Zaveta* (SPb.: 1799).

<sup>145</sup> For example, H. Orda, *Rukovodstvo k posledovatel’nomu chteniiu prorocheskikh i uchitel’skikh knig Vetkhogo Zaveta* (1871-72); M. Kheraskov, *Rukovodstvo k posledovatel’nomu chteniiu Piatknizhii Moiseiva* (1875); D. Bogolepov, *Uchebnoe Rukovodstvo k chteniiu Evangelii* (1875); A. Ivanov, *Rukovodstvo k istolkovatel’nomu chteniiu Poslanii Apostolov i Apokalipsisa* (1875).

<sup>146</sup> Cf. *Men’*, 281.

The short lectures on *The Introduction to the New Testament* by Prof. V. Rozhdestvenskii<sup>147</sup> and *The Introduction to the New Testament* of German author Gerig, translated and edited under the supervision of Archimandrite Mikhail<sup>148</sup>, were published during 1869-1878 and served as a starting point that modelled a basic approach to the problem for the succeeding Orthodox scholars. These works took the series of questions from the western biblical literature of that time<sup>149</sup> and critically responded to every point of disagreement. This was more fully developed in the works of the others, who undertook the critical questions of the authorship, data and origin of the biblical writings as the extent of the discipline and moved on by rejecting or accepting the critical points of view.<sup>150</sup>

In 1892 in the journal *Joy of the Christian in reading the Bible* and then as a separate edition *The Introduction to the New Testament* of Filaret, Metropolitan of Moscow was published in 1892 (it was published from the class notes of his student E. Polotebnov made in 1817).<sup>151</sup> Filaret's basic assumptions were: (1) the attestation of Jesus as Christ and Savior is a sole essence of all the books of the New Testament; (2) the canonical books of

<sup>147</sup> V. Rozhdestvenskii, "Instoricheskoe obozrenie sviashchennykh knig Novogo Zaveta," ["Historical overview of the Sacred book of the New Testament,"] *TKDA* (1877-1878).

<sup>148</sup> Archimandrite Mikhail, *Vvedenie v Novyi Zavet [The Introduction to the New Testament]* (M.: 1869).

<sup>149</sup> Since the publication of *Introduction to the Divine Scriptures of the New Testament* by Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791) the question of introduction became dogmatically important and widely discussed in the West and later among the Eastern scholars. In this work, Michaelis treats for the first time and independently, the question of language, textual criticism, and origin of the individual NT writings. The NT, for Michaelis, might be explained by its several parts (not as the whole) and there is no definite assertion that the NT writings are of apostolic origin. Cf. Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972/London, 1973), 62 ff.

<sup>150</sup> See I. A. Artobolevskii, "On the issue of sacra-historical materials for description of St. Paul's life," *BV* III (1899) 12: 547-557; N. N. Vinogradov, "St. Paul as the Exposer of Judaism," *KhCh* (1874) 2: 591ff; N. N. Glubokovskii, "Chronology of the NT," *TKDA* II (1910) 7/8: 375-408; (1911) 3: 365-394; 6: 200-228; 7/8: 357-377; A. Gorskii, *History of the gospels and of the Apostolic Church* (M.: 1833); N. Molchanov "The writer of the Forth Gospel," *KhCh* 2 (1880): 419 ff; M. D. Muretov, "The Authenticity of discourses of the Lord in the Forth Gospel," *PO* 3 (1881): 33-72; *Ibid.*, "The Apocryphal Correspondence of the Apostle Paul with the Corinthians," *BV* III (1896) 7: 1-16; 113-154; 365-390; 8: 1-28; V. G. Roshchdestvennskii, "The History of the New Testament Canon," *KhCh* (1873) 2: 473 ff.; 3: 473 ff.; (1874) 2: 423 ff., 732 ff.; F. I. Titov, "The circumstances of the origin of 1 Thess.," *TKDA* (1893) 12: 497-515; I. I. Uspenskii, "The question of activities of the Apostle John in Manor Asia," *KhCh* 1 (1879) 3 ff.; 297 ff.; *Ibid.*, "St. Apostle John -the Writer of the Forth Gospel and the book of Revelation," *KhCh* 1 (1880): 47 ff., A. M. Klitin *The Authenticity of Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus* (K.: 1888); Podobedov, *Guide to the Old and New Testaments* (M.: 1779); P. Yungerov, *Obshchee Instorico-Kriticheskoe vvedenie v Vetkhozavetnye knigi [A Comprehensive Introduction to the book of the Old Testament]* (Kazan', 1902).

<sup>151</sup> Filaret (Mitr. of Moscow), *Introduction to the New Testament* (M.: 1882).



the New Testament are characterized by their wholeness, therefore they have to be studied not as many separate entities within one canon, but as one unit; (3) every book of the New Testament has its own purpose, but only as a part of the whole; (3) supernatural guidance of God presents in the process of composing the Biblical material by the apostles and by the other chosen by God men; (4) Scripture should be approached from the perspective of the Church teaching rather than from the historical disciplines; and (5) all the books of the New Testament contain and support the Orthodox doctrines and therefore the study of the background should not lead to the conclusions that contradict the Church dogma.<sup>152</sup>

Although, the book itself, did not contribute to the studies of biblical backgrounds; yet, due to the dogmatic weight of Filaret's objective the Orthodox scholars have been challenged as how to approach the introductory questions in accordance with the Church-directed perspective toward all the issues of the books of the Bible.

Later, Stefan Sol'skii published the article on the kinds of scientific introductions to Scripture in which he summarized the developments in the discipline of background studies and suggested the route for a further expansion of the discipline within the orthodox scholarship.<sup>153</sup> He concluded,

The science of introduction to the books of Scripture, in our theological literature,... is in its embryonic form. We have no study that will systematically investigate all the books of the Old or New Testament and scientifically answer to the critical points of view... The published studies and those, which are still appearing, take into the consideration only the specific segments [of the Bible]...they are being composed without a particular hypothesis; and, as the result, their value cannot be merited beyond *the popular writings*.<sup>154</sup>

The solution to the situation, Sol'skii sees in learning from the western orthodox (conservative) Protestant and Catholic scholars, who "in biblical scientific introductions

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<sup>152</sup> Filaret (Mitr. of Moscow), "Introduction to the New Testament," *Joy of the Christian in reading the Bible* February (1882): 1-8.

<sup>153</sup> S. Sol'skii, "Kakov dolzhen but' sostav nauchnykh vvedenii v knigi sv. Pisaniiia v nastoiashchee vremia?" ["What kind of framework should the Scientific Introductions to Scripture follow in a modern time?"] *TKDA* 3 (1887): 358-376.

<sup>154</sup> "Наука введения в книги св. Писания в нашей богословской литературе... находится еще в зачаточном положении. Мы еще не имеем такого научного введения, которое в систематическом виде обзревало бы все книги Ветхаго и Новаго Завета и давало научные ответы на вопросы отрицательных воззрений... Изданные и издающиеся у нас руководства и пособия к изучению книг св. Писания, не исключая и последних опытов, обнимают известные отделы, а не целый состав библейских книг, составлены без определенной руководительной мысли и не выходят из ряда обыкновенных популярных пособий." S. Sol'skii, "What kind of framework should the Scientific Introductions to Scripture follow in a modern time?" *TKDA* 3 (1887): 358.

searched, in the first place, the evidences for the teaching of the Ancient Church, regarding the origin of sacred books, their form and teaching.”<sup>155</sup> He affirms, a framework that determines centre of the discipline of Bible Introduction within the biblical scholarship of the Russian Orthodox Church, can be derived from western studies as basis, because he regard these as good models in procedure, though not in conclusions they offer [esp. of De Wette (1780-1849), Adolf Hildendorf (1823-1907), Heinrich Holtzmann (1832-1910) and Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918)]. Sol’skii suggested the following outline: (1) the origin of the writings; (2) the authorship; (3) the authenticity of the biblical books; (4) the historical-canonical recognition; and (5) the teaching of the writings.<sup>156</sup>

