

5.5 New Testament Hermeneutics

5.5.1 Introduction

This last section forms the conclusion on Bogdashevskii's interpretation of the New Testament. The foregoing pages sought to present a coherent analysis of Bogdashevskii's model for approaching philosophy, New Testament investigation, and Christian ethics as the disciplines that witness closely to his hermeneutical procedures. The reading of the individual issues synthesizes reflection about common elements found in Bogdashevskii's writings and allows one to constitute a hermeneutical discernment of the New Testament. The following arguments seek to draw a firm line of the essential elements of Bogdashevskii's New Testament hermeneutics from a variety to main lines. In some cases the evidence of the constitutive parallels or contrasts between Bogdashevskii and modern Orthodox scholarship will be given in footnotes.

5.5.2 The Church as the Interpreter of the New Testament

Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics is *centred in ecclesiology*. "The Hermeneutics of the Church," guided by the authority of the Church points to the authoritative understanding of the New Testament which does not depend on biblical science alone, but the Church as the point of departure. From this emerges the principle of the priority of the Church in relation to the interpreter. This hermeneutical concept, in Bogdashevskii's model may be clarified by distinguishing the embraced elements: (1) a self-evident concept of the Church as the interpreter of the New Testament; (2) a pair related to the first: (a) the understanding of the essence of the tradition of the Church and the New Testament; and (b) the tradition of the church as the interpreter of the New Testament texts; (3) the nature of the relationship between biblical exegesis and dogmatics (exemplified from Bogdashevskii's work) as the after-effect of all the previous; (4) the ecclesiastically-liturgical use of the New Testament; and last (5) appeal to the Fathers.

The point of departure, in Bogdashevskii's *ecclesiastic hermeneutics*, takes as its keystone that the Orthodox Church is, and ever has been the interpreter of the New Testament.

Bogdashevskii's straightforward description views the Church as the holy foundation, made by the Incarnate Word of God. The church is the place for the salvation and

sanctification of all humankind. It has divine authenticity and bears His authority. The Church consists of man holding one faith, bound to Jesus Christ and each other with faith, hope, and love. The Church believes the same dogmas, has the same worship and is governed by the successors of the Apostles.

Although the Church community existed before the documents of the New Testament, it still had a clear perspective of the truth about Christ and the origin of the Church. Thus, the New Testament is not the reality in itself, but together with the tradition of the Church bears an authoritative testimony about the reality of Christ and the reality of the Church.

Because the Church is united with her head - Christ, who dwells within the Church, the Orthodox Church preserved pure and undefiled sources of dogmatic truth (based on the Bible and Tradition); and by the Church these sources of dogmatic truth are rightly interpreted. The Church is endowed by her Founder with the non-errant faculty of rightly dividing the word of truth. The Church fixed the canon of the Scriptures, being guided by the Holy Spirit. Since the New Testament is given to the Church, the New Testament can never be understood outside of the Church. It cannot be an isolated unit without the peculiar quality of a relationship with the Church. Bogdashevskii says, "There is only one true and valid [Ru. - *istinnoey*] understanding of the Gospel [the whole New Testament is assumed] - the universal [Ru.- *vselenskoe*] understanding which is of the whole Church [Ru. - *obshche-tserkovnoe*]."²⁷³ Agreeably, "In the sphere of faith the foremost importance has ... the universal voice of the Church."²⁷⁴

Since Bogdashevskii regards the Orthodox Church as the only true Church, the Orthodox Church is a paradigm of unity among the people of God where Christ is present.²⁷⁵ Without the Church, where the relationships between man and the Word of God exist, it is impossible to have a proper understanding of the New Testament.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ "Есть единое истинное понимание Евангелия,- понимание вселенское, общецерковное...." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 301.

²⁷⁴ D. Bogdashevskii, "Sound Metaphysics," Book review of P. Linitkii, *Guide to the Study of Philosophy* (Kharkov': 1893) in *TKDA* II, 5 (1898): 126.

²⁷⁵ See esp. "O Khristsanskom Edinenii (In. 17:21)," ["About Christian Unity (John 17:21)," *TKDA* I, 4 (1905): 576-586; Cf. *TKDA* I (1905): 566-575.

²⁷⁶ Cf. with the emphasis of Archbishop Illarion (Troitskii, d. 1929): "if a man believes in the Church, he conceivably will receive an accurate message of the Holy Scripture." Illarion, *Sacred Scripture and the Church* (M.: 1914), 17.

Bogdashevskii argues, “If in a scientific field everything is conformed with the scientific requirements, established by this science, then it is exceedingly true that in the issues of understanding Scripture, individualism should not take place, for it leads only to the darkening and obvious falsification of truth.”²⁷⁷ In Bogdashevskii’s view, the Church does not and should not operate independently of (and isolated from) reliable Orthodox biblical scholarship. Yet, since the Holy Spirit gave the Word of God to the Church, the Church preserved both the Word and its understanding. The Church is a historical community and as the Body of Christ in history is the bearer of the totality of God’s revelation through history,²⁷⁸ and the Church possesses and lives out an active presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Bogdashevskii gives no alternative for the above hermeneutical key to understanding the New Testament, except the Church. Only the Church can interpret it authentically and rightfully. The Church is *a priori* in the reading of the New Testament. It is the hermeneutical norm.²⁷⁹

Bogdashevskii determines that the biblical interpretation regarding investigation into the area of Christian faith is not some kind of scientific research (esp. true for the hypothetical supposition of the historical critical science) that is independent from the Church. His appeal to Church authority does not suggest any kind of manipulation of Scripture by the Church, rather it places the Church at the service of God’s revelation attested to in the New Testament, it is the guardian of its truth. Reading the New Testament in the light of The Church, being faithful to the original truth of God, is the encountering of Church-understanding and Scriptural-understanding in a concordant way. In Bogdashevskii words, “If we correctly appeal to the problem, then it is obvious that the Church for us is not

²⁷⁷ “Если в области науки нужно подчиниться основным научным требованиям, считаться с тем, что сделано наукою; то тем более в области веры полный индивидуализм не должен иметь места, ибо он ведет только к затемнению и прямому искажению истины.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. On the Significance of the Church,” *TKDA* 3 (1913): 459. Cf. *Ibid.*, “Sermon. On Christian Humility,” *TKDA* 3 (1913): iii-iv.

²⁷⁸ Meyendorff also stresses that the ecclesiastic character of Orthodox theology is based on the fact that the Church has received the fullness of divine revelation. See John Meyendorff, “Light from the East? ‘Doing Theology’ in an Eastern Orthodox Perspective,” from *Doing Theology in Today’s World...*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 354-55. Fr. Florovsky says, “Revelation is preserved in the Church. Therefore, the Church is the proper and primary interpreter of revelation.... And the Church is the divinely appointed and permanent witness to the very truth and the full meaning of this message, simply because the Church belongs itself to the revelation, as the Body of the Incarnate Lord.” Florovsky, *BCT*, 25-26.

²⁷⁹ In the words of a modern American Orthodox biblical scholar “The Church is the proper locus for the interpretation of the Bible” John Breck, “Orthodoxy and the Bible Today,” in *The Legacy of St. Vladimir: Byzantium, Russia, America*, eds. John Breck and others, (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1990), 144.

something external, a simple authority which controls us. We are flesh from her flesh and bone from her bones.”²⁸⁰ The point is that authority, as a category, is not applicable in terms of the Church, for there cannot be authority in the same spiritual world of the Church.²⁸¹ Therefore he argues, that the distrust of the institutional church (creeds, dogmas, and sacraments) is typical only to non-Orthodox people (the point is made against Adolf von Harnack’s *Das Wesen des Christentums* ²⁸²).

5.5.2.1 Tradition and the New Testament

How do the New Testament documents relate to other sources of authority in Bogdashevskii’s hermeneutics? To answer this question we need to examine both his views of the New Testament and the tradition of the Church.

In Bogdashevskii’s assessment, the documents of the whole Bible constitute the most imminent source of Orthodox faith and practice.²⁸³ The Word of God in the form of the New Testament, like the incarnate Logos himself, must be understood as a “theandric” or divine-human reality. To Bogdashevskii, the New Testament is God’s Word to human beings, and not merely human words about God. The New Testament writers must be understood primarily as referring to the Eternal Logos, the Son of God and Mary, who became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth and is glorified in the Church from a *Trinitarian* perspective - together with the Father and His Spirit. The New Testament is the collection of accounts, written by men, inspired by the Spirit of God, to record God’s revelation of the eternal Logos as a self-disclosure of God to his creation. In this way, the New Testament is the transmission of interrelated divine truths to people; it is the Word of God. The New Testament constitutes

²⁸⁰ “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 костей ея...” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,” *TKDA* 2 (1904): 191-192.

²⁸¹ In the same way, Berdiaev keenly disregards categorizing the tradition of the Church as authority. He says, “Authority is a category only applicable to the natural world of division and hatred, in the spiritual worlds it [*i.e.*, authority] has no meaning; or rather, it means simply a certain humility and submission which precede freedom.” N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), 331.

²⁸² See D. I. Bogdashevskii, D. I “Adolf Harnack, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. by M. Blum (M.: 1906),” *TKDA* III, 9 (1907): 151-155.

²⁸³ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 269.

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 of the whole creation with God.

The Holy Spirit guarded the writers 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 (correspondent to his intellectual, mental and spiritual qualities²⁸⁴) as well as with the needs, wants and character of the believers to whom the writings were addressed.²⁸⁵ The New Testament writings are primarily theological story rooted in history, but not limited to a strict historical record.²⁸⁶

Although Bogdashevskii admits that the New Testament and its teaching "is addressed, in the first place, to a separate person,"²⁸⁷ the aim of it is to transform human society into the living Body of Christ (through the proclamation of its salvific, dogmatic and moral truths). For apologetic purposes it serves the Orthodox faith.²⁸⁸ As a living Word of God it brings the believer into a dimension of hearing and living.²⁸⁹

[In the New Testament] we will be able to find all the answers to the inquiries of our spirit. It is the source that transforms our life.... It gives an authentic freedom - a freedom of spirit. It grants an authentic wealth - a spiritual wealth.... It establishes an authentic state of being equal - spiritual equality.... It brings up our thinking and filling to everlasting, heavenly and godly [values]. It is always teaching us to submit the temporal to the everlasting, the materialistic to the heavenly. It must get to the bottom of our lives and into all our relationships.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁴ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287. He also 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." *Ibid.*, 282.

²⁸⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 287.

²⁸⁶ Cf. *Idem.*

²⁸⁷ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Sermon. About Christian Truth (Mt 3:15)," *TKDA* I (1912): ix.

²⁸⁸ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Historic Character of Acts," *TKDA* II, 5 (1909): 385 ff.

²⁸⁹ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, Slovo. O dukhovnoi khritianskoi bor'be," ["Sermon. About Spiritual Christian Warfare,"] *TKDA* I, 3 (1911): vi-vii.

²⁹⁰ "[В Евангелии] найдем ответы на все запросы нашего духа, оно – начало, преобразующее нашу жизнь.... Оно дает истинную свободу – свободу духа; оно доставляет истинное богатство, - богатство духовное; оно утверждает истинное равенство, то равенство.... Оно возводит нашу мысль и чувство к вечному, небесному, божественному.... Оно наставляет нас одному: подчинению временного вечному, - чувственного, грубого, материального – чистому, светлому, небесному; высшее должно проникать всю нашу жизнь, все наши отношения." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 302.

