

**BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION  
IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH:  
A HISTORICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempts to identify the issues that are specifically important for an understanding of biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church. Its purpose is not to advocate *pro* or *contra* Russian biblical scholarship, but to place the emphasis on the history of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Orthodox biblical hermeneutics. Two considerations are specifically pertinent to our study of this topic. First, the history of biblical interpretation is surveyed from a sole and specific perspective - from within a historical-dogmatic development of the Russian Orthodox Church from the Kiev period of its history (IX-XIII cc.) till the Synodal period (1721-1917). Second, it is true that once originated, the Biblical Study in Russian Orthodoxy formed its own way and developed its own fundamental principles of interpretation. Although many principles correlated and corresponded with general principles of biblical interpretation, in essence they form "Russian Orthodox Hermeneutics".

Chapter 1 considers the problematic character of the subject and indicates the specific target group of readers, namely the biblical experts outside the Russian Orthodox confessional borders, both in the East and in the West.

Chapter 2 addresses the methodological issues. We considered general ideas as applicable in the historiography and we defined our position with regard to the leading opinions that motivates a discipline of historical research.

Chapter 3 focuses on characteristics and factors that played the main role in determining the inquiry of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church during the Kiev period (x-xiii cc.) up to the Synodal period (1721-1917).

Chapter 4 examines *selected* anthropological aspects relevant to the Russian Orthodox Church that exercised both a direct and indirect impact upon the Orthodox biblical hermeneutics. This chapter presents a general overview of some key Orthodox anthropological beliefs, followed by an account of several specific features of Orthodox anthropology as examined, such as: (1) the nature of Russian man, (2) the wholeness of man; and (3) the concept of *theurgy* which proved to be particularly helpful in understanding of how the Church's anthropological ideas are not only linked with Orthodox hermeneutics, but actually determine it.

Chapter 5 gives an account of Bogdashevskii's life and scholarship, emphasizing his hermeneutics. A performed case study which focuses on the analysis of the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics according to the work of one particular scholar, is reflected in this

chapter and it serves as an example of the hermeneutical trends as observed in the Russian Orthodox Church.

Chapter 6 summarizes and interprets the fundamental principles and main features peculiar to Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation, using the attestation to these principles in the foregoing study as a basis. The chapter demonstrates that the main hermeneutical features of the Russian Orthodox Church: (1) are deeply influenced by patristic exegesis; (2) show that the Orthodox Church is *a priori* in reading the Bible; (3) place an entire dogmatic premise as a quintessential criterion for the Bible interpretation; (4) exalt the Church tradition as the indispensable guide to the understanding of Scripture; (5) consider Christ as the *beginning-centre-* and *end* of biblical interpretation; (6) base Orthodox exegesis upon cooperation between the Holy Spirit and the human interpreter; (7) demands a critical reading of the Scriptures guided by the Church dogmatics, and a multidisciplined approach to the text which includes proper attention to questions of grammar, logic, history of the text, translations, criticism of editions, and exegesis proper.

Chapter 7 summarizes our discussions, outlines the results of this study and indicates the possible directions for further studies.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- BT* *Богословские Труды / Theological Works*
- BV* *Богословский вестник/Bogoslovskii Vestnik /Theological Messenger of Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy.*
- ChOLDP* *Chtenia v Obshchestvie Liubutelei Dukhovnogo Prosveshcheniia // Readings of the Society of Lovers of Spiritual Enlightenment*
- Cyprian (Kern)* Cyprian (Kern). *The Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas.* Paris: YMCA-Press, 1950.
- Fedotov* G. Fedotov. *The Russian Religious Mind*, Vol. 1: *Kievan Christianity: The Tenth to the Thirteen Century*; Vol. 2: *The Middle Ages - XIII-XV cc.* John Meyendorff, ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966.
- Florovsky, BCT* G. Florovsky. *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View. Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol. 1. Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1972.
- Florovsky, Ways: One* Georges Florovsky. *Ways of Russian Theology: Part One.* Gen. ed. Richard D. Hauch. Belmont, Mass. Nordland, 1979.
- Florovsky, Ways: Two* G. Florovsky *Ways of Russian Theology: Part Two.* Gen. ed. Richard D. Hauch. Belmont, Mass. Nordland, 1979. Vaduz: Buchervertriebsantalt, 1987.
- Florovsky, Puti* G. Florovsky. *Puti Russkogo Bogosloviia.* Paris, 1937.
- JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- JMP* *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate*
- K.* Kiev
- KhCh* *Христианское чтение/ Khristianskoe Chtenie/Christian Reading of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy*
- Khristianstvo* *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar' [v 3 tomakh] M.: Nauchnoe Izdatel'stvo 'Bolshaia Rossiiskaia Entsiklopediia', 1995*
- M.* Moscow



- Men'* Aleksandr Men'. "K Istorii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Bibleistiki," ["Toward the History of Russian Orthodox Biblical Studies,"] *BT* 28 (1987): 272-289.
- Mikhail (Luzin)* Mikhail (Luzin). *Bibleiskaia Nauka: Ocherk Istorii Tolkovaniia Biblii. Kniiga 1.* [*Biblical Science: The History of Bible Interpretation. Book One*]. Tula: 1898.
- NTS* *New Testament Studies*
- PO* *Православное Обозрение / The Orthodox Review*
- PS* *Православный Собеседник / Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik/The Orthodox Interlocutor of Kazan' Ecclesiastic Academy*
- RKCB* *Radost' Khristianina pri Chtenii Biblii / Joy of a Christian in reading the Bible*
- SPb.* St. Petersburg
- SVTQ* *St. Vladimir Theological Quarterly*
- TKDA* *Труды Киевской Духовной Академии / Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii / Proceedings the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy*
- Zernov* N. Zernov. *The Russians and Their Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998.
- Zen'kovskii* V. V. Zen'kovsky. *A History of Russian Philosophy*, 2 Vols. Eng. trans. by George Kliene. London: Routledge & Kegan Ltd., 1953-67.

*Experiencing the antiquity of the past  
opens up the future potential of the present.*<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

During most of the Soviet era religious expression was strictly discouraged. Since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, religious following has increased and there has been a resurgence of traditional religions, particularly that of Orthodox Christianity.<sup>2</sup> The Orthodox-Protestant interactions have been increased both in the East and in the West.

The current circumstances of the Russian Christianity stimulate the rethinking and reconsidering the Orthodox past in order to make the present more meaningful not only for the Russian Orthodoxy but also for the whole Christendom.<sup>3</sup> In spite of this, this study attempts to survey the landscape of the Russian Orthodox religious thought relevant to bible interpretation and *hermeneutics*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jörn Rüsen, *Studies in Metahistory* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1993), 89.

<sup>2</sup> Among the introductions to the Russian Orthodox Church and to Eastern Christianity in general, for example, see: N. Arseniev, *Holy Moscow: Chapters in the Religious and Spiritual Life of Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century* (New York, 1940); Peter Bouteneff, *Orthodox Spirituality* (Templegate, 1997); Daniel Clendenin, ed. *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader* (Baker, 1995); George Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, Vol. 1: Kievan Christianity: The Tenth to the Thirteenth Century; Vol. 2: The Middle Ages - XIII-XV cc. John Meyendorff, ed., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966); Florovsky, *Ways One*; Florovsky, *Ways Two*; George Maloney, *Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh: An Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality* (Crossroad, 1997); Nichols, Robert L. and Theofanis George Stavrou, eds. *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978); John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, trans. from French by John Chaplin (Pantheon Books, 1962); A. Schmemmann, *Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963); *Ibid.*, *Ultimate Question: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991); Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 2nd ed. (Penguin, 1993). Also see BIBLIOGRAPHY.

<sup>3</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan appropriately emphasizes that the circumstances of the contemporary Christianity lay in the history of all the Churches - Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant. See esp. his *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)*, vol. 5 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> The term *hermeneutics*, as used throughout this work, refers to the problem of understanding *the biblical texts*. Traditionally hermeneutics was entitled to the formulation of rules for the understanding of an ancient text, especially in linguistic and historical terms. The interpreter was urged to begin with the language of the text, including grammar, vocabulary and style. He examined its linguistic, literary, and historical context. In other words, traditional hermeneutics began



The present study focuses on the history of bible interpretation and biblical hermeneutics within the Russian Orthodox Church with specific group of readers in mind - the biblical experts outside the Russian Orthodox confessional borders, both in the East and in the West. We will pursue our investigation from inside the Orthodox theological framework.

Although we are aware that, whatever degree of intellectual honesty we will manifest, it is impossible totally to overcome our Protestant background. The fact that many Russians who belong to a relatively young Christian tradition of Evangelicals (especially so-called Evangelical Christians-Baptists and Pentecostals) had come from the Orthodox Church, emphasized the need for the rightful attention to be paid in regard to Orthodoxy which they had carried with them as an integral part. In general it is acknowledged that there is some *resemblance* between the Russian Evangelicals and Orthodox.<sup>5</sup> Yet, in order to distinctly discern the similarities and differences between the Orthodox and Evangelical hermeneutics, one has to be acquainted to the Orthodox hermeneutics.

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with the recognition that a text was conditioned by a given historical context. Since the 19th century, hermeneutics tends to include philosophical theories of meaning and understanding in addition to the theories of literary interpretation. Nineteenth-century hermeneutic theorists such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Whilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) considered understanding to be a process of both grammatical and psychological reconstruction; that is to say, the reconstruction by the reader of the original text and intention of the author. In this view, the text is the expression of the thoughts of its author and interpreters must attempt to put themselves within the author's "horizon" in order to relive the creative act. See Jeanroad Werner, G. "Hermeneutics" in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, eds. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden, (London: SCM Press, 1990), 282-284. Later, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) proposed the theoretical reality of a "hermeneutic circle", referring to the way in which, in understanding and interpretation, part and whole are related in a circular way: in order to understand the whole it is necessary to understand the parts and vice versa. This is the condition of possibility of all human experience and enquiry. As the result, "hermeneutics in the more recent sense of the term begins with the recognition that historical conditioning is two-sided: *the modern interpreter, no less than the text, stands in a given historical context and tradition*". Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 11.

