

## **5.3 Hermeneutical Assessment of the New Testament investigation**

### **5.3.1 Introduction**

Bogdashevskii considered his own New Testament exegetical writings as an attempt to enrich Russian Orthodox Church exegetical literature which he considered inadequate in merit and quantity.<sup>88</sup>

Since the study of exegetical methodology is the study of understanding the New Testament and because any study of understanding the text begin reading or interpretation it starts out with presuppositions. The statements about Bogdashevskii's personal presuppositions are in agreement with the analysis of his methodology. Since in biblical hermeneutics there are almost an infinite number of possible presuppositions or assumptions (i.e., *a priori* framework of exegesis), the focus of the following discussion will be his theological and methodological axiomatic assumptions that construct Bogdashevskii's theory of reading and experiencing the New Testament, judging its worth, and interpreting its meaning.

### **5.3.2 Theological Axiomatic Assumptions**

Bogdashevskii is a devoted Orthodox clergy and exegete. The frame of reference of his exegesis is the whole range of the Orthodox faith. The Orthodox theological concepts, and every in its own way, enforce or discharge certain requirements of particular exegetical phases. They form his principles and attitudes toward the text under investigation, serve decisively for both making the choice of the kind of question(s) to be applied to the text and form the expectation concerning the kind of questions and issues the text will disclose to the reader. Bogdashevskii's theological views also pre-govern the results of exegesis by supplying a theological conception attached to any specific matter found in the text. Altogether, the fixed theological views of the exegete form his pre-conceptual relationship in life to the New Testament and to its interpretation.

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Ob"iasnitel'nye Zamechaniia k Naibolee Trudnym Mestam Poslaniia Iakova," ["The Explanatory Remarks for the Most Difficult Texts of the Letter of James,"] *TKDA* III, 9 (1894): 116.

From a long list of Bogdashevskii's cognitive and conceptual theological beliefs and determinations such as loyalty to the Orthodox doctrine and the conception of the Church, together with those two specifics: (1) the human-divine nature of the New Testament, and (2) the supernatural elements in the New Testament, significantly shape his way of reading the New Testament. These three elements, as the operative conditions for how Bogdashevskii approaches the process of understanding the New Testament, are selected for a focused treatment.

### 5.3.2.1 The Matter of Ecclesiology Within Hermeneutical Frame

Bogdashevskii's treatment and an extended exposition of related issues of the Church as a topic of theological understanding appears in two of his public lectures *About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands* (19 December 1903) and *On Significance of the Church* (17 October 1913), which were delivered for the members of *Kiev Religious-Educational Society*. One of the main theses of these lectures is that the concept of the Church in its theoretical and practical significance, is fundamental for formulating all the other theological questions of the Christian world-view.<sup>89</sup> In light of this consideration, it is evident that the formal structure of Bogdashevskii's theological and hermeneutical framework is emphatically *ecclesiological*.

Bogdashevskii's major assumption is that "for understanding the Church it is vital to completely distinguish a *subjective* from an *objective* aspect of the Church."<sup>90</sup> The concept of *objectivity* constitutes that the Church is *one* and *harmonious* (i.e. undivided in her structure and activities); and, as such, the Church is *perfect*, *holy* and *true*. The *subjective* aspect of the Church is conceptually attached to the people - the members of the Church, who are *sinful*, *limited* and *untrue* in their deeds, thoughts and achievements.<sup>91</sup> A real essence of the Church is expressed in the sacraments. The sacraments, especially baptism and eucharist, liturgy, and the body of rites prescribed for formal Orthodox public worship serve as the paradigm of receiving God's supplying grace, and it is in this atmosphere the *objective*

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Chtenie. O Tserkvi," ["Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,"] *TKDA* 2 (1904): 167.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 194.



aspect of the Church overcomes the *subjective*.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the ecclesiastical community, in corporate worship and within a sacramental context, bears witness to the power of the Word of God in the truest meaning of scripture.<sup>93</sup> This is one of Bogdashevskii's presuppositions that dominate his reading of the New Testament.

Since Bogdashevskii does not really attempt to produce a comprehensive synthesis of the New Testament teaching on the Church, it is not easy to point out to a focal image that governs his reading of the New Testament text related to the Church. Nevertheless, by using the New Testament metaphors, Bogdashevskii emphasizes that the Church is: (1) the organic body of Christ; Christ is the head, Christians the many co-equal members; (2) it is related to Christ as branches to a vine [a more intricate and pervasive relationship is implied by this image than by the image of the body]; (3) the bride of Christ, an image that stresses the personal, intimate quality of the relationship and the depth of mutual commitment; and (4) the people of God, a description that stresses, on one hand, the continuity of the church with Israel and, on the other, its potential universality. The earthly state of the Body of Christ is in a living and mutual communion with the heavenly Church (on this basis "the necessity to pray for the dead and saints is obvious"<sup>94</sup>).

There are several significant elements in Bogdashevskii's ecclesiology. *First*, the Church as the assembly includes two important factors: (1) the organised *unity*; and (2) a momentum of *calling* to be in the Church. Precisely because God calls all the churchmen into the Church, it is possible to be One Body of many members (*i.e.* to be harmoniously united). Consequently, the same laws guide the members of the Body, *i.e.* they have one and the same faith and a doctrinal core of the Orthodox faith. Only a complete acceptance of Orthodox teaching on the essence of faith and life-practice is the guarantee and indicator of personal conversion and salvation; rather than merely faith in Christ. Since there is no salvation outside of the Church, one must be a member of the Church, but in order to be in the Church one must completely confess the teaching of the Church.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. "Only in the sacraments does the Christian Community pass beyond the purely human measure and become the Church." Georges Florovsky, "The Church: Her Nature and Task," in his *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View: Collected Works* Vol. 1. (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1972), 61.

<sup>93</sup> Florovsky speaks of the principle *ut legem credenti statuat lex arandi* ["So that the rule of worship should establish the rule of faith"]. Florovsky, *BCT*, 61.

<sup>94</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 172.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 185.

*Second*, he does not insist that the Church should be understood “*only* as the society of the true or proper believers in Christ.”<sup>96</sup> This definition of the Church, in his vision, is *absolutely inaccurate*. He shows no interest in applying absolute classification to the members of the Orthodox Church. He says,

[T]he modern empiricism knows only the believing Ivan or the sceptical Peter..., but according to an empirical point of view nothing is impossible to understand in Christianity; a higher Christian idealism is needed. From this point of view, the Church is neither a simple assembly nor a simple abstract.<sup>97</sup>

Since the people form only a *subjective side* of the Church, the essence of the Church *cannot* be judged on the basis of the standing of her members. Whether this position is correct or not, it can hardly be denied that Bogdashevskii’s appeal to the authority of a doctrinal teaching of the Church characteristically highlights not only the harmonious state of the Church, but also its major task, namely to indoctrinate or instruct the people in faith. This conviction is essential for the purpose of exegesis.

Of course, Bogdashevskii notes that the Church is the establishment that instructs the people *graciously*, rather than *judicially*, for in judicial instruction everything is based on the external mandate. The Church, however, instructs a man not from outside, but from within itself; *i.e.* from its *truly-living-divine* nature. Christ himself dwells in the Church through the Holy Spirit. Thus, it is the institution where God can be really known. It is worthy, Bogdashevskii argues that since the Spirit of God gave birth to the Church and Christ is continuously dwelling in her through the Spirit, the Church has all the rights to be a *holy* and *divine* institution that brings the people to the maturity of faith and knowledge in Christ.<sup>98</sup>

*Third*, the major character of the Church’s nature in Bogdashevskii’s thought is its fullness. Actually, the fullness is not a character as such it is nothing else but the essence of the Church. The concept’s precise formulation is found in the following arguments,

The Church is the fullness, *i.e.* the perfection, unconditional perfection; nothing could be added or attached to the Church. She is the ‘fullness’ in its basic nature, but in the

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<sup>96</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,” *TKDA* 2 (1904): 168 [my italics].

<sup>97</sup> “[С]овременный эмпиризм знает только верующего Ивана, или сомневающегося Петра,... но при эмпирической точке зрения в христианстве ничего нельзя понять; тут необходим высший христианский идеализм. С этой точки зрения, Церковь не есть ни простой коллектив, ни чистый абстракт.” *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Idem*.



lives of believers this fullness is gradually actualising, through the operation of its Head - Christ.... [T]he development of the Church is not development as such, but it is the self-disclosure of its ideal, given in Christ.... As the fullness of Christ, the Church is holy, a sure thing in essence; not in a factual state of its members who furthermore need sanctification. As the fullness of Christ, the Church is sinless; it has the fullness, rather than a partial truth and, therefore, it does not destroy its own teaching previously accepted.<sup>99</sup>

Bogdashevskii notes that even if the members of the Church profess or popularize a 'corrupt' faith or the heretical doctrines they do not diminish the holiness of the Church; rather they separate themselves from the Church by constituting heresy and schism. Furthermore, the modification of the Church's organization or rituals does not signify the change of the essence of the Church, i.e., its holiness and fullness.<sup>100</sup> On these arguments is based his next view that articulates the Church as a completely perfected agent to convey God's knowledge in this World, for God is revealing in the Church. This thought on Church becomes his hermeneutical key.

*Fourth*, as the above quotation indicates, Bogdashevskii does not only explain his view of the Church, but he also seeks to articulate the efficiency of Church tradition, which is based entirely on the conceptual reality of the fullness of Christ in the Church. Since the fullness of Christ presupposes the fullness of the Church, the Orthodox tradition (*i.e.* the mind of the whole Orthodox Church) gives a comprehensive operating understanding of the divine truths. Furthermore, since only within the Orthodox Church "an ancient Christian purity and truthfulness are preserved,"<sup>101</sup> Bogdashevskii is convinced that in his own time the divine truth is dwelling in the Russian Orthodox Church without error.