Since the Church is the expression of Christ's presence and since the Church is the hermeneutical 'place' where the New Testament should be read, Christ expresses His truth and revelation for the Church through all the different voices of the Church. The Orthodox Church preserved this truth in the New Testament, the other written and oral Christian sources - the sacred stores of revelation, the treasures of the words of God, that are authoritative for the Christian faith. Bogdashevskii says,

[The New Testament documents] are only the part of an extensive Apostolic oral tradition, established in a written form. From this it is apparent, how mistaken those are who take Scripture as a single source of the Christian faith and life and reject all the significance of the Sacred Tradition.²⁹¹

The above quotation indicates that Bogdashevskii rejects the notion of self-sufficiency of the New Testament (often expressed in the phrase *sola-scriptura*). The tradition of the Church, in Bogdashevskii, is not supplementary or additional truths to the New Testament, but it is an essential spiritual attestation of a divine truth that is grounded in the mystical light of the Church: it is God's revelation that embodies the truth similarly to the Bible.²⁹²

Bogdashevskii distinguishes three types of Church Tradition. He says,

There are different kinds of historical ecclesiastic tradition [Ru. *predanie*].... *An ancient* tradition belongs to the Apostolic Fathers, *a constant* tradition was set out in the second century and it is preserved by all the Churches.... [*An*] *unanimous* tradition is the harmonious and non-contradictory mind of the Church.²⁹³

The last type of tradition is hermeneutically decisive. In Bogdashevskii's thought, we have all the rights to search for the meaning of New Testament texts, but "the Church already has what we are searching for; therefore it is obligatory to be submissive to her universal

²⁹¹ "Евангелия – это только часть широкого Апостольского устного предания, закрепленного для нас в письмени. Понятно отсюда, как заблуждаются те, которые единственным источником христианской веры и жизни считают Писание и отвергают всякое значение Священного Предания." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 281; cp. p. 301.

²⁹² Cf. with Breck's argument, Orthodoxy fully accepts the canonical or normative quality of Scripture for deciding matter of belief and behaviour. On the other hand, it recognizes that Scripture is a product or fruit of Tradition... The Bible must be understood as the expression of Tradition, created by the Spirit through human agents, that serves as the "canon," the norm and rule, by which all traditions are measured and all authentic Tradition is determined." Fr. John Breck, "Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation," *SVTQ* 40 (1996): 88-89.

²⁹³ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 276 (his italics).

truth.”²⁹⁴ A *unanimous* tradition, legitimised by the whole Church, includes the whole living and experiential faith: a collection of written documents, a body of doctrinal beliefs, a set of customary practice is that were recognized as true and unfailing in the legacy of the Church. Moreover, it is an authoritative and reflective source of divine truth constituting normative reality of the New Testament text(s), the living and developing expression of the Orthodox faith, and the total life of the Church.²⁹⁵ In attempting to interpret the New Testament, the tradition of the Church, in Bogdashevskii’s view, “must be accepted as a requirement of the scientific conscientiousness. To negate it means to nullify any kind of historical investigation.”²⁹⁶ Tradition, as a whole, supplies the interpreter with the necessary information base to understand the New Testament documents.²⁹⁷

Bogdashevskii indicates that irreverence to the tradition of the Church comes from a self-cantered paradigm. The neglect to tradition affects the productiveness in understanding the New Testament. He says, the tendency of the interpreter to reject the divine truths of the tradition “brings forth a complete spiritual disharmony and destroys life and its development.”²⁹⁸ The concept as a whole, in Bogdashevskii’s thought, serves as a safeguard against subjectivity of the interpreter. In seeking objectivity, Bogdashevskii, however, does not assume the possibility of interpreting the New Testament outside the Church, but only within the Church community. This is an *a priori* assumption for Bogdashevskii. For him, this is not in conflict with the objective epistemological question in biblical interpretation simply because it is impossible to claim *not* to have the presuppositions for interpretation. The hermeneutical concept of the tradition, therefore, is a *legitimate* presupposition, for it

²⁹⁴ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,” *TKDA* 2 (1904): 191-192.

²⁹⁵ Cf. with Fr. Hopko formulation, “The tradition of the Church is an exterior, phenomenal manifestation of the interior, nominal unity of the Church. It must be comprehended as a living force, as the consciousness of one organism, in which all previous life is included.... All the life of the Church at all times in its existence, as far as it is fixed in documents -this is Church tradition. Thomas, Hopko, “Bible and Church History” *The Orthodox Faith*, Vol. 3, 26-27.

²⁹⁶ “... предание не только можно, но безусловно нужно принять, ибо этого требует научная добросовестность, и подвергать его сомнению – значит собственно делать невозможную какую бы то ни было историческую критику.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 276-277.

²⁹⁷ This is clear in Bogdashevskii’s arguments in “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 269-302.

²⁹⁸ Archpriest Bogdashevskii, “Sermon. On Christian Humility,” *TKDA* 3 (1913): iv.

places the interpreter within Church faith and practice. Tradition, then, becomes the basis for a biblical interpretation.

The concepts of the Church and tradition are vital for Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics. Here he is searching the grounds for dismissing the super-mysticism and positivistic rationalism in the perception of Scripture.²⁹⁹

By allowing individuality and creativeness in the process of understanding, Bogdashevskii, however, demonstrates that despite limited variations the understanding of the New Testament can be perceived in different ways. For example, he admits that a personal experience (although, not a decisive hermeneutical key) may illuminate and direct the interpreter to apprehend the biblical truth in a personal way. Nevertheless, the results of the interpretation from the view of dogma should completely lead to a fixed religious understanding, already known and sanctioned by the Church.³⁰⁰ Yet, the idea of authoritarian Church tradition is only the translation of spiritual phraseology into the language of the natural and historical world. This should not be perceived as the power-effect dimension. Church tradition is not an authority imposed on the interpreter from without. Church tradition is a real victory over divisions and misunderstandings in how Scripture is perceived. It is the union of the past, present, and future in ecclesiastic oneness. Thus, tradition, as the creative life of the Spirit of God, makes individual understanding of the New Testament more definite by keeping the interpretation in union with the collective mind of the Church. Bogdashevskii says,

[It] is possible and necessary to investigate, according to personal potency and ability, but this investigation must not be disassociated from the foundation of a fixed Church tradition. If our investigation in theological fields differs from universal Church teaching, the legitimacy of our conclusions must be questioned, because the Church is more accurate than we; and her mind supersedes our insufficiency. We are searching..., but the Church... already possesses what we are looking for; therefore it is necessary to be submissive to her truth.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. On the Significance of the Church," *TKDA* 3 (1913): 466.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 465.

³⁰¹ "[M]ожно и должно исследовать, сколько кому позволяют его силы и способности, то только пусть это исследование не будет оторванным от почвы единого вселенского предания. А если наше исследование в богословской области расходится с вселенским церковным учением, нужно усумниться в справедливости наших выводов, ибо Церковь правее нас, ее разум бесконечно превосходит нашу ограниченность. Мы ищем..., но Церковь... владеет уже тем, чего мы ищем, а потому нужно быть покорным ее вселенской истине." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 191-192. In the words of Fr. Hopko, "A scholar cannot begin his work by taking himself as his sole point of departure. He must study the work of all his predecessors and carry it on

5.5.2.2 *The Nature of the Relationship between Biblical Exegesis and Dogmatics*

Everywhere in his writings, Bogdashevskii tirelessly resisted “liberal” Protestantism’s tendency, exemplified classically in the exegetical investigations, which maintained radical approaches of historical-critical method. For Bogdashevskii, “there is nothing more ill-intentioned than a perverted use [of the Bible] to justify any kind of pseudo or presupposed convictions.”³⁰² All of this is both important and clear. Nevertheless, Bogdashevskii’s argument raises a notoriously puzzling feature in his hermeneutics. While recognizing that the prejudice in the understanding of the text is risky; his hermeneutics nonetheless carries significance for Church dogmatics, which precedes individual analysis of the text and appears to be legitimised almost automatically by application. The issue should be defined and exemplified from his own exegesis.

On the one hand, Bogdashevskii does not stress a particular methodology for exegetical process as an exclusively legitimate. He sees the possibility for exegetical creativeness and multifaceted approaches. In this sense, exegetical methodology is not linked to dogma (methodology is not indoctrinated).

On the other hand, since the Bible is the revelation of God that corresponds with the essence of Church faith, Bogdashevskii’s “ecclesiastic” hermeneutic brings together the final exegetical conclusions and the doctrinal teaching of the Church in a such way that the coherence of the text(s) lies within the boundaries of Church dogma. With an eye toward dogmatics, Bogdashevskii departs from the views: (1) since Church dogma is unchangeable, there can be no individualism in the dogmatic formularisation; and (2) the Church did not create doctrines; rather it faithfully preserved them.³⁰³ Church dogma is both tradition and reflection of the mind of the Church. It is an authoritative tool for understanding the New

without a break in the community.... [T]he understanding of Holy Scripture must be based on tradition. In other words, when one undertakes to understand the Word of God from point of view of faith and dogma, one must necessarily be in accord with the interpretation of the Church handed down by the divinely-inspired Fathers and teachers of the Church and from the apostolic times.” Thomas, Hopko, “Bible and Church History” *The Orthodox Faith*, Vol 3, 23. The other Orthodox scholar says, “ While personal interpretation of Scripture are welcomed and encouraged, those interpretations forfeit their claim to authority if they sever their connection with the ecclesiastic Body and its Tradition.” John Breck, “Orthodoxy and the Bible Today,” in *The Legacy of St. Vladimir: Byzantium, Russia, America*, eds. John Breck and others, (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1990), 144.

³⁰² D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 301

³⁰³ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. On the Significance of the Church,” *TKDA* 3 (1913): 457-466.

Testament, because: (1) it makes a decisive judgment of the legitimacy of a religious or dogmatic meaning of the New Testament; and (2) it directs and controls the selection of the questions one should bring in front of the text(s). In Bogdashevskii's own practice exegesis is centred on the New Testament texts that *most clearly provide support* for the Orthodox dogma or *most clearly reproach* dogmatics of the Roman Catholics or Protestants.

In presenting the evidence, the first example is Bogdashevskii's interpretation of the agony and turmoil of Jesus' spirit in the Gethsemane prayer, preceded by his death on the cross. Here Bogdashevskii departs from dogmatic concepts as the keys for accurate understanding of the event (Mt. 26: 35-46; Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:39-46; cf. John. 12:27). Initially, he argues against the conclusion that Jesus had no fearful experience of the cross before him. Bogdashevskii operates from the standpoint that the nature of God's incarnation in Jesus (the divinity of Jesus) cannot be emphasised at the expense of his humanity, for this can lead to Apollinarianism (a denial of the full humanity of Christ; this heresy was condemned at the First Council of Constantinople in 381). Christ, in his "*two natures, one person*" therefore did experience fear in the light of approaching physical suffering. Next, it is impossible for Bogdashevskii to consider the Gethsemane event as a *struggle* or *conflict* within Christ's soul. Although, not arguing that the incarnate Son had but a single, divine nature, Bogdashevskii maintains Christology "from above" by stating that Christ's divine nature could not possibly struggle against the cross, for this would constitute disobedience to the Father. Such disobedience presupposes sinfulness and inner division; yet this is impossible for Christ's holy and perfect divine nature.³⁰⁴

Second, Bogdashevskii's exegesis of the pericope Mt. 4:1-11 (cf. Mk. 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-14) stresses a vital theme of Christ's obedience to the Father which was accomplished through Christ's humility, service and suffering. Bogdashevskii says that Christ's experience of being tested by Satan in the wilderness was real, rather than merely symbolical.³⁰⁵ In his view, the crucial question of this pericope is centred not only on a choice between the will of Satan or the will of God or the encouragement for believers in the face of the testing they could be confronted with but especially on the nature of Christ's divinity. This testing should be understood as involving a struggle between Jesus and Satan in the sense that Jesus was provoked to capitalize upon his identity as the Son of God. Therefore it is important, for Bogdashevskii, to specify the essence of Jesus Christ, for a dogmatic formulation of the

³⁰⁴ See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. Christ the Savior in Gethsemane," ["Chtenie. Khristos Spasitel' v Gevsimanii,"] *TKDA* I, 4 (1913): 630-633.