Nowadays, hermeneutics "has become a highly technical and philosophical oriented field of discussion". S. E. Porter, ed. *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament* (Leiden: Briel, 1997), 25. Bearing this in mind, the usage and meaning of *hermeneutics*, in the scope of the present study, will be restricted to the science of Bible interpretation, which primarily deals with a literary corpus of the Old and New Testaments as its material object. It is in this sense the term will be used in the clauses – biblical hermeneutics or Orthodox hermeneutics. [Furnishing a complex set of rules for finding and expressing the meaning of the biblical books may be said to be a formal object of biblical hermeneutics.] Consideration will also given to the process of understanding of the Bible, as it is reflected and formed in the exegetical writings of the Russian Orthodox theologians and exegetes.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Mark Elliott, "Eastern Orthodox and Slavic Evangelicals: What Sets Them Both Apart From Western Evangelicals," *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 3 (Fall 1995), 15-16; also see Osborn's article where he outlines the relationships between Orthodox and Evangelical Protestant hermeneutics. Grant Osborn, "The many and One: The Interface Between Orthodox and Evangelical Protestant Hermeneutics," *SVTQ* 39-3 (1995): 281-304.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that many Orthodox fundamental principles of interpretation correlated and corresponded with general principles of biblical interpretation; yet, in essence they form “Russian Orthodox biblical hermeneutics”. This dissertation seeks to establish a firm outline of the essential elements of Orthodox biblical hermeneutics as they developed in the history of interpretation. It seeks to stimulate the appearance of new works in the field under review and to assist researchers at the start of their careers.

### **1.1 The Need for this Study**

For many centuries the Orthodox Church regarded the Bible as “absolutely central to every aspect of Orthodox life, from its liturgical celebration to its mission within the world at large.”<sup>6</sup> Until now, however, the history of Bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church and the analysis of the Orthodox hermeneutics has been a virtually uncultivated and barely surveyed field. No study performed on the Russian Orthodox Church that concentrate on the Orthodox perspective on scripture and which could introduce the experts in the biblical scholarship to the Orthodox bible hermeneutics, attested in the Russian Orthodox Church, has yet been undertaken. It is not difficult to demonstrate the insufficiency of relevant studies in: (1) the Russian Orthodox literature; and (2) the western literature.

For decades, the Russian Orthodox scholars have produced numerous works investigating both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Yet, there has been no study performed that will *conjointly* outline the history of bible interpretation and the hermeneutical issues that are specifically important for an understanding of biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, merely a few formal studies of the Orthodox biblical hermeneutics have been undertaken.<sup>7</sup> A few decades ago, Fr. Kniazev claimed that the Russian Orthodox theology, in contrast to western theological thinking, still has to construct its own *orthodox hermeneutics*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John Breck, “Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation,” *SVTQ* 40 (1996): 80.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Alexander Men’, “K Istorii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Bibleistiki,” [“Toward the History of Russian Orthodox Biblical Studies,”] *BT* 28 (1987): 281.

<sup>8</sup> Alexii Kniazev, “O bogovdukhnovennosti Sv. Pisaniia,” [“About the Inspiration of a Sacred Scripture,”] *Pravoslavnaia Mysl’* (Paris: YMCA PRESS, 1951), 114.



In the Russian Orthodox literature there only a very small number of studies that focus on the topic of bible interpretation in the Orthodox Russia exist.<sup>9</sup> These studies are short and general. They predominantly focus on a historical overview of the history of the Bible translations into the Russian language.<sup>10</sup> That is important, for a literature on the Russian orthodox exegetes, albeit not too extensive does exist, though no synthesis has been made to interlink the history of bible interpretation and hermeneutics. The exception is a short article by Alexander Men' (d. 1990), "K Istorii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Bibleistiki", published in 1987. In this essay, Men' briefly comments on the history of bible interpretation and supplies his account with brief comments on the Orthodox hermeneutics.<sup>11</sup> The study offers the detailed bibliographical information and names the major Orthodox expositors of the Bible. Moreover, Men' groups the Orthodox exegetes according to their main research interests. There are two main factors, however, that have been insufficiently emphasized in the article. First, Men' does not trace the close tie between the methods of interpretation adopted by the Orthodox exegetes and the Orthodox hermeneutics. Secondly, he does not specifically link the history of bible interpretation in the Orthodox Church with the historical contexts of the church and society in Russia.

It is necessary to say that in the recent years, the Eastern Orthodox scholars, outside of Russia, have written several studies that suggest an Orthodox answer to what biblical scholars call "the hermeneutical problem".<sup>12</sup> Yet, studies known to us do not focus on the

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<sup>9</sup> See F. Eleonskii, "Otechestvennye trudy po izucheniiu Biblii v XIX v.," ["The Russian indigenous works of Biblical studies in XIX c.,"] *KhCh* (1901) 1: 5-28; 5: 633-660; N. Glubokovskii, *Russkaia Bogoslovskaja Nauka v ee istoricheskom i noveishem sostoianii* [*Russian Theological Discipline in its historical development and present state*] (Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1928); Iannuarii (Ivliev), "Vklad Sankt-Peterburgskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii v Russkuiu Bibliistiku," ["Contribution of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy for Russian Biblical Scholarship,"] *A Jubilee Edition of Theological Works* (1986): 192-198; Iannuarii (Ivliev), "Biblical Scholarship in Russian Orthodox Church in XX cc.," Unpublished paper presented at *Theological Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church Feb. 7-9, 2000* (<http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru>); Mikhail (Luzin), *Stoletie iz istorii tolkovaniia Biblii u nas v Rossii* [*The Century of Bible Interpretation in Russia*] (M.: 1878); M. Nikol'skii, "Nasha Bibleiskaia Nauka," ["Our Biblical Science,"] *PO* 1 (1875): 184-196; N. Troitskii, "Russkaia Bibleiskaia nauka i ee sovremennye zadachi," ["The Russian Biblical Studies and Their Modern Objectives,"] *ChOLDP* 10 (1877).

<sup>10</sup> Esp. Mikhail (Luzin), *Bibleiskaia Nauka: Ocherk Istorii Tolkovaniia Biblii. Kniga Pervaia* [*Biblical Science: The History of Bible Interpretation. Book One*] (Tula: Fortunatova, 1898), 115-149; S. Sol'skii, "Upotreblenie i izuchenie Biblii v Rossii," ["The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,"] *PO* (1868) 10: 145-180; 11: 251-270; (1869) 2: 190-221; 4:38-577; 6: 797-822.

<sup>11</sup> *Men'*, 272-289.

<sup>12</sup> Florovsky provides a good expression of the Eastern Orthodox position on Scripture. His thematic articles are collected in *Florovsky, BCT*. See also the American and Greek Orthodox authors. For example, see: Thomas Hopko, "The Bible in the Orthodox Church," *SVTQ* 14, 1-2



Bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos in his recent *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective (Volume One: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics)*, for example, discusses the Eastern Orthodox hermeneutics by referring only to the scholars of the Greek Orthodox Church and the American Orthodox Church. He neglects the Russian Orthodox theologians (with the exception of G. Florovsky who mainly worked and published in France and in the United States of America).

The majority of western pre-modern and modern handbooks and surveys of the history of biblical scholarship, the Eastern Orthodoxy is mostly and habitually dismissed. A clear orientation towards the western branch of the Christian church is maintained throughout. Among the recent examples of such orientation there is the comprehensive work of G. Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1996). The author emphasizes that his book was written from the conviction that “the Christian bible belongs to the church, which is the primary place where it is read and used.”<sup>13</sup> The book covers about twenty centuries of the history of bible interpretation and refers to many earlier and later critics. Nevertheless, it gives absolutely no attention to the bible interpretation in the Eastern Orthodoxy (whether in the past or in the present). One could possibly think that Bray’s study, together with the works of others, consciously rule out the Orthodox Church as *the primary place where the Bible is read and used* and understand the church in terms of the western branch of the Christian church. The argument is not to ridicule Bray’s method of writing history of Christian bible interpretation. The point is, however, that the historiography of biblical interpretation should in no way be in tune with the current practice of modern scholarly biblical research. The historiography of the bible interpretation should not stay restricted by confessional or national boundaries.

The main guideline of the present study, therefore, has been the conviction that the Russian Orthodox Church is an organic part of the Universal Church and, therefore, the

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(1970); 66-99; John Breck, “Theoria and Orthodox Hermeneutics,” *SVTQ* 20, 4 (1976): 195-219; John Breck, “Orthodoxy and the Bible Today,” in *The Legacy of St. Vladimir*, ed. John Breck and others. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990) 141-157; John Breck, “Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation,” *SVTQ* 40 (1996): 77-93; Vasilin Kesich, “Biblical Studies in Orthodox Theology: A Response,” *GOTR* 17, 1 (1972): 63-68; Vasilin Kesich, “The Orthodox Church and Biblical Interpretation,” *SVTQ* 37, (1993): 343-351; A. Ugolnik, “An Orthodox Hermeneutics in the West,” *SVTQ* 27:2 (1983): 93-118; Theodore Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), 15-43; Elias Oikonomos, *Bibel and Bibelwissenschaft in der orthodoxen Kirche* in *Stuttgarter Bibelstudien* 81 (Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1976); Savas Agoridis, “Biblical Studies in Orthodox Theology,” *GOTR* 17,1 (1972): 51-62; Savas Agoridis, *The Bible in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Athens: University of Athens, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> G. Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1996), 8.

study of history of Bible interpretation and biblical hermeneutics in the Orthodox tradition is obligatory.

## 1.2 The Research Problem and Purpose of this Study

Archimandrite Iannuarii (Ivliev), in his address to the participants of the recent theological conference of the Russian Orthodox Church, stated that at the end of the XX century the Orthodox biblical scholarship does not exist in Russia in its classical sense.<sup>14</sup> His statement somewhat contradicts his earlier essay on Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation, where Fr. Iannuarii argued that:

During the 19th century, the Russian biblical studies as scientific discipline achieved the distinguished results. The accomplishments of the prominent Russian biblical scholars of the beginning of the 20th century can be appropriately placed along with the highest achievements of a concurrent biblical scholarship worldwide...<sup>15</sup>

The purpose of this dissertation, however, is not to advocate *pro* or *contra* Russian biblical scholarship, but to place the emphasis on the history of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Orthodox biblical hermeneutics. This study also does not attempt to compare the history and approaches of the Orthodox biblical interpretation with the developments within the Protestant and Roman Catholic confessions. The purpose of this study is to provoke an awareness of the focus on the historical character and controlling factors of inquiry of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church. By means of surveying the history of biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church, analysing the anthropological aspects as relevant to the hermeneutics and pursuing single-case study – the New Testament hermeneutics as reflected in the writings of the Russian Orthodox ordained priest and biblical scholar Archbishop Vasilii (Dmitrii Ivanovich

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<sup>14</sup> “В конце 20-го столетия, если и можно говорить о православной библеистической школе, то её (и то лишь в становлении) можно распознать только в Университетах Афин и Фессалоники.” Iannuarii (Ivliev), “Biblical Scholarship in Russian Orthodox Church in XX cc.,” Unpublished paper presented at the theological conference of the Russian Orthodox Church “*Orthodoxy on the Threshold of the New Millemniun*”, which was held in Moscow (February 7-9, 2000) (<http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru>). Lezov forwards similar conclusion. See S. Lezov, *Kanonicheskie Evangeliiia [The Canonical Gospels]* (M.: Nauka, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> “Русская библеистика как научная дисциплина в течении XIX столетия, достигает столь замечательных успехов, что достижения ее видных представителей в начале XX в. с полным правом можно поставить в один ряд в ряд с крупнейшими завоеваниями мировой библеистики того времени...” Iannuarii (Ivliev), “Vklad S.-Peterburgskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii v russkuiu bibliistiku,” [“Contribution of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy for Russian Biblical Scholarship,”] *A Jubilee Edition of BT* (1986): 192.