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<sup>99</sup> "Как тело Христово, Церковь есть полнота, т.е. совершенство, безусловное совершенство, в ней нет ничего недостающего, что можно бы, или нужно бы присоединить. Она "полнота" по существу, а в жизни верующих эта полнота, чрез действие Главы Христа, ... Развивается ли Церковь, если она есть "полнота"? Не развивается, конечно, а только самораскрывается, ибо "развитие ея не есть что-либо новое, не данное Христом, а есть осуществление того идеала, который дан ей во Христе... . Как полнота Христово, Церковь свята, - свята, конечно, опять по существу, а не по фактическому состоянию своих членов, которые нуждаются в освящении. Как полнота Христово, Церковь непогрешима, владеть полною, а не частичною истиною, а потому она не разрушает того своего учения, которое признавала раньше." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 173-74.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *Idem.*, 174. The matching elements are stressed, among the others, by A. S. Khomiakov, *Collected Works* (M.: 1900), Vol. II, 4-5.

<sup>101</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 186.

*Fifth*, as far as the whole spectrum of the Church's objective, Bogdashevskii says that the tasks of the Church chiefly corresponds with its understanding as: (a) the realized Kingdom of God; and (b) the undertaking instrument of establishing the Kingdom of God (this leads to the conclusion that "salvation without the Church is impossible"<sup>102</sup>). The principal task of the Church is to establish: (1) the Kingdom of God *inside us* (ethical task); (2) the kingdom of truth, peace, love and joy about the Holy Spirit of God *outside us* (cosmological task); the Kingdom of God *in future* (eschatological task). For all these purposes the Church is longing to bring all the people to Christ.<sup>103</sup> The interpretation of Scripture has to be correspondent with this notion.

*Sixth*, Bogdashevskii determines that the true Church is only in the Orthodox version. A statement that "There is only true Church - the Orthodox Church"<sup>104</sup> reasons that the Roman Catholic Church or the Protestant Christianity has deliberately separated itself from an incompatible mind of the Church, by moving away from a consolidated ecclesiastic consciousness. The Roman Catholic Church, in his opinion, cannot be called the Church in a biblical sense, for it introduced the papal rule, the papal sinlessness, concept of indulgence, purgatory, etc. Bogdashevskii argues that the Orthodox Church is premium over to the Roman Catholicism even in regard to Scripture. He declares, "Thanks be to God, the Orthodox Church gave in the hands of all of us the Word of God; it never put out a papal manifesto against a new version of the biblical text."<sup>105</sup> In regard to Protestantism he says,

Protestantism is not the Church, but it is only a Christian confession. Where there is no hierarchy there is no Church... Protestantism in its teaching departed from the unity with the universal Church tradition... their rules of complete individualism or independence. Protestantism is some kind of anarchism of faith, for there every person has his own rights on how to believe.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Chtenie. O znachenii Tserkvi," ["Lecture. On the Significance of the Church,"] *TKDA* 3 (1913): 458, see also p. 459

<sup>103</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 175.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. "Двух истинных Церквей не существует и не может существовать, а есть только единая истинная Церковь – Церковь Православная, как хранящая подлинное Апостольское и отеческое учение без всяких уклонений и искажений." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. On Significance of the Church," *TKDA* 3 (1913): 458.

<sup>105</sup> "Богу благодарение, православная Церковь всем нам дала в руки слово Божие; никогда она не издавала папских декретов против принятия нового варианта священного библейского текста..." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 181.

<sup>106</sup> "Протестанство не есть Церковь, а только христианское исповедание,... Там, где нет богоучрежденной иерархии, не существует и церкви;... Протестанство в своем учении



In contrast to Roman Catholicism or Protestantism, the Orthodox Church is the true Church which is characterized by the oneness of many, a harmonic unity in freedom.<sup>107</sup> Thus, Bogdashevskii stressed that in his time “only the Greek-Russian Orthodox Church is a sole carrier and manifestation of the universal Church.”<sup>108</sup> Since the Russian Orthodox Church has no other authority (religious or secular) than Christ himself, in the questions of faith, the authority of the Church reflects the supremacy of Christ.

*Seventhly*, in formulating his account of the Church, Bogdashevskii also comments that the Church, despite her doctrinal conservatism, does not reject or bind scientific investigation in general nor a scientific approach to the Bible in particular. He begins with a statement that the participation in the Church is completely voluntary, because to believe is the act of freedom. He then develops his arguments on the issue in the following way:

If someone joined the Church, he is spiritually obligated to submit himself to the Church; under different conditions he is not the member of the Church. The Church cannot deny him her own doctrinal teaching, established by the universal councils.... She is not a common human institution; rather she is the divine establishment, animated by the Holy Spirit. The Revelation of God cannot contradict itself. The Church does not receive new revelation and does not give birth to the truths previously unknown, rather it makes known the foregoing and unchanged... Therefore, it is possible and necessary to investigate according to our personal facilities, but this investigation must not be disassociated from the foundation of a fixed Church tradition. If our investigation in theological fields differs from the universal church teaching, it ought to question the legitimacy of our conclusions, because the Church is more accurate than we and her mind supersedes our insufficiency.<sup>109</sup> We are searching and we have the right to search, but the Church... already has what we are searching for; therefore it is obligatory to be submissive to her universal truth. The investigation in the area of Christian faith is not some kind of scientific research; here all the abilities of our spirit are longing for the knowledge of

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порвало всякую связь с единым вселенским преданием; Протестанство - это своего рода анархизм в области веры, ибо здесь каждое лицо имеет право так, или иначе веровать.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,” *TKDA 2* (1904): 179.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 177-181; Cf. Bishop Antonii, “Chem otlichaetsia pravoslavnaia vera ot zapadnykh ispovedanii,” [“How Orthodox Faith differs from Western Confessions,”] *Missionary Society // Missionerskoe Obshchestvo* July-August (1901): 3-13.

<sup>108</sup> “Православная Греко-Российская Церковь есть в настоящее время единственная носительница и выразительница Церкви вселенной.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,” *TKDA 2* (1904): 183.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. “Spirit of Christ, sustaining the Church is wiser our careful wisdom. [Ru. - “Дух Христов, хранящий Церковь, премудрее (нашей) расчетливой мудрости.”] A. S. Khomiakov, *Collected Works*, Vol. II (M.: 1900), 24.

truth. If we correctly appeal to the problem, then it is obvious that the Church for us is not something external, a simple authority restraining us. We are flesh from her flesh and bone from her bones; in her is our true life, our true autonomy. The Church does not set limits for any scientific investigation... she blesses every such study, except if this produces unbelief. The Church, obviously, cannot allow to popularize among its members all the pernicious teachings which reject the concept of a personal God, the immortality of the human soul, revelation, etc.<sup>110</sup>

From the above remarks it is clear that Bogdashevskii seeks to defend two interrelated assumptions that binds together his view of Church tradition and scientific investigation: (1) since the Church has a complete divine revelation as well as a full understanding of the truth; and (2) its teaching (tradition) is fundamental key to proper scientific investigation as well as the governing factor in establishing the integrity of all the exegetical phases and results.

In addition, since from the early times “the Orthodox Church preserved an authentic Apostolic and patristic teaching without corruption and error”<sup>111</sup> the exegesis of Scripture has to keep it safe and unchanging now and in the imminent future. The Orthodox Church, in Bogdashevskii’s view, preserved not only written sources of Christian tradition (the Bible is part of tradition) but also she preserved an oral tradition, an authoritative source for the Christian faith.<sup>112</sup>

It is possible to conclude that Bogdashevskii’s thoughts on Church become his hermeneutical key. His ecclesiology does not separate the Church from Scripture. Both the

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<sup>110</sup> “Кто вступил в Церковь, он обязан ей духовно подчиняться, а иначе он не член ея. Церковь не может отказаться от того вероучения, которое она установила на вселенских соборах:... она не обыкновенное, человеческое учреждение, а учреждение божественное, одушевляемое Духом Святым; откровение Божие не может самому себе противоречить, и Церковь не получает новых откровений, не рождает дотоле неведомых ей истин, а она только раскрывает первоначальное, неизменное свое содержание, данное ей Христом, применительно к нуждам и потребностям, в разное время различным, своих членов. Поэтому можно и должно исследовать, сколько кому позволяют его силы и способности, но только пусть это исследование не будет оторванным от почвы единого вселенского церковного предания. А если наше исследование в богословской области расходится с вселенским церковным учением, нужно усумниться в справедливости наших выводов, ибо Церковь правее нас, ея разум бесконечно превосходит нашу ограниченность. Мы ищем и имеем право искать, но Церковь, как благодатное учреждение, владеет уже тем, чего мы ищем, а потому нужно быть покорным ея вселенской истине. Исследование в области веры, это не какой-либо научный эксперимент, а тут участвуют все силы нашего духа, стремящегося познать живую истину. Если правильно вникнуть в дело, то Церковь не есть для нас нечто внешнее, простой авторитет, стесняющий нас, а мы плоть от плоти ея и кость от кости ея; в ней наша истинная жизнь, наша истинная автономия.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,” *TKDA* 2 (1904): 191-192.

<sup>111</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. On the Significance of the Church,” *TKDA* 3 (1913): 458.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Чтение. О Евангелии и Евангел’скои Истории: Против современного рационализма,” [“Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,”] *TKDA* 2 (1902): 281.



Old and New Testaments are part of the Church tradition. Assuming the indisputable fullness and perfection of the Orthodox Church, Bogdashevskii seeks to construct a hermeneutic that eliminate the non-essentiality - indeed, the impossibility - of independent human reckoning in biblical interpretation and the necessity of the reading of the Bible and its understanding within the Church and according to the Church.

His statement "If someone joined the Church, he is spiritually obligated to submit himself to her; or he is not the member of the Church"<sup>113</sup> directly indicates that an individual Orthodox exegete must adhere to the Church oversight of the meaning of the New Testament for she is protecting the Bible from heretical misunderstanding. In general, his rule is "*Believe as the Church prescribes, live as the Church commends.*"<sup>114</sup> This well presupposes: *interpret and understand as the Church discerns.*

### 5.3.2.2 The Nature of the New Testament

In Bogdashevskii's view, the New Testament is the most imminent source of the Orthodox faith. He says, "our faith and our life are predominantly based upon these books."<sup>115</sup> The New Testament is the collection of accounts, written by inspired men. Here the divine revelation is recorded. It is God's self-disclosure to humans. Regarding the New Testament composition he says,

[The human writers], illuminated by the Spirit of God, offer the facts from Jesus' life that most plainly represent Him as our Reconciler with God. Every writer accomplishes this task in accordance with his own individual particularities, as well as with the needs, want and character of the believers to whom the Gospel was addressed.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> "Кто вступил в Церковь, он обязан ей духовно подчиняться, а иначе он не член ея." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 191.