³⁰⁵ See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Exegetical Remarks: Mt. 4:1-11...", *TKDA* II, 6 (1907): 198.

precise nature of Christ is of chief importance to understanding the event. Bogdashevskii argues that in the interpretation of Satanic temptation for Jesus it is impossible to see any kind of dualism in the nature of Christ. In Christ there were both *two desires* and *two wills*, yet because of Christ's sinlessness, the conflict between these desires did not exist; there was a human desire, yet it was submitted to a divine desire in the same person. Contradiction to His self-identity and to the will of the Father means to induce into Christ's nature some kind of consistent struggle and conflict. The understanding that Christ did experience hunger is absolutely acceptable. Yet, "that in Him there was a natural *psychological* desire, contradictory to the will of the Father is unfeasible to accept without destroying Church teaching about the Person of Jesus Christ."³⁰⁶

Next, his essay "A Secret Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ" [Tainaia Vecheria Gospoda Nashego Iisusa Khrista] is the other good example of a *dogmatic exegesis*. Here Bogdashevskii is turning to a treatment of the New Testament passages related to Christ's institution of the Eucharist (Mt. 26:26-30; Mk. 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20, John 6:51-59; 1 Cor 11:25-26). Throughout the discussion, it is apparent that his polemical target is to show that the "words of institution" regarding: (1) the eating of the bread; (2) the drinking of the wine; and (3) the eschatological drinking of the wine in the Kingdom, Jesus' use of the verb ἐστίν, "is" ("this is my body"; "this is my blood"), can hardly mean that Jesus is physically present with the Twelve at the meal. Bogdashevskii argues, that Christ *is* genuinely present in the elements, but without a change of these *into* his actual body and blood (as in Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation). He also dismisses that Jesus merely instils a new dynamic symbolism into these elements. Rather,

In the mystery of the Eucharist Christ the Saviour leads us in the most imminent bodily communion with Himself. In the Church He made us His own body, and in the Eucharist He gives us His own true flesh and His true blood.... This is the meaning of the Eucharist - it is the repetition of Christ's sacrifice, not a meditative one, but a real sacrifice in its essence.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ "Но что в Нем было *психическое* желание, противное боле Отца, этого уже никак нельзя допустить, не разрушая церковного учения о Лице Иисуса Христа." See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Exegetical Remarks: Mt. 4:1-11...", *TKDA* II, 6 (1907): 201 (his italics).

³⁰⁷ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Tainaia Vecheria Gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista," ["A Secret Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ,"] *TKDA* III, 10 (1906): 27. Correspondingly, in his thought, John 6: 48-58 is Johannine version of Jesus' saying about the bread at the Last Supper. Taking it as a eucharistic discourse, Bogdashevskii views the *eucharistic words of Jesus* not as "metaphorical discourse" or as the train of symbolical and/or figurative thoughts for the original tradition of the Institution of the Lord's Supper, but as *literal* indication on (1) the reality of the Incarnation and the death of the Incarnate One; (2) "the reality of experiencing eating and drinking the true flesh and blood of Christ." Ibid., "Interpretation of John 3:1- 6:71," *TKDA* (1917): 180.

As the qualifying phrases in the above quotations suggest, Bogdashevskii argues, that when the Church repeats this sacramental meal, it does not simply look back to the redemptive death of its Lord, which is thereby commemorated, but experiences the unification with their Lord in His death. The mystery of the death of God's own Son, for the Orthodox faith, for this reason, is at the centre of Church worship.

The other example is Bogdashevskii's reading of the passage in Mt. 16:17-20. Here Jesus makes an important declaration concerning Peter: σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, "you are Peter" (*petra* - "rock") and promises to build the Church upon the *rock*. Bogdashevskii is motivated by his Orthodox intolerance against the tendency of Roman Catholics to justify the papacy, on the basis that Peter is the rock upon which the church was built. Bogdashevskii argues against this interpretation in favour of the view that Peter's antecedent confession itself is the rock. Thus, a supremely important confession of Jesus as Messiah (confirmed by Jesus' declaration of the divinely certified truth of confession) is the basis for Christianity, rather than the authority or personality of St. Peter.³⁰⁸ Further, Bogdashevskii's understanding of verse 19, confirmed by the Church Fathers, is that the Apostles had received the authority to forgive or not forgive sins (i.e., to determine salvation or damnation of the people). Consequently, Church supremacy received confirmation in the divinely granted authority of its leaders "to forgive or retain sins and therefore to admit or not admit into the kingdom of heaven (excommunication)."³⁰⁹ On the basis of Mt. 16:19, Bogdashevskii also argues that although the Church is composed not only of bishops or of clergy, but of the whole laity as well, (affirming that the guardian of truth is the entire "people of God"), the power to forgive or not forgive sins in the Church's disciplinary framework is bestowed only on certain priests and is manifested through certain institutions (such as a council). He concludes that without Church hierarchy the Church is unthinkable, without Church hierarchy Church discipline is impossible, for the power of judgment does not suggest the involvement of many individuals, but only these elected by the power of Christ.³¹⁰ In addition, by submitting exegesis to the Church dogma, Bogdashevskii reads into James 5: 14 the teaching regarding sacramental action that takes place in two sacraments: (1) *confirmation*, which follows baptism immediately in the form of anointment with chrism; and (2) *anointment of the sick*. Despite

³⁰⁸ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Christ the Savior in Bethsaida in the Districts of Magdala and Ceasaria Phillipi: Mt. 15:39 -16:28; Mk 8:10 - 9:1," *TKDA* II, 7/8 (1913): 360-362.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 364.

³¹⁰ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Poslednee prebyvanie Khrista Spasitelia v Galilee...", ["The Last Visit of Christ the Savior in Galilee: Mt. 17:1-18:35 and parell.,"] *TKDA* III, 11 (1913): 368-69.

the obvious indication of anointing in James 5:14, its purpose in James is not clear. This verse together with the only other mention in the New Testament of anointing the sick with oil in Mark 6:13 suggests its medicinal or practical purpose (or simply symbolical), but to conclude that James 5: 14 evidently establishes a sacrament of anointment is a biased way of reading this text.³¹¹

Next, in Bogdashevskii's view the pericope Mt. 19:13-15 (cf. Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17) correctly regards literal children who belong to the kingdom by their very nature. However, it is not likely, contra to Bogdashevskii, that the phrase τῶν γὰρ τοιοῦτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (of Mt. 19: 14) is *the direct reference to infant baptism and the support for the necessity of infant baptism* in Orthodox Church practice.³¹²

In understanding the commission given by Jesus to Peter in John 21:15-17, Bogdashevskii speaks in the confessional Orthodox way that holds Peter as a first Apostle among equals (*i.e.*, among the Apostles), in contrast to the Roman Catholic exegesis that recognizes here that Jesus is choosing Peter as the sole repository of his pastoral authority, his Vicar upon earth, the Supreme Pontiff.³¹³

From these examples it is clear, that for Bogdashevskii, the interpretation of the New Testament texts is aimed to offer Orthodox readers the assurance in the correctness of Orthodox dogmas. Consequently, the understanding of the biblical texts is rooted in the interrelated elements of the Church dogma and biblical context. The scholar shows by his own example that proper Orthodox investigation of the holy texts requires careful attention to the New Testament with an eye to Church dogmatics - a hermeneutical key, established by the living tradition of the whole Church. If the New Testament can be read and understood in the light of Church tradition, then the texts must be read in the context of the whole of Scripture with a view to the faith statements of the Orthodox Church. It is not to suggest that Bogdashevskii's hermeneutical system places the New Testament in a closed-off or fixed sense, without fresh and potential meaning for "today's readers", but it does imply that in itself the New Testament, if properly understood, cannot contradict Church dogma, since

³¹¹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Letter of James," *TKDA* III, 11 (1907): 456-58. On this issue see among others E. W. Puller, *The Anointing of the Sick in Scripture and Tradition* (London: SPCK), 1904; M. F. Unger, "Divine Healing," *BSac* 128 (1971) 234-44; J. Wilkinson, "Healing in the Epistle of James," *SJT* 24 (1971) 326-45.

³¹² See "Poslednee puteshestvie 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, 1 (1914): 16-17.

once the Church has received and discerned the truths of the New Testament she is faithfully preserved thereafter.³¹⁴ Orthodox dogmatics, as the expression of Church tradition, in Bogdashevskii, is the conceptual response to the problem of overoptimistic faith in a humankind that assumes similar abilities in all people to override the difficulties, involved in all the processes of understanding Scripture, for the possibility of achieving a correct interpretation. His view of interpretation holds that in the Church (tradition and dogma) there is the stable ground for judgment to avoid running the risk of foundering in a quagmire of subjectivism and relativism (caused by scepticism that Church knowledge is not indubitable).

5.5.2.3 Church Liturgy and the New Testament

Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics is primarily focused on the use of critical tools in private reading of the New Testament. His hermeneutical construction is not limited, however, to private reading and does not indicate that biblical understanding occurs only in private reading and investigation of the New Testament. Although Bogdashevskii does not stress that biblical interpretation is grounded above all in liturgy³¹⁵, he still points out that the essence of Orthodox biblical understanding comes via liturgy, the body of rites prescribed for formal Orthodox public worship. Liturgical common prayer (as well as private prayer) serves as the paradigm of receiving God's supplying grace and help for any human mediums and activities of understanding of the Word of God.³¹⁶ Bogdashevskii assumes, that in the

³¹³ See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Voskresenie Khrista Spasitelia i Ego Iavlenie: Mf. 28:1-20 i parall.," ["The Resurrection of Christ the Saviour and His Appearance: Mt. 28:1-20,"] *TKDA* II (1915): 27.

³¹⁴ Cf. Bogdashevskii, "On Significance of the Church," *TKDA* 3 (1913): 457-466.

³¹⁵ Contra such emphasis in the modern Orthodox biblical scholarship. See John Breck, *The Power of the Word in the Worshiping Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1986); Michael Prokurat, "Orthodox Interpretation of Scripture," in *The Bible in the Churches: How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures*. Ed. by Kenneth Hagen. 2nd ed. (Milwaukee Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1994), 59-97 (esp. 59-62, 57). Prokurat says, "Orthodox Christians experience Scripture and its interpretation primarily as a liturgical celebration, other than in their private reading and study." Additionally, "the liturgical (including the homiletical) use of the Word of God in the Orthodox church may be seen occupying a preeminent place over the written word, used for personal devotion and study."

³¹⁶ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "On Prayer (Luk. 22:40; cf. Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38)," *TKDA* I, 4 (1907): iii. In this sermon Bogdashevskii notes that even pious lighting of the Church candles serves the Orthodox Christian as an enlightening channel of Divine presence and grace (the same page as above). Fr. John Breck argues, "emphasis on the fulfillment of the Word of God through liturgical celebration marks the uniqueness of an Orthodox hermeneutics.... And it is only there, within the Church and its liturgy, that we can rediscover the Scripture as a source of life and hope for ourselves,

atmosphere of Orthodox liturgy, associated not only with the prayers and ceremonies, used in the celebration of the Eucharist, but also with liturgical context of the living tradition of the Church, the truth of the Word of God embraces the believer and in hearing the Orthodox sacred singing every Christian is capable of understanding the truth of God and the truth about the direction of a man's life.³¹⁷ Quoting an Old-Slavonic version of Rom. 10:8, Bogdashevskii uses a striking citation Paul's and an interpretation of Deut. 30:14³¹⁸, to support his view that the Church has the truth in ἐν τῷ στόματί and ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ; thus it voices a spiritual knowledge in the liturgy and equip the congregation with the understanding of the Divine Truth. Liturgy, therefore, "cannot be substituted by any science."³¹⁹ The science of biblical interpretation cannot be disjoined from the liturgical community-forming action that creates the necessary conditions for the interpretation of Scripture.