Bogdashevskii, 1861-1933) this study intends to attribute to filling the gap that exists in the knowledge about the Russian Orthodox approach of interpreting the Bible. We sincerely hope that this study will serve the processes of theological enrichment of all the Christian traditions.

### **1.3 Methodology and Limits of this Research**

The matter of establishing the historical trends of bible interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church is a crucial one. Without doubt, to display a historical account, requires a fixed methodology and certain limitations. Though one needs to begin at one point in history, a full-blown historical study on Bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church is outside the scope of this study. Chapter Two will indicate a specific point of view that this dissertation is maintaining in the realm of general ideas of historiography and specify the methodological approach applied to the treatment of the topic in this dissertation.

This dissertation seeks to present a coherent analysis of the Russian Orthodox approaches to the Bible as well as to establish a firm outline of the essential elements of Orthodox biblical hermeneutics as they developed in the history of interpretation. This dissertation is not meant to treat the problem exhaustively, but rather it should be understood as an initial plunge into an ocean of the Orthodox published materials, relevant to the field of biblical interpretation. Therefore, this study does not attempt to undertake more than merely to note the most specific hermeneutical contours, outlined in the history of bible interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church.

### **1.4 The Design of this Study**

The main aims of this dissertation is to survey the biblical interpretation in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, from the *Kiev period* of its history (X-XIII cc.) till the *Synodal period* (1721-1917) and to concentrate on the Orthodox biblical hermeneutics within this period of the Church history.

Chapter Two starts out with a few remarks about the scientific conceptions of historiography and then specifies the methodological approach applied to the treatment of the subject in this dissertation. In addressing the methodological question in Chapter Two,



choose the most appropriate method for our purpose - to survey the biblical interpretation in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Chapter Three, then focuses on the characteristics and controlling factors of inquiry of the bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church. This chapter situates the issue in its larger historical context of the Russian Orthodox Christianity. The overview of the bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church is structured around the main historical phases: (1) Kievan period (X-XIII cc.); (2) the period of Tartar invasion (1280-1480); (3) the period of ecclesiastic self-establishment (XV-XVIII cc.); and (4) the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> . The historical survey of biblical interpretation will be done specifically from the viewpoint of this dissertation - to discern the Russian Orthodox biblical hermeneutics. In some cases, when the hermeneutical approaches will reappear in the periods of history of interpretation, the repetitions of the findings will be unavoidable.

The next three chapters, 4-6 respectively, will provide a reflection of the Orthodox biblical hermeneutics. In order to make our focus on the Russian Orthodox biblical hermeneutics feasible, this dissertation will attempt to contour the biblical hermeneutics reflected and implied in: (1) the Orthodox theological teaching about *ἄνθρωπος*; and (2) the writings of the Russian Orthodox ordained priest biblical scholar Archbishop Vasilii (Dmitrii Ivanovich Bogdashevskii, 1861-1933).

Consequently, Chapter Four narrows our focus from a general historical perspective to a specific theoretical position of the Orthodox Church that communicates to the issues of biblical hermeneutics. This chapter shows how the Orthodox anthropological ideas shape the Orthodox biblical hermeneutics.

Chapter Five performs a case study, limiting our analysis to the writings of one particular scholar - Dmitrii Bogdashevskii.<sup>16</sup> Bogdashevskii is chosen for his significant contribution to the Russian Orthodox New Testament scholarship. A case study of Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics will be performed because it is advantageous to have a detailed study of one writer as an example of the hermeneutical trends attested in the Russian Orthodox Church.

This chapter attempts, therefore, to examine Bogdashevskii's career as an exegete of the New Testament. This is not a comprehensive study of Bogdashevskii as such. We will present an analysis and an explanation of the major hermeneutical principles of Bogdashevskii's, as well as his exegetical methodology. From this perspective, we will

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<sup>16</sup> The detailed grounds for selecting Bogdashevskii, as the representative of the Russian Orthodox biblical scholarship, will be specified in Chapter 5.

consider one central aspect, namely the way in which Bogdashevskii approaches the New Testament. For doing so, we will examine Bogdashevskii's homiletic and exegetical material.

Chapter Six will identify and summarize in the light of what was done previously the hermeneutical issues that are specifically important for an understanding of biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church. It is an interpretation of the Russian Orthodox hermeneutical perspective based on the analysis of the preceding chapters. The presentation of this interpretation is based on and makes frequent reference to the analysis set forth in preceding chapters. This chapter is preconditioned by the assumption that the study of the history of biblical interpretation, within the Russian Orthodoxy, served a better understanding of the Orthodox hermeneutics.

The study concludes with a recapitulation and summary of the findings of the dissertation.

### **1.5 Note on Composition**

The nature of the topic and a concern for a wider group of potential readers also require comment on the composition in presenting the data in this study (in terms of the technical aspect of the text).

*Firstly*, in citing the Russian sources, English translations will be used when available, although the originals will be compared. Otherwise, translation from Russian will be my own. Comments on the sources and the Russian text will be occasionally interspersed in the text or footnotes. This will also serve for a control over scientific accuracy in presenting the information.

*Secondly*, to facilitate the important function of conversation of Russian written language into the characters of English (particularly in bibliographic data) I will use a commonly used method of conversion – *Transliteration*. This method will facilitate the representation of the Russian alphabet by Roman literal alphabet (resulting in Anglicising) as unambiguously as possible. There is no complete satisfactory system of transliteration. In reconstitution of the Russian texts and documents in its original form, a system of transliteration, based on the international system for transliteration of Slavic Cyrillic characters, approved by the Library of Congress and the American Library Association<sup>17</sup>, will be used throughout this dissertation. For a system of transliteration, employed in this dissertation, see Appendix I.

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<sup>17</sup> See "Congress Cataloging Service," *Bulletin 119* (Fall, 1976): 63; *ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for Non-Roman Scripts/Approved by the Library of Congress and the American Library Association*. Compiled and ed. by Randall K. Barry, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1997), 184.



In a system of transliteration, employed in this dissertation, a particular effort is made to keep to a minimum the letters groups and diacritical marks. In using proper names and places I will generally maintain the Russian form (in transliteration). The exceptions are standard names such as Moscow. These do not need transliteration. In this dissertation the adjectival proper name-ending *-skii* instead of *-sky* will be used. In the case of Russians who have published extensively in English, I have retained their own preferred spelling of the names: thus Florovsky, and not Florovskii.

*Thirdly*, to avoid confusion by the variation in the spellings and transliterations, at the first time of referring to the person or a source, I will use both versions: transliterated from Russian into English (according to ALA-LC system) and English translation. Afterward, I will give only the translations. Capitalization in book titles also follows Russian usage. Nevertheless, stylistic consistency in the abovementioned matters and absolute consistency of application of the system of transliteration is virtually impossible.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF HISTORY: METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

#### 2.1 General Remarks

Since the study of the Bible is a multi-faceted discipline, it embodies the whole complex of tasks in order to proceed toward a precise meaning of the biblical texts. Here all contemporary resources of knowledge that can contribute to this process ought to be used. The history of antecedent biblical interpretation, then, is a vital reservoir of knowledge for the field of biblical studies. For the better results of learning, the historical trends in understanding and interpretation of the Bible have to be established as accurate as possible.

To achieve a historical exactness in reconstructing the history of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church requires a fixed methodology in both research and formulation of a historical account. The purpose of this chapter is to indicate the point of view that this dissertation is maintaining in the realm of general ideas of historiography and to define the position we occupy in the conflict of the leading opinions that move a discipline of historical research. We will start out with a few remarks about the scientific conceptions of historiography and then specify the methodological approach applied to the treatment of the subject in this dissertation.

**Excursus: Different Orientations in Historical Thought.** The contemporary ideas about history and historiography have undergone a weighty transformation since they originated with the ancient Greeks.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the standards and interests of the great historians of Classical Greek antiquity dominated historical study and writing for centuries. In the 5th century BC Herodotus, who has been called the father of history, and later Thucydides (circa 460-c. 400 BC) Xenophon (430?-355? BC), Theopompus of Chios (born about 378 BC), Ephorus (4th century BC), Polybius (in the 2nd century BC) recorded contemporary or near-contemporary events in prose narratives of striking style, depending as much as possible on eyewitness or other reliable testimony for evidence. These and later ancient historiographers stressed the distinction between myth and truth. In addition: (1) individual lives were regarded as illustrations of public life; (2) the political analysis

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press of New England, 1997), 2. For an understanding of development of historiography over time see wide-ranging and up-to date collections of essays in Michael Bentley, ed., *Companion to Historiography* (London: Routledge, 1997); and Daniel Woolf, ed., *A Global Encyclopedia of Historical Writing* (1998).



was based on human motivations; and (3) speculation on human destiny and moral questions was considered the proper work of philosophers, not historians.<sup>2</sup>

Later, Josephus Flavius Josephus (AD 37?-101?) and the Early Christian historians mingled secular and religious history. A religion had significant implications for the interpretation of human history.<sup>3</sup> This was further developed in the Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup>

The intensified study of Greek and Roman literature and the renewal of rhetorical education that characterized intellectual life in 15th-century Italy had an effect on historical study; it encouraged a secular and realistic approach to political history, both ancient and modern. During the era of Renaissance the historians wrote works that set political history in a world bounded by human laws and human ambitions. It brought the separation of ecclesiastical from secular materials of history.<sup>5</sup>

From the 16th century onward, many scholars throughout Europe devoted their lives to the laborious, systematic collection of the sources for their national and religious histories. The classical traditions of history writing had emphasized literary skill and the reinterpretation of history at the expense of basic research.<sup>6</sup>

In the 19th century<sup>7</sup>, with the work and influence of German historian and educator Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), history achieved its identity as an independent academic discipline with its own critical method and approach, requiring rigorous preparation.<sup>8</sup> Von Ranke insisted on dispassionate objectivity as the historian's proper point of view and made consultation of contemporary sources a law of historical construction. He substantially advanced the criticism of sources beyond the achievements of the antiquarians by making consideration of the historical circumstances of the writer the key to the evaluation of documents. According to van Ranke, history gives significance to the phenomenal world. "It

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<sup>2</sup> See Paul Cartledge, Garnsey, P. and Gruen, E.S. (eds.) *Hellenistic Constructs: Culture, History and Historiography* (Berkeley, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Esp. St. Augustine (354-430), in his great Christian apologia *City of God* (413-26), formulated a theological philosophy of history by conceiving of far more complex and subtle relations between Christian and secular history.