<sup>114</sup> "*Веруйте так, как учит Церковь, живите так, как повелевает Церковь.*" D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. On the Significance of the Church," *TKDA* 3 (1913): 457 [my italics].

<sup>115</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 267.

<sup>116</sup> "Евангелисты, просвещенные Духом Божиим, передают из жизни Господа только то, что наиболее открывает в Нем Спасителя, Примирителя нас с Богом; каждый из них осуществляет эту цель сообразно индивидуальным своим особенностям, равно нуждам, потребностям и характеру верующих, которым назначалось Евангелие." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287.

The above quotation reflects Bogdashevskii's view of Scripture. *First*, the New Testament is *the record* that communicates to the readers the important matters about God's personal character and activity and His message to the people. It also means that the New Testament has its origin in God himself and as God's word his Spirit communicated it to the people. In this way, the New Testament is the transmission of interrelated divine truths to the people. It is the Word of God. The New Testament constitutes the access to God's revelation in Jesus. As the New Testament is read, the Spirit of God uses it to produce a faith response toward Jesus as the Reconciler. Here Bogdashevskii refers to a common for the Russian Orthodox theologian factor of the Spirit as the illuminating agent for perceiving a divine reality.

*Second*, regarding the concept of inspiration of the New Testament, Bogdashevskii argues one should accept that as a result of a direct energizing of the Holy Spirit the writers have been guarded from misconception; yet one should not arrive at a conclusion that inspiration reduces an individual character of the writer and that the text does not reflect the peculiarity of a human author and an author's distinct intention, in relation to his intellectual, mental and spiritual qualities.<sup>117</sup> Both divine and human nature of the Bible are in effect. He says, "The inspiration itself does not suppress and does not exclude an individuality of any sacred writer, and therefore every book in itself reflects a particular image of the Apostolic message and incorporates its specific type."<sup>118</sup> The concept of inspiration, "does not exclude the use of the ordinary human tools by sacred writers," such as the gathering and investigation of the historical data, learning and quotation from the oral and written sources, etc.<sup>119</sup> The concept of inspiration is not merely limited to a single word or to grammatical form, but is connected to the speech in general, the method of evidence and explanation, the idea.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, this concept is not based in or fixed in the New Testament itself, but it is inborn in the revelation that belongs to the Church, the revelation of the Christ through the Holy Spirit. Based on a such view the New Testament presupposes a special understanding that involves (1) a process of personal divine-human interaction within the Church community; (2) faith as a predetermined attitude toward the text(s).

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<sup>117</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>119</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Ob istochnikakh Deianiiia Apostolov," ["About the Sources of Acts,"] *TKDA* III, 10 (1910): 169.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "K Is"iasneniiu 1 Kor. 1:18-6:20," ["The interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-6:20,"] *TKDA* I, 4 (1911): 469.



Bogdashevskii views the New Testament not as a historical or biographical document in the classical sense. The primary aim of the New Testament is not historical rather it is theological.<sup>121</sup> In this sense, the New Testament writings are primarily theological story rooted in history but not limited to a strict historical record. The New Testament accounts however “are not tendentious writings where the historical facts are adapted to fit the idea.”<sup>122</sup> The presentation of the New Testament historical events and environment serve to the whole narrative as foundational factor for trustworthiness and weight of the New Testament message attached to a real physical world. Thus, the New Testament documents can be considered as the earliest Church-historical chronicles<sup>123</sup> that, of course, do not communicate a simple stenographic recording of the events.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, the historical or chronological data of the New Testament documents are indisputable.<sup>125</sup> Thus, Bogdashevskii recognises that the New Testament should be understood from a particular religious, political, socio-cultural standpoint in the first century. The patterns of living conditions and forms of religious expressions (both Jewish and Hellenistic), the typography of biblical lands are considered in his exegesis. Bogdashevskii emphasises the reconstruction of all these elements in order to interpret the New Testament in the light of this information, i.e., to interpret the New Testament on its own terms. This, in his thought, allows it to draw significance for modern human realities.

Yet, for Bogdashevskii, the study of a “human-social-historical reality” is significant *only* in the light of Church. Without this perspective, knowledge and understanding of the New Testament can be only partial. Here Bogdashevskii’s thoughts are noticeably typical to the Orthodox anthropological constructs mentioned in Chapter 4. According to Bogdashevskii, therefore, a study of a human reality of the New Testament world is especially attached to the domination of learning by the “objective” natural sciences stressed by “liberal” biblical scholars. The latter, in his thought, denied that theology can attain an

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287. But he regards, for example that Acts mainly as the historical not theological book. See “Istoricheskii Kharacter Deianii Apostolov,” [“The Historical Character of Acts,”] *TKDA* II, 5 (1909): 381-425.

<sup>122</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 288.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Pervoe Poslanie k Korinfiianam,” [“The First Letter to the Corinthians,”] *TKDA* I, 3 (1907): 335;

<sup>124</sup> Bogdashevskii, D. I. “The Historical Character of Acts,” *TKDA* II, 5 (1909): 391, 393.

<sup>125</sup> *Idem.*, 422-23.

absolute dogmatic truth that transcends historical and cultural circumstances. Thus, the data on the history, culture, topography, etc. is *not sufficient to confirm or refute the meaning(s) of the New Testament text*. The world behind the text or extra to the text is significant, but it is not of a *priori* matter. In this argument Berdiaev follows Bogdashevskii in saying, “The past is not known externally from the remains of its monuments which have been subjected to historical analysis, but from within, through sacred memory [i.e., the Tradition ], through inner contacts with it, through life in *sobornost* which transcends the gaps made by the time.”<sup>126</sup>

### 5.3.2.3 The Supernatural Element of the New Testament

Bogdashevskii argues, “The whole Christian theology is based on supernatural presuppositions.”<sup>127</sup> Under these supernatural presupposition Bogdashevskii places: (1) the actuality of the New Testament miracles encircling the life of Jesus, the Apostles, etc; and (2) the supernatural activity of God through the Holy Spirit in human beings.

Thus, Bogdashevskii views the miracles of Christ, narrated in the New Testament, as the account of Christ’s divine activities. To reject the miracles means to reject Christ’s divinity.<sup>128</sup> The miracle can be of *physical* character, i.e. it could be the transformation of one material substance into the other; rather than merely of *psychological* character. For example, Bogdashevskii interprets the first of the signs of Jesus, the first public act of the divine intervention in Cana by changing water into the wine (John 2:3-11) by taking this miracle story, termed a σημεῖον, a “sign” (as throughout this Gospel), as “the accelerated

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<sup>126</sup> N. Berdiaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), 94-95.

<sup>127</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-6:20,” *TKDA* I, 4 (1911): 472. Contra David Friedrich Strauss, (1808-1874), German theologian and philosopher, whose controversial sceptical interpretation of the Gospel, was formulated in his famous treatise, *The Life of Jesus* (1835), in which he sought to explain the miracles of the Gospel narratives as a series of myths, whose later theological writings, including *The Old Faith and the New* (1872; trans. 1873), exhibit an even more extreme scepticism than *The Life of Jesus*. See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “E. Renan, *Zhishn’ Iisusa* (SPb.: 1906),” [“E. Renan, *Life of Jesus* (SPb.: 1906),”] *TKDA* III, 9 (1907): 148-151; also *Ibid.*, “Prof. D. Muretov’s review of *E. Renan and his ‘Life of Jesus’* (SPT.: 1908),” *TKDA* III, 9 (1909): 158-160; cf. *Ibid.*, “O. Pleindorff, *Vozniknovenie Khristianstva* (SPb.: 1910),” [“O. Pleindorff, *The Origin of Christianity*. Trans. G. L’vovich (SPb.: 1910),”] *TKDA* I, 2 (1911): 290-292.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 299.



natural process.”<sup>129</sup> Although, Bogdashevskii’s understanding of this particular miracle is lacking depth in significance of the gift of wine instead of water in John 2:3-11, he makes his point about a particular type of miracle. The miracles, such as healing of the blind (John 9), should also be taken in its literal sense as the supernatural act of God; rather than in a symbolical sense - day/light vs. night/darkness of the human mind (Bogdashevskii contra L. Tolstoy, *The Gospels*, vol. 2, 180ff).<sup>130</sup> He repeatedly argues against symbolic understanding of the miracles. For example, in his exegesis of Mt. 8:23-27, Mk. 4:36-41 and Luk. 8: 22-25, he says, “The symbolical interpretation of the miracles absolutely does not understand miracle. The symbolism, in any kind of its form, must be grounded in the history. The merely symbol [non- attached to the reality] cannot be the basis of the fact.”<sup>131</sup>

Despite the character of the miracle, the accounts about the New Testament supernatural performances “attest to the authenticity of the historical facts.”<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the historical authenticity of the miracles does not contradict the historical objectivity of the New Testament. Bogdashevskii denies, for instance, the idea that Matthew inserts the miracle stories in Mt. 8-9 in order to manifest Jesus as the prophet. Bogdashevskii argues that: (1) miracle stories are interdependent in connection with time and location; and (2) the story contains “the historical details directly connected to the miracles (8:18-22; 9:9-17) which compose the historical framework for the miracles.”<sup>133</sup> “The miracle comes into the history, it is the historical fact”.<sup>134</sup> From the above it is possible to conclude that Bogdashevskii’s view of Scripture is interrelated with his religious beliefs that the Holy Spirit as a power of God is involved in the human history.

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<sup>129</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 293.

<sup>130</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 296-97.

<sup>131</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Khristos kak chudotvorets...,” [“Christ as the Miracles Performer: Mt. 8:1-9 and parallel.”] *TKDA* III 10 (1911): 265

<sup>132</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Historical Character of Acts,” *TKDA* II , 5 (1909): 425, n. 1.

<sup>133</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Christ as the Miracles Performer: Mt. 8:1-9 and parall.,” *TKDA* III 10 (1911): 243-244.

<sup>134</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Historical Character of Acts,” 425, n.1.

### 5.3.3 Methodological Presupposition

In considering Bogdashevskii's methodology and practice of exegesis, it is vital to indicate several elements of his theoretical construction in regard to the New Testament texts.