Since "preaching at its best energizes worship and makes the liturgy a more powerful experience,"³²⁰ Bogdashevskii's sermons proclaim God's saving and transformative message from the New Testament are closely related to liturgy.

Bogdashevskii's sermons, anchored in liturgy, are full of emotional elements. He views the Bible as the Word of God that expects God's people to understand and obey its spiritual deposit of a divine truth; therefore, his homiletic materials presupposes the use of the New Testament text(s) in a supposedly more contextualised way. Consequently, Bogdashevskii discursively suggests that an ancient author was inspired to say more than he knew and therefore addressed the issues meaningfully for 'modern' Orthodox believers.

In his sermons Bogdashevskii does not centre solely on the historical or linguistic aspects of the biblical texts and does not uses the biblical texts as the instrumental sources of historical reconstruction of biblical Christianity. Rather, in his pastoral concerns he utilized both, the historical argument of the Bible and the present criteria of relevance. His sermonisation tends to stress the transformational element of the believers through the

one to be received, celebrated and communicated through the Holy Spirit...." Fr. John Breck, "Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation," *SVTQ* 40 (1996): 79-80.

³¹⁷ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. Truth and Freedom," *TKDA* I (1900): 540-41.

³¹⁸ Rom. 10: 8 Ἐγγύς σου τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστιν, ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου· τοῦτ' ἐστὶν τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ὃ κηρύσσομεν (The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' that is, the word of faith which we preach).

³¹⁹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. Truth and Freedom," *TKDA* I (1900): 541.

³²⁰ Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective. Volume One: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), 64.

encounter with biblical texts and with the Orthodox tradition of the past and present. In other words, he is aware of the hermeneutical function of the biblical texts in relation to the reader-situations in the past and present. Therefore, Bogdashevskii takes the biblical text as the rationale for Orthodox beliefs and behaviour practices. In his sermons he uses the New Testament in existential scope. In this sense, his homiletic materials use Scripture for the service of contextual pragmatism. By addressing the ethical and behaviour issues of Orthodox churchmen, Bogdashevskii presupposes that properly interpreted biblical text is also of a *practical and pragmatical purpose* and as such serves for *acculturalization*. He says, The New Testament “in its essence is life and should make alive all human activities.”³²¹ In this regard, he stresses the concept of *transformative hermeneutics*³²² or *transformative interpretation* of the Bible that does not require great learning or the use of a complex exegetical methodology, but rather emphasizes an unconditional obedience (application), demanded by the Word of God. For a greater effect, his sermons occasionally contain the element of allegorical interpretation, that correspond not with pre-Christian Greek or Jewish allegorical purpose to *de-objectify*, or *de-particularize*, but with “the Christian Patristic and medieval purpose of *spiritualizing*, or providing *Christological or moral particularization and application*.”³²³

Assuming that the practical life of the Church is a primary goal of all biblical and theological hermeneutics, it is important to see that Bogdashevskii stresses that in liturgy there is a sacramental experience of the Word in worship, the understanding of biblical and theological thoughts, associated with the worship of God, and can be instantaneously conjoint with its practice. Thus, in liturgy the Word of God becomes living truth, the praxis of the Church and this, of course, is one of the principal purposes of the New Testament.

³²¹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “About Spiritual Christian Warfare,” *TKDA* I, 3 (1911): vii.

³²² The wording *transformative hermeneutics* is used correspondingly with Theodore Stylianopoulos theoretical constriction. In his formulisation, “Transformative hermeneutics is reflection on how the saving message of Scripture and its normative aspects become living truth, God’s living word, in the *praxis* of the Church.... Transformative hermeneutics is critical in function as well as substance, seeking both spiritual discernment and existential access to new life. It calls the Church to be itself, but not of the worlds, a spiritual movement as well as a historical institution. It drives the Church to mission and service, which can be accomplished to the degree that the church itself demonstrates unity in Christ and radiates the newness of the Spirit.... Transformative hermeneutics exposes this significant fact: the hermeneutical problem is ultimately a spiritual issue for the Church itself, a matter of its own ongoing health and renewal in Christ.” See Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective. Volume One: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), 235-237.

³²³ For the comparison of the pre-Christian and Christian use of allegorical interpretation see Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 157-173.

5.5.2.4 *The Appeal to the Fathers as the Interpreters of the New Testament*

Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics is patristic. Since the Church is of Apostolic succession, and since the Fathers, in knowledge and power of the Spirit of God, were actively involved in the formation of the mind of the Church, the Church is "Patristic". The Fathers are truly witnesses of the Divine truth. Bogdashevskii, therefore, says "If there is the problem in interpretation of any selected text one should counsel with the works of the Apostolic Fathers to find clarification to any important issue."³²⁴ The authority of the Church Fathers in understanding the text, for Bogdashevskii, is of logical sequence: (1) **Since** in the reality of human life we observe that (a) nearly all the people are able to be involved in the majority of human activities; but the outstanding performance is achieved by the most experienced and talented; (b) the professionals of particular field are completely authoritative and responsible for the operating and directing acts correspondent to their vocation (e.g. medical doctors - performing medical surgery, etc.); (c) the most qualified and trustworthy guidance for any operation is determined by the council of competent specialists; (2) **determine** that in the reality of God, all people may participate in contemplation about God, but only the most gifted and spiritually experienced people of God, as the community, are conclusive.³²⁵

Bogdashevskii argues, that the study of the New Testament the authority belongs to "the specialists, rather than to a person, accidentally examining the text."³²⁶ These specialists are the Church Fathers. The gain and authority of the early Church Fathers writings, for Bogdashevskii, is fixed by the factors that the Orthodox Fathers (contra heretics): (1) have a

³²⁴ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 281.

³²⁵ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 278. Cf. with Stylianopoulos statements, "the appeal to revered interpreters [i.e. the Fathers] expressed the concern for doctrinal integrity and signified the ecclesiastic dimension of biblical interpretation, a dimension which underscores that the Bible is above all a book of the Church. Scripture belongs to no one alone. Properly speaking, it belongs to the Church, the community of faith that produced the Scriptures and upholds their authority. While interpreters should pursue scholarly objectivity and debate, no interpreter can engage the Bible as Bible apart from the context of the Church and its exegetical tradition, the interpretation of Holy Scriptures as Holy Scripture is, in the final analysis of the Church.... The exegetical achievements of the patristic luminaries was esteemed and preserved as a basis for unity and truth." Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective. Volume One: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), 112-113.

³²⁶ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 278.

constant and ultimate measure and criterion of right Orthodox faith (thus, their voice is much more than a historical feature, it is of a theological authority); (2) have been closer to the well spring of the truth of the early Church (i.e., at the first stage of the continuity of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church they were able to discern full and proper meaning of biblical truth both biblically and ecclesiastically justified; and (3) were able to read the Greek New Testament without lexicons and other reference tools (hence, they had no linguistic hindrance in reading and understanding the Greek texts). Moreover, the principle mark of the Fathers is that their interpretation was existentially rooted in the commitment to faith.³²⁷ The mind of the Fathers, no less important than the word of Holy Scripture³²⁸, serves as a help in the creative task of disclosure of the religious and ecclesiastic meaning of the New Testament within a changed “trans-historical” condition.

In his own exegesis, Bogdashevskii has shown that the use of the patristic interpretation should be subjected to precise assessment and critical analysis, rather than the use of the Patristic interpretation as a merely mechanical excerption or copying. His patristic hermeneutics, rather, assumes to follow the Fathers’ vision of their faith, to have their attitude and assumptions in approaching and understanding Scripture.³²⁹

5.5.3 Spirit of God as the Interpreter of the New Testament

Within the heart of Bogdashevskii’s hermeneutics, there emerges the principle of the illumination of the Holy Spirit in the process of interpretation of the New Testament. By stating that the source of understanding [of the New Testament writings] is the Spirit of God...., [for] the divine can be understood only through the divine - from the Spirit of God”,³³⁰ Bogdashevskii designates his hermeneutics as co-centered (together with ecclesiology) in *pneumatology*. The accent on the Holy Spirit is typical to Orthodox theological

³²⁷ Summarized from D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ’s Cross,” *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 277-278.

³²⁸ Cf. Florovsky, *BCT*, 107.

³²⁹ In the same way, Florovsky states, “It is a dangerous habit “to quote” the Fathers, that is their isolated sayings and phrases, outside of the concrete setting in which only they have their full and proper meaning and are truly alive. “To follow” the Fathers does *not* mean just “to quote” them. “To follow” the Fathers means to acquire their “mind,” their *phronema*.” Florovsky, *BCT*, 107 (his italics).

³³⁰ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “K Iz’iasneniiu 1 Kor. 1:18-6:20,” [“The interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-6:20,”] *TKDA* I, 4 (1911): 468-69.

consciousness.³³¹ The Holy Spirit is especially regarded as the fundamental element in both the transfiguration of human nature and the birth of new creation. Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics focuses on the third role of the Spirit - illumination.

According to Bogdashevskii, in the process of biblical interpretation, an exegete is engaged in the disclosure or understanding of divine revelation given to the Church. The Holy Spirit channels this understanding. Thus, the Word of God becomes transparent under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The understanding of the New Testament is a divine-human enterprise based upon the illumination of the human interpreter by the Spirit of God. Without the Holy Spirit, the interpreter discovers the meaning that is only close to the outer surface of the New Testament. Moreover, it was established that, Bogdashevskii's hermeneutical strategy demands that one reads Scripture thoroughly with the intent of obeying exactly what is commanded there. The precise understanding of Scripture, functioning normatively, is vital for practicing Orthodox faith. Therefore, the role of the Holy Spirit is attached both to epistemological and transcendental concepts of *hearing-practicing* the New Testament.

Among the most significant of Bogdashevskii's comments on this issue are his interpretative remarks on 2 Peter 1: 20, taken in the context. In his view, the phrase: *πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται* [no prophecy of Scripture derives from the prophet's own interpretation] cannot be interpreted either as (1) no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, or (2) no prophecy of Scripture derives from the prophet's own interpretation. He rightly concludes, that "the text refers not to the interpretation of prophecy, but *to its origin*."³³² While deciding between these alternatives, Bogdashevskii stresses that to be assuredly certain that 2 Peter 1:20 says nothing about the *interpretation* of Scripture is impossible. Therefore, he insists, although the Apostle Peter does not directly speak about the interpretation of Scripture, indirectly the Apostle implies: "[the understanding of Scripture] is not an act of one's own interpretation, for *the understanding is bestowed by the Holy Spirit*."³³³

In forming his arguments, first, Bogdashevskii begins with the understanding of the psychology of prophetic inspiration not as irrational ecstasy in which the prophet is a purely passive instrument of the Spirit of God, unconscious of the message the Spirit announces

³³¹ Among the others Berdiaev also articulates, "Orthodox thought sees the action of the Holy Spirit everywhere. Orthodoxy deep down is essentially the religious of the Holy Spirit." N. Berdiaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), 351.

³³² D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Second Letter of Peter," *TKDA* II, 7 (1908): 390 [his italics].