Without doubt, Sol’skii demanded investigation of these selected issues to correlate with the Church dogma. The background study, in his own words, “should not be settled on a pure historical basis..., but in a sense of its submission to a known and accurate theological status of the biblical books.”<sup>157</sup> The main theme (and, perhaps, the presupposition) of all the introductions to the Bible that convey the Orthodox position in this regard, therefore, should be, according to Sol’skii that “all biblical books in their origin and essence, in composition and transmission accord with the conclusions of the ancient Church.”<sup>158</sup> In his introductory lectures to the study of the New Testament Sol’skii states, that the subject matter of the “Introduction” to the Holy Scriptures should be that kind of

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<sup>155</sup> S. Sol’skii, “What kind of framework should the Scientific Introductions to Scripture follow in a modern time?” *TKDA* 3 (1887):366-367.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 368, 375-376.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. “...большинство из них [т.е. вопросов исагогики] должно решаться на почве исторической, но не в смысле принадлежности их к обстоятельному историко-критическому наследованию библейских книг, как историко-религиозных памятников, а в смысле сподчинения их к уяснению правильности известного рода богословских положений относительно библейских книг.” S. Sol’skii, “What kind of framework should the Scientific Introductions to Scripture follow in a modern time?” *TKDA* 3 (1887): 369-370. The idea of a natural surrendering of the critical studies to a known and accepted in the Church was later reconsidered by the twentieth century Russian Orthodox theologian Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944). He says, “The Church, not only does not block the ways for all available approaches in studying the Bible, particularly for the means of scientific criticism, but also does not pre-determine the conclusions of such criticism.” Sergei Bulgakov, *The Orthodoxy* (Paris, 1948), 67. See also his “The Bible and Tradition,” *The Student Word* 27/2 (Geneva, 1932); “Dogma and Theology,” in *The Living Tradition* (Paris, 1933) trans. into German “Dogma und Dogmatik,” *Internationale Kirshlishe Zeitschrift* 5 (1943): 139-158.

<sup>158</sup> S. Sol’skii, “What kind of framework should the Scientific Introductions to Scripture follow in a modern time?” *TKDA* 3 (1887): 376; Cf. S. Sol’skii, “Is lektzii po Novomu Zavetu,” [“From the Lectures on the New Testament”] *TKDA* 8 (1887): 256.



information on the basis of which it is possible to reconstruct the respect for these writings given by the Orthodox Church.<sup>159</sup>

From the above it is clear that the questions of introduction were not separated from the question of the authority of the Bible, authority of the Church and authority of the Church Tradition in Bible interpretation. This corresponds with the fact that in the Orthodox theological circles the matter of introduction has not been separated from the formation of doctrine.<sup>160</sup> The Orthodox Churchmen deliberately sought to present the text to its readers as a historical document, which possesses a special religious character.

Furthermore, although there were some minor differences in emphasis among the Orthodox scholars in regard to the study of the questions of introduction, the larger number of issues reflects unity that the majority sustained. This unity is derived from their belief that Scripture is not essentially a human book that originates “from below”. Thus, it is clear that all Orthodox scholars maintained the belief that the process of composing the biblical material takes place under supernatural guidance or supervision. The biblical text is therefore compiled from Scripture originating “from above”, as the Ancient Church stressed it, because this process was not left to the human agent alone. Consequently, the approach towards Scripture has to be determined predominantly from the perspective of the Orthodox theology and Church teaching than from the historical disciplines. This makes the acceptance of other views difficult. It also means that for the Russian Orthodox, the Bible speaks only in the voice of their Church.

Therefore, one can also notice the presence of a considerable negative attitude toward the employment of the historical-critical investigation. The naturalistic and extra-biblical presuppositions were openly rejected. Because of the general beliefs that the Bible is not only a human document that is culturally and historically limited, the majority of the Orthodox scholars emphasized the function of Scripture rather than the nature of the Bible per se. If the questions on different backgrounds, purpose and general teaching of the composition were welcomed by the Orthodox scholars, the inquiry into the issues of authorship, date and the problems of the origin or literary composition of the biblical writings was rejected as an extra-theological analysis. It had been determined that every orthodox work of research into the questions of Christian faith and the inquiry into biblical

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<sup>159</sup> See S. Sol'skii, “Is leksii po Novomu Zavetu,” [“From the Lectures on the New Testament”] *TKDA* 8 (1887): 248.

<sup>160</sup> The standard dogmatic textbooks of that period classified the Introduction as the introductory and assisting discipline for the formation of the Orthodox theology. See Mitr. Antonii, *Dogmaticheskoe Bogoslovie* [*Dogmatic Theology*] 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (SPb.: 1862), § 22; Makarii, *Vvedinie v Pravoslavnoe Bogoslovie* [*Introduction to the Orthodox Theology*] (1884), § 162.

texts, should never be merely scientifically-critical, but should be dogmatic in its character. The scholars had to build their scientific studies under the guidance of a theological idea of the Church.<sup>161</sup> The dispute over the questions of introduction, in particular, caused the development of the Orthodox response to the western biblical criticism in general.

#### 3.5.3.4 *The Orthodox Response to Historical Criticism*

As noted above, the nineteenth century was the beginning of the major disciplines of biblical research in the West. The hermeneutical debates of the Western scholars of course touched the Orthodox biblical scholars, but the remaining question is that of to what extent such influence existed. The systematic discernment and appreciation of the Orthodox Biblical scholarship, therefore, cannot be achieved without investigation into the analysis of existing response to the critical hermeneutical questions of the Western biblical scholarship of 18<sup>th</sup> –19<sup>th</sup> centuries, for there were both the reaction and a slight acceptance of the historicism.<sup>162</sup>

Presenting different theories, the historical-literary criticism had a disturbing effect on many Orthodox scholars for it suggested that some biblical assertions could not be literally true, and that various biblical works could not be the product of those to whom they had traditionally been ascribed to by the Church. The historical-critical approach did not allow the interpreter to start from the point of view of the Church doctrine, but from that of history as it can be rationally reconstructed. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had aroused tremendous opposition from the Orthodox scholars, who, by considering the biblical criticism as the attack on the Church,<sup>163</sup> felt that the spirit and truth of the biblical material was obscured by critical study.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. M. D. Muretov, *Novyi Zavet kak predmet Pravoslavno-Bogoslovskogo izuchenia* [*The New Testament as the Subject of the Orthodox-Theological Study*] (M.: 1915), 665; S. Sol'skii, "Is leksii po Novomu Zavetu," ["From the Lectures on the New Testament"] *TKDA* (1887) 8: 249.

<sup>162</sup> This concept is generally associated with the development in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Germany, in particular by German Protestant theologian and scholar Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923). On the 19<sup>th</sup> century historicism in biblical studies see Gunter Scholtz, "The Notion of Historicism and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Theology," in 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), 149-167.

<sup>163</sup> So Nikol'skii, "A Theologian-apologet senses that the attacks on Scripture come overall from the enemies of the Church." M. N. Nikol'skii, "Nasha Bibleiskaia Nauka," ["Our Biblical Science,"] *PO* 1 (1875): 186.