<sup>4</sup> For example, St. Bede the Venerable (673?-735), English Benedictine monk and scholar, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People) (dated 731) achieved the integration of secular and ecclesiastical history, natural and supernatural events, in a forceful and intelligent narrative. For an introduction to historiography during the Middle Ages see the essays collected in *Part II: The Medieval Ages* in Michael Bentley, (ed.) *Companion to Historiography* (London: Routledge, 1997), 103-246.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. D. R. Woolf, "The Writing of Early Modern European Intellectual History," in Michael Bentley, (ed.) *Companion to Historiography* (London: Routledge, 1997), 314-315. For the article that attempt to survey historiography in the Greco-Roman world see Donald Lateiner, "Greco-Roman Historiography," in D. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992-1997).

<sup>6</sup> Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88), set a standard for historical writing. See G.A. Aylmer, "Introductory Survey: From the Renaissance to the Eighteenth Century," *Ages* in Michael Bentley, (ed.) *Companion to Historiography* (London: Routledge, 1997), 249-280.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive overview of historical thought and historical writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century se George P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1913).

<sup>8</sup> See L. von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, G. Iggers/ K. van Maltke (eds.), (New York: The Boobs-Merril Company, 1973).



devotes its efforts to the concrete.<sup>9</sup> For von Ranke, the efforts of history demand: (1) a broad universal interest in all aspects of social and intellectual life that will reveal, in their interconnectedness, a plausible cognition of the past; (2) a documentary, penetrating and profound study of the object under observation; and (3) as a penetration in the causal nexus of the connection among the various events.<sup>10</sup> Von Ranke sees the meaning of the history in the multiplicity of the developments. The scientific orientations since Leopold von Ranke shared the basic assumptions connected with the tradition of older forms of historical writings. Iggers specifies three assumptions: (1) history portrays people who really existed and actions that really took place; (2) human actions mirror the intentions of the actors and it is a task of historian to comprehend these intentions in order to construct a coherent historical story; and (3) the events operate in diachronical conception of time, in which later events follow earlier in a coherent sequence.<sup>11</sup>

By the 20th century, history was firmly established in European and American universities as a professional field, resting on exact methods and making productive use of archival collections and new sources of evidence. Iggers, in his *Historiography in the Twentieth century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, outlines the current trends of the increasing specialized historiography. He points out that the earlier optimism that promised imminent recovery of the truth of the past has been replaced by the belief that no accumulation of facts constitutes history as an intelligible structure, and no historian, however free from crude bias, can be a totally neutral, impersonal recorder of an objective reality. Furthermore, the scope of history has expanded immeasurably, in time, as archaeology and anthropology have provided knowledge of earlier ages, and in breadth, as fields of inquiry entirely unknown in the past (such as economic history, psychohistory, history of ideas, of family structures, and of peasant societies) have emerged and refined their methods and goals. To many scholars, national history has come to seem an outmoded, culture-bound approach, although history written on thoroughly international assumptions is extremely difficult to achieve.

Historians have looked more and more to the social sciences—sociology<sup>12</sup>, psychology, anthropology<sup>13</sup>, and economics—for new methods and forms of explanation; the sophisticated use of quantitative data has become the accepted approach to economic and demographic studies. The influence of Marxist theories of economic and social development remains vital and contentious.<sup>14</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>9</sup> See L. von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, G. Iggers/ K. van Maltke (eds.), (New York: The Boobs-Merril Company, 1973), 39.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-42.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. G. G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press of New England, 1997), 3.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Max Weber clearly advocated social science approach in history. See M. Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Science*, E.A. Shils and H.A. Finch eds., (New York: The Free Press, 1949).

<sup>13</sup> By focusing on small social unities consisting of individuals, Clifford Geertz, for example, interrelated the emphasis on the culture with history. In doing so he brought history in contact with anthropology. See C. Geerts, *An Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana Press, 1973, repr., 1993).

<sup>14</sup> The influence of Marxism upon historiography is well examined in G. McLennan, *Marxism and the Methodologies in History* (London, 1981). S. H. Rigby, "Marxist Historiography," in Michael Bentley ed., *Companion to Historiography* (London: Routledge, 1997) also provides a very useful learned discussion of the Marxist historiography and bibliography on this topic.

many scholars have turned with sharpened interest to the theoretical foundations of historical knowledge and are reconsidering the relation between imaginative literature and history, with the possibility emerging that history may after all be the literary art that works upon scholarly material.<sup>15</sup>

Each particular model of historiography offers something valuable, yet each loses much of its value when it claims to be the only way of interpretation of the past.

## 2.2 History and Historiography

History, in its broadest sense, is the totality of all past events, although a more realistic definition would limit it to the known past. Historiography is the written record of what is known of human lives and societies in the past and how historians have attempted to understand them. Of all the fields of serious study and literary effort, history may be the hardest to define precisely, because the attempt to uncover past events and formulate an intelligible account of them necessarily involves the use and influence of many auxiliary disciplines and literary forms.

Although the historical research is to collect and record facts about the human past and often to discover new facts, the historical discourse does not, however, produce new information about the past and does not provide new knowledge about the past. The historical research produces the interpretations of whatever information about and knowledge of the past the historian commands.<sup>16</sup> “History is a science of collecting finding, penetrating; it is an art because it recreates and portrays that which it has found and recognized.”<sup>17</sup> The investigation of the records of the past must be scientific; the exposition of the findings in writing becomes literature and hence is an art.

We deal with a real past and not an imagined past. However, this past is “accessible only through the medium of the historian’s mind.”<sup>18</sup> This calls for methods and approaches that follow logic of historical inquiry, because the relation between evidence and fact,

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<sup>15</sup> For the polemical discussions of the current trends see, for example, Keith Windshuttle, *The Killing of History: How a Discipline is Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists* (Sydney, 1994). A superior study of the modern historiography is Michael Bentley, *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (1999).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Hayden White, *Figural Realism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>17</sup> L. von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, G. Iggers/ K. van Maltke (eds.), (New York: The Boobs-Merril Company, 1973), 33.

<sup>18</sup> G. G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press of New England, 1997), 15.



however, is rarely simple and direct. The evidence may be biased or mistaken, fragmentary, or nearly unintelligible after long periods of cultural or linguistic change. The historian task, therefore, is to assess the evidences with a critical eye.

On the whole, history does not recreate the past but it can pass judgement upon the documentation. The available information about the past is incomplete, partly incorrect, or biased and requires our careful attention.

The task of the historian, as we see it, is to try to get to the kernel of the story and see its relevance in its won context and its contribution to the ongoing tide of life.

### 2.3 Objectivity and Truth in History

Until modern times, history was regarded primarily as a special kind of literature that shared many techniques and effects with fictional narrative. Historians were committed to factual materials and personal truthfulness, but like writers of fiction they wrote detailed narratives of events and vivid character sketches with great attention to language and style. In recent decades an increased number of historians arrived at the conviction that “objectivity in historical research is not possible because there is no object of history.”<sup>19</sup> It is in this context some scholars stress the literary character of historical text and the fictional elements. It is even proposed that the historical works are mainly the literary works, which do not refer to an actual historical past (i.e. they are not “objective”) but as such do not differ from fiction.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, the representation of the past is a problematic enterprise. Yet, we regard objectivity, properly understood, to be a worthy goal of our historical inquiry. Can history be objective? It is common to reply to this question, “it all depends on what one means by ‘objective’”. Following Thomas Haskell, we understand “objectivity” as the attempt “to sustain that minimal respect for self-overcoming, for detachment, honesty, and fairness that makes intellectual community possible.”<sup>21</sup> Our assumption is that history is “objective” insofar as it can be written as accepted (or verified) by rational scientific standards.<sup>22</sup> Only

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<sup>19</sup> G. G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press of New England, 1997), 9.

<sup>20</sup> See Ronald Barthes, “Discourse of History,” *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, vol. 3 (1981): 3-28; Hayden White, *Figural Realism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Haskell, “Objectivity is not Neutrality,” in *History and Theory: Contemporary Readings*, Brain Fay, Philip Pomper and Richard T. Vann eds., (Malden: Blackwell, 1998), 306.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Christopher Blake, “Can History be Objective,” *Mind* 64 (1955): 61.



in this sense, the historical “objectivity” is obtainable. On the one hand, a high degree of objectivity is possible as we work on the level of simple description, for it is possible to establish beyond measurable doubt that a person existed and acted in a specific way. On the other hand, however, history cannot be conceived as recovering the past “as it actually was”. Therefore, ‘objectivity’, as Bradley and Muller rightly argue, “becomes more difficult when we move from the realm of description to that of explanation.”<sup>23</sup>

We recognize that history is both a science and an art.<sup>24</sup> It is a science of collecting and finding the evidence of the past which provide information on when, how, why and through whom something happened. It is an art because it recreates and interprets that which has been found and established. The product of these two is the documentary version of “objective” historical experience.

Furthermore, our assumption is that it is possible to reach “truth” (“truth” of the object is its valid interpretation) through a dynamical process of the historical learning in which our task is to integrate “history as an objective given in present life relations, and history as a subjective construction to orient oneself toward one’s interest and practical [or ideological] life.”<sup>25</sup> Following Handlin we say that “[n]o one can relive the past; but everyone can seek truth in the record.”<sup>26</sup>

## **2.4 Facts, Interpretation and Form**

Mere sifting of evidence for facts never fulfils the purpose of history as a serious endeavour to understand human life. Fact-finding is only the foundation for the selection, arrangement, and explanation that constitute historical interpretation. The process of interpretation informs all aspects of historical inquiry, beginning with the selection of a subject for investigation, because the very choice of a particular event or society or institution is itself an act of judgment that asserts the importance of the subject. Once chosen, the subject itself suggests a provisional model or hypothesis that guides research and helps the historian to assess and classify the available evidence and to present a detailed and coherent account of the subject. It is true that every historical account is a construct

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<sup>23</sup>James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 52.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. L. von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, G. Iggers/ K. van Maltke (eds.), (New York: The Boobs-Merril Company, 1973), 33.

<sup>25</sup>J. Rüsen, *Studies in Metahistory* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1993), 92.

<sup>26</sup>Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (London: Belknap Press, 1979), 406.

arising from a dialogue between the historian and the past. It “does not occur in a vacuum but within a community of inquiring minds who share criteria of plausibility.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, our task, in this dissertation, will be to respect the facts, avoid ignorance and error as far as possible, and create a convincing, intellectually satisfying interpretation of the history of bible interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church.