In order to achieve this we will analyse Bogdashevskii's most noticeable methodological arguments regarding: (1) the text, for his textual theory has consequence for the methodological handling of the text; (2) the specific issues, such as: (a) the theory of formation of the Gospels; (b) the authenticity of the New Testament writings; (c) methodological restrictions of historical inquiry; (3) the historical-critical method; and (4) typological allegorical and literal meaning of the texts. In analysing his methodology we will single out the texts to which Bogdashevskii applies his lines of method.

#### 5.3.3.1 Textual Theory: Language, Communication and History

In Bogdashevskii's theoretical system there are three governing components that establish his concept of the New Testament: (1) text as language; (2) text as communication; and (3) text as history. *First*, since Bogdashevskii assumes that the New Testament authors, in composing the texts, used the language in a typical rather than individual character in order to express the order, regularity, unity of time, place, and action, he presuppose that exegesis of the New Testament texts demands the knowledge of Greek language in which they were written. Close analysis of the language reveals essential ambiguities of meaning. He is aware that the language as such is fixed by governing linguistic rules, shaped by interpersonal communication in a given (New Testament) time and place. The language and the meaning of the linguistic elements in textual transmission is understandable only in connection to the historical time, sociology, and the other internal and extratextual factors. It is interesting to note that on grounds of the language Bogdashevskii establishes the authority of the early Church Fathers. He reasons because the Church Fathers knew perfectly special features of Greek their understanding of the New Testament books is superior to those interpreters who learn Greek as a second or third language.<sup>135</sup> Thus, they have linguistic advantage above the modern readers of the New Testament.

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<sup>135</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Chtenie. Sovremennye vrugi kresta Khristova," ["Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross,"] *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 277-278.



Among many other examples, his comments on John 21:15-17 indicate that Bogdashevskii is attentive and careful in the word studies (or semantics). Here he shows that it is difficult to believe that the author of the Fourth Gospel intended any distinction of meaning in the two verbs for love: (1) the higher term for sacred love (ἀγαπάω); the lower term to the feeling of natural love (φιλέω) in the conversation between Jesus and Peter in John 21:15-17 [*contra* B. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Murray, 1908), 298]. Bogdashevskii examined the use of these verbs in the Fourth Gospel and in the other documents of the New Testament and rightly concluded that whatever distinction they may have had elsewhere, in the Gospel these two verbs are synonymous and in John 21:15-17 are used synonymously. (This is confirmed in modern semantic studies.) Thus, there is no need to claim that (1) twice Jesus expects from Peter the confession of the higher love (ἀγαπάω), but Peter shows only the feeling of natural love (φιλέω); (2) the third time Jesus adopts Peter's word in order to show that He is bringing down the expectations from Peter.<sup>136</sup>

*Second*, the language of the New Testament, in Bogdashevskii appropriation, reflects images, comparisons, irony and the other speech effects that the interpreter must recognize to make coherent meaning.<sup>137</sup> He does not presuppose, however, that only by close analysis of technical devices of the language is the interpreter capable of expressing the particular concrete meaning that the literary work possesses.

*Third*, any particular book is a single communication that in its unity has a message to convey. Therefore, the structure of the text (or the whole book) is the construction of the interrelated textual elements (words, sentences, segments, etc.). This presupposes the analysis of the broader context as the determining factor of the textual meaning. It does not presuppose, however, that the structure of any particular passage is a completely closed system that fixes the meaning without extra-textual factors. Although attentive to the context of any particular passages, Bogdashevskii, nevertheless, shows a passive interest toward grammatical analysis of the organization and structure of the text. In his exegesis a study of the sentence or the whole textual unit has little significance. In his exegetical essay on the Letter of James, for example, he rationalizes:

The Epistle of St. James is written in the form of Old Testament wisdom, therefore any attempt to suggest a plan for dividing up the Letter under investigation is

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<sup>136</sup> See Bishop Vasiliï , "Voskresenie Khrista Spasitelia i Ego Iavlenie: Mf. 28:1-20 i parall.," ["The Resurrection of Christ the Savior and His Appearance: Mt. 28:1-20,"] *TKDA* II (1915): 26-27.

<sup>137</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "On the Second Letter to the Corinthians," *TKDA* 7 (1902): 369.

fictitious. Of course it is possible to find in the Letter the group of thoughts, but even in this case it is necessary to avoid the unnecessary subdivision of the text.<sup>138</sup>

Not supposing that the meaning is determined by immutable basic structures, Bogdashevskii does not concentrate on small stylistic details; rather he senses the importance of the author being of greater significance. He assumes that the author of any given New Testament book accomplished his task in accordance with his own individual particularities, as well as with the needs, wants and characters of the intended readers.<sup>139</sup> Thus, in his exegetical studies Bogdashevskii attempts to divine the author's thought, experience and situation by "converting" himself, so to speak, into the author. The biblical writings are best understood if the author's personality is carefully considered.<sup>140</sup> In this sense, Bogdashevskii is following the Schleiermacher formula: "The more we learn about author, the better equipped we are for interpretation."<sup>141</sup> In addition, as noted above, he demonstrates that interpretation of the New Testament requires also the examination of the consciousness, the social and political worlds, etc. which were shared by all the receivers of a particular New Testament writing.

*Fourth*, Bogdashevskii views the New Testament, particularly the Gospels, as not being historical or biographical documents in a classical sense. "The primary aim of the Gospels is not historical; rather it is soteriological"<sup>142</sup> (often he speaks of theological purpose). In this sense, the New Testament primarily contains theological story and teaching rather than a strict historical record. Moreover, the New Testament does not present an exact chronology of the historical events; thus, it is not a historical account as such. Bogdashevskii's exegesis is delicate in remembering that the New Testament is not the historical chronicle as such; therefore, he avoids putting the claims that every New

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<sup>138</sup> "Послание св. Иакова написано в форме ветхозаветной гномической мудрости, а потому всякая попытка разделения его на определенные части будет только искусственною. Можно в нем наметить только известные группы мыслей, при чем и в этом случае необходимо, насколько возможно, избегать излишней дробности деления." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Poslanie Apostola Iakova," ["The Letter of James,"] *TKDA* III, 10 (1907) 208.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287.

<sup>140</sup> This is one of the governing assertion in his lecture "Chtenie. O Lichnosti Ap. Pavla," ["On the Personality of Sp. Paul,"] *TKDA* I, 1 (1906): 1-16.

<sup>141</sup> F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* ed. by H. Kimmerle. [AAR Text and Translation series I, Eng. tr. by J. Duke and J. Forstman] (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 113.

<sup>142</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287; Cf. *Ibid.*, "Ekzegeticheskie zemetki: (1)



Testament account constructs an absolute chronology and historical record. Nevertheless, if the New Testament is not a collection of the historical writings it does not mean, that “these are not tendentious writings where the historical facts are adapted to fit the idea.”<sup>143</sup> This emphasis on history is the result of his presupposition that the interpreter might recover, from the monuments of New Testament literature, a knowledge of the particulars in which men lived centuries ago. Moreover, the extent to which the texts of the New Testament are historical documents is established not on the basis of their preciseness with the ancient past, known from the other sources of antiquity but on the basis of the Church’s pronouncement and Church tradition. For example, says: “The authenticity of facts in Acts, as well as in the Gospel of Luke are mainly confirmed by the Church tradition.... [Therefore], on the basis of this ratification we find that historical facts in Acts are convenient.”<sup>144</sup>

Bogdashevskii is concerned with the historical context in which a work was written, or with biographical details about the author, or with the author's purposes. He holds the view that the New Testament authors used the historical facts in order to express their theological and pragmatic arguments. Bogdashevskii assumes that the New Testament writers did not indicate the precise duration and time of the events for: (1) it was not their purpose; and (2) the exactness of chronology and the details of time framework were not crucial for ancient historiography.<sup>145</sup> In such as presentation, the chronology of events and the environment of happening (i.e. location, circumstances, people involved, etc.) are subordinated to the idea and the message by serving the whole narrative as supplementary equipment.

The historical data, of course, is important for Bogdashevskii. He argues that the knowledge of God is made possible by history. Without accepting historicity of the New Testament and a historical reliability of the individual documents and the events narrated

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Rodoslovie Khrista (Mf. 1:1-7)...,” [“Exegetical remarks: (1) The Genealogy of Christ (Mt. 1:1-7),”] *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 288.

<sup>143</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 288; Cf. *Ibid.*, “Exegetical remarks: (1) The Genealogy of Christ (Mt. 1:1-7)...,” *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 290.

<sup>144</sup> “Подлинность кн. Деяний, как и третьего Евангелия, главнейшим образом заверяется в церковном предании... В несомненной подлинности кн. Деяний мы находим твердейшую опору для признания ее исторического характера.” *Ibid.*, “The Historical Character of Acts,” *TKDA* II, 5 (1909): 381-384.

<sup>145</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Khronologiia knigi Deianiia Apostolov,” [“The Chronology of Acts,”] *TKDA* I, 1 (1911): 1-29.

there, one will see only abstract reality fixed by ethical or aesthetic elements.<sup>146</sup> By all means, Bogdashevskii's starting point is that trustworthiness and weight of the New Testament message cannot be established without presupposing reality and validity of the historical events narrated in it (esp. such as Christ incarnation, death and resurrection).<sup>147</sup> Otherwise, Bogdashevskii argues, that the New Testament will be reduced to the ethical codex, unattached to a real world.

### *5.3.3.2 Origin, Formation and Integrity of the New Testament*

In addition to the governing textual factors of language, communication and history Bogdashevskii presupposes concern with the other factors. These include his specific views of the New Testament texts: (1) the theory of formation of the Gospels; (2) the authenticity of the New Testament writings; (3) methodological restrictions of historical inquiry.

#### *(a) The Formation of the Gospels*

Bogdashevskii considers the authors of the Gospels as either eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus (directly Matthew and John the author of the Forth Gospel) or as close associates of the Apostles (Mark associated with Peter, and Luke, the historian, with the Apostle Paul). Because a real investigation of the Synoptic problem (their similarities and differences) did begin in the second half of the eighteenth century and numerous hypotheses emerged in the course of the nineteenth century, Bogdashevskii is attentive to this quest.