(a) *Hostility Toward Historical Criticism*

One of the primary figures, who aimed to analyse historical and literary scholarship of the western critics, was Arch. Mikhail (Luzin, 1830-1887). The collections of Luzin's essays, entitled *Bibleiskaia Nauka (Biblical Science)*, were published posthumously.<sup>164</sup> In these studies, by analysing the arguments of the Western scholars (among the others, esp., Ernst Renan,<sup>165</sup> H. J. Holzmann<sup>166</sup>) he did not only discover the whole world of major disciplines of the biblical research and identified the diversity among the western scholars, but also formulated the Orthodox position as the reply to a critical study of the Bible. Mikhail formulated the conception about the methodology and biases of western biblical criticism. In his own words, he was "the first among the Russian Orthodox scholars who initiated the dispute with the modern sceptical teachings about the Bible."<sup>167</sup>

The application of the historical-critical principles to Bible and theology, in the opinion of Mikhail, had far reaching consequences. For him, developed to deal with natural events, the historical-critical method was destined, if applied to a divine nature of Scripture, to degrade the true understanding of the Bible. On the basis of his own hermeneutical presuppositions, the scholar gives four main supporting observations.

*Firstly*, the historical-critical method dissolves the Bible's teaching into the natural and to interpret it as analogous to everything else (human literary documents).<sup>168</sup>

*Secondly*, it constitutes that the Bible and the Church tradition can claim no absolutes, but only a greater or lesser degree of probabilities that must always remain open to doctrinal revisions and restatements of Orthodox Christianity.

<sup>164</sup> Michail (Luzin), *Bibleiskaia nauka: Kniga I* [Biblical Science, Vol. I] (Tula, 1898-1906); *Ibid.*, *Bibleiskaia nauka, Kniga II: Piatiknizhie* [Biblical Science: Pentateuch. Book 2], ed. by N. I. Troitzkii (Tula, 1899).

<sup>165</sup> Renan, (Joseph) Ernest (1823-1892), French philologist and historian of religion. His widely read *Vie de Jésus* (Life of Jesus, 1863 - the first part of his *Histoire des origines du christianisme* "History of the Origins of Christianity" 8 vols., 1863-1883), caused a great controversy in Russia because of its un-orthodox point of view. The Orthodox scholars opposed Renan for the later approached religion as a rationalist and humanist, using contemporary historical findings in a field long restricted by tradition.

<sup>166</sup> Among others (such as G Wilke (1786-1854), C. H. Weisse (1823-1866)), Heinrich Julius J. Holzmann (1832- 1910) is associated with a field of alternative synoptic source theories. He suggested "two-sources" solution of the Synoptic Problem. H. J. Holtzmann, *Die synoptischen Evangelien. Ihr Ursprung und ihr geschichtlicher Charakter* (*The Synoptic Gospels; their origin and historical character*) (Liepzig, 1863). See W. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972/London: SMC, 1973), 151-155.

<sup>167</sup> Mikhail (Luzin), 118.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. S. Sol'skii, "From the Lectures on the New Testament," *TKDA* 8 (1887): 247.

*Thirdly*, it is about to diminish the Church's understanding of biblical canon and to destroy an accepted integrity of its writings. *Last*, the biblical critics contradict to the traditional Orthodox arguments for the existence of God for they suggest the arguments for existence of God on the basis of practical reason or religious consciousness of the human beings (*i.e.* from the perspective of "natural religion").<sup>169</sup>

Arch. Mikhail not only saw a danger in the western biblical criticism that could, if applied, effect the Russian Orthodoxy, but also understood that the orthodox scholarship of that period had not been equipped to grasp the critical enterprise thoroughly neither to formulate and present the contra arguments in a well advanced system. Therefore, his recommendation to the Orthodox scholars and theological students was to obtain the use of a theological response to the western "liberalism" of the nineteenth-century theology from *the western "orthodox" Protestant scholars*,<sup>170</sup> who apologetically rejected the most important presuppositions and affirmations of the radical biblical criticism. He says,

It is necessary to utilize the products of the western apologetics: what prevents us from using an expertise of the experienced western representatives in the field? .... The multitude of literature of the western negative theories is confronted with a rich apologetic literature in the West. Then, what hinders us to obtain and use its power and influence in our own context in order to oppose to the spread of their own negative criticism?<sup>171</sup>

The crucial point to see is this: although in general the orthodox scholars opposed to the western non-orthodox scholars, the western fundamental Protestant scholarship (so-called "conservative wing") that did not accept the Bible in a human way and did not employ the principles of scientific historical-critical study of the Bible in a damaging way to the theological tradition of the Christendom, was not only accredited and appreciated by the

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<sup>169</sup> *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 10-25.

<sup>170</sup> The Orthodox scholars did observe that the 19<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholicism came to grips with the problem of responding to the radical issues of historical criticism more slowly and not so adequately than the Protestants themselves. Cf. N. Drozdov, "V Zashchitu Svobodnogo Nauchnogo Issledovaniia v Oblasti Bibliologii," [On Defence of a Free Scientific Investigation in the Field of Biblical Studies] *TKDA* 10 (1902): 301.

<sup>171</sup> "Нужно усвоить нам плоды западной апологетики: что мешает нам воспользоваться опытом опытных в науке представителей ее там - на Западе? Широкой литературе отрицательных учений там противопоставлена богатейшая литература апологетическая: что препятствует заимствовать силу и богатство ее нам, перенести на нашу почву и противопоставить ее распространению отрицательных учений тамошних же у нас?" *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 148.



Russian Orthodox Church,<sup>172</sup> but also it was used, albeit with many reservations and adaptations.<sup>173</sup>

Mikhail brought into existence an objective for the Orthodox biblical scholarship - to identify and to respond to the accomplishments and failures of the biblical research in the West.<sup>174</sup> He called the biblical scholarship to launch the intellectual defence of the Orthodox Christian truth. This objective, of course, reflects an apologetic spirit of the Russian Orthodoxy, which was initiated by Mikhail's predecessors and became common among the Orthodox scholars of his generation.<sup>175</sup> Still, Mikhail was able to spread this noble objective at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, since as an academic instructor, he "imparted to his students a love for scholarly reading and study and tried to attract them to scholarly work, training them to come to know critical problematics, albeit from someone else's textbooks."<sup>176</sup>

As a result his students carried soon afterwards out the polemical debates with the critical views. Bishop Nikolai Eleonskii (1843- 1910), professor at Moscow Orthodox Academy and later at Moscow State University studied and zestfully discussed the theories and concepts proposed by Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860) German Protestant theologian, who founded the Tubüngen School of New Testament studies.<sup>177</sup> Eleonskii indicated that although the faith must be grounded in history, as Baur suggested, the use of the historical-critical method to reconstruct the development of the early church couldn't be employed without subjectivity. Eleonskii also attacked Bauer's conception of history as a

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<sup>172</sup> An American evangelical scholar Grant Osborn rightly concludes that there are several common aspects of biblical hermeneutics for the Orthodoxy and the fundamental movement of Protestantism (i.e. evangelicals) - "the high view of Scripture, the acceptance of the historical veracity of the biblical texts, the emphasis on the inspiration of the sacred authors and the divine origin of biblical revelation." Grant R. Osborn, "The Many and One: The Interface Between Orthodox and Evangelical Protestant Hermeneutics," *SVTQ* 39/3 (1995): 303.

<sup>173</sup> Drozdov, for example, emphasizes that "in the use of the Protestant studies, the caution and an accurate review are necessary". N. Drozdov, "On Defense of a Free Scientific Investigation in the Field of Biblical Studies," *TKDA* 10 (1902): 305.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *Men'*, 279.

<sup>175</sup> Arch. Filaret (Gumilevskii), few decades before Mikhail, objected to the western rationalism from the Orthodoxy dogmatic point of view. Cf. Smirnov, *Istoriia Moscovskoi Akademii - 1814-70* (M.: 1879), 20. See Filaret's arguments against radical criticism in his *Besedy o stradaniakh Gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista* (M.: 1854); *Opyt ob 'iasneniia na Poslanie Pavla k Galatam* (Chernigov, 1862); *Uchenie Evangelista Ioanna o Slove* (Chernigov, 1869).

<sup>176</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 128.