Clearly, we are not in the position to record events we ourselves have witnessed. Our task is to distillate the evidences surviving from the past, because “[w]here there is no evidence there is no history.”<sup>28</sup> The historical facts can only be known through intermediary written sources, such as previous histories and other written information. All these, and many more sources of information provide the evidence from which the historical facts can be deciphered. Yet, this dissertation is not meant to treat the problem exhaustively, but rather it should be understood as an initial plunge into an ocean of the Russian Orthodox published materials. The path to a comprehensive study of the Russian orthodox hermeneutics lies through the monographic studies and research of vast published materials. In addition to printed works, the subject of this dissertation might be discussed on the basis of iconographic and more tangible religious materials. However, the discussion of these goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.

## **2.5 Method in History**

Our topic, the history of bible interpretation will be investigated from a specific threefold perspective: (1) from within a particular historical-dogmatic tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church; (2) with an eye toward the historical evolution and development of the issues being debated throughout the period of time; and (3) with a special reference to select individuals, mainly concentrating on their contribution to hermeneutics. This selection of perspectives will be reflected in the scope of research.

The historical study of bible interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church is an integral part of the historical identity of the Church. It contributes to the formulation of self-understanding of the Church. Therefore, linked to the church history, the presentation of the history of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church is necessarily diachronic. This already required a pure chronological approach to the method of study [for example, in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, from the *Kiev period* of its history (X-XIII cc.)

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<sup>27</sup> G.G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press of New England, 1997), 145.

<sup>28</sup> Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (London: Belknap Press, 1979), 405-406.



till the *Synodal period* (1721-1917)]. It will be impossible to avoid the sections on the genesis and development of the orthodox bible interpretation.

Furthermore, for the presentation of the history of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church several basic methods will be used: (1) *the general/specific*; (3) *the synchronic*; and (2) *the great thinker method*.<sup>29</sup>

By employing *the general/specific method* we will, first, break the history of biblical interpretation down into periods for the sake of identifying historical development (according to the principle of commonly accepted periods of the Russian Church and nation). Then within each period we will provide a general survey of the selected authors, their ideas and the forces that impinged on the history of interpretation. Secondly, while offering a general outline of thought, we will concentrate on a particular issue – the Russian Orthodox biblical hermeneutics. This method will help us to note the contributions of the various writers into to the development of the orthodox hermeneutics.

*The synchronic method* provides a complex view of history because it focuses on a broader dialogue between the ecclesiastical, social and political concerns and the subject of biblical interpretation. This method will allow us to look at the history of interpretation from the whole complexity of the past (i.e. to understand the subject on a broader scale of the interrelated events).

*The great thinker method* will be employed in the examination of the individual scholar - Dmitrii Bogdashevskii as representative of the Russian Orthodox biblical scholarship. We are aware that this method tends to locate the meaning in individual persons. This dissertation does not discount the fact that Bogdashevskii is living out the results of a long tradition and might have used the same theoretical concepts (but in a somewhat different way) as the other Russian Orthodox scholars. We do not suggest that the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics can be reduced to Bogdashevskii. *The great thinker method* was chosen for the study of Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics only in order to stabilize the larger body of the materials and sources. The focus on Bogdashevskii will help us understand how the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics cohere in one person's thoughts. Our assumptions are: (1) the particular individual is only contributory to the larger development and that the location of meaning lies in the interaction of ideas of many; and (2) any case study must say something of wider importance and be located in a more ecclesiastic historiography. In addition, I will approach Bogdashevskii being governed by the idea that each individual human being is a complex collection of motives, some good, some less than

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<sup>29</sup> With orientation on the study of doctrine, these and other methods are outlined in James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 26-38.

good. The only thing we know for certain about history is the fact that we cannot know the full motivation of the people at any time. We can only observe their external behaviour, and judge according to that. To claim more is to allocate power to ourselves, which does not belong to us.

Several further comments are still required. *Firstly*, in the presentation of the subject matter the ecumenical environment is favourable. It is desirable to write a history of the Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation by consulting what Roman Catholic Roman Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars have done. Thus, on the one hand, the systematic discernment and appreciation to the Orthodox Biblical scholarship cannot be achieved without reference to the critical hermeneutic questions within Western biblical scholarship. On the other hand, the focus of this dissertation will be limited primarily to the Russian Orthodox scholars.

*Secondly*, since our aim is to trace the history of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox from the *Kiev period* of its history (X-XIII cc.) till the *Synodal period* (1721-1917), a comprehensive study of all the scholars and all their writings would require more than one dissertation. The number of labourers in the field of biblical study is numerous. Therefore a judicious process of selectivity will be employed in order to present the main contributors in terms of their most important works. In a selection of facts and in reconstruction of the past our main focus will be the attempts to survey the landscape of the Orthodox religious thought relevant to biblical hermeneutics.

*Thirdly*, in order to analyse the development and essence of biblical scholarship in the Russian Orthodox Church, this study will be particularly focused on the academic inquiries accomplished by the lecturers of four Orthodox Academies (in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev and Kazan') who contributed to the field of Biblical studies (esp. in the New Testament). The use of periodical press, especially theological-scholarly journals, will serve as the main source of materials (but not be limited to). It is important to note, that the journals have been at the centre of Russian cultural, intellectual and academic life (esp. throughout the Imperial period).<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of this dissertation, the most prominent journals will be considered: (1) *Khristianskoe Chtenie* (*Christian Reading*) of St. Petersburg Academy (from 1821-; and during 1875-1913 it became a supplement to a weekly journal

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<sup>30</sup> The importance of the Orthodox periodical literature in Pre-revolutionary Russia has been accredited by several recent studies. See esp., Mienard Dindorf and Edward Kasines, "Russian Pre-Revolutionary Religious-theological Serials in the St. Vladimir Seminary Library," *SVTQ*, 14 (1970): 100-107; Edward, Kasinec, "A Bibliographical Essay on the Documentation of Russian Orthodoxy during the Imperial Era," in Robert Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou, *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1978), 205-228; Robert Whittaker, "Two New York Collections for the Study of Eastern Christianity," *SVTQ* 35 (1990): 221-236; Robert Davis, "19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Religious-Theological Journals: Structure and Access" *SVTQ* 33 (1989): 235-259; B. Geffert, "Lisovskii's List: Pre-1900 Russian Theological and Religious Periodicals," *SVTQ* 40 (1996): 181-206.



*Tserkovnii Vestnik*); (2) *Pribavleniia k Tvoreniiam Otsov* (from 1843-1864, 1871-72; 1880-1891, but after 1892 is known as *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* (*Theological Messenger of Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy*); (3) *Proceedings of the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy* (from 1837 it was a weekly journal *Voskresnoe Chtenie*, and later -from 1860 *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Academy*; and (4) *Pravoslavnyi Sobesiednik* (*Orthodox Interlocutor*) published by the Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy.<sup>31</sup> The publication of these journals was designed to satisfy the requirements of the academically serious readers. Considering the fact that in the pre-revolutionary Russia there was no well-organized theological publishing and that the main studies and dissertations in Bible interpretation and theology were published only in a journal version, the above named journals are mandatory for a study in Russian Orthodoxy (although often abandoned).

Heaviest reliance for evidence in the proposed study will be placed on primary sources found in major Orthodox collections in Russia and abroad (esp. Georges Florovsky Library of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary/New York, USA). The internal and external critical techniques will be employed in the assessment of documents.

**Excursion: The Use of the Russian Orthodox Academic Periodicals in Scholarly Research.** The religious-theological serials, esp. academic periodicals, produced by the four theological academies have been ignored by the majority studies of the Russian Orthodoxy. Cf. Robert H. Davis, "19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Religious-Theological Journals: Structure and Access," *SVTQ* 33 (1989): 235. An incredible ignorance of theological journals and unacceptable unfamiliarity with theological literature in Russian is shown in several recent studies from the western Orthodox scholars. A notable example, among others, is Michael Prokurat's essay "Orthodox Interpretation of Scripture" published in *The Bible in the Churches: How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures*. Ed. by Kenneth Hagen. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 59-99. Due to overlooking all the primary sources in Russian and relying entirely on the secondary sources (predominantly in English) that treat the subject discursively, Prokurat's essay does not achieve its objective - to investigate "the Bible and its interpretation in Eastern Orthodox Church" by treating both Greek/Byzantine and Slavic/Russian Orthodox traditions. Moreover, Prokurat shows a considerable misconception of the topic. Rather than to show how the Orthodox Christians interpret the Scriptures (note the book's subtitle), Prokurat predominantly concentrates on a historical overview of Bible translations into Greek and Russian languages.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A detailed and chronological list of all the Russian Orthodox theological and religious periodicals can be found in specialized surveys. See: N. M. Lisovskii, *Bibliografiia Russkoi Pereodicheskoi Pechati: 1703-1900 gg.* (Petrograd, 1915); *Pravoslavnaia Bogoslovskaia Entsiklopediia ili bogoslovskii Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar'* 12 vols. Vols. 1-5 ed. by Prof. A. P. Lopukhin. [from *Alfa* - to *Ifika*] and vols. 6-12 ed. by Prof. N. N. Glubukovskii [from *Iavan* to *Konstan-tinopol*] (Petrograd, 1900-11); *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar'* (M.: 1900- ["Reprintnoe vosproizvodnoe izdanie F. A. Brokgauza /I. A. Efrona, 1890]).

<sup>32</sup> This misconception is also noted in the Russian Orthodox literature. For example Prof. Sol'skii's study of the history of Bible interpretation in Russia concerns mainly the history of Bible translation into Old-Slavonic/Russian. Only indirectly he regards the topic of interpretation. See S.

## 2.6 Modes of Expression

In this dissertation, for the purpose of expressing the historical past, two distinct modes will be used. A *mode of exposition* will be used to explain and analyse causes of events, the significance of decisions, the motives of participants, the ideology, and the meaning of an event or idea.<sup>33</sup> It is in this mode that the study of the influence of the circumstances on a historical process of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church will be presented.

The *mode of argument* will be used to build a proposition, to create a dialogue between the views or positions on the subject, and to elucidate what happened and why.<sup>34</sup> In unfolding the history of biblical interpretation, the study will always be in dialogue, not only with the primary sources of the events we write about but also with other historians who write about some of those events. This engages in argument.

Needless to say, the modes of exposition and argument overlap. Mainly the method of investigation of the topic will be descriptive, although critical evaluation in terms of textual criteria will also be selectively employed for the purpose service of more precise understanding.