³³³ *Ibid.*, 389 [his italics].

through him, but as rational participation of the human being in the process. Thus, self-activity and individuality of the human role exists in prophecy.³³⁴ Next, the Holy Spirit of God inspired not only the prophets' visions, but also their understanding and interpretation of them, so that when they recorded the prophecies in Scripture they were spokesmen for God himself, the interpreters of His word. Moreover, Scripture or the documented prophecies contain the mystery of God, but the interpretation of this mystery is not the matter of the text itself.

Thus, the New Testament embodies God's word, but the interpretation significantly lies in the world behind the text - "The Holy Spirit interprets it, God gives the interpretation of His word in the same way as He sent it."³³⁵ On the one hand, "the Holy Spirit guarded the Apostles from misconceptions in the transmission of the New Testament truths."³³⁶ On the other hand, the role of the Holy Spirit is to prevent false, self-individual interpretation of the biblical text.³³⁷ Bogdashevskii says,

There is only one way of understanding - an external experience (sight and hearing) and an internal experience (the happenings inside the heart). Neither of these can give the full understanding of God's wisdom [recorded in Scripture].... Since God's wisdom is of heavenly and supernatural origin, the source of its understanding is the Spirit of God.... The homogeneous is grasped only by the homogeneous; as the stranger cannot understand our soul, for its private motives are only understandable for our inner eye, similarly the divine can be understood only through the divine - from the Spirit of God.³³⁸

³³⁴ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Second Letter of Peter," *TKDA* II, 7 (1908): 391.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 389. Also Florovsky, "The same Spirit, the Spirit of truth, which 'spoke through the Prophets,' which guided the Apostles, is still continuously guiding the Church into the fuller comprehension and understanding of the Divine truth, from glory to glory." Florovsky, *BCT*, 106.

³³⁶ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-6:20," *TKDA* I, 4 (1911): 469.

³³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 469.

³³⁸ "Естественный путь познания - опыт внешний (видение, слышание) и опыт внутренний (внутренние сердечные переживания). Но ни тот ни другой опыт не могут дать познания [божественных благ]... Таковы свойства божественной премудрости. Так как она небесного, сверхъестественного происхождения, то и источником ее познания является Дух Божий... Однородное познается только однородным, и как никто посторонний не может проникнуть в нашу душу, а она в своих сокровенных движениях постигается нашим внутренним оком; так и божественное уразумение только через божественное - от Духа Божия." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-6:20," *TKDA* I, 4 (1911): 468-69.

In Bogdashevskii's words, through the Holy Spirit "Christ is communicating into our mind what is His own."³³⁹ Correspondingly with his own philosophical concepts, Bogdashevskii, here, attempts to overcome the subjectivity by emphasising that in order to understand God's wisdom, the word of God, a searching physical mind should be bonded with the world of the highest reality. The existence of this bondage figuratively indicates 'homogeneous' with the Holy Spirit. It is manifested through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a human being, bearing the fruits of obedience to God. The presence or absence of the Holy Spirit and obedience do *pre-condition* the nature of man (the *spiritual* or *unspiritual* man). The degree of spirituality of man is in proportion with the degree of understanding the New Testament message. Understanding rests upon the spiritual state of the believer in whom the Holy Spirit operates.³⁴⁰

5.5.4. Faith and Reason as Ways of Knowing - Hermeneutical Mode

The question in focus is how much in Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics belongs to scientific method, based entirely on human judgment and how much to receptive and inquiring Christian faith that shapes the vision and creative insight of the interpreter. By referring to faith we are going to pay attention to Bogdashevskii's conception of faith that emphasizes a total existential character of faith – i.e. an attitude of the entire self, including both will and intellect, directed a divine being (not merely belief as opposed to knowledge).

5.5.4.1 Faith

In Bogdashevskii's philosophical essays he argues that it is possible that something exists apart from *us*, but until grounds are discovered on the basis of which *a priory* concepts may be extended beyond the limits of the phenomenal worlds, the choice of answers to the question of the existence or non-existence of things in themselves cannot be made by science with its empirical experiments, but only by faith.³⁴¹ Thus faith is of epistemological significance.

³³⁹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-6:20," *TKDA* I, 4 (1911): 471.

³⁴⁰ Summarized from D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-6:20," *TKDA* I, 4 (1911): 468-73.

³⁴¹ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 5 (1898): 73.

Bogdashevskii distinguishes between the “subjective” element in faith, which involves the supernatural action of God upon the human soul, and faith's “objective” component, which is characterised as adherence to a body of truth found in creeds, in definitions of church councils, and especially in the Bible (i.e. the concept of “belief in” or “belief that”). In addition to the most evocative definition of faith as the act of giving one's trust to a salvific message of Christ or the act of trust between two beings, Bogdashevskii widely uses the term “faith” for self-definition of Orthodox Christianity. In this sense it is of an objective and phenomenological nature, connected to the history of Russian Orthodox theology (in this sense “faith” as “ideology” is a general phenomenon in all religions). In this sense faith is a criterion of opposition to heretics (formulated in the “rule of faith” (*kanon tes pisteos = regula fidei*) and becomes a central term of self-definition, which is in a certain way a product of the connection of New Testament traditions, in which faith is primarily viewed on the basis of its content. In addition, especially in his ethics, Bogdashevskii, focuses in the subjective or individualistic aspect of faith concentrated on the risk and moral effort involved in attempting to lead the life of Orthodox faith as an expression of this faith, rather than merely to accept Church dogmatics. This aspect of faith in Bogdashevskii thought is considered in looking at his ethical system. The investigation of such central categories is not at the heart of the undergoing concern.

For a current discussion, however, it is significant to observe Bogdashevskii's emphasis of faith, defined, as an attitude of the entire self, including both will and intellect, *freely* directed towards an idea or a divine being.³⁴² The existential character of faith is distinguished and opposed to a sceptical knowledge. “Faith gives man life, for it opens to him a spiritual, eternal, heavenly as well as earthly domain.”³⁴³ From the *theocentric* conception of the world, which Bogdashevskii professed in his philosophical system, he assumes that God's revelation cannot be comprehended by reason alone. In regard to Christ's life and His redemptive work reflected in the New Testament, Bogdashevskii says: “it cannot be completely understood by reasoning thought; it is a mystery, which we have to grasp by faith.”³⁴⁴ The meaning of the text becomes clear in the light of faith. Thus, he

³⁴² Berdiaev similarly stresses, “Faith is a free spiritual act for without freedom faith is an impossibility.” N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), 107.

³⁴³ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Basis for Modern Unbelief,” *TKDA* I, 1 (1910): 20.

³⁴⁴ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. Christ the Savior in Gethsemane,” *TKDA* I, 4 (1913): 628. Cf. his “Exegetical remarks ...,” *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 314. Also with Berdiaev's thought, “it is by faith, by voluntary re-direction of our power of choice, that we can once more address ourselves to the

implies faith to be a hermeneutical key in understanding the truth of the New Testament. He asserts, "Understand by faith, submit your reason to the obedience of faith - this is the obligation of any Christian science."³⁴⁵ In Bogdashevskii, however, faith is not the key for conceptual understanding alone, but also to the holiness of the life of interpreter.³⁴⁶ The practice of faith, a holiness of the interpreter, makes possible an accurate understanding of the text. He states, that man not illuminated by the Holy Spirit and not perfected in his obedience, is of "a dead potency of life; [such man] cannot understand the spiritual things, the things beyond empirical experience are foolishness to him."³⁴⁷

Excursion: The Sources for Scepticism and Unfaith. Bogdashevskii argues that the source of unbelief or unfaith is "an evil direction of human will." See Bishop Vasilii (Bogdashevskii, D. I), "Interpretation of John 3:1- 6:71," ["K iz"iasneniiu In. 3:1-6:71,"] *TKDA* (1917): 159. Thus, unfaith comes from "within" a human being. Nevertheless, in his public lecture "About the Basis for Modern Unbelief" (1910), Bogdashevskii gives several **reasons for scepticism and unfaith** that influence a human being from "outside": (1) He argues against the consequent scientific explanation of phenomena formerly considered supernatural. Defending a positivist view of scientific method, he indicates that science based on suspicion, nihilism and a "no-miracle" argument transforms these principles into a word-view that denies God's reality. Therefore, positivistic empiricism, which emphasizes the role of experience, should not take being of God (all his reality and activity in the universe) as the object of study. This knowledge belongs to the Church and it is beyond a pure scientific purpose; (2) He argues that ethical studies of human conduct, concerned with questions such as "When is an act right?", "When is an act wrong?", and "What is the nature, or determining standard, of good and bad?" may propose the nature of ethical knowledge, the measure of it, the source of it, the means of knowing it, and how it ought to be applied absolutely on the basis of a simple "correctness" (*i.e.* reasoning be "right" so the others will be "right" to you) that in itself dismisses faith in God as necessity for ethical goodness; and consequently, it suggests that faith in God is not necessary for a human being at all.; (3) The unprecedented scale of wars, persecutions, all human sufferings damage Christian belief in inevitable progress by mistakenly confronting the concept of faith with a question how extreme suffering can ever be theologically explained. This leads the people to speculate about the absence of God.; (4) Bogdashevskii indicates that *historical materialism* [as set forth in the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), Russian

divine and spiritual world." N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), 107.

³⁴⁵ Archpriest Bogdashevskii, "Sermon. On Christian Responsibility," *TKDA* I (1913): xv.

³⁴⁶ This is a common view of the Church Fathers. See St. Mark the Ascetics, *Early Fathers from Philocalia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 83; St. Symeon the New Theologian, *The Discourses* (NY: Paulist Press, 1980), 262. Cf. "[I]t is the experience of all observers of spiritual things: no one profits by the Gospels unless he be first in love with Christ." Florovsky, *BCT*, 14.

³⁴⁷ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-6:20," *TKDA* I, 4 (1911): 470.

socialists and esp. Vladimir Ilich Lenin (1870-1924)] by taking a prevailing economic system as determination for the forms of societal organization and human life is *antireligious materialism*, for it is hostile toward the theological dogmas of organized religion, particularly those of Christianity, and as such it causes unfaith.; (5) If religion is taken in a broad sense, the way of belief as such may include not only such diverse systems as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Shinto, Shamanism, etc., but also Atheism which explains phenomena of life and supernatural power in universe without God. To believe in everything is unfaith; (6) As Russian visual and literary art, influenced by scepticism and naturalism, propagate the views that regard the individual as a creature without free will, a part of nature bound by scientific laws rather than by God's laws faith as aspect of human being might be ruined. See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Basis for Modern Unbelief," ["Chtenie. O Prichinakh Sovremennogo Neveriia,") *TKDA* I, (1910) 1: 10-21; 2: 164-171. **A security for personal faith** is the Church rather than a personal ability and openness of a man to believe. "Only those who are in the Church, who are embraced by its spirit, who are penetrated by a mystical feature of Church life cannot and will not become unbelievers." Idem, *TKDA* I, 2 (1910): 171.

5.5.4.2 Reason

Bogdashevskii stresses that because the same God was the source of both types of knowledge, He cannot contradict Himself in these two ways of speaking. Thus, any apparent opposition between revelation and reason could be traced either to an incorrect use of reason or to an inaccurate interpretation of the words of revelation. He is biased toward the position, however, that *reason alone* may lead to materialism, the doctrine that all existence is resolvable into matter or into an attribute or effect of matter. Since materialism is linked with the concept of the supremacy of mind and material values, the understanding in light of this world-view based on *reason alone* leads to rationalism³⁴⁸ (Lat., *ratio*, "reason") a system of thought that emphasizes the role of reason in obtaining knowledge. Since rationalism in religion is the claim that the fundamental principles of religion are innate or self-evident and that revelation is not necessary, Bogdashevskii's epistemological construction absolutely rejects the epistemological rationalism as applicable to the field of theological inquiry. For him, *reason alone* is an anti-religious tendency. Nevertheless, as the precise scope of reason,

³⁴⁸ Rationalism is primarily identified with the tradition stemming from the 17th-century French philosopher and scientist René Descartes (1596-1650). In his *Discours de la Méthode* (Discourse on Method), *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* (Meditations on First Philosophy, 1641; revised 1642) and *Principia Philosophiae* (The Principles of Philosophy, 1644), Descartes held that by means of reason alone, certain universal, self-evident truths could be discovered. He assumed that these self-evident truths were innate, not derived from sense experience. This type of rationalism was developed by other European philosophers, such as: (1) the Dutch rationalist philosopher and religious thinker Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) who rejected providence and freedom of will, and introduced the concept of an impersonal God; and (2) the German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716).