<sup>177</sup> F. Eleonskii "Analysis of the Modern Criticism on Pentateuch," *KhCh* (1871-1873); *Ibid.*, "The Modern Criticism of the Sacred Scriptures," *The Faith and Church* I (1901): 5ff and VII -pp. 4ff.

movement of opposing forces that become resolved into a synthesis (developed by the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel), and disagreed with Baur's theory in *Untersuchungen über die sog. Pastoral-briefe des Apostels Paulus* [Investigations of the So-called Pastoral Epistles of the Apostle Paul, 1835] that primitive Christianity was characterized by a struggle between Petrine Jewish-Christian and Pauline Gentile-Christian ideas. Baur's suggestion to regard only Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans as genuine Pauline epistles, in *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi* (1845) was considered by Eleonskii as untrue - "the heresy of our time."<sup>178</sup>

Timofei Butkevich (1854-1925), professor of the Apologetics and Theology at Kharkov' University, critically reviewed the hermeneutical theory of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).<sup>179</sup> Butkevich especially opposed to Schleiermacher's ideas of religion and the Bible in *Reden über die Religion* ("On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers", 1799), where Schleiermacher defined religion as "feeling and intuition of the universe" and "a sense of the Infinite in the finite" and rejects the authority of the Bible in virtue of its own power.

The Orthodox historian, archaeologist and exegete Nikolai Troizkii (1851-1920) investigated the history of the Synoptic problem (during XVIII-XIX cc.) and argued against the conclusions of H. J. Holzmann.<sup>180</sup> Among the others who contributed to Biblical criticism in Russia's nineteenth century, theological renewal was represented by Dmitrii Bogdashevskii (1861-1933), Vladimir Ribinskii (1857-1920), Sergei Zarin (1875-1914), and distinctively Mitrofan Muretov (1850-1917), etc.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>178</sup> F. Eleonskii, "The Modern Criticism of the Sacred Scriptures," *The Faith and Church I* (1901): 11.

<sup>179</sup> See Timofei Butkevich, *Zhizn' Gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista* [The Life of our Lord Jesus Christ] 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (SPb.: 1887); *Ibid.*, *Poluvekovaia Bor'ba Khristianskogo Bogosloviia na Zapade* [50 Years of Fight of Christian Theology in the West] (M.: 1884).

<sup>180</sup> Nikolai Troizkii, *O proiskhozhdenii pervykh kanonicheskikh Evangelii* (About the Origin of the First Canonical Gospels) (Kastroma, 1878); see also *Ibid.*, "Russkaia Bibleiskaia nauka i ee sovremennye zadachi ["The Russian Biblical Studies and its Modern Objectives,"] *Chtenia v Obshchestve Liubitelei Dukhovnogo Prosviashchenia* (Readings of the Society of Lovers of Spiritual Enlightenment) 10 (1877); about Troitskii and the bibliography of his works see *Khristianstvo*, III, 43.

<sup>181</sup> Among the various works against the western biblical criticism see, esp.: D. Bogdashevskii "On Gospels: Against Modern Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 269-302; *Ibid.*, "Renan's Life of Jesus," *TKDA* III, 9 (1907): 148-151; *Ibid.*, "Ädolf Harnack's essence of Christianity," *TKDA* III, 9 (1907): 151-155, *Ibid.*, "Ädolf Diesmann. Licht vom Osten," *TKDA* I, 2 (1911): 294-298; F. Eleonskii "Analysis of modern criticism on Pentateuch," *KhCh* (1871-1873); A. C. Lebedev, "Review of French Theological Literature," *PO* II (1870) 9: 389-394; Fr. Miroshkin, "Review of French Theological Literature," *PO* 3 (1866): 170-193; *Ibid.*, "Review of German exegetical works," *PO* (1885) 8: 456-462; M. D. Muretov, The Protestant theology before Strauss," *BV* II (1892) 6: 460-482, (1892): 904 ff.; *Ibid.*, "Hermeneutic Theory of Kant" *BV* II (1892) 6: 58-76; *Ibid.*, "The exegetes-philologists and Schleiermacher," *BV* III (1892) 7: 58-*Ibid.*, "The followers



Due to the detachment of the Russian Orthodoxy from the West,<sup>182</sup> a wide interest of the orthodox biblical scholars in the western biblical criticism and their analysis of these studies have not been answered by the western thinkers. There was a scholarly conversation on the problem that has been going on for some time within the Orthodox Church itself. *Firstly*, there were the Orthodox scholars of a fundamentalist bias who reacted to historical criticism, because, in their pattern of thought, it emphasizes the human elements in the Bible, i.e., that the Bible was written in historically-conditioned language and from a human perspective (that human beings spoke and wrote the “word” element of the Bible).<sup>183</sup>

*Secondly*, the other Orthodox scholars, as an allegation, suggested that historical-biblical criticism leads to a denial of Orthodox dogma.<sup>184</sup> Those who defended a scientific investigation of the Bible, answered by indicating that the teaching of the Church is based on both Church tradition and Scripture (not *Sola Scriptura*); thus, even if the Bible is being considered historically-critically, the evidence for the dogma, authorized by the teaching of the Orthodox Church Tradition, cannot be disputed.<sup>185</sup> For example, Prof. Muretov in his article on the death of the Lord upon the cross, objects the rationalization of scientifically historical points of view by insisting that the reality of Jesus’ death should be proved on the basis of Church dogma that takes a biblical account of Jesus’ death literally.<sup>186</sup>

*Thirdly*, the Russian Orthodox Church pragmatists, who saw that historical criticism might be an obstacle for the Orthodox interests in relation to the Bible and

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of Hegel and the predecessors of Strauss,” BV III (1892) 9: 319-360; *Ibid.*, “Renan’s Life of Jesus,” BV IV (1892) IV, 12, 391-410; (1893) 2: 284-199; 4, 46-110; 10: 80-110; IV (1894) 10: 33-66; 11: 230-245.

<sup>182</sup> Meyendorff finds that “there are also weaknesses for which the Orthodox have only themselves to blame, in particular, the bane of excessive nationalism which has resulted in the harmful isolation of Orthodox churches....” John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, Trans. from French by John Chaplin (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 230.

<sup>183</sup> V. P. Il’inskii, “New developments in German Theology,” *PO* 3 (1889): 643-741; K. Kustodiev “Review of French Theological literature,” *PO* I, (1870): # 3: 507-532; #4: 643-660; V. Makarov, *On the Gospel of Matthew: The analysis and critique of Baur’s negative Criticism* (M.: 1873).

<sup>184</sup> Esp. I. Osinin “Renan’s Life of Jesus,” *KhCh* (1863) 3:330ff; (1864) 1:116ff.; F. Vinogradov, “Novaia Tubingenskaia shkola,” [“New Tübingen School,”] *TKDA* (1869) 6: 173-226; 7: 317-360; 9: 62-127.

<sup>185</sup> N. Drozdov, “On Defense of a Free Scientific Investigation in the Field of Biblical Studies,” *TKDA* 11 (1902): 486-487.