## 2.7 Historiographical Representation of Continuity

The methodological approach of this dissertation is derived from the point of view that “continuity is the leading idea of a history connecting the experience of the past with the expectations of the future.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, in our study of the history of Russian Orthodox bible interpretation, the peculiar mixture of failures and achievements in interpretation will be shown by giving attention to the most prominent scholars, for in the development of

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Sol'skii, “Kratkii Oчерk istorii sviashchenoi bibliologii i ekzegetiki,” [“A brief outline of the history of sacred bibliology and exegesis,”] *TKDA* (1866) 10:157-190; 11:305-342; 12: 466-506; also his “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO* 27/10 (1868): 145-180; 11:251-270; I (1869) 2:190-221; 4:38-577; 6: 797-822. The same approach is found in *Mikhail (Luzin)*.

<sup>33</sup> See Richard Marius, *A Short Guide to Writing about History* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), 61-62.

<sup>34</sup> See *Ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>35</sup> J. Rüsen, *Studies in Metahistory* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1993), 13. On the point of chronology Handlin well states, that “[n]o abstraction, no general interpretation, no wish or preference can challenge chronology dominion, unless among those people who, lacking a sense of time, lack also a sense of history.” “No abstraction, no general interpretation, no wish or preference can challenge chronology dominion, unless among those people who, lacking a sense of time, lack also a sense of history.” Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (London: Belknap Press, 1979), 406.



biblical interpretation, scholars usually stand on the shoulders of their predecessors, and new research is made possible by earlier results. In study of this kind, when the aim is to trace the development of biblical scholarship, a comprehensive study of all the scholars and all their writings is impossible. Therefore, again, in order to present the main contributors in terms of their most important works, a judicious process of selection has also been employed. The chronicle of the bible research will not spell out what a particular scholar says about a particular passage, or even about a particular issue. For our purpose, the examples of the exegetical and critical results will be shown selectively. The main purpose, however, is to report the larger historical development of biblical interpretation.

There is another glance at the historiographical representation of continuity of the Orthodox bible interpretation. The range of happening in the field proportionally preconditions the extent of our presentation of the stream of events and developments of the history of bible interpretation. Since the most extensive form of biblical scholarship is identifiable during the *Synodal period* (1721-1917), the narration concerning this period will be more wide-ranging than of the earlier periods of the Church history.

In addition, in historiography, the presentation of the temporal chain of events, caused by intentional activities, is usually interpreted not only by using the intentions of the actors in order to understand what was going on, but also by searching for structural conditions, circumstances and relationships of human life which determine human activity.<sup>36</sup> It is not to suggest that the work of the historian can be explained primarily in terms of social factors or that it has primarily an ideological function but it means that the historical inquiry performed in this dissertation “must be seen in the sociocultural and political framework in which it is practised.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, in the unfolding of the history of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church, deepens to various dimensions such as ecclesiastic condition, political structure, cultural factors like mentality, social relations, etc., comes into view.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. J. Rüsen, *Studies in Metahistory* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1993), 205.

<sup>37</sup> G.G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press of New England, 1997), 18.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 3.1 Introduction

In 1868, the Professor of Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy Stephan Sol'skii (1835-1900) has acknowledged that even though the bible interpretation in the Orthodox Russia has not admitted having as its own the critical problems, precisely formulated within the western theological development, "in Russia the study of the Bible has its own history."<sup>1</sup> The question in focus, then, is what are the characteristics and controlling factors of inquiry of the bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church, from the *Kiev period* of its history (X-XIII cc.) till the *Synodal period* (1721-1917).

Being specifically conscious about the aim of this dissertation - to contour the ways of interpretation of the Bible within the Russian Orthodox Church, the matter of establishing the historical trends becomes a crucial one. While a full-blown historical study on biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church is outside the scope of this chapter, nevertheless, one needs to begin at one point in history.

Once again, in this study which concerns an immense topic, namely the history of interpretation, is investigated from a sole and specific perspective: - from within a historical-dogmatic tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>2</sup> Such perspective links the topic as an

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<sup>1</sup> S. Sol'skii, "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* 27/10 (1868): 145.

<sup>2</sup> Methodologically, there are three distinct perspectives that could reason the investigation: (1) from within a particular historical-dogmatic tradition of a distinctive Church (e.g. see the study from the Roman Catholic tradition of Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985); (2) with an eye toward the historical evolution and development of the issues being debated throughout the period of time [The discussion of earlier biblical interpretation is found, for example, in J. L. Kugel and R. A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (LEC, 3; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); K. Froehlich, trans. and ed. *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Henry de Lubak, *Medieval Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). For a later period see standard treatments by Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972/London: SMC, 1973); F. F. Bruce, "The History of New Testament Study," in I. Howard, Marshall, ed. *New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 21-59; Anthony C. Thiselton, "New Testament Interpretation in Historical Perspective," in Joel B. Green, ed. *Hearing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 10-36; Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Grove: IVP, 1996)]; and (3) with a special reference to select



issue-oriented factor to a specific environment and time. Secondly, the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, from the Kiev period of its history (X-XIII cc.) till the *Synodal period* (1721-1917) is taken as the framework for our research. The study will be chronologically ordered primarily according to scholars in relation to developing trends in the time.

Without doubt, to display a historical account, requires a fixed methodology and certain limitations. These have been spelled out in CHAPTER TWO. Keeping these in focus, the description of historical developments of the interpretation of Scripture in the history of Russian Orthodox Church is the focus of the following parts of this chapter.

### **3.2. Kievan Period (X-XIII cc.): Historical Beginning**

#### **3.2.1 The Foundation of the Orthodoxy in Kievan Rus'**

The Russian Orthodox Church is more than one thousand years old. Although, according to the tradition, St. Andrew the First Called, while preaching the gospel, stopped at the Kievan hills to bless the future city of Kiev,<sup>3</sup> the recent studies aptly reject this assumption as scientifically inaccurate.<sup>4</sup> Only in the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Christianity was introduced to this pagan Slavic nation that favoured beliefs and rituals from a variety of sources.<sup>5</sup>

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individuals, mainly concentrating on their contribution to Biblical interpretation. Cf. J. C. O'Neill, *The Bible Authority: A Portrait Gallery of Thinkers from Lessing to Bultmann* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991); W. Baird, *History of New Testament Research. Vol. 1: From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); Leonard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament: Vol. -1.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 251-281; Donald McKim, *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Leicester: IVP, 1998). The account of the latest biblical interpretation, with discussion of recent approaches, such as literary criticism and social-scientific criticism, is R. Morgan with J. Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford Bible Series: Oxford University Press, 1988); E. J. Epp and G. MacRae, eds., *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); S. E. Gellingham, S.E. *One Bible Many Voices: Different Approaches to Biblical Studies* (London, SPCK, 1998); S. McKenzie & S. Haynes, *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application* (Louisville, KY: WJKP, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> See "Andrei," in *Khristianstvo*, I, 81.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. D. Pospelovsky, *Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' v istorii Rusi, Rossii i SSSR* (M.: Institut St. Ap. Andreia, 1996), 27. Also A. P. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: An Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); A. Poppe, "Two concepts of the Conversion of Rus' in Kievan Writings," in *Proceedings of the International Congress Commemorating the Millennium of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine of Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 12-13 (Cambridge, Mass.: 1988-89), 488-504, John Fenell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (London: Longman, 1995), 20-21; contra E. Golubinskii, *Istoriia Russkoi Tserkvi [A History of the Russian Church]* (M.: 1997), vol. I, 19-34.

The fact that the Old Russia had among her neighbours a powerful Christian state, the Byzantine Empire, contributed to a great extent to the spread of Christianity in it.<sup>6</sup> The South of Russia was blessed with the work of Sts. Cyril [Constantine] (c. 826-869) and Methodius (c. 815?-885) Equal to the Apostles, the Illuminators of the Slavs.<sup>7</sup> In about 954-955 Princess Olga of Kiev was baptized.<sup>8</sup> All this paved the way for one of the greatest events in the history of the Russian people, namely, the baptism of Prince Vladimir [or Vladimir I] (c. 956-1015) and the Baptism of Russia in 988 that: (1) chronicles the origin of Eastern Christendom in Russia; and (2) establishes the date of the “conversion” of Russia.<sup>9</sup> Since that period of time, the Russian Orthodoxy turned into an essential and organic part of the universal Church.

The creation of the Cyrillic alphabet for the Slavs by Byzantine missionaries and the preservation of ancient Greek manuscripts and religious culture by Byzantine scholars were the most important contributions of the Byzantine Empire to the posterity of the Russian

<sup>5</sup> On the early history of the Russian Church see, for example, *Povest' vremennykh let [The Russian Primary Chronicles] (PVL)*, ed. D.S. Likhachev and B.A. Romanov, 2 vols., (M. - Leningrad: 1950); E. E. Golubinskii, *Istoriia Russkoi Tserkvi [A History of the Russian Church]*, 2 vols., (M.: 1900-11); John Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200-1304*, Logman History of Russia, vol. -2 (London: 1983); *Ibid.*, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (London: Longman, 1995); V.N. Tatishchev, *Istoriia Rossiiskaia [A Russian History]*, vol. 2 (M. -Leningrad: 1963); G. Vernadskii, *Kievan Russia* (New Haven: London, 1943); A. P. Vlasto, *The Early Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: An Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge, 1970), etc.

<sup>6</sup> The influence of Byzantine Empire on the Russian Orthodoxy is discussed, among others, in F. Dvornik, *The Slavs in European History and Civilization* (Rutgers University Press), 1962; John Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, St. Vladimir's Press), 1982; D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Inheritance of Eastern Europe* (London: Variorum), 1982; E. J. Thomson, “The nature of the Reception of Christian Byzantine Culture in Russia in the Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries and its Implications for Russian Culture,” *Slavica Gandensia*, vol. 5 (Ghent, 1978): 107-39.

<sup>7</sup> On the contribution of the Sts. Cyril and Methodius to the growth of national consciousness see, for example: D. Obolensky, “The Legacy of SS Cyril and Methodius,” in *The Legacy of St. Vladimir*, ed. John Breck and others, (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 23-30.

<sup>8</sup> Scholars do not agree on the date of Ol'ga's trip to Constantinople and on the date of her baptism. We follow convincing arguments proposed by Litavrin. See G. G. Litavrin, “K voprosu ob obstoiatel'stvakh, meste i vremeni kreshcheniia kniagini Ol'gi,” in *Drevneishie gosudarstva na territorii SSSR. Materialy i issledovaniia* (M.: 1986), 49-57. *Ibid.*, “O datirovke posol'stva kniagini Ol'gi v Konstantinopol',” *Istoriia SSSR* 5 (1981): 172-184.

<sup>9</sup> On the question of significance of the Baptism of Rus' and its influence on the development of Russian culture see D. M. Shakhovskoi, “The Significance of the Baptism of Rus' in the Development of Russian Culture,” in Giuseppe Alberigo and Oscar Beozzo, eds., *The Holy Russian Church and Western Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 1-9.