Bogdashevskii suggests that its use is vital in teaching, demonstration, and discussion as well as in selecting or accepting authority, in the practice of critical reading, in developing the interpreter's own powers of thinking and in disputation, defending crucial points of Church teaching against all those who challenge it. All these are important for explanation of the text. Reason, therefore, is vital for the explanatory framework of the text.

5.5.4.3 Synthesis

In his philosophical thought, Bogdashevskii argued that "the sphere of faith cannot be mixed with knowledge, these two should be differentiated."³⁴⁹ He says, however,

in differentiating the sphere of faith from knowledge, we unconditionally, have no right to separate them, and moreover to oppose one against the other. Faith, in its practical character, has the element of knowledge... For this reason, the unity of faith and knowledge is possible in so-called speculative theology where religious concepts are explained rationally and/or restrained to the basics of the mind's intelligence."³⁵⁰

In regard to the interpretation of Scripture, Bogdashevskii stresses, *the mind of man without faith* is of great potential of creativeness and of achievements in the areas of science, art and the practical life of man,³⁵¹ but it is "from faith and by faith that Scripture becomes forceful and effective."³⁵² The understanding of Scripture cannot be proper without faith in the essential postulates of Christian faith (such as Christ's divinity, the supernatural involvement of God in the lives of people, etc.). "Without faith only a simple congenial or psychological analysis and understanding of the New Testament is achievable."³⁵³ Of course, the most accurate empirical knowledge does not exclude the necessity of much surpassing elements of faith and religious or mysterious knowledge. Religious knowledge, as such, may derive from a scientific investigation of the biblical text, based on reason alone; yet its

³⁴⁹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Sound Metaphysics" Book review of P. Linitzkii, *Guide to the Study of Philosophy* (Kharkov': 1893) in *TKDA* II 5 (1898): 126.

³⁵⁰ Idem.

³⁵¹ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. In Remembrance of Christ's Suffering (Luk 23:21)," *TKDA* II, 5 (1988): 54-55.

³⁵² Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "About the Christian Spiritual Struggle (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38)," (Mf. 26:41; Mk. 14:38)," *TKDA* I, 3 (1904): 367.

³⁵³ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 290.

fullness occurs through faith, especially in prayerful meditation or in the mystical experience (for example, the veneration of the relics³⁵⁴).

Bogdashevskii, in general, is defending scholasticism, because “the fight against scholasticism switched over into the fight against Christianity.”³⁵⁵ His synthesis of faith and reason, however, is not completely of scholastic character. He does not attempt to validate neither the use of natural human reason to understand the supernatural content of Christian revelation, nor the integration into an ordered system both human wisdom and wisdom of Christianity. In contrast to the chief concern of the scholastics to discover new facts, Bogdashevskii argues for the integration of knowledge that already has been acquired from Christian revelation of the Bible and the Church. Furthermore, the basic aim of Bogdashevskii is not to show the conviction of fundamental harmony between reason and revelation, but to subject reason to revelation. Moreover, since revelation is the direct teaching of God preserved by the Church, it possesses a higher degree of truth than natural reason. In apparent conflicts between religious faith and philosophical reasoning, faith is thus always the supreme arbiter:

Believe sincerely - believe with all the strength of your spirit; believe in the Church as the only preserver of Christ's truth; in that case rationalism of every kind is not dangerous, for there is a confident barrier against it. If someone is problematic [in the questions of faith] you have to realize that these doubts are the effects of your restricted apprehension. Its own understanding cannot be deposited in place of the truth of Christ.³⁵⁶

As a result of Bogdashevskii's belief in the harmony between faith and reason, he attempts to determine the precise scope and competence of each of these faculties and their interrelationships. *First*, clearly distinguishing the two, Bogdashevskii warns against being overconfident that reason could prove certain doctrines of revelation; thus the balance is presupposed. *Second*, he restricts the domain of truths capable of being proved by reason and insists that many doctrines previously thought to have been proved by Church tradition

³⁵⁴ Bogdashevskii argues that the veneration of the relics of the Church martyrs and saints (the practice known at least as early as the 2nd century; yet in the Orthodox church, the veneration of relics was sanctioned by the Council of Constantinople, 1084) is also an experience of learning and knowing. See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Sermon. The Significance of the Holy Places for Orthodox Christian,” *TKDA* III (1911): i-viii. Fr. Bulgakov, who assures that the bodies of the saints are vessels of the Holy Spirit, for “the Holy Spirit has a special connection with the bodily relics”, effectively defends the practice of veneration. Fr. S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodoxy* (Paris: YMCA, 1965), 365.

³⁵⁵ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross,” *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 280.

had to be accepted on the basis of faith alone. *Third*, in theological reasoning the authority of the early Fathers of the Church, subordinated only to the Bible and the official councils of the church, is vital. The intensive study of these ancient authors, whose culture and learning had been so much richer than 'modern' is more than a stylistic ornament for beginning or ending the exposition of the commentator's own opinions about the New Testament passage; it is intended to show that the commentator's views were in continuity with the past and not mere novelties.

5.5.5 The Historical Character of Interpretation

It was established that Bogdashevskii's exegetical approach views the New Testament writings not as primarily historical documents, but as theological (or religious),³⁵⁷ which contain a theological story teaching rather than supplying strict historical records. He avoids putting the claims that every New Testament account construct is absolutely historically accurate (in chronology, for example). Nevertheless, Bogdashevskii's version of historical reliability does not allow him to say that the New Testament is historically inaccurate and that the historical facts in the New Testament are simply adapted to fit the idea.³⁵⁸ Bogdashevskii argues that the authors of the New Testament books did not indicate the precise duration, time of the events or other historical data for it was not crucial for ancient historiography.³⁵⁹ Thus, "one should attribute claims to it that are not applicable."³⁶⁰

However, Bogdashevskii's starting point is that in interpretation the historical reliability of the New Testament must be presupposed and fully accepted, for its data specify the revelation of God in history and records significant historical events for the Christian faith (esp. such as Christ incarnation, death and resurrection).³⁶¹ Otherwise,

³⁵⁶ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 284.

³⁵⁷ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Idem., 288; also his "Exegetical remarks: (1) The Genealogy of Christ (Mt. 1:1-7)...," *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 290.

³⁵⁹ See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Chronology of Acts," *TKDA* I, 1 (1911): 1-29.

³⁶⁰ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 288.

Bogdashevskii argues, the New Testament will be reduced to an abstract moral codex, non-attached to a real world. Therefore, his hermeneutics has an explicit historical character in supposing that interpretation of the New Testament requires the examination of the consciousness, social or political worlds, etc. which were sharable by the author and recipients of any particular New Testament document. This is a must, for, in Bogdashevskii's view every individual person is characterized as a historical being partly determined by a given place in space and time within a given cultural system and community. The understanding of the human being as such (his life and activity) requires a careful analysis of their 'connectedness' to the surrounding environment in the past or present. Understanding of the historical document is closely related not only to the correspondence, analogy, generality and uniqueness of the writers or readers, but also to the particulars of the depicted personages. Bogdashevskii also understands the interpreter as someone as conditioned by his place in history.

On the one hand, the study of the New Testament, for Bogdashevskii, embodies the whole complex of historical research in order to proceed toward a precise meaning. Thus, it is important to analyse that the historical facts can only be known through intermediary sources (i.e., the written and unwritten information derived from the past), for these sources of information provide the evidence from which the interpreter deciphers the textual features. Since the relationship between evidence and fact is rarely simple and direct (the evidence may be fragmentary, or nearly unintelligible after long periods of cultural or linguistic change) the interpreter has to assess the evidence with a critical eye (but not scepticism).

On the other hand, Bogdashevskii is sceptical about the historical method of interpretation that is based solely on the establishment of the actual facts and so far as method is concerned pays no attention to the canon of the New Testament.³⁶² He is critical of the representatives of a purely historical interpretation that not only equate the task of understanding the New Testament wholly with that of historical understanding and leave the questions of both doctrinal- religious and devotional truth out of consideration. He says,

³⁶¹ His "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 288-89; cf. his "The Reality of the Resurrection of the Dead According to the Teaching of St. Paul: 1 Cor. 15:1-34," *TKDA* 1 (1902): 61-98.

³⁶² Cf. "If one rejects the authenticity of the Gospels, [he or she] clearly opposes to an evident truth and displaces the significance of the Church tradition, that supports an apostolic origin [of the Gospels]." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 276.

“For the purpose of spiritual and ethical formation of the believers, the reconstruction of biblical chronology, typography, etc., has no significance.”³⁶³

In addition, in his hermeneutics, the opinion of Church tradition, especially the documents that claim and support the historical accuracy of the account, are decisive. The analysis of the ancient documents is not of an incomparable validity. Rather, the evidence of the Church and the antecedent biblical interpretation of Orthodox integrity form a vital reservoir of knowledge, which spells out the historical knowledge and understanding of the New Testament world from the time of Jesus to the present age. The tradition of the Church, as a whole, supplies the interpreter with the necessary data to understand the New Testament documents.³⁶⁴ Church tradition, in Bogdashevskii’s view, “must be accepted as a requirement of scientific conscientiousness; to negate it means to nullify any kind of historical investigation.”³⁶⁵

5.5.6 Against Socio-Critical Hermeneutics of Social Democracy (Marxism)

Thiselton defines socio-critical hermeneutics as “an approach to texts... which seeks to penetrate beneath their surface-function *to expose their role as instruments of power, domination, or social manipulation.*”³⁶⁶ Although, this approach is not circumscribed in Bogdashevskii’s terminology, he is dealing with the phenomenon of a certain way of reading texts to demonstrate their re-discovered truth that supports pragmatic versions of socio-critical theory.

The dilemma with which Bogdashevskii wrestles is developed from the notion of a socio-political mode of the pre-Revolutionary period in Russia. The years preceding the revolution of 1917 were marked in Russia by many political events that permeated the coming crisis. The national movements, growing social and agrarian tendencies in 1905-1906, and the growth of revolutionary ideas were the trends of the Social Democratic political party, established in the beginning of the twentieth century. The *Mensheviks* (pure Marxism), and the *Bol’sheviks* (Neo-Marxism), and other groups of the Russian *intelligentsia* have fixed a moderate opinion of Russian society. The set of intellectual

³⁶³ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. The Lord’s Entry into Jerusalem,” *TKDA* II, 5 (1910): 34.

³⁶⁴ This is clear in Bogdashevskii arguments in “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 269-302.