<sup>186</sup> D. Muretov, “Diestvitel’nost’ Smerti Gospoda hashego Iisusa Khrista,” [“The reality of the Death of Our Lord Jesus Chris,”] *PO* I (1881): 667-698.

observed that the academics are about to separate themselves from the authentic realities of Russian life, also voiced their reply. They felt that, although the orthodox scholarship should not capitulate to the presuppositions and dichotomies of Western problematics, the main task of the biblical scholarship is not at the level of theoretical principles, but at the level of practical life, providing the results for spirituality, preaching and theology. Some strongly pointed out that rather than reconstruct the Scriptures in the understandable language; the Orthodox literature had concentrated to respond mainly to the rationalistic doctrines. Nikol'skii, for example, says "Give us the Scriptures in a comprehensible language right at the beginning, explain it, clear it out, illuminate it and supply all the knowledge about its details; and then we ourselves will discern the meaning of these debates."<sup>187</sup>

In this regard, the other side of the discussion pointed out that if the Orthodox biblical scholars would employ the historical criticism keeping the spiritual concerns and insights in mind, in contrast to the western rationalist efforts, the theological categories might be discovered. For example, Nikolai Drozdov insisted, "historical questions must be answered by historical means." The historical investigation, for him, if properly employed, does not separate the scholar from spiritual, theological and preaching interests, but in contrast to that it "improves both theologically accurate and historically grounded understanding of Scripture."<sup>188</sup>

*Fourthly*, some Orthodox scholars openly accused their colleagues of a non-accurate and not profound critique against the western biblical criticism and in conducting fashioning the studies without proper evidences and arguments.<sup>189</sup> Indeed, the critical point of view would usually be rejected only on the basis of the Church traditional assessments. Those who endeavoured a proper Orthodox scholarship, oppose the narrow-minded shallow scholars since they "bring darkness, rather than light...", especially to those readers, who deserve to know the *pro and contra* on the issues.<sup>190</sup> On the one hand, this judgment is legitimate, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox scholars, without doubt, lived by the mode of

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<sup>187</sup> "...дайте нам сначала Писание на понятном языке, истолкуйте его смысл, очистите, освятите и пополните наши сведения о частных его сторонах, и тогда мы поймем сами собою смысл этих споров и сами отрицательно относимся к односторонним воззрениям." M. N. Nikol'skii, "Our Biblical Science," *PO* 1 (1875): 187-188.

<sup>188</sup> N. Drozdov, "On Defense of a Free Scientific Investigation in the Field of Biblical Studies," *TKDA* 10 (1902): 302-303.

<sup>189</sup> The reasons for disappointments in the Orthodox biblical scholarship esp. in regard to its shallow analysis of the western biblical criticism are expressed in the work of M. N. Nikol'skii, "Our Biblical Science," *PO* 1 (1875): 184-196.

<sup>190</sup> M. N. Nikol'skii, "Our Biblical Science," *PO* 1 (1875): 188.



thought of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russians - reject all that is modern and the all that is non-Russian.<sup>191</sup> This attitude of rejection and faultfinding negatively shaped the level of scholarship; and consequently, the objection itself was accentuated for stronger rather than the properly reasoned debating. On the other hand, since very little was inherited by the 19<sup>th</sup> century orthodox biblical studies from the previous times on which scholars could build their opposing point of view regarding the biblical criticism, the question: "Could anyone in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia anticipate to see a higher level of the Orthodox biblical scholarship?", bears substance.

*Lastly*, in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia, some voiced that the Orthodox apologetics are inherently defensive and therefore seem to allow non-believers and sceptics to set the agenda in a discussion on Christian beliefs. In their view, the best apologetic maintains a clear statement of belief based on the careful study of the Bible. For example, Arch. Khrapovitskii argued, "we have to study the sources carefully and not copy or reproach a system of the western doctrines, as we have been doing for two hundred years."<sup>192</sup> In saying this Arch. Khrapovitskii admits the fact of the influence of the western interpretations on the Russian thought as evident. With its logical reasoning, Khrapovitskii's comments are evident of some degree of independence and originality in the Orthodox ways of interpretation.<sup>193</sup>

Nevertheless, nearly instantaneous reaction against the "negations" of the Western biblical criticism marks a unique characteristic of the Orthodox biblical scholarship during the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century - beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century - honesty and determination to reply to the so-called negative critics. Since Scripture was truly regarded as the Sacred Book for the Orthodox Church, the Church scholars were consequently faithful to it, according to the traditional teaching of the Church. The new methods and theories were considered as an attack on the credibility of Scripture and, consequently, an attack on the authority of the Orthodox Church - "the preserver and keeper of God-revealed truth."<sup>194</sup> Obviously we have only the limited means to discover the real motivations and grounds for the cautions, shown by Orthodox biblical scholars, but the motives indicated above as widely attested in

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<sup>191</sup> Cf. Nikolai Berdiaev, *The Types of Religious Thought in Russia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), 16-18.

<sup>192</sup> Quoted in Florovsky, *Puti*, 482.

<sup>193</sup> In Zen'kovskii argumentation there is an excellent established mode of reasoning. He says, "The concept 'influence' may be applied only where there is at least some measure of *independence* and *originality*; unless this is present one cannot speak of influence: it is impossible to influence a vacuum." *Zen'kovskii*, vol. I, 8 [his italics].

<sup>194</sup> Fr. Grigorii, "Sviashchennoe Predanie ne nizhe Svaiashchennogo Pisaniaia," [The Holy Tradition is not lower than the Holy Scripture,] *Dushepoleznoe Chtenie* III (1914): 94.

Orthodox scholarship, picture the distinctive character of the 19<sup>th</sup> century bible interpretation in Russia.<sup>195</sup>

(b) *Occurrence of Historical-Critical Exegesis*

Although the majority of Orthodox biblical researchers oppose the critical studies of the west, there were some who held “moderate” views. Thus, it seems not legitimate to describe the position of the Orthodox scholars only as a “pure objection” to the critical western studies. For example, the Orthodox theologian Bulgakov positively assesses the historical-critical exegesis. He says,

The triumph of the scientific-critical method applied to sacred writings, especially to the Old and New Testament, is its philological-literature study, in which all-sided examinations are applied to the texts, forms, to all surface literary and historical elements.... Of course, from this point of view there is no and should not be any difference between a literary-historical writing and, for example the Gospel [*i.e.* canonical Gospels].<sup>196</sup>

Consequently, in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the anti-Western confessional spirit did not prevent certain scholars and theologians from being open to the western theological influence.<sup>197</sup> While the majority united in their attempt to disregard the critical notion to apply the approach of new critical methods developed in the western biblical scholarship the Works of the Biblical scholars, especially in Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy, expressed the influence of the western critical literature.

The Rector of the Kiev Academy Filaret (Filaretov, later Bishop of Riga (1824-1882) in his dissertation *Proiskhozhdenie Knigi Iova* [The origin of the Book of Job] did accept the later post-captivity dating of the book and viewed the book more as a literary monument, than as an inspired book of a sacred canon of the Bible.<sup>198</sup> Filaret (Filaretov), thus, “positively” introduced a major issue that has been debated - how historical criticism

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<sup>195</sup> It should be also noted that the attempts directed against the historical critical methods were also widely attested in Roman Catholic scholarship. Roder Aubert, *The Church in a Secular Society*, - Vol. 5 of *The Christian Centuries* (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 1978), 186-203; E. See Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (London: Geoffrey Charman, 1985), 15-25.

<sup>196</sup> S. Bulgakov, *Svet Nevechernii [The Unfading Light]* (M.: Put' 1917; Repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 84.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1996), 187.

<sup>198</sup> Filaret (Filaretov), *Proiskhozhdenie Knigi Iova [The origin of the Book of Job]* (Kiev, 1868).



is reconcilable with and even beneficial to a faith stance in which the Bible is recognized as the inspired “word of God”. The Holy Synod, therefore, forbade its public defence, because “the dissertation was lacking any hint of the divinely inspired character of a book of the Bible.”<sup>199</sup>

Another representative of a critical school in Kiev’s Academy was Iakim Olesnitskii (1842-1907). His primary interest was a literary expression of Jewish biblical poetry. Olesnitskii, by demonstrating the similarities and parallels between the biblical poetry in the books of Proverbs and Song of Songs, and literary songs/narratives of the other ancient ethnic groups in the Near East, suggested a recurrent interpolation of the latter in the biblical texts.<sup>200</sup> In his later works, however, perhaps due to the censorship (see below) and a general opposing spirit toward the biblical criticism, Olesnitskii holds more traditional perspectives toward the biblical interpretation, exemplified by the Church Fathers.<sup>201</sup>

On the whole, 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 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the one hand, in uniting themselves in response 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 commentators were captured by the West, following its creation and quests in responding to the life of the Western scholarship. The Bible interpretation, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox Church, consequently, was both alienating itself from the West by devoting itself to the elements of the Orthodox dogma and tradition, as well as 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.