Orthodox Church. Zernov rightly suggests, however, that, despite the Byzantine influence and important role in bringing the Bible, the Russians understood Christianity in their own way. He says,

... having in common with others the fundamental elements of their newly acquired religion, the Russians found their own approach to it. The majority of Christianity saw the Church in the light of the Greeks and Latin theological writings. The Russians were the only people in Europe who remained outside this influence; and this made it possible for them to understand Christianity in their own way.<sup>10</sup>

The peculiarity of the Russian Orthodoxy, however, does not imply its independence from the Byzantine Christianity in X-XIII cc. Even if one presupposes a distinctively natural process of the Russian Orthodox Church, the effect of Byzantine dogmatic tradition cannot be overlooked. While Western Scholasticism was built on the Latin Fathers and on early medieval western sources, the Russian Orthodox theology, from its early stage, was constructed on the foundation of the Greek Fathers and medieval Byzantine. The early Russian religious literature was largely Greek in derivation and consequently in the doctrinal values it reflected. Nevertheless, Fr. John Meyendorff is correct in saying that the theological and religious- theoretical achievements of the Byzantine “were accepted [by the Russians] only passively and on a very limited scale.”<sup>11</sup>

With regard to inter-Orthodox relations. During X-XIII centuries, the Orthodox Christians had numerous contacts with the Church in Constantinople (now Istanbul), which between AD 320 and 1453 was the centre of Eastern Christendom as well as with three other ancient Orthodox Patriarchates in Alexandria, Egypt; Damascus, Syria (although the incumbent carries the ancient title patriarch of Antioch); and Jerusalem. Due to the political non-stability, however, these and other contacts (esp. with the Christians in Greece) that could open the possibility for learning and perfection in theological studies were not developed. Thus, the foundation for study of the Bible was not established and its evolution was affected by such unfavourable situation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Zernov, 6.

<sup>11</sup> John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia. A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations* (Cambridge: 1989), 18.

<sup>12</sup> See D. Pospelovsky, *Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' v istorii Rusi, Rossii i SSSR* (M.: Institut St. Ap. Andreia, 1996); A. P. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: An Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); John Fenell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (London: Longman, 1995).



### 3.2.2 The Bible in Ancient Russia

Even though it is very disputable that the Old Slavonic translation of the biblical texts existed in Kievan Rus' before or at the time of the baptism of Rus' (c. 988),<sup>13</sup> it is commonly accepted that the Bible became accessible for the nation soon after the mission to Greater Moravia (now Slovakia and the eastern region of the Czech Republic) of the Thessalonian brothers Cyril and Methodius Moravia (in 862-863), who translated the Scripture into Old Bulgarian "Slavonic" (from which they later devised an alphabet, in its final form, came to be known as Cyrillic).<sup>14</sup> The handwritten editions of the Bible were known in Kievan Rus' soon after the Christianisation, yet, the printed Bible in Old Slavonic became available only in the second part of 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The four gospels circulated in Old-Slavonic language as early as in 1144 and availability of the Pauline epistles and the rest of the New Testament canonical books is marked after 1220.<sup>16</sup> The biblical books reached Old- Russia together with many other liturgical and devotional books, formerly drafted by the Southwestern neighbours (esp. in Greece and Bulgaria).<sup>17</sup>

### 3.2.3 The Receiving of the Bible

In the pre-Tartar period of its history, in Russia there were many men who devoted their hearts and their time to read the Holy Scriptures. Among them were famous men of the nation. Iaroslav the First or "the Wise" (980-1054) (Grand Prince of Kiev from 1019) "applied himself to books and read them continually day and night..., grouped many scribes and translated book from Greek into Slavic..., copied and collected many books."<sup>18</sup> Andrei Bogoliubskii (about 1110-1174), Grand Prince of Suzdal' and Vladimir, was also "devoted

<sup>13</sup> Contra Sol'skii who stresses, that at the time of conversion of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, all the canonical books of the Bible were translated into Old-Slavonic and were available for reading. S. Sol'skii, "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* 27, 10 (1868): 147, 155-156.

<sup>14</sup> In 860 they were part of a mission sent by the Byzantine emperor Michael III, called The Drunkard, to the Khazars, a Tatar people who tolerated all faiths and whose ruler practised Judaism.

<sup>15</sup> S. Sol'skii, "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* 27, 10 (1868): 147.

<sup>16</sup> See I. A. Chistovich, *Istoriia Perevoda Biblii na Russkii Iazyk* [A History of the Translation of the Bible into the Russian Language] (SPb.: 1877); Erich Bryner, "Bible Translations in Russia," *The Bible Translator* 25/3 (1974): 318-331; M. I. Rizhskii, *Istoria Perevodov Biblii v Rossii* [A History of the Bible Translations in Russia] (Novosibirsk, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> On the biblical texts, which existed during this period see E. Golubinskii, *A History of the Russian Church* (M.: 1997, repr. 1901-), vol. I, 883-886.

to a divine scripture.”<sup>19</sup> He brought many books from Bulgaria and translated them into Old Slavonic.<sup>20</sup> The authors of the Russian Ancient Chronicles attest, that the Russian Grand Princes were not only reading the Scripture themselves, but also motivated the priests and all the churchmen to study the meaningfulness of sacred books, to search the wisdom from every passage.<sup>21</sup>

Over all, the Bible was received with a zeal for learning from its truth.<sup>22</sup> A distinguished Greek theologian Ioaonn Damaskin (VIII c. A.D.) points out, that from the very beginning, the Russian Orthodox Church has been encouraging the people to read and study Scripture for this is “one of the main elements that best portrays the Orthodox Christianity.”<sup>23</sup> The recommended reading and understanding “should be harmonious with the spirit of Greek Orthodox Church”<sup>24</sup> - the “Mother Church” of the Russian Orthodoxy. One can say, therefore, that the Bible was received with its pre-formed understanding.<sup>25</sup> The Byzantine culture with its *Churchcentric* mode of thought did not liberate or awaken Russian creative energies, but on the contrary hampered them.<sup>26</sup>

The Bible was received widely and with a prevalent veneration as “the Books of the nation, books of the Church, rather than of the individuals.”<sup>27</sup> This viewpoint later developed into hermeneutic principle - “the Bible is the word of the Church, which carries communal

<sup>18</sup> Nestor, *Polnoe Sobranie Russkoi Letopisi*, vol. I, 65-66; cf. *Povest' vremennykh let (PVL)*, ed. D. S. Likhachev and B.A. Romanov, (M. - Leningrad: 1950), vol. I, 102-103.

<sup>19</sup> S. Sol'skii, “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO* 27, 10 (1868): 164.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. E. Golubinskii, *A History of the Russian Church* (M.: 1997), vol. I, 190-191.

<sup>21</sup> Nestor, *Polnoe Sobranie Russkoi Letopisi*, I, 65-66; cf. *Povest' vremennykh let (PVL)*, ed. D. S. Likhachev and B.A. Romanov, 2 vols., (M. - Leningrad: 1950), 102-103.

<sup>22</sup> On a substantial role of the Bible in development of Russian culture and education see M. I. Rizhskii, *History of the Bible Translations in Russia* (Novosibirsk, 1978), 31 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ioaonn Damaskin, *Tochnoe izlozhenie pravoslavnoi very [The Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith]* (M.: 1844), 270.

<sup>24</sup> S. Sol'skii, “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO* 27, 10 (1868): 174.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Henrik Birnbaum, “The Balkan Slavic Component of Medieval Russian Culture,” in Henrik Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier, *Medieval Russian Culture* (Berkeley, 1984), 3-30.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Zen'kovskii*, vol. I, 23.

<sup>27</sup> S. Sol'skii, “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO* 27, 10 (1868): 168.



authority of the respective traditions of faith.”<sup>28</sup> From the beginning, the Orthodox ecclesiastical ideology and culture initiate an impact on ways of Bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.2.4 The Translation of the Church Fathers’ Writings

Together with the proclamation of the Christian truth, the ancient Russian people picked up the anti-heretical message. The earliest Russian literature indicates that the Russians, who had only recently converted to Christianity, were warned about the fallacious dogmatic teachings.<sup>30</sup> In order to strengthen the faith of the Russian Slavs and to advance a doctrinal consciousness of the clergies, the Russian Church appealed to the Church Fathers who, in their view, have faithfully preserved the true Christian teachings.

It is rightly concluded, that in the first centuries of Russia’s conversion, the quotation and translation of the Church Fathers was “almost single endeavour of the Church teachers of the Bible.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, a sufficient diversity of such translations signed a major event in a nation’s life during the *Kiev period* (IX-XIII cc.).<sup>32</sup>

If in the beginning of the eleventh century there is no firm evidence for a general literacy among the Russians, later there was a sudden appearance of a translated and copied literature (in a more comprehensive language for the Russians). The majority of produced

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<sup>28</sup> See Theodore Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), 45.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Riccardo Picchio, “The Impact of Ecclesiastical Culture on Old Russian Literary Techniques,” in Henrik Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier. Eds., *Medieval Russian Culture* (Berkeley, 1984), 247-279.

<sup>30</sup> See M. O. Koyalovich, *Istoriia russkogo samopoznaniia po istoricheskim pamiatnikam i nauchnym sochineniiam* [A History of the Russian Self-Awareness According to Historical Monuments and Scientific Works] (SPb.: 1884); D. S. Likhachev, *Natsional’noe samopoznanie drevnei Rusi: Ocherki iz oblasti russkoi literaturi XI -XVII vv.* [The National Self-Awareness of Ancient Rus’: Essays on Russian literature of XI-XII cc.] (M.: 1945); *Ibid.*, *Russkie letopisi i ikh kul’turno-istoricheskoe znachenie* [The Russian Chronicles and their Historical-Cultural significance] (M.: 1947).

<sup>31</sup> See P. I. Savvaitov, *Bibleiskaia Germenevika* [Biblical Hermeneutics] (SPb.: Treia, 1859), 119.