³⁶⁵ *Idem.*, 277.

presuppositions and ideological constructions concentrated on many political and social issues (such as the rejection of violence and all forms of discrimination, social reforms, the opposition to the dominant authorities, establishment of power-sharing between the Social Democratic groups to oversee some cultural and economic policies). The revolutionary movements increased and adopted definite policies and aims: (1) one prominent group advocated nihilism, which aimed to tear down the basis of existing society and build a new (but indeterminate) one on its ruins; (2) the *narodniki*, a populist movement, worked for a peasant uprising; etc. These and the other ideas were defended or confronted on the basis of both secular ideology (by Marxists) and the Christian world view (by religious-philosophical groups), etc.³⁶⁷ (the majority if the Social Democratic groups were of an anti-religious character³⁶⁸). The political and social situation in Pre-Revolutionary Russia resonated in various theories to which Orthodox theologians felt called to answer. The entire study can and should be done to evaluate a theological system of Socio-Critical and Socio-Pragmatic strands of Russian theology in the beginning of the twentieth century.³⁶⁹ The preliminary observation of the development of these strands among the Orthodox-religious socialists allows us to conclude that, in a limited sense, it is an earlier version of so-called Liberation Theology, which employs not only pure doctrinal views, but also social, political, and economic theories.³⁷⁰ For our purposes and in the scope of our discussion, however, the outline of the issues is limited only to Bogdashevskii's hermeneutical reflections.

Some elements of the issues in question, addressed by Bogdashevskii, are present in the essay *The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical*

³⁶⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 379.

³⁶⁷ The similarities and contrasts between the positions can be traced, among the others, from two published collections of articles, devoted to ideological and theological presuppositions for the political and social reformation of Russia. From the Marxist group, *Ocherki realisticheskogo mirovozreniia* [*Outlines of a Realistic World-View*] (SPb.: 1904). A book with religious-philosophical ideas - *Problemy idealizma* [*Basic Problems of Idealism*] (SPb.: 1902).

³⁶⁸ Bogdashevskii refers to them as the *enemies of Christ's cross* who blame the Church in reducing the needs of the people to the merely religious. See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 281-83.

³⁶⁹ For brief but useful comments of the issue see Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 233 ff.

³⁷⁰ In the correspondent sense, the term "liberation theology," for the first time used in Latin America in 1969 by Ruben Alves and Gustavo Gutierrez, cannot be used as identification of the religious-revolutionary movements in Russian (of the end of XIX - beg. XX cc.). Nevertheless, the modern developments in Liberation Theology can be traced back to the period when the Russian religious groups presented a theological perspective which suggests social and political dimensions.

Issues [Evangelie kak Osnova Zhizni...] (K.: 1907)³⁷¹ and in his public lecture “Lord’s Beatitudes: The Gospel’s Truth and the ‘Truth’ of Modern Socialism” at Kiev Religious-Educational Society (21 November, 1908).³⁷² In these studies, Bogdashevskii uses the biblical material of the canonical Gospels [collectively the Gospel], which within the mainly religious-socialist-led communities was seen as an invitation to change things on the basis of the goodness and justice of God.

Bogdashevskii argues that the New Testament is not aimed to give some kind of social-economical theory:

In actuality, it does not enter into the problematic issues of social and economical issues. It speaks about equality of the people, but without doubt it is a spiritual equality. It teaches about liberation from evil, but not about economic liberation... The message of Christ is not of a social, but of a religious character; Christianity has is not the religion of the poor and the proletariat [*i.e.* the labouring class in a society].³⁷³

In order to focus the attention of Bogdashevskii’s version of socio-critical hermeneutics and answer the question regarding the norms concerning the social issue that might be derived from the New Testament is possible by considering his interpretation of the portions of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount (esp. the Lord’s Beatitudes according to Mt. 5:3-7), seen by this scholar as the clearest contrast to the call for *social manipulation* emphasized by the Russian socialists:

Mt. 5:3 μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. In these words, Bogdashevskii does not see “the literary poor”, for Christ by referring to the literally poor (who in their psychological element place hope in God) added “in spirit”. The main idea is that both the present and the future blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven (= of God) belongs to those who understand that they do not merit God’s kingdom, but await God’s mercy. Christ does not address to literary poor or proletariat in saying that their social standing is honorable. “Poverty is not a Christian virtue in the same way that wealth in itself is not evil; our

³⁷¹ This softbound edition first appeared in *TKDA* I, 4 (1906): 547-576.

³⁷² D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Chtenie. Blazhenstva Gospodni...,” [“The Lord’s Beattitudes: The Gospel’s Truth and a ‘Truth’ of a Modern Socialism,”] *TKDA* I, 2 (1909): 203-236.

³⁷³ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical Issues,” *TKDA* I, 4 (1906): 566; Cf. his “The Letter of James,” [Poslanie Apostola Iakova,”] *TKDA* III, 10 (1907) 207; “Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ’s Cross,” *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 281-82.

attitude toward poverty and wealth is important.³⁷⁴ Moreover, a visible form of the Kingdom of God on Earth is the Church, and the implementation of this kingdom upon the Earth is through the Church is.³⁷⁵ Based on these conditions, social improvement is not implied in this text.

Mt. 5:4 μακάριοι οἱ πειθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται. This text, as an allusion to the LXX of Isa 61:2, according to Bogdashevskii, has political-theoretic motifs (the salvation of Jews from captivity is at hand), in Matthew it represents not so much God's activity for the literal downtrodden and poor, as it signifies God's comfort for these weeping in conflict with a moral captivity of sin. "If one understand those weeping as the downtrodden labour classes, who are going to find comfort in destruction of the capitalistic political system, then the Gospel of Christ is replaced by the gospel of Marx."³⁷⁶

Mt. 5:5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν. This seems one of the most difficult of the Lord's Beatitudes for Bogdashevskii to wrestle with. The problem, for Bogdashevskii, is not the interpretation of inheriting the physical earth for 1000 years on the basis of Rev. 20:4, since the book of Revelation, for him, is a "symbolic book" (that cannot be interpreted word-for-word); rather the obstacle comes from the Eastern Father John Chrysostom who provided the understanding that the meek will inherit the physical possessions as the reward for being meek. Bogdashevskii argues, that in verse five, Christ might have possibly pointed to the solution of the agrarian question. Nevertheless, this text says nothing in support of taking the land by power; rather earthly welfare is promised to those who are meek not vicious, for those who are patient, not extreme in social reforms. Christ is teaching, "be patient in suffering, do not revolt, do not be violent."³⁷⁷

Mt. 5:6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται. Again, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for Bogdashevskii, are in a religious sense - those searching for holiness and seeking to live according to God's will. The righteousness or the truth, here, is not socialistic justice, based on the abolition of private ownership. The truth is of ethical, moral, religious or even of legal essence; yet it is not a text for any sort of shared ownership.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Lord's Beattitudes: The Gospel's Truth and a 'Truth' of a Modern Socialism," *TKDA* I, 2 (1909): 207.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

³⁷⁶ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Lord's Beattitudes: The Gospel's Truth and a 'Truth' of a Modern Socialism," *TKDA* I, 2 (1909): 213. Cf. his "Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 282.

³⁷⁷ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Lord's Beattitudes: The Gospel's Truth and a 'Truth' of a Modern Socialism," *TKDA* I, 2 (1909): 214-216.

³⁷⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 220-221.

Mt. 5:7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται. Bogdashevskii admits that this verse indicates to the spirit of goodwill towards humanity, usually expressed in activities that promote human welfare (Charity or Philanthropy). Thus, the functions of religious-oriented charities are assumed. In Russian society, Bogdashevskii suggests, the voluntarily-sanctioned measures to aid the infirm, the poor, and the disadvantaged are needed; not forceful socialist reforms.³⁷⁹

Further, Bogdashevskii argues against the communist idea that imagines a state of affairs without private ownership, which suggests that individual private property is an impediment to a just society. In his opinion Scripture gives no basis for communal ownership. He also opposes the use of biblical testimony about the Apostolic Church in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 4: 32-37) as a model of a communist society characterised by the abolition of private ownership (and by means of production, distribution, and exchange). He says, “the Church is not the state and it is impossible to transform the Church ideal into the State model;” moreover, “the Gospel does not teach to deny private ownership.”³⁸⁰ In Bogdashevskii’s view, the New Testament does not demand the abolition of private ownership: (1) Luk. 19:8-9 - Jesus stated to Zaccheus “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham” considering his faith, not because Zaccheus said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much”; (2) Acts 5: 3-8 - Apostle Peter did not accuse Ananias for lying to the Holy Spirit but rather than for keeping back what remained his own and was under his control; (3) Luk. 18:22 - Jesus said to a certain ruler not only “sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven” but also added, “come, follow Me.” This means that Christ wanted to use these men as missionaries to whom possessions are a burden; moreover, missionaries are to ‘get their living from the gospel’ (cf. 1 Cor. 9:14). This is not the call for all the people, but only to a select group of travelling missionaries.³⁸¹ In light of the above interpretations, Bogdashevskii concludes, “We do not diminish the significance of the biblical

³⁷⁹ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Lord’s Beattitudes: The Gospel’s Truth and a ‘Truth’ of a Modern Socialism,” *TKDA* I, 2 (1909): 222-223; Also his “Chlenie. O Lichnosti Ap. Pavla,” [“Lecture. On the Personality of Sp. Paul,”] *TKDA* I, 1 (1906): 15.

³⁸⁰ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical Issues,” *TKDA* I, 4 (1906): 570; Cf. *Ibid.*, “Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ’s Cross,” *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 281-82.

³⁸¹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical Issues,” *TKDA* I, 4 (1906): 571.

virtuous model but argue that private ownership is needed as a free individual activity of man."³⁸²

His view of a social current as a political and private power of the land and possessions is possibly ideologically and historically rooted in an ecclesiastic debate between Non-Possessors (Ru. - *nestiazhteli*) and Possessors (Ru. - *stiazhteli*) who, in the time of Ivan IV (1533-1584), campaigned for monastic properties, which were important for the well-being of the Orthodox Church.³⁸³ On the other hand, it is obvious that the way Bogdashevskii reads the New Testament shapes his vision. The interpretation of the biblical texts related to the issue, in Bogdashevskii, however, seems to be overemphasized toward *anti-liberation* tendencies. For example, his explanation of Luk. 18:22, demonstrated above, is the a simple call to sell ones possessions before departing for the missionary 'trip.' Rather, Luke's idea of the kingdom of God, in this passage, stresses that the man in pursuit of eternal life needed to divest himself of all his worldly security and then follow Jesus. In this way his treasure would be securely invested in heaven and would no longer be only an earthbound asset. It "shows that the underlying principle is the readiness to renounce for the sake of the kingdom of God whatever should prove necessary to be renounce";³⁸⁴ rather than the idea to renounce possessions for the sake of missionary service. Still, Bogdashevskii's point is clear: The New Testament cannot be read as the text-proof for social and economic liberation.³⁸⁵

In addition, he sees that the New Testament was used not only for the claims for the personal, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the people in Russia (i.e. was limited only to theoretical ideas of the rights and freedoms of others, the requirements of morality, public order, and general social-economical welfare). Bogdashevskii is concerned that for some readers it becomes the justification of violence in rebellions, the most extreme

³⁸² D. I. Bogdashevskii, *The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical Issues* TKDA I, 4 (1906): 571; Cf. *Ibid.*, "Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," TKDA III, 10 (1908): 282; N. S. Strelletskii, "Socialism: Its History and Criticism from the Christian Point of View," TKDA 6 (1905): 204-205.

³⁸³ On the debate see N. A. Kozakova, Y. S. Lur'e, *Antifeodal'noe ereticheskoe dvizhenie na Rusi XIV - nachala XVI veka.* (M.: 1955); A. Klivanov, *Reformatsionnye dvizheniia v Rossii v XIV- pervoi polovine XVI v.* (M.: 1960).

³⁸⁴ John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 35b* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1998), on the passage.