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<sup>199</sup> Acc. to Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 127. Schmemmann is right when he concludes, “Before the Russian Revolution, free discussion of the problem arising from a critical and historical approach to the Bible was heavily censored if not completely forbidden, in official academic theology.” Alexander Schmemmann, “Russian Theology: An Introductory Survey,” *SVTQ* 16 (1972): 176.

<sup>200</sup> See Iakim Olesnitskii, *Kniga Pesni Pisnei i eia Noveishie Kritiki* [The Book of Song of Songs and its modern critics] (K.: 1880); *Kniga Pritchei Solomonovykh i eia Noveishie Kritiki* [The Book of Proverbs and its modern critics] (K.: 1881).

<sup>201</sup> Iakim Olesnitskii, *Rukovodstvennye printsipy o Sviachshennom Pisanii Vetkhogo i Novogo Zaveta svedeniia is tvorenii sviatykh Ottsov i Uchitelei Tserkvi* [The guiding principles of Church Fathers and Teachers of the Church about Sacred Scripture of the Old Testament and the New Testament] (K.: 1894).

(c) Summary

On the whole, there were two major discussions that shaped the course of the Orthodox biblical scholarship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: (1) the debates over the Bible interpretation between the Orthodox Church and the rest of Christendom, especially with its Protestant radical wing; (2) an inner for the Russian Orthodox Church dispute as to how to approach the Bible interpretation by absolutely following the Patristic methods of Bible interpretation and to build upon it or take it as the foundation, without the danger of moving too far in the other direction of minimizing the historical content of the Bible. Although much time and effort has been allocated to a fundamentalist attempt to defend every detail and to negate the historical difficulties, the development in the Orthodox approach to the Bible historicity has beneficially affected an intelligent understanding of the Scriptures.

The question, however, remains: Did the biblical criticism and critical reviews of the western literature enhance the scholarly competence of the Orthodox school of biblical studies? Fr. George Florovsky answers sufficiently this question when he makes a general analysis of the situation,

Many had to teach what they themselves had never been taught... Too many studied not the subject itself, but rather the western literature about it. It seemed that the only task facing modern Russian scholarship was to “catch up” with western learning. One gets the impression that Russians theologized more through a westernized or western inertia than from inner need or conviction.<sup>202</sup>

Of course, on the one hand, the western biblical criticism evoked the Orthodox scholars to formulate their position on many issues of biblical interpretation. The “perplexing” questions, raised outside of the Russian Orthodoxy, led the biblical scholars into the dialectics of the subject, in which they were not firmly grounded.

The development toward the proficiency in this domain of Bible interpretation, however, was indirectly blocked at the on of 1880s. The shift in the Russian political and religious situation under the influence of Konstantin Pobedonostsev (1827-1907) Professor of Moscow State University and Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod (1880-1905) to search the “truth” not in a freedom of discussion, but in a religious Orthodox conservatism.<sup>203</sup> Although confirming the patriarchal guidance of the Church, Pobedonostsev preferred to

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<sup>202</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 137.

<sup>203</sup> Among his writings of significant importance are: *Kurs grazhdanskogo prava* [*Course on Civil Law*] (M.: 1869); *Istoriia issledovania* [*The History of Investigation*] (M.: 1876). On Pobedonostsev see esp. I. V. Preobrazhenskii, *K. P. Pobedonostsev: Lichnost' i deiatel'nost'* [*K. P. Pobedonostsev: Personality and His Public Work*] (SPb.: 1912).



protect the Russian Orthodoxy through government authority, for the government and the Church administration have the ethical power to determine what is right or wrong.<sup>204</sup>

By reasoning that the Church was not yet ready to defend herself or that open debates and disagreements will harm the Orthodox theological ideas and with the desire to save the traditional core of the Orthodox faith, Pobedonostsev wanted to encourage the Orthodox scholars to give a ready answer to every question, to portray the impression that the Orthodox world view was one of the utter finality, and to prevent the Church from the possibility of any perplexing issue. The moral themes, in contrast, should be allocated the highest significance.

For that very reason, Pobedonostsev had no sympathy for the freedom of theological argumentation. In his *“Rules for Reviewing Treatises Presented for the Purpose of Obtaining Theological Degrees,”* published in 1889 (in Moscow), such freedom was restrained from presenting any grounds for the “false questions.” Rather than systematically examine such questions, the scholars were urged to concentrate only on the Orthodox doctrines regarding them only as genuine.<sup>205</sup> The investigation of false doctrines (or negative views) was almost forbidden, for to sustain attention for too long on such themes, for Pobedonostsev and the Holy Synod, was harmful for the spirit and dignity of the Orthodox Church. Pobedonostsev stressed the ecclesiastic censorship, which at the beginning of the 1980s caused the termination of some of the best theological publications. Among them was an important journal *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie* [Orthodox Review] that since 1860 furnished the material on biblical studies). Consequently, “theological literature as a genre undoubtedly declined to the level of simple edification.”<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> In contrast to Zen'kovskii, who mainly accuses the state of the oppressive censorship in the freedom of investigation. He says, “freedom was always dear to the Russian mind; almost always it was the state rather the Church which introduced oppressive censorship in Russia - and, if oppressive tendencies arose within the Church which gained great strength because of the pressure of the state, the spirit of freedom was never extinguished in the ecclesiastic consciousness.” *Zen'kovskii*, vol. I, 2. The historical factor of the ideological concord of the state and the Orthodox Church has not been undermined, especially in the sensitive questions of Christian world-view.

<sup>205</sup> For instance, M. Muretov, in his study *Renan's Life of Jesus* for the purpose of disproof expounded Renan's arguments. In this case, while Renan's book was translated into Russian and read widely for some time, the censorship held back the publication of Muretov's study against Renan's book for fifteen years.

<sup>206</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 192.

### 3.5.3.5 The Exegetical Works

Although the first fruits of Russian Orthodox exegesis appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the greatest productivity of exegetical works is marked in the course of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The vast number of successive exegetical studies, which obviously cannot be named in this section<sup>207</sup>, may possibly be divided into two categories: (1) popular; and (2) academically specialized. More often, the selective passages, rather than an entire biblical book, were chosen to exegete.

There were the studies produced for the common reader.<sup>208</sup> During 1870-97, Bishop Mikhail (Luzin) wrote the extensive volumes on the Gospels and Paul in which he presented both his own comments and the fragments from widely known works of the Eastern Church Fathers.<sup>209</sup> He always paid respect to a balance between the critical studies and the works that aimed to encourage the living experience of the Church. The commentaries on the Gospels by Boris Gladkov (1847-1921) (in the approach similar to the works of Mikhail) were also well received by the Orthodox Christians and were consequently re-published in several editions.<sup>210</sup>

The perspective of offering the Orthodox Church a commentary on the entire Bible, was initiated by Professor of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy, Aleksandr Lopukhin (1852-1904), the first editor of a twelve-volume *Tolkovoi Biblii* "Explanatory Bible", which was published posthumously (during 1904-1913).

Because the apologetic interests predominated in those years, almost all the academically specialized exegetical works reflected a dynamic interest in this regard.