Regarding the variance of particular accounts in the Gospels, Bogdashevskii is due to the fact the fact of the oral apostolic tradition underlying the Gospels. In his view, the 'contradictions' of the Gospels are not of major significance, if the Gospels are viewed as supplementary writings. "When the Evangelists narrate the same event their stories are supplementing one another." If the Evangelists did expose different particulars of the same event, then the interpreter has to combine the compounded elements given in every Gospel

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<sup>146</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 288.

<sup>147</sup> See, for example, Idem., 288-89; cf. Ibid., "Deistvitel'nost' Voskreseniia Mertvykh po Ucheniiu Sv. Apostola Pavla: 1 Kor. 15:1-34," ["Reality of the Resurrection of the Dead According to the Teaching of St. Paul: 1 Cor. 15:1-34,"] *TKDA* 1 (1902): 61-98.



into one full story.<sup>148</sup> “This simple methodology”, in his view, dismisses all the contradictions in the Gospels. In Bogdashevskii view, since the New Testament canonical Gospels were fixed as the result of criticism, which rejected some gospels and provided reasons for accepting four gospels, shows that the canonical Gospels should be regarded as harmonious.

On the one hand, Bogdashevskii theoretically admits the individual character of the Gospels; on the other hand, practically he synthesizes these Gospels into one harmonious story, following ancient tendencies of employing the four canonical Gospels into a single, continuous narrative (esp. so-called Diatessaron (Greek: διὰ τεσσάρων “through [the] four [Gospels]”), the name given by Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 4.29.6).<sup>149</sup> The Fourth Gospel, in Bogdashevskii’s view, is written “to supplement the first three Gospels; [thus, St. John] presupposes that his readers know the synoptic tradition.”<sup>150</sup> It is in agreement with Clement of Alexandria’s story that John’s Gospel provided a “spiritual” complement to the “bodily” Synoptic Gospels (Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7) which for Bogdashevskii gives a glimpse of the process of criticism for a gospel harmony. Since “the Evangelists only supplement each other,” he also says “there is nothing unnatural in considering the Gospel of Luke as the extension of the first narrative - the Gospel of Matthew - as some kind of introduction to Luke.”<sup>151</sup> Thus, Bogdashevskii’s exegesis abounds with the practice of harmonization. For example, Bogdashevskii takes the pericope Matthew 20:20-28 (Mark 10:32-45; cf. Luke 22:24-27) in which Jesus teaches concerning the nature of greatness and priority in the kingdom as the same episode narrated in the Markan pericope (Mark 10:32-45). He argues, despite two different reports (*i.e.*, in Matthew’s version it is Salome who implores Jesus for the special privilege of her sons, but Mark puts the request in the mouth of her sons), that the evangelists “tell about the same episode but emphasize different features of the event.” In Bogdashevskii’s thinking, therefore, the combination of these two passages (*i.e.*, Salome was

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Tainaia Vecheria Gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista,” [“A Secret Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ,”] *TKDA* III, 10 (1906): 26.

<sup>149</sup> Among the others see R. van den Broek, “A Latin Diatessaron in the ‘Vita Beate Virginis et Salvatoris Rhythmica’,” *NTS* 21 (1972): 109-32; A. F. J. Klijn, *A Survey of Researches into the Western Text of the Gospels and Acts, Vol. 2*. NovTSup 21. (Leiden, 1969); W. L. Petersen, “Romanos and the Diatessaron,” *NTS* 29 (1983): 484-507; G. Quispel, *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden, 1985).

<sup>150</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Chtenie. Khristos Spasitel’ v Gevsimanii,” [“Lecture. Christ the Savior in Gethsemane,”] *TKDA* I, 4 (1913): 627.

<sup>151</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Christ as the Miracles Performer: Mt. 8:1-9 and the corresponding texts,” *TKDA* III 10 (1911): 248, 387.

the first who addressed Jesus, next her sons) dismisses the need “to form an opinion on which narrative is prior or more accurate.”<sup>152</sup>

In the same way, Bogdashevskii harmonizes the Johannine and synoptic accounts about the cleansing the temple (in John 2:13–17, the cleansing of the temple happened at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry; and according to the synoptic accounts at the end). Bogdashevskii is pointing to two separate incidences. In his thought, the writers had no freedom to order their materials and situate them so alien. Thus, two separate cleansings of the temple results in (1) the synoptics completely omitting Christ’s early activity in Jerusalem; and (2) John’s concern in emphasizing the cleansing of the temple at the outset of the Gospel in order to supplement the synoptics’ story and omitting the second cleansing as already documented in the synoptics.<sup>153</sup>

According to Bogdashevskii thought, the tendency to harmonize the Gospels has: (1) the practical advantage, for as a compact harmony the Gospels render a unified point of view; and (2) the ideal defence against all kinds of “speculations” about the disharmony of the Gospel accounts. For example, in regard to the miraculous distribution of the food in the feeding of the Multitude: 5000 people in Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:31-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-13 and 4000 in Mt. 15:32-38; Mk. 8: 1-9. Despite the similarities in the events, Bogdashevskii appeals to understand two different events rather than the twin of a slightly different account.<sup>154</sup>

Nevertheless, Bogdashevskii cannot be charged in complete ignorance of the differences among the canonical gospels. He argues with perspective,

It is impossible to reconcile the non-reconcilable; there is no need in such forced efforts, for the differences among the Gospels are not significant enough to diminish the authenticity of the Gospel accounts. In such cases, the interpreter should follow the writer whose version is the most complete....<sup>155</sup>

<sup>152</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Poslednee putesthestvie Khrista Spasitelia v Ierusalim...,” [“The Last journey of Christ the Savior to Jerusalem: Mt. 19: 1-20:34; Mk. 10:1-52; Luke 18:15-19:28,”] *TKDA* I, 3 (1914): 341.

<sup>153</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Deiatel’nost’ Khrista Spasitelia ot vkhoda v Ierusalim do Paskhi stradanii...,” [“The Activity of Christ the Savior During the Entry into Jerusalem and the Passover of His Suffering: Mt. 21:1-26:2 and parall.,”] *TKDA* II, 5 (1914): 15-16.

<sup>154</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 292-5.

<sup>155</sup> Нельзя примирять непримиримое, и в подобных явно искусственных усилиях нет и нужды, ибо евангельские различия в определении места и времени событий несущественны, а потому не могут подрывать достоверности евангельских повествований. Нужно следовать здесь тому Евангелисту, рассказ которого отличается наибольшею полнотою...” D. I. Bogdashevskii, D. I (Bishop Vasilii) “The Last journey of Christ the Savior to Jerusalem: Mt. 19: 1-20:34; Mk. 10:1-52; Luke 18:15-19:28,” *TKDA* I, 3 (1914): 349.



(b) *The Authenticity of the New Testament Writings*

Bogdashevskii takes his departure from the view that the New Testament writings are of the apostolic origin (directly or indirectly), of indisputable literary integrity, and of canonical authority. Prior to exegesis, he opposes an approach that suggests, for example, the Gospels to be the compositions from the different kinds of oral and written sources:

It is painful for the Orthodox theologian, inexpressibly painful to see, how whole, living and organic Gospels are under the attack of pseudo-scientific operations, under which [the Gospels] become a fusion of the different kinds of materials.<sup>156</sup>

Of course, Bogdashevskii's assumption protests only against the extra-biblical (hypothetical or existing, written or oral) sources. Yet, he commonly appropriates that the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament books and were aware about the framework and wording of the other New Testament documents, the oral tradition of the Apostolic version, and consequently, indebted to its knowledge.<sup>157</sup>

(c) *The Restrictions of Historical Inquiry*

Bogdashevskii states, "If one rejects the authenticity of the Gospels, [he or she] clearly opposes an evident truth and displaces the significance of *Church tradition* that supports the apostolic origin [of the Gospels]."<sup>158</sup> For Bogdashevskii, apostolicity, literary integrity and inspiration all belong together as a matter of cause and effect. If there are historical grounds for doubt concerning the apostolic authorship of a writing, then this has persistent consequences for how the document is to be interpreted and understood. For example, the doubts concerning the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, raised by Western scholarship, led Bogdashevskii to make the judgment that it is not possible to accept the

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<sup>156</sup>«Православному богослову больно, невыразимо больно видеть, как единое, живое, органическое целое, каким являются наши Евангелия, подвергается этим мнимо научным операциям. Безжалостно разсекается и превращается в какой то странный сплав самых разнородных материалов.» D.I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 276; cf. Ibid., "On the Second Letter to the Corinthians," *TKDA* 7 (1902): 368; Ibid., "Poslanie Apostola Iudy," ["The Letter of St. Apostle of Jude,"] *TKDA* III, 11 (1908): 364-366.

<sup>157</sup> Esp. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Ob istochnikakh Deianiia Apostolov," ["About the Sources of Acts,"] *TKDA* III, 10 (1910): 169-202.

<sup>158</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 276 [my italics]; also Ibid., "Chlenie. Sovremennye vrugi kresta Khristova," ["Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross,"] *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 276.

inspiration of Hebrews without accepting Pauline authorship.<sup>159</sup> Despite the limits of historical knowledge that precludes positive identification of the writer, Bogdashevskii argues that a firm tradition concerning Pauline identity exists from the earliest period. The divergence among the Ancient Church writers who underscore the impossibility of establishing the writer's identity, for Bogdashevskii, are *the subjective and private opinions* that must be distinguished from *a unified opinion of the Orthodox Church*.<sup>160</sup>

In Bogdashevskii's interpretative framework the Church tradition exerts a powerful control not only on the interpretation of a specific passage, but also in the discussion of the above critical issues. Hence, he presupposes that the guidelines for establishing the authorship or the time of composition of the New Testament document is *not in its inner parameters* (such as the document's exceptional linguistic features or theological concepts, etc.), but *in the Church opinion*. In other words, as he approaches the New Testament books under the guidance of this perspective, the issues of the authorship and the time of writing becomes intelligible in the light of Church tradition.