³⁸⁵ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical Issues," TKDA I, 4 (1906): 566.

course taken in the attempts to achieve reforms.³⁸⁶ This is obvious from Bogdashevskii's analysis of the approach of the Russian religious philosopher Vladimir Frantsevich Ern (1882-1917), whose sociological strategy: (1) appeals for theological and religious sensitivity toward the social environment in Russia; (2) challenges Christianity in socio-economical motionless; (3) calls for limited violent expressions, such as organized work stoppage, for the purpose of enforcing demands relating to political and social issues.³⁸⁷ Ern argued that Christ's ejection of traders from the temple, with their beasts and birds for sacrifice and the scattering of their money (cf. Mt. 21:12; Mk. 11:15; Jn. 2:14) is the justification for revolt and strikes. He says, Jesus exemplified for us "a practical approach against economic passion in mankind."³⁸⁸ Bogdashevskii's interpretation of this event is the opposite: (1) Although, Jesus made a whip out of cords and threw the traders out of the temple, he, in fact, used the whip against the sheep and the cattle; (2) Christ's act is not an economic protest but has completely religious purposes;³⁸⁹ (3) Christ's authority and his act is of a religious nature, related to the order in the temple of God, rather than to a social-political situation in the Roman Empire as such. Thus, Bogdashevskii perceives that this narration has no support for any domestic violence and strikes with the purposes of economic liberation in Tsarist Russia.³⁹⁰

In conclusion, Bogdashevskii's views constitute a transposition of religious-socialistic-social ideas into a deferent hermeneutical key. Bogdashevskii sees no necessity to apply biblical principles to a variety of social problems engendered by industrialisation. His understanding of the New Testament does not permit its reading beyond ecclesiastic, dogmatic and ethical issues. This is especially clear in his exposition of the Letter of James which is concerned with the social effects of the rich who hurt not only themselves but other

³⁸⁶ See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 282.

³⁸⁷ Vladimir Ern, "Khristianskoe uchenie o sobstvennosti," ["A Christian Teaching about Private Enterprise,"] *Voprosy Zhisni / The Questions of Life* 8-9 (1905).

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 381.

³⁸⁹ Cf. I. Buse, I. "The Cleansing of the Temple in the Synoptics and in John." *Expository Times* 70 (1958-59) 22-24; R. H. Hiers, "The Purification of the Temple: Preparation for the Kingdom of God." *JBL* 90 (1971): 82-90.

³⁹⁰ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical Issues," *TKDA* I, 4 (1906): 569.

people as well. Bogdashevskii avoids addressing the social problems on the basis of this Letter and underlines only the moralistic side of the issue.³⁹¹

Thus, on the one hand, his biblical hermeneutics stresses a religious rather than a social significance of Scripture; on the other hand, it reveals a boundary beyond which the issues of socio-contextual pragmatism are not welcomed. The significance of the debate that Bogdashevskii leads with the religious-socialistic propositions is that as an Orthodox scholar, he reads the New Testament from the dictum of the Russian Orthodox Church's mind: (1) to defend the Russian monarch from revolution; (2) to respect those who are reached; and (3) to bring all the social classes into a unity in love and mutual respect, under the Church umbrella. The New Testament, in his view, is the teaching on human dignity to all the social classes in Russian society. It primarily serves, however, as *a religious creed* of Christianity that calls for prosperity and welfare of the people through the spiritual transformation of human being into the image of God, rather than through merely reformation of the State structure and social policy.³⁹² The New Testament's intention is "to free us from earthly vanity."³⁹³

5.5.7 The Unity between the Old and the New Testament

Bogdashevskii makes a serious attempt to deal with the whole witness of the canon—not just the New Testament, but the Old Testament also. He cannot be faulted for selective use of text, for he casts the exegetical net widely. Indeed the range of his use of Scripture is so wide that is difficult to identify a functional canon within the canon. The deepest roots of his thoughts are, however, in the Gospels.

The Old and New Testament represent a unified witness to "salvation-history." The relation between the two Testaments is that of Promise and Fulfilment. An inner, organic unity exists between the two, such that key persons and events of the Old Testament find their ultimate meaning in the of the New. This fact, inherent in the historical process itself, can be described as a relation of "type" and "antitype" or "type" and "archetype."

³⁹¹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, D. I. "The Letter of James," *TKDA* III (1907) 10 :181-210; 11: 439-462.

³⁹² Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical Issues" *TKDA* I, 4 (1906): 576; *Ibid.*, "Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 282.

³⁹³ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Gospel as the Foundation of Life: On the Contemporary Social-Economical Issues," *TKDA* I, 4 (1906): 549.

To interpret the New Testament in relation to the Old Testament the Orthodox will have recourse to *objective typology* that links the Old Testament images and prophesies to the person and activity of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.³⁹⁴ For Bogdashevskii, the *objective typology* is the presentation of the links between the Old and New Testaments, which are grounded in the texts and in the Church's perception of the historical links that exists between them, *i.e.*, in the connections between actual persons, events, places and institutions of the Old Testament, and parallel realities in the New Testament that complete or fulfil them.³⁹⁵ The New Testament texts can be interpreted as the prototype of transcendent, heavenly archetypes: e.g. the church that points forward to and is fulfilled by the Kingdom of God, or the Eucharist that points forward to and is the fulfilment of the eschatological banquet. The quality and aim of typological interpretation is of theological character that enriches the ordinary, independent interpretation of the Old and the New Testament texts.³⁹⁶

5.5.8 Conclusions

This chapter recounts Bogdashevskii's life and scholarship with emphasis on his hermeneutics. It has sought to place his life within the context of the event which shaped the society and church in Russia. This chapter was not a biographical study in the strict sense. It focused on Bogdashevskii as Bible exegete.

In conclusion we must try to draw together some of the threads of Bogdashevskii's thought about conceptual and logical problems which shed light on some specific hermeneutical issues in the New Testament interpretation.

The reminding of Bogdashevskii's philosophical considerations cannot be bypassed to illustrate the point. At the beginning of our study we claimed that Bogdashevskii's religious-philosophical perspective allows us to legitimise the alliance of science and faith in our understanding. He restricted his philosophical system to epistemology, which, in his opinion,

³⁹⁴ Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Paul's Letter to the Hebrews," *TKDA* I (1905): 341.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Bishop Vasili, "Interpretation of John 3:1- 6:71," *TKDA* (1917): 158.

³⁹⁶ Cf. his arguments D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Exegetical remarks: (1) The Genealogy of Christ (Mt. 1:1-7)," *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 289-91. Breck similarly stresses, "The consensus among Orthodox exegetes, however, is that a proper typological approach can complement in a very fruitful way the more conventional scientific approaches." Fr. John Breck, "Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation," *SVTQ* 40 (1996): 92.

“shapes by itself the answers on the other philosophical questions.”³⁹⁷ Thus, in relation to the interpretation of the New Testament, his conclusion answers the problem of hermeneutics by concentrating on the theory of understanding, which should provide the conceptual tools for the interpretation. Furthermore, Bogdashevskii’s philosophical perspective, revealed in his language about science and philosophy the importance of the fusion of philosophical horizon (in a sense of love of wisdom and Church teaching) and scientific horizon. This suggests that in differentiating the sphere of faith from the scientific knowledge there is “no right to separate them, and moreover to set one against the other...; [thus], the unity of faith and knowledge is possible where the religious concepts are explained rationally.”³⁹⁸ Bogdashevskii’s theoretical construction, based upon Christian faith in God, recognizes that any scientific investigation related to Christian faith should not use the assumptions originated or placed outside the horizon of the Church. In philosophical thinking, Bogdashevskii stresses that human understanding, selflessly inclined to comprehend the truth, formed the truths that often contradict each other and tend toward reorganization and modification. He asks, therefore, “can we find here [in philosophy] the satisfaction for our mind?”³⁹⁹ In this context, the answer is, - “in the centre of different and strange teachings which surrounded us we have His revelation, to which we must pay attention.”⁴⁰⁰ Since Bogdashevskii emphatically identified the domain of bestowed, stored and preserved revelation of God (*the true knowledge*) in the Church, the ecclesiastic mind, which is the reflector of God’s wisdom, as epistemologically superior to every human reasoning and searching. Thus, he accepts the concepts of unconditional or indubitably veridical knowledge in connection with God’s revelation as the basis, rather than with significance of facts as sole and unconditional proof of the truth.

On closer inspection of Bogdashevskii’s writings, it is clear that his philosophical conclusion is a “window frame” into his theory of understanding the New Testament. *First*, Bogdashevskii leaves no room for critical historical inquiry, for he places his emphasis on Church tradition. The Church and Tradition mark out the primary area of his pre-understanding. Thus, the process of investigation the text(s) or the research procedure is only a helpful tool. From his philosophical viewpoint, “in any given process of

³⁹⁷ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Sound Metaphysics,” *TKDA* II (1898) 5: 126.

³⁹⁸ *Idem*.

³⁹⁹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, “In Remembrance of Christ’s Suffering: Where to find Peace for Our Doubts? (John 14:1),” *TKDA* II, 5 (1891): 4-5.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

comprehension the idea or thought should always be a priory.⁴⁰¹ It has important implications in his hermeneutics.

Second, the importance of questions about pre-understanding and Bogdashevskii's own horizon suggest that in his hermeneutics the gravity shifts from the present to the past, from the modern interpreter to the Church Fathers, from the current exegetical study to the history of the Orthodox interpretation in the past. His hermeneutics supposes to support, secure and clarify an already accepted Church understanding.

Third, Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics does not reduce to a totally present question regarding meaning "for me". It does not stress a private language of "in my view", but corporate language in the question about meaning "for the Church." Thus, the Orthodox interpreter should not distance the New Testament from the Church, from the history of Orthodox theology, or from creed dogma but must seek the meaning of the texts to hear it in terms of the Church. This is indispensable as a matter of principle. The ecclesiastic mind is epistemologically superior to individual human reasoning and searching.

Fourth, although the historical period of the New Testament is indisputably valid, the inquiry into the history must be done from the perspective of Christian faith. These two cannot be separated; yet if the Church's historical exposition of the New Testament conflicts with the findings of the modern historical critical method, the hermeneutical significance belongs to the ecclesiastic viewpoint.

Last, the New Testament, in Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics, contains the set of contexts, which create the hermeneutical gap, i.e. there are two different contexts: (1) of the past, i.e. of the New Testament writers; and (2) of the present, i.e. of the modern interpreter. This shows that the New Testament must be re-interpreted or contextualised to mean something in present. In Bogdashevskii's thought, the New Testament speaks today to a new experience and situation; yet the voice of the text is nearly exclusively theological. It should not be overemphasized in its application to the problems of the present day (e.g. social or political situations). There is a connection between the two poles. It is the proclamation of the Gospel, dogmatics and moral instruction of the people. Bogdashevskii puts the matter more theologically. Although Bogdashevskii interprets Scripture within contemporary events, which conceptually correspond to the original context (like in his typological linkage of the Old Testament to the New Testament), he is not interested in finding a perfect equivalent between the contexts. Scripture speaks within the Church and to the Church. Thus, the Church holds the key to how the text(s) can be applied in the present situation. (It

⁴⁰¹ D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Interrelationship of Philosophy and Science," *TKDA* III, 12 (1894): 543.

was shown in Bogdashevskii's ethics that the moral codex of the New Testament is directed by the Church as applicable or non-applicable to a certain modern situation.)

In regard to the understanding of the New Testament, Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics creates a manifold *rule of trust* in the mind of the Church. It reminds us of his axiom, "*Believe as the Church prescribes, live as the Church commends.*"⁴⁰² It postulates, *interpret and understand as the Church apprehended.*

⁴⁰² D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. On the Significance of the Church," *TKDA* 3 (1913): 457 [my italics].