<sup>207</sup> For the list of exegetical studies, published in the academic journals, during this period see I. Znamenskii, *Sistematicheskii Ukazatel'* [A Systematic Catalog for Periodicals on the subject of Scripture] Parts I and II (Kazan': Kazan' University Press, 1880-1890); I. K. Korol'kov, *Dvadsatiletie Zhurnala: Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii za 1860-1879* [Twenty years of the Journal: Works of the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy 1860-1879] (K.: 1883); also *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii za 1860-1904* [The Index for Works of the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy 1860-1904] (K.: 1905) P. A. Efremov, *Ukazatel' k Pravoslavnomu Obozreniiu 1860-1870* [The Index for the Orthodox Review 1860-1870] (M.: 1872); V. V. Shakhov, *Ukazatel' k Pravoslavnomu Obozreniiu 1871-1886* [The Index for the Orthodox Review 1871-1886] (M.: Moscow University Press, 1887); N. B. *Sistematicheskii Ukazatel': Khristianskoe Chtenie 1821-1870* [The Index for Christian Reading 1821-1870] (SPb.: 1871); A. Rodoskii, *Sistematicheskii Ukazatel': Khristianskoe Chtenie 1871-1880* [The Index for Khristianskoe Chtenie 1871-1880] (SPb.: 1881).

<sup>208</sup> See the list of the authors who mainly wrote for a popular reader in *Men'*, 282.

<sup>209</sup> Michail Luzin, *Tolkovoe Evangelie [Explanatory Gospel]*, 3 vols. (M.: 1970-74); *Ibid.*, *Tolkovii Apostol [Explanatory Apostle]*, 2 vols. (K.: 1890-97).

<sup>210</sup> Boris Gladkov, *Tolkovanie Evangelii [The Interpretation of the Gospels]*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (SPb.: 1913).



Among the latest scholars, who produced the exegetical studies of relevant apologetic purposes, were Mitr. of Kharkov' Antonii, Aleksandr Roshchdestvenskii (1864-1930), Archbishop Varfolomei (Remov, 1880-1936), Bishop Feofan (Bistrov, 1872-1943), Veniamin Platonov 1883-1936)<sup>211</sup> and Vasilii Chetirkin (d. 1948), and the others.<sup>212</sup>

Professor of Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy Mitrofan Muretov (1850-1917) was one of the most prominent biblical scholars of this period. Besides the New Testament, Muretov lectured both Greek and French at the Academy. His primary interests were, however Biblical Hermeneutics and Exegesis.<sup>213</sup> Muretov's productivity and the extensive nature of his scholarly exegetical works led some to title him as "the first Russian New Testament exegete".<sup>214</sup>

Two main characteristics of his exegesis stand out in his published studies (especially from his premium *Novii Zavet kak predmet Pravoslavno-Bogoslovskogo izucheniiia* [*The New Testament as the Subject of the Orthodox-Theological Study*])<sup>215</sup> where he develops the Orthodox view on New Testament Theology).

In the first instance, it is a Christ-centered exegesis. In his view, the understanding of the Bible should only be explained and studied through Christ, that is under the guidance of a unique idea of Godmanhood. The idea of Godmanhood, for Muretov, is the main object of New Testament theology from the Orthodox point of view. The life of Christ, presented in the Gospels, according to Muretov, provides ideological-theological foundation for the Orthodox New Testament scholarship. Consequently, the exegesis should be mainly of theological (Christological or dogmatical) concern, rather than a pure literary study, in which the consideration of literary sources, the formulating of genres, the emphasis on the division of the text into its constituent parts, take the central place as main aim of exegesis. Muretov was very concerned about the fact that a literary approach may lead biblical interpretation to the pattern of reduction of the New Testament books to the level of good stories that may or may not be grounded in the actual historical events.

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<sup>211</sup> About him see the articles in *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate* # 12 (1948), # 11 (1949).

<sup>212</sup> For a selective bibliography see *Men'*, 288, n. 68.

<sup>213</sup> About him and the list of his works is found in Archimondrite Simon (Novikov), "Professor Mitrofan D. Muretov of the Moscow theological Academy and his Studies of the Four Gospels," *JMP* 4 (1972): 75-80.

<sup>214</sup> Acc. Archimondrite Simon (Novikov), "Professor Mitrofan D. Muretov of the Moscow theological Academy and his Studies of the Four Gospels," *JMP* 4 (1972): 76.

<sup>215</sup> M. D. Muretov, *Novyi Zavet kak predmet Pravoslavno-Bogoslovskogo izucheniiia* [*The New Testament as the Subject of the Orthodox-Theological Study*] (M.: 1915).

*Secondly*, Muretov's exegesis maintains the historical approach. The New Testament, for Muretov, is both: (1) circumscribable and limited according to its letter and to history; and (2) uncircumscribable and unlimited in its spiritual and contemplative aspects as reflective of a "trans-historical" and an unlimited Word of God. The exegetical labor itself, for Muretov, can be justified as an ecclesiastic and creative construction in a historical perspective toward both the New Testament times (as the background) and the history of the Early Church (as the essence). He stresses,

The Church experience does not divide the history of Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus of faith.... The Church recognizes and confirms dogmatic events in the life of Jesus as facts of history... [Therefore] to interpret Scripture means to exegete it in the historical element.<sup>216</sup>

Especially on the point of historical reliability of Scripture, Muretov and the other Orthodox exegetes attempted to remonstrate the western biblical criticism.<sup>217</sup> The assumption that the Bible is concrete history and at the same time has super historical significance, underlines the distinctive characteristic of the Orthodox exegesis in its double perspective as undoubtedly historical and meta-historical.<sup>218</sup>

Conclusively can be stated that the important feature of the Orthodox exegesis was related to the polysemantic nature of Scripture, which requires the use of numerous steps in an exegetical study and the use of the different areas of knowledge (such as biblical history, archeology, biblical languages, etc). Several elements were especially considered as vital: the study of the Biblical texts in the original languages, an attention given to the literary and historical contexts, the comparative study of the Gospels, the consideration of the authorial corpus and style of his expressions.<sup>219</sup> These exegetical processes did not dismiss one another, but were used as the supplement of each other.

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<sup>216</sup> M. Muretov, "Renan's Life of Jesus," *BV* IV (1894) 11: 243-245.

<sup>217</sup> See John A. Jillions, *Biblical Criticism in Russia's Nineteenth Century Theological Renewal: The Case of Professor Mitrofan Muretov (1850-1917)*, non-published Master's Thesis at Saint Vladimir Orthodox Seminary, Crestwood: NY, 1984. This study, however, is exclusively based on the secondary sources and does not reflect the knowledge of Muretov's original thought.

<sup>218</sup> "Every fact narrated in the Bible is a historical fact which has had its place and its moment in history, while at the same time it is always possesses a symbolical sense; it is a sign that spiritual scope passes beyond the reason of mere history.... Looked at from one point of view the book of the Kings and the synoptic Gospels are history, and the books of the Chronicles and the Gospel St. John are meta-history. The orthodox exegetical attitude lies in the unbroken equilibrium between the two perspectives; it turns from the figure to contemplate the icon." Pavel Evdokimov, "An Eastern Orthodox Bible Study," *Student World* XLII/12 (1949): 155.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. S. Sol'skii, "A Short Review of the History of Biblical exegesis," *TKDA* 10 (1866): 157-190; *Ibid.*, "The use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* 11 (1868): 251-270.



### 3.7 Conclusion

By 1914 there was a great development of theological schools: both undergraduate and graduate. There were more than 40.000 schools of all kinds that depended on the Orthodox Church.<sup>220</sup> These schools had a potential of preparing able theologians, historians, biblical scholars, and liturgists for the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, when the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church became an ideological enemy *a priori*, as being an institutional part of czarist Russia. The theological schools were closed. Many bishops, thousands of clergymen, as well as lay people were subjected to repression up to execution. The closure of theological schools and immigration of the best scholars from the country destroyed the possibility of increase of biblical scholarship in the Russian Orthodox Church. Fr. Alexander Shmemann even argues that 1917 “brings to an end a whole epoch of Orthodox itself.”<sup>221</sup> The recent theological conference of the Russian Orthodox Church ‘An Orthodoxy on the Threshold of the New Millennium’, which was held in Moscow (7-9 February, 2000), evaluated the Orthodox theology in the XX c. It recognized that after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the field of biblical interpretation has been almost fruitless.<sup>222</sup> The recent developments, which occurred after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 is the subject of future analysis.