For example, he says, "The Gospel of Luke which according to Church tradition is the Gospel of Paul, was written not after the death of the Apostle, but during his life."<sup>161</sup> Such reasoning is typical for Bogdashevskii. Further, regarding the authorship of the Second Letter of Peter, he willingly admits that the authority of 2 Peter is indeed disputable from the time of the Early Church (in connection with its authorship see Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.3.4; 6.25.8; Jerome, *Ep.* 120.11). Nevertheless, he argues,

if the enemy of the Letter would not demand a direct quotation of the Letter in ancient Apostolic Fathers, then they would recognize the Petrine authorship on the basis of gathering possible allusions to Second Peter from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.... The whole Church, however, actually recognized that in 2 Peter

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<sup>159</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Poslanie Apostola Pavla k Evreiam," ["Paul's Letter to the Hebrews,"] *TKDA* I (1905): 325-359.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Paul's Letter to the Hebrews," *TKDA* I (1905): 330 [his italics]. For the discussion establishing the writer's identity, among the others, see: C. P. Anderson, "Hebrews among the Letters of Paul." *SR* 5 (1975-76) 258-66; W. Bates, "Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews Again." *BSac* 79 (1922) 93-96; J. M. Ford, "The Mother of Jesus and the Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews." *TBT* 82 (1976) 683-94; A. Harnack, "Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs." *ZNW* 1 (1900) 16-41; J. D. Legg, "Our Brother Timothy: A Suggested Solution to the Problem of the Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews." *EvQ* 40 (1968) 220-23; C.C. Torrey, "The Authorship and Character of the So-Called 'Epistle to the Hebrews.'" *JBL* 30 (1911) 137-56.

<sup>161</sup> "Так как Евангелие Луки, согласно церковному преданию, есть Евангелие Павлово, то и написано оно, должно быть не по кончине Апостола а при его жизни." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "About the Sources of Acts," *TKDA* III, 10 (1910): 201.



there is the apostolic hand by including 2 Peter in canon. The Church does not make non-apostolic to be apostolic, she only ratifies what is appropriately apostolic.... [Therefore] there is no need to give emphasis to the linguistic features, the latter are irrelevant.<sup>162</sup>

From the above quotation it is obvious that the indisputable literary integrity of any New Testament writing, for Bogdashevskii, is not established, for example, on the basis of the Pauline, Johanine, Petrine, etc., standards in: (1) vocabulary and sentence-building (*i.e.* the refined language style); (2) the theological conceptions of the author; and (3) the manner in which the writer structures his material for maximum effects for “there is no reason to prescribe to a sacred writer our own regulations of composition.”<sup>163</sup> Thus, the authorship presupposed on the basis of the Church tradition (which established the concept of canon) is bound to a dogma of inspiration and apostolic origin. The New Testament cannot fall apart into apostolic and non-apostolic documents. The conviction of the Ancient Church about indisputable literary integrity is valid for every document of Scripture. The Church consciousness is “the best known evidence” in constituting the origin, the authorship and the literary integrity of the New Testament books.<sup>164</sup> Throughout Bogdashevskii writings he argues that there is no need to defend literary integrity of the New Testament documents, because the fragmentary or partition theory is “a critical arbitrariness.”<sup>165</sup> Bogdashevskii admits that the writers of the New Testament might have known the content and precise wording of the other New Testament document; yet it is absolutely improbable that their

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<sup>162</sup>“Если бы противники подлинности послания не были так явно придирчивы, т. е. не требовали непременно прямой цитации его у древнейших церковных писателей,... Церковь не делает неапостольского апостольским, а утверждает только апостольское, и тот факт, что вселенское церковное сознание признало разматриваемое послание Первым, служить известнейшим доказательством его апостольского происхождения... . никогда не следует соблазнять простыми словами, одним лексическим материалом и из - за - слов терять из виду существо дела.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Vtoroe Poslanie Petra,” [“The Second Letter of Peter,”] *TKDA* II, 7 (1908): 358-67; cf. *Ibid.*, “Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews,” *TKDA* I (1905): 351.

<sup>163</sup>“Нет, далее, никакого основания навязывать священному писателю свои правила писания...” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Letter of St. Apostle of Jude,” *TKDA* III, 11 (1908): 370.

<sup>164</sup> For example, “Послание к Евреям испытало, так сказать, горнило церковной критики, и если вселенское церковное сознание признало его Павловым, то это есть “известнейшее” доказательство его Апостольского происхождения; современная критика не располагать теми данными, которыми владела древняя церковная критика.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews,” *TKDA* I (1905): 351

<sup>165</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Pervoe Poslanie k Korinfiianam,” [“The First Letter to the Corinthians,”] *TKDA* I, 3 (1907): 333; Cf. *Ibid.*, “The Letter of St. Apostle of Jude,” *TKDA* III, 11 (1908): 366-67.

compositions were enslaved in dependence on the literary corpus of the New Testament or the other extra-biblical literature.<sup>166</sup>

Bogdashevskii's position that all the New Testament writings are of apostolic origin, characterized by indisputable literary integrity, leads him not only to defend the New Testament documents before the attacks on their authorship and to object the idea that some documents are made up of separately defined sections (as the result of a final touch to the reconstruction of apostolic compositions or as a presentation of several non-apostolic fragments as a "connected whole"), but also to presuppose that the authority of the New Testament documents derives from their recognition by the Orthodox Church in accordance with its own tradition and teaching. At issue is the relationship between the authority of the canon and the authority of the Church. The New Testament, as a closed collection and with a view to its outer limits, is very much a product of the Church, but much of the contents of the canon rose to authority by virtue of their self-evident value. This presupposition is so critical for Bogdashevskii that he dismisses, in axiom, the idea that the canon remains open to revision.

Bogdashevskii also assumes that in the critical study of any canonical document of the New Testament it is impossible to approach it alone and by disregarding the rest of the canonical writings. Thus, individual writings must be interpreted not in terms of the diversity but in their particular literary and theological interrelationship. The theological interpretation of the New Testament can be properly understood only if the attention is paid to the whole canon (*i.e.* the other canonical texts as *a canonical context*). Bogdashevskii does not presuppose the hermeneutical dynamics of *the canon within canon* and does not consider an individual document by itself or in connection with a smaller group of related documents as an assemblage within which there is diversity or progression. These are, rather, the books harmoniously fixed in theological thought.

Affirming the traditional boundaries of the canon as the authoritative work of the Orthodox Church, and conceiving the canon of Scripture and the teaching authority of the church to be indivisible, Bogdashevskii clearly overemphasizes the theological authority of the canon for the confessional tradition of Orthodox Christianity. The extreme example is apparent in his judgment about the limits of the canon. For example, he argues that nothing in the historical situation, surrounding the Corinthian correspondence, indicates that Apostle Paul wrote to Corinth the letter that now is lost and not included in the New Testament

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<sup>166</sup> This argument is made in regard to Jude's indebtedness to the ideas and terminology of Paul or 2 Peter [see D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Letter of St. Apostle of Jude," *TKDA* III, 11 (1908): 375.];



canon (NB! 1 Cor 5:9). Bogdashevskii believes that if the Apostle Paul did write to Corinth more than two authoritative letters these would be ratified and designated by the Church as canonical. Thus, his explanation of 1 Cor. 5:9 is prejudiced:

In western scholarship it is common to assume that the First Letter to Corinthians was preceded by a lost letter of the Apostle to the same Church. All the defenders of this view endorse their position by referring to 1 Cor. 5:9: "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people." In which letter did he write? .... [N]othing, however, restricts us from linking 1 Cor. 5:9 with the antecedent Paul's words [of the same letter]. This is the understanding of all ancient commentators [points, however, only to St. Feodorit, *The Commentary on the Pauline Letters* (M.: 1861), vol. VII, 200)].... "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people" points not to the other Pauline letter, but to 1 Cor. 5: 7 - "Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough" - the expression of the same Letter.... It is thoughtfully natural to conclude that after 1 Cor. 5:8 the Apostle paused in his writing or dictating, and when he proceeded further he did pick up the topic, by giving the following explanations.... Paul's thoughts in 1 Cor. 5:9-13 are essential to the preceding verses about a matter of incest among the Corinthians, and therefore this acceptance the fact of the lost Letter, anteceding to the First Letter to the Corinthians, has no grounds.<sup>167</sup>

Bogdashevskii's interpretation of 1 Cor. 5:9 is the result of his pre-conception that "the existence of the lost Apostolic Epistles cannot be accepted on the basis that these Epistles absolutely could not vanish in spite of the Church's distinct attention to preserve the apostolic documents."<sup>168</sup>

The above conscious convictions led Bogdashevskii to formulate his conceptual objections toward the historical-critical method of New Testament investigation, practiced by his contemporaries in the West.

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<sup>167</sup> "В западной науке почти общепринято, что первому посланию к Коринфянам предшествовало утерянное послание Апостола к той же церкви. Все защитники этого взгляда приводят в обоснование его один и тот же аргумент, именно ссылаются на 1 Коринф. 5, 9: "я писал вам в послании не сообщаться с блудниками". В каком писал послании? ... ничто не препятствует связывать 5, 9 с непосредственно предшествующею речью Апостола, как и понимают данное место все древние толкователи. "Писахъ вамъ въ послании не примешатися блудникомъ", - не в другом, но в том же послании... . Вполне естественно допустить, что после 5, 8 Апостол сделал перерыв при своем писании или диктовке, и, вновь возвращаясь к написанному - как бы ближайшим образом разъясняя его. чтобы не подать повода к перетолкованию своих слов - он продолжает:... Мысли раскрываемые св. Павлом в 9 - 13, имеют для себя основу в его предшествующей речи о коринфском кровосмеснике и потому признание утерянного послания, предшествовавшего первому посланию к Коринфянам, не вызывается какою-нибудь необходимостью." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," *TKDA* I, 3 (1907): 314-16.

<sup>168</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Second Letter of Peter," *TKDA* II, 7 (1908): 382-83; Cf. also his article "The New Testament Canon," in *The Orthodox Theological Encyclopaedia* ed. by N. N. Glubokovskii (SPb.) vol. 8, p. 305.