Keeping the focus of this study in mind the results referring to the aim of establishing the historical trends in understanding and interpretation of the Bible within the Russian Orthodox Church, may be summarized by recalling and condensing those strands to one perspective: the character of the bible study in the Russian Orthodoxy.

*Firstly*, the biblical interpretation itself was a process best understood in a sole and specific perspective - from within a historical-dogmatic tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church and the history of the nation. The perspective of biblical interpretation was always linked with the issues or factors of a specific prevailing environment in the Church and society. Precisely, the Orthodox Bible expositors attempted to interpret the Scriptures by

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<sup>220</sup> John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, Trans. from French by John Chaplin (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 117.

<sup>221</sup> Alexander Shmemann, *Istoricheskii Put' Pravoslaviia [The Historical Way of Orthodoxy]* (New York, 1954; M.: 1993), 341.

<sup>222</sup> Esp. see Iannuarii, *Biblical Studies in the Russian Orthodox Church in XX .c.* Unpublished paper presented at the Conference “An Orthodoxy on the Threshold of the New Millennium”, Moscow (7-9 February, 2000), <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru> (November, 2000)

correlating an interpretation of the contemporary situation in the Church and nation with an interpretation of the scriptural texts. The implication of such a correlation clarified the theological task to provide specific interpretation or studies on the principle issues in the contemporary situation. This is why during many initial centuries the Orthodox teachers of the Bible emphasized the ethical element of the Scripture and provided the moral vision of the Bible for the nation that accepted Christianity by force rather than by genuine conversion, or at a later date, the biblical interpretation duplicated the spirit of Russian "nihilism" of negating and debating from a pure antagonistic perspective.

*Secondly*, the peculiar mixture of failures and achievements in the Orthodox Bible interpretation characteristically correlated with the distinct attention given by the interpreters to their predecessors. Often, over the course of history, the Russian Orthodox scholars have not been developing the biblical scholarship by considering the previous works and systems of their own predecessors<sup>223</sup> (such consideration, however, was given in the other fields<sup>224</sup>). For example, the works on hermeneutics published during 1809-1848 do not even mention the hermeneutical principles given by Mitr. Platon in his *Instruction for the Interpreter of the Holy Scripture*. It is possible to suggest, that the Orthodox biblical scholarship as such has its history, but it lacks a gradual development within its own legacy (in a narrow sense of *cause-effect process*). Such a historical path of the biblical scholarship in the Russian Orthodox Church led one of the prominent Orthodox theologians to say, "Biblical studies represent the weakest area in the Russian theology, and it is clear, still awaits a real 'revamping' of its 'Biblical department.'" <sup>225</sup>

*Thirdly*, the larger historical development of the Orthodox Bible interpretation indicates, that due to many surrounding and controlling factors the Bible interpretation is of responsive character rather than of a proactive nature. During many periods of time the biblical scholars were involved in the disputes over the issues of Bible translation, Church dogma, biblical criticism, etc., as the replying side rather than the initiative party. The course of their accomplishments was pre-formed by the others, from other theological

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. F. G. Eleonskii, "Otechestvennye trudy po izucheniiu Biblii v XIX v.," *KhCh* # 1 (1901), 17.

<sup>224</sup> During the historical church-directed progress of the Orthodox scholarship only the field of Patrology was fully developed. "More works of the Fathers and related texts have been translated into Russian than into any other European language." John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, Trans. from French by John Chaplin (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 117. The list of translated works see in C. Kern, *Les Traductions russes des textes patristiques: Guide bibliographique* (Chevetogne, 1957).

<sup>225</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, "Russian Theology: An Introductory Survey," *SVTQ* 16(1972): 176, 178.



fields. Of course, one can say that the Orthodox theology has never felt “at home” in biblical scholarship in the West or did not accept as its own the problems formulated within Russian philosophical development. Obviously, the Orthodox biblical scholarship demonstrated a passive attitude which marked a lack of initiative in that regard, as reflected in the Church life.

*Forthly*, let us refer to the legitimacy of two contrasting conclusions, offered in recent studies that state: (1) the Russian Orthodox biblical scholars created their own principles of biblical interpretation and succeeded to a high level of the Biblical scholarship;<sup>226</sup> and (2) in Russia there has never been the Biblical scholarship.<sup>227</sup> Of course, it would be an exaggeration to articulate a high level of the biblical scholarship in the Russian Orthodoxy. The Orthodox scholars themselves did not make such a statement. On the contrary, they voiced self-criticism. Just at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Nikol’skii explicitly concluded,

In biblical studies we do not have the scholars of original work, the specialists in a full measure... in regard to the biblical studies we have nothing to display; we did absolutely nothing to contribute to it. In the field of biblical literature it is impossible to indicate any one, about whom it is acceptable to say, without hesitation, that he had investigated all the Scriptures from the originals, knows the biblical languages, utilized in the interpretation a broad scope of the historical and archaeological knowledge, which was diligently collected by a modern science.<sup>228</sup>

Yet, as our study shows, the interpretation of the Bible was undertaken in the Orthodox Church and its results should not be considered in comparison to the Western biblical scholarship, but in the context of its own situation - within the historical frame of the Orthodox Church. In that regard the only conclusion that may be drawn is rooted in the fact that, although the Russian Orthodox Church firmly maintains the Scriptural roots and dimensions of every theological discipline: dogma, Ecclesiology and moral theology, yet it “implicitly rather than explicitly rejects the isolation of Scripture in a closed and self-sufficient field of study.”<sup>229</sup> Such isolation of Scripture suggests that the Orthodox

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<sup>226</sup> *Men’*, 273. Cf. with Ivliev’s conclusion, “During XIX c. the Russian Biblicism accomplishes at a very high scientific level. The achievements of its major figures certainly may be viewed as of equal value to the scholarly research of their time [in the West].” Cf. Ivliev, “Contribution of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy in the Russian Biblicism,” *BT* (1986): 192.

<sup>227</sup> Sergey Lezov, *Kanonicheskie Evangeliiia [The Canonical Gospels]* (M.: Nauka, 1993), 24.

<sup>228</sup> M. N. Nikol’skii, “Our Biblical Science,” *PO* 1(1875): 187.

<sup>229</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, “Russian Theology: An Introductory Survey,” *SVTQ* 16 (1972): 177.

interpreters of the Bible were inherently restricted from theologising and theorising merely in a pure scholarly approach.

The final word on the history of biblical interpretation in Russian Orthodox Church is a perplexing task, because “for a simply curious mind and all the more for the mind longing for a serious study of the development of Biblical studies in Russia, its observation presents many things that make one think, rejoice and sorrow, meditate and search.”<sup>230</sup>

Our study must go on. Keeping in mind the historical overview of bible interpretation on the Russian Orthodox Church, from the *Kiev period* of its history (X-XIII cc.) till the *Synodal period* (1721-1917), we are going to attempt the analysis of the hermeneutical perspective of the Orthodox Bible interpretation. In the following two chapters we will approach the Orthodox hermeneutics from two angles. *Firstly*, the focus will be on the theoretical-dogmatic matters of anthropology. *Secondly*, in Chapter 6, our discussion will turn to Dmitrii Ivanovich Bogdashevskii (1861-1933). The investigation of his understanding of the New Testament interpretation and hermeneutics will serve as the test case study in Russian Orthodox hermeneutics.

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<sup>230</sup> “Для мысли и просто любознательной, а тем более желающей серьезно изучать эту область, обозрение ея представляет много такого, что заставляет задуматься, порадоваться и поскорбеть, помыслить и размыслить.” *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 115.