### 5.3.3.3 *The Attitude Toward the Historical-Critical Method*

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Bogdashevskii observes that the popularity of the historical-critical method is declining in the West; yet in Russia the interest in the historical-critical investigation is spreading throughout the translated works. In his view, the guardian of an accurate interpretation is not a radical censorship that will prevent the translation and publishing in Russia of the literature that reflects a rationalistic prospect; rather it is an open discussion that will sort out all the arguments *pro* and *contra*.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, his open criticism toward the historical-critical method Bogdashevskii is justified on the hermeneutical, theological or exegetical grounds. He presupposes that this method as a practice of reading the New Testament is not applicable in the Eastern Church, because the rationalistic and individualistic practices of the West are contrary to Orthodox thinking.<sup>170</sup> (This agrees with the Russian Orthodox anthropology). Furthermore, the historical-critical method, for Bogdashevskii, is a consequence of Anti-Christian presuppositions: (1) an ethical biblical element is superior to dogmatic appointments of the Bible; (2) Christianity, as the religion, is a product of the natural progress of mankind's religious need; (3) the rejection of the actuality of God's revelation in the Bible, etc.<sup>171</sup>

Moreover, Bogdashevskii assumes that a belief in the evolutionary priority of the simple over the complex (*e.g.* textual variant or theological concept), that guides the exegetes to speculate on the phases of development in the transmission of the New Testament text and teaching to be an improper hypothesis. Thus, his methodological assumptions consider a so-called scientific hypothesis: such as (1) the numerous hypotheses that emerged to explain the difference between the Gospels; *i.e.* source-hypotheses, utilization hypothesis, the original Gospel hypothesis, etc.; (2) the apposition between the Judaic and the Hellenistic, the Pauline and Petrine schools in the corpus of the New Testament documents; (3) the unreliability of oral tradition and speculation of disunity between Jesus and the early Church; (4) the objection of the historical credibility of the New Testament facts; and (5) the mythological theory which denies the historical existence of

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<sup>169</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, D. I. "Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 275-77.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 279.



Jesus; etc. as “scientific fantasy or scientific chimera that poses itself as the latest achievement of a critical study.”<sup>172</sup>

Foremost, such judgment on the historical-critical method in Bogdashevskii derives from his view to the question: can the Orthodox faith be preserved if historical inquiry owing to the appearance of new facts and new material proves scientifically that certain things which the New Testament and the Church relate as facts has no existence, that they are not historical events but myths, legends, theological doctrines created by the believing Christian communities? There are two points that form Bogdashevskii’s answer to the above question. First, he is bound to acknowledge that the Orthodox faith stands on a high level of historical truth, for Orthodoxy is the revelation of God in history (the coming of Christ is a historical phenomenon!). Christianity is historical and therein lies its strength and dynamism in history.

In Bogdashevskii’s mind, scientific historical criticism must be as free as a purifying or clarifying significance for the Orthodox faith. Yet, historical criticism cannot decide any sort of religious and spiritual questions in regard to the New Testament text(s).

Second, Bogdashevskii leans toward the official Church concept of history that does not allow historical criticism to lay its touch upon sacred writings of the New Testament. There cannot be any historical authority and scientific historical criticism that takes no account of meaning. Since the account of revelation is documented in the New Testament as of divine-human essence, its interpretation is also divine-human, not merely *human* investigation of its historical matters which in Bogdashevskii’s thought is a naïve realistic study of the text(s). The interpretation of the New Testament presupposes the use of the ‘authoritative’ judgment of the Church, where divine revelation is present.

In regard to the historical understanding of the New Testament facts, Bogdashevskii places the presuppositions of the historical-critical method as the *rule of doubt*, and puts his own presuppositions as the *rule of trust* to the living tradition of the Church

#### 5.3.3.4 Acquiring Supplementary Information

Bogdashevskii presupposes that due to the temporal and cultural distance between the text and the reader, the supplementary information is a must for a proper exegesis. In other words, while the New Testament texts communicate the available message, this

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<sup>172</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 276.

communication could become more comprehensible if the additional data (about the language, history, culture, topography, etc.) is demonstrated. Of special importance, for Bogdashevskii, is the disclosure of the religious history of the Old Testament and the contemporary world of the New Testament. He, however, assumes that awareness, indebted to the extratextual knowledge is *not sufficient to confirm or refute the meaning(s) of the New Testament text*. The justification of the meaning of the text in the ongoing scholarly quest of the New Testament on the basis of the inter-textual awareness alone is not permissible. He stresses that the data employed from ancient sources or from other specialized literature could make the interpreter confuse the meaning(s) demonstrated from the text (*i.e.* intended by its author and recognized by the Orthodox Church) with the meaning(s) ascribed by extratextual testimony (esp. if this data is subjectively applied to the text of the New Testament). Thus, the world behind the text or extra to the text is not *a priori* matter.<sup>173</sup>

In contrast, the world within the text as well as the ‘mind of the Church’, concordant with the text of the New Testament, are decisive for the justification of the meaning. Bogdashevskii assumes that the use of secondary literature (*e.g.* exegetical commentaries, theological stretches, etc.) is serviceable for the exegete as the supporting environment for the possible interpretations of the texts; yet, again, these offer only subjective opinions about the texts. In justification of the possible interpretation, therefore, the leaning toward the Church Fathers and the Orthodox Church tradition is of a greater certainty.

### 5.3.3.5 *Typological, Allegorical and Symbolical Meanings*

As Bogdashevskii is exegetically dealing with the New Testament texts he takes for granted that the writers of the New Testament writers consciously used: (1) the sequencing of ideas to emphasise their importance (*e.g.* by placing them at the end of a sentence or passage for caustic effect) or to contrast the ideas in such a way as to give emphasis to contrasting ideas; and (2) the figurative locutions that should be taken as deviating from the strict literal sense of a word, or sentence construction. He is aware that the figurative locutions such as (a) *hyperbole*, form of inordinate exaggeration; (b) *irony*, dryly humorous or lightly sarcastic mode of speech, in which words are used to convey a meaning contrary to

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<sup>173</sup> This assumption is in effect attested to throughout his exegetical writings. In particular see D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Ekzegeticheskie zametki...,” [“Exegetical remarks...,”] *TKDA* II, 7/8 (1909): 493-495.



their literal sense; (s) *metaphor*, use of a word or phrase denoting one kind of idea or object in place of another word or phrase for the purpose of suggesting a likeness between the two; etc., have been extensively employed by the writers to strengthen and embellish their composition. Moreover, he presupposes that the New Testament authors included in the meaning of the text(s) allegorical, typological or symbolical sense.

The allegorical interpretation in Bogdashevskii's exegesis is an insignificant feature. Although he does not incline to allegorise, his exegetical practice does start out with the presupposition that allegorical interpretation is possible, because of the specific nature of certain texts to be interpreted and because Church tradition affirms a specific allegorical reading of the selected texts. For example, Bogdashevskii notes that the Letter to the Hebrews has numerous texts (esp. of cultic concerns centering in priesthood and sacrifice) that must be interpreted allegorically or typologically. The emergence of these interpretations is "explained by the basic nature and aim of the Letter."<sup>174</sup> He makes a distinction, however, between: (1) *subjective allegory* that employs a completely different and arbitrary meaning to the text; and (2) *objective typology* that links the Old Testament images and prophecies to the person and activity of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.<sup>175</sup> For Bogdashevskii, the *objective typology* is present in the illumination of Jesus' death by the incident of Moses lifting up a bronze snake (Num 21:4-9). Thus, through the lifting up of the Son of Man on a cross believers have eternal life similarly as the lifting up of the snake by Moses for the healing of Israelites bitten by snakes.<sup>176</sup>

Following the Patristic and mediaeval exegesis, Bogdashevskii assumes that the formation of the religious meaning of particular texts is of greater value rather than to offer only the statements that reflect non-religious facts or to offer the explanation of the New Testament without its linkage to the texts of the Old Testament. There are also some undertakings to spiritualise the text. *i.e.* to prescribe spiritual meaning to physical matters. For example, in interpreting James 5:16: ἔξομολογεῖσθε οὖν ἀλλήλοις τὰς ἀμαρτίας καὶ εὐχεσθε ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων ὅπως ἰαθῆτε ["Confess your sins to one another then, and pray for one another so that you may be healed"] Bogdashevskii implies that James suggests the confession of sin as evidentially necessary for spiritual healing rather than for physical. He

<sup>174</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Paul's Letter to the Hebrews," *TKDA* I (1905): 341.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>176</sup> See Bishop Vasilii, "K iz'iasneniiu In. 3:1-6:71," ["Interpretation of John 3:1- 6:71,"] *TKDA* (1917): 158.

argues, “the verb ἰᾶσθαι ... is used in the figurative [Ru:- *perenosnom*] sense, i.e. in the sense of spiritual healing.”<sup>177</sup> The entire section, and account for the presence of anointing with oil is not connected to physical healing or the cure of illnesses. For Bogdashevskii, it is a general principle of prayer and confession for spiritual restoration of the Church members. Bogdashevskii’s interpretation is predetermined by his decision that the conjunction οὖν (“therefore”) which connects the thought of verse 16a with that of verse 15, must be omitted (as in some MSS). Moreover, since the Orthodox Church teaches that Church members, other than elders, cannot take part in a ministry of intercessory prayer (for pastoral privilege and responsibility does not belong to the whole Church, but only to its priestly office) verse 16 does not suggest that non-priestly believers should pray for the sick.<sup>178</sup>

In his interpretation of Mt. 8:23-27 (and parallels Mk. 4:36-41 and Luke 8: 22-25), a narrative that involves both testing for the disciples of Jesus and demonstration of the authority of Jesus over the forces of nature, Bogdashevskii focuses his attention not only on the disciples and their little faith, as well as on the unique authority of Jesus (concern of both discipleship and Christology), but also on the Ecclesiology and Eschatology. In doing so he accepts Tertullian’s allegory (cf., Tertullian, *On Baptism* 12) as an accurate reading of the text. The passage, for Bogdashevskii, should be read in an allegorical sense. Consequently: (1) the boat is the imagery of the Matthew’s church and the Church of every era under the storm of the heresy and persecution that threatens the Church; (2) Christ’s sleep is the Lord’s patience; and (3) the stilling of the storm is Christ’s promised return at the end of the age. Thus, the text calls not only to discipleship that involves an absolute trust in Christ who has the authority over the forces of nature, but also describes the provision of the Lord to his Church, whatever disturbances may be encountered in the present and future, and identifies Jesus’ power over the sea with the dawning of the eschatological kingdom.<sup>179</sup> Bogdashevskii’s argues, “this interpretation is true, because in such an interpretation *the historical character of the miracle by no means is excluded.*”<sup>180</sup> In line with this interpretation stands Bogdashevskii’s understanding of the passage about Jesus’ walk on the

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<sup>177</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Ob”iasnitel’nye Zamechaniia k Naibolee Trudnym Mestam Poslaniia Iakova,” [“The Explanatory Remarks for the Most Difficult Texts of the Letter of James,”] *TKDA* III, 9 (1894): 143.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Explanatory Remarks for the Most Difficult Texts of the Letter of James,” *TKDA* III, 9 (1894): 142-43.

<sup>179</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Christ as the Miracles Performer: Mt. 8:1-9 and the corresponding texts,” *TKDA* III, 10 (1911): 262-265.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 265 [my italics].



sea (Mt. 14:22-32, Mk. 6:45-52; cf. John 6:16–21). “The rescue miracle also has a moral sense. The Church should not fear the dead of night on the sea of Galilee, when fighting wind and rowing she advances only for a relatively short distance. Christ the Savior, after testing our endurance, will come at ‘the fourth watch’ and will save his people.”<sup>181</sup>

For a further example, he understands the sending of the *twelve* disciples of Jesus on a mission of extension of the message and ministry of Jesus (Mt. 9:35 ff.) as a new movement that represents a new era of the new Israel - the Church. He says,

The sending of the Twelve Apostles on the mission is the beginning of the establishing of the Kingdom of God on the Earth. The twelve Apostles correspond to the 12 Patriarchs. In the place of the fleshly Israel comes a new spiritual Israel instituted by the Twelve Apostles.<sup>182</sup>

The typological interpretation also presents in Bogdashevskii’s explanation of the sign of Jonah mentioned by Christ (in Mt. 12:40, elucidated through the quotation of Jonah 2:1; cf. also Mt. 16:21) as *prototypical parallelism*. He sees here the specific analogy between Jonah’s experience and Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. Bogdashevskii takes the analogy, elaborated by the post-resurrection Church, as the allowance to connect the discussion of Jonah’s whole experience with the fact of the mission, burial and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>183</sup>

This assumption also is in effect in Bogdashevskii’s interpretation of the ancestry of Jesus (Mt. 1:1–17; cf. Luke 3:23-38). His rendition is that Matthew’s and Luke’s genealogies should not be viewed as the chronicled lists in a classical civil code, for there are omissions and other alterations. The quality of these genealogies is not of mathematical or archival character, but of theological.<sup>184</sup> Nevertheless, these genealogies are filled with typological characters of messianic type that should be taken as interpreted history, set forth

<sup>181</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Khristos Spasitel’ v okrestnostiakh Vevsaidy: Mf. 14:1-34 i parall.,” [“Christ the Savior in Bethsaida: Mt. 14: 1-34 and parall.,”] *TKDA* I, 1 (1913): 26.

<sup>182</sup> “Послание Апостолов на проповедь – это начало созидания на земле Церкви Божией. Посылаются 12 соответственно, должно быть, 12 коленам Израилевым: на место плотского Израиля, имевшего родоначальником своим 12 патриархов, должен выступить Израиль духовный, ведущий начало от своих родоначальников – 12 Апостолов.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Poslanie Apostolov na propoved’,” [“The Sending of the Apostles to Preach: Mt. 9:35-10:42,”] *TKDA* I, 1 (1912): 4.

<sup>183</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Otnoshenie ko Khristy Spaciteliu knishnikov i fariseev: Mf. 12: 1-50 i parall.,” [“The Attitude of the Pharisees and Scribes toward Christ the Savior: Mt. 12:1-50 and the corresponding texts,”] *TKDA* II (1912): 27-30.

<sup>184</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Exegetical remarks...” *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 290.

with a theological goal to inform the readers in the soteriological and eschatological truths. They are “of a mysterious symbolism, that is achieved not on the basis of the historical facts, but on the basis of ideological or typological illumination of the latter.”<sup>185</sup>

Some texts, in Bogdashevskii’s assumption, have a symbolic meaning. For example, in John 1:29-34: (1) the baptism of Christ should be seen in the light of the redemptive event, the sacrificial death of Jesus (cf. Mt. 3:16 and parallel.); (2) the metaphorical expression ἤνεώχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί “the heavens were opened,” at Christ’s baptism, symbolizes the blessings that will be poured out in the eschatological future; or (3) the Spirit described as καταβαῖνον ὡσεὶ περιστεράν “descending as a dove” conveys a real occurrence of descent of the Spirit upon Jesus that symbolizes in the reference of the dove, peace, purity, and meekness marked by Christ’s ministry.<sup>186</sup> He argues, that although the various New Testament texts are of symbolical meaning, the events behind these texts, however, cannot be discounted as merely symbolical.<sup>187</sup> “Mysterious symbolism is achieved not as superior to the history, by invalidating its facts, but by ideological illumination of the history.”<sup>188</sup> Consequently, Bogdashevskii assumes that certain New Testament texts convey the *historical-eschatological* or *historical-ecclesiastic* meaning(s). For example, in dealing with Mt. 24:5-14, Bogdashevskii interprets these verses not as pure story of the future historical event, but takes them in a historical-eschatological sense (similarly the various expressions of the Book of Revelation). “The history [in these texts] is an empirical basis for the eschatology: some of these events exist or/and will exist in the future, but in its full sense they will be disclosed only before or during the Second coming of Christ.”<sup>189</sup> The historical-ecclesiastic symbolism Bogdashevskii sees in the text of John. 19:31-37, which records the historical event with a deeper level of symbolic meaning, is significant for the Church. Commenting on John. 19:34 Bogdashevskii (with support from Chrysostom and the Fathers) discerns in the water and the blood, shed after the soldier pricked Jesus’ flesh, the true

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<sup>185</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Exegetical remarks...” *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 291.

<sup>186</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Exegetical remarks...” *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 296-98.

<sup>187</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Exegetical remarks..., *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 298. Cf. “The symbolical interpretation of the miracles absolutely does not understand miracle. The symbolism, in any kind of its form, must be grounded in the history. The merely symbol [non- attached to the reality] cannot be the basis of the fact.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Christ as the Miracles Performer: Mt. 8:1-9 and the corresponding texts,” *TKDA* III 10 (1911): 265.

<sup>188</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Exegetical remarks...,” *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 291.

<sup>189</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Exegetical remarks...,” *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 312.



initiation of the Orthodox sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. Thus, water and blood, the evidence of the factual death of Christ, are of “ecclesiastic” meaning for the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.<sup>190</sup>

### 5.3.4 Conclusion

In the beginning of this section, it was noted that Bogdashevskii considered his own exegetical writings as an attempt to enrich Russian Orthodox exegetical literature which he weighed to be inadequate in merit and quantity.<sup>191</sup> Therefore, to exegete he selected especially the New Testament documents or selected passages which have not been carefully considered by other Russian Orthodox interpreters.<sup>192</sup>

By listing what appears to be the character of Bogdashevskii’s New Testament investigation, reflected in his exegetical studies, we may at least hope to present his achievements to indicate certain matters and the direction in which Bogdashevskii found solution for working out the investigation of the New Testament text(s):

*First* and foremost, in Bogdashevskii’s study of the New Testament any application of the scientific study of the text(s) is related to the doctrine of inspiration, the concepts of canonicity and authenticity. On the one hand it does not abandon (1) a careful reconstruction of the New Testament text in Greek (on the basis of critical editions of the Greek NT) in order to establish what the interpreter reads is not far from what the New Testament writers actually wrote or the interrelations found among the New Testament documents (i.e. what is called *lower criticism*); (2) the use of grammatical, linguistic and lexical tools for the study of the New Testament; and (3) a careful study of New Testament externals; yet, on the other hand, the weight of these concepts conveys the challenge to decision and belief for the judgment of the dates of the New Testament books (not later than A. D. 100 ) and their Apostolic origin, historicity and literary integrity. Thus the liberty of the scientific and critical approach, in Bogdashevskii, has established itself within the *Church-Tradition-Objectivity*,

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<sup>190</sup> See Bishop Vasilii, “Paskha Stradanii Khrista Mt. 26:3 - 27:66 i parall.,” [“The Passover of Christ sufferings Mt. 26:3 - 27:66,”] *TKDA* I (1915): 345.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Explanatory Remarks for the Most Difficult Texts of the Letter of James,” *TKDA* III, 9 (1894): 116.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Bishop Vasilii, “Proiskhozhdenie Ev. Matfeia,” [“The Origin of The Gospel of Matthew,”] *TKDA* III (1915): 243.

rather than within the maximum of objective independence of the interpreter from the confessional postulates.

*Second*, Bogdashevskii does not select any specific corpus of the New Testament as a starting point for his study of the New Testament. For Him, the central message of Jesus Christ controls the whole New Testament. Therefore the idea of the progress, reformulation or correction of the theological concepts among the New Testament documents is not acceptable appropriation.

*Third*, the four canonical Gospels should be treated in the same way with an attempt to harmonize their account of the life and activity of Jesus. It is possible that the evangelists used the same sources existing in the period of oral tradition, or even consulted available written material; yet the difficulty and complexity to harmonize the four Gospels proves, on one hand, their independent composition, and, on the other hand, their common purpose which was to thoroughly record and convey the life and message of Jesus.

*Fourth*, to the more complex interpretation of the text(s), Bogdashevskii prefers the most simple. For example, in his exegesis of Acts 6:3a [ἐπισκέψασθε δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἄνδρας ἕξ ὑμῶν μαρτυρομένους ἑπτὰ] where the twelve Apostles urged to elect specifically *seven* men of good repute (and of the other significant qualities) not because (1) there is an *a priori* scriptural text; (2) the number *seven* is symbolic number; and (3) the institution of the seven deacons, in Acts 6, follows after the example of a particular Jewish paradigm to select seven men for a public service; but because the Apostles simply estimated that to meet the particular needs of the Church they have to commission seven men in total. Thus, their decision to appoint *seven* men is not of theological or symbolic meaning, but of a merely practical character, where the number seven is relevant only to the logical-pragmatic measure.<sup>193</sup>

*Fifth*, although Bogdashevskii stresses the importance of Church tradition in interpreting the New Testament, the absolute dependence on the Orthodox commentaries and the Church traditional interpretation is not attested to his exegesis. His manner of handling the New Testament material and his attitude toward the exegetical investigation of the other scholars and interpreters does not show his own neutrality. Despite his own convictions, prejudices and predilections, the charges that Bogdashevskii, in interpreting the

<sup>193</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Exegetical remarks: ... (6) Acts 6:3," *TKDA* II, 7/8 (1909): 493-495.