<sup>32</sup> Sol’skii also offers a detailed account of how and in what order these translations appeared in the first centuries of Christianity in the Ancient Russia (X-XIII). See S. Sol’skii, “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO* 27/10 (1868): 145-180. See also I. A. Chistovich, *Istoriia Perevoda Biblii na Russkii Iazyk* [A History of the Translation of the Bible into Russian Language] (SPb.: 1877). The list of translated works during this period see in C. Kern, *Les Traductions russes des textes patristiques: Guide bibliographique* (Chevetogne, 1957).

literature was new translations or the interpretative essays made out of the manuscripts (preserved and authorized by the Constantinople Church). Among scholars, however, there is no agreement whether or not these translations were made in Medieval Rus' and what the estimated number of the scriptural manuscripts that were circulated in the *Kiev Period* is.<sup>33</sup>

The exegetical works of this period were highly supplemented. Often, the Christians were acquainted with the text of a particular book of the Bible through the exposition of ancient Church teachers. "The Ancient Russian people, it seems, preferred the available commentaries to an ordinary [biblical] text."<sup>34</sup> Of particular value were: (1) the translation of comments on the four Gospels by Teofilaktus of Bulgaria (11th or 12<sup>th</sup> century), based on Chrysostom and other ancient Fathers; and (2) the commentary on five Pauline Epistles (*Tolkovii Apostol [The Apostle Interpreted]*), written by unknown Greek author (dated 1220). The latter, is some kind of prototype of a contemporary Study Bible (one by one the Epistles have short introductions; thematically assorted passages are given in the order and frequency of their liturgical use; the comments are given by several named Church Fathers). These translations, which reflected ancient concerns,<sup>35</sup> were meant to serve the Russian Christians as the ethical and pedagogically instructive books on Scripture and to bring the change in lives of the Russian people. Although the commentaries on the biblical books were primarily dictated by the want to impact the lives and morals of the Russian people, this literature was also effective for educational purposes. It affected the culture in general, since the Christianity had to affect "the very manner of thinking."<sup>36</sup> The source of such

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<sup>33</sup> For different opinions see *The Modern Encyclopedia of Religion in Russia and Soviet Union*, vol. 4 (Gulf Breeze, FL.: Academic International Press, 1991), s. v. "Bible, Church Slavonic," by Henry R. Cooper Jr.; *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoi Literatury* (St. Petersburg: Academy of Science Press), vol. 11, 323-26. On the translation work of Cyril and Methodius and on the early Slavic translations see Anatolii Alekseev, *Tekstologia slavianskoi Biblii [The Textology of the Slavic Bible]* (SPb.: 2000).

<sup>34</sup> S. Sol'skii, "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* 27/10 (1868): 171.

<sup>35</sup> Thiselton rightly observes that "much, if not most, biblical interpretation in the Patristic and mediaeval era was undertaken for the purpose of instruction, doctrine and the evaluation of ideas." Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 143. For the discussion of earlier biblical interpretation see J. L. Kugel and R. A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (LEC, 3; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); K. Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (in *Sources of Early Christian Thought*, ed. W. Rusch; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); K. Henry de Lubak, *Medieval Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998)

<sup>36</sup> Florovsky, *Puti*, 7.



enlightenment has been found in ancient interpretations on the Bible that “clarified for the Russians a new and elevated holy truth.”<sup>37</sup>

At that time the Orthodox Russia was much more interested in imitating Western Europe than in a creative legacy. The historians are right in that respect, since the whole package of the religious and cultural heritage was received by Rus’ from Byzantium and it seemed as though for the Russians nothing was left to develop.<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, the quotations of Patristic and Byzantine works by early Russian authors indicates the growth of a cultural level in Kievan Rus.<sup>39</sup> Some scholars argue that Kievan Rus’ was a heir to the intellectual world of the theology of the Fathers of the Church; yet, others reason that the Russians remained outside the influence of the Greek and Latin theological writings; they understood Christianity in their own way.<sup>40</sup> Of course, any ideas of a high level of intellectual acquaintance with the Greek Church Fathers must be dismissed.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, however, it is open to question whether it is possible to use the works of the others as authoritative and remain outside their influence. It seems not probable that the Russian clergies would stay unaffected through personal contact with the Greek Church and with the bulk of ecclesiastic literature. Fedotov, thus, rightly argues that the Christian authors, admired in the Byzantine theology, have had a long-lasting influence on the development of Russian Church.<sup>42</sup>

On the one hand, the overview of Christian writings in Kievan Russia indicates that there were no original works. Largely, these writings were compilatory. Quite often, “the Russian cleric, writing on ethical and dogmatic subjects, was not giving his own views; he was expounding those of others, sometimes acknowledging his source, sometimes not.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> S. Sol’skii, “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO* 27/10 (1868): 169.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. D. Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 34-35.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. F. J. Thomson, “Quotations of Patristic and Byzantine Works by early Russian Authors as an Indication of the Cultural Level of Kievan Rus’,” *Slavica Gandensia*, vol. 10 (Ghent, 1978), 65-102.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Zernov*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> See F. J. Thomson, “Quotations of Patristic and Byzantine Works by early Russian Authors as an Indication of the Cultural Level of Kievan Rus’,” *Slavica Gandensia*, vol. 10 (Ghent, 1978), 65, 73

<sup>42</sup> G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind. Kievan Christianity: 10-13 Centuries* (Harvard University Press, 1960), 90-91.

<sup>43</sup> John Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (London: Longman, 1995), 107.

The works of the Fathers of the Church served as accepted sources that facilitated the early Russian Christian writers to put forward their own opinion. On the other hand, however, all this significantly influenced a further historical course of Bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church. Without doubt, the nature and characteristic of Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation and exegesis was deeply influenced by patristic exegesis and for many centuries, the Church Fathers writings<sup>44</sup> became the frame of reference for the Orthodox, regarding their understanding of the Bible.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.2.5 Non-canonical Literature

Following the Byzantine Church, the Russian Orthodox Christians accepted both canonical and non-canonical books for their use. They recognized the value of the non-canonical books as the important sources of sacred information on the development of Church teaching. An ancient chronicle suggests that since the time of the Baptism of Russia in 988, as the nation progressed in literacy, the people had a special interest in the various kinds of narrative prose literature which embodied homiletics, hagiography, ascetics, dogmatic/polemics, canon law, accounts of pilgrimage, chronicles, liturgical poetry and esp. legends.<sup>46</sup> These either came from the Byzantine or were composed in Kievan Rus'.<sup>47</sup>

There were manifold religious texts.<sup>48</sup> Many legends, especially of mystical nature, were dealing with religious subject matters. Encompassing a great variety of subjects, associated with Christian faith, they were believed by both narrator and audience as true stories. Once these stories and parables, proverbs and legends were heard and remembered

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<sup>44</sup> Especially by St. Gregory of Nazianzus (circa 329-89), St. Athanasius (circa 293-373) Clement of Alexandria (150?-215?), St. Basil, called Basil the Great, (circa 329-379) and St. John Chrysostom (354?-407).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. "Tradition... it is an interpretation of Scripture." Thomas Hopko, "Bible and Church History" *The Orthodox Faith* (New York: SVS Press), vol. 3, 18. For Fr. Florovsky, tradition, as living function, is a hermeneutic principle for Scripture and without Tradition Scripture loses its normative interpretation. See Florovsky's articles on the subject of Scripture interpretation in Florovsky, *BCT*.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. E. J. Thomson, "The nature of the Reception of Christian Byzantine Culture in Russia in the Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries and its Implications for Russian Culture," *Slavica Gandensia*, vol. 5 (Ghent, 1978), 107-115.

<sup>47</sup> Nestor, *Polnoe Sobranie Russkoi Letopisi*, I, 70-75. Cf. G. Podskalsky, *Christentum and theologische literature in der Kiever Rus' 988-1239* (Münich: 1982).

<sup>48</sup> Some refer to more than 100.000 manuscripts of different kinds (only the Christian texts) that existed in of this period (including biblical). Cf. *Trudy ot dela drevnerusskoi literatury AN SSSR [The works of Ancient Russian Literature of Academy of Science USSR]* (M.: 1955), vol. 11, 323.



they were subjected to various alterations in the course of retellings. As they were transmitted through a culture and time many were fixed in written form. Often, this literature served as a vehicle to clarify the teaching of the biblical books. The lectionaries for liturgical use or small biblical books, editions that contained collected and rearranged biblical passages (especially *The Psalter*), were dressed up with the apocryphal materials. In observing the time and circumstances in Kievan Rus', the Russian historian and religious anthropologists George Fedotov rightly concludes,

In Russia the notion of the Biblical canon, distinguishing strongly between the inspired Holy Scripture and the words of the fathers never existed. All religious writings were called sacred and divine insofar as they were not heretical. The Russian people have a particular predilection for the apocrypha because of its fabulous content that appealed to their imagination.<sup>49</sup>

This indicates that the Ancient Russians have had a broad view of canon. In addition, since for the Ancient Russian mind "the Holy Scripture was unattainable for an easy understanding"<sup>50</sup> the Bible was in need of interpretation. This, of course, later led to the development of mechanisms of interpretation.

In this period, the Church, as universal institution of the Body of Christ that has the authority for doctrine, was also too abstract for the Russians. Then it is not surprising, that during the first historical phase of the Russian Christianity the most popular literary corpora – namely, the apocrypha, the lives of saints and the legends was used as a primary guidebook(s) of national moralism and pietism. It determined God's will for the Russian Christians. On the whole, at that time, such literature "substituted an exegesis of the Holy Scriptures."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Fedotov, vol. 1, 43; cf. V. V. Mil'kov, *Drevnerusskie Apokrifly* [*The Ancient Russian Apocrypha*] (SPb.: 1999), 62.

<sup>50</sup> S. Sol'skii, "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* 27/10 (1868): 176-177.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 176; Obolensky also argues that among the medieval Orthodox Slavs the Christian doctrine was diluted by a admixture of legends and myth and was transmitted through the popular imagination into poetry and songs. D. Obolensky, "Popular Religious in Medieval Russia," in *The Religious Worlds of Russian Culture. Russia and Orthodoxy; Volume II*. Ed. by Andrew Blane (Paris: Moulton, 1975), 43-54. About Old Russian Apocrypha see, esp., V. V. Mil'kov, *Drevnerusskie Apokrifly* [*The Ancient Russian Apocrypha*] (SPb.: 1999), 10-14; 19-45.

### 3.2.6 Lack of an Appeal for studying the Bible

There is no evidence that during the X-XIII cc. there has been an appeal for studying the Bible by the Russian Orthodox Christians. Looking at the initial historical period of the Russian Orthodoxy in Kievan Rus', it is conceivably possible to indicate four main obstacles that postponed the origin and development of indigenous study of the Bible.

*Firstly*, the biblical books came into the Christianised Rus' with a colossal number of ancient expositions and interpretations. From the beginning the Orthodox Church in Russia has received the Bible and Tradition as coequal. Moreover, the Church Fathers' writings, were often consulted alone, completely without reading the biblical text itself.<sup>52</sup> The existence of such "alternative" for spiritual edification and understanding of God's revelation blocked the biblical literature as a separate and focal object of study (or interest) in the very early period of Russian Orthodox Church.

*Secondly*, there is no firm evidence for general literacy among the Russians until the end of the eleventh century, but even at a later date the Russians "have always preferred to express their religion convictions through painting, music, architecture and the rituals of daily life rather in the written word."<sup>53</sup> Only small part of the Churchmen was familiar with the biblical texts and their teaching.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, during this early period of the Orthodox history in Russia, it is difficult to discover whether any literature written by the Russians, which would express their thoughts and teaching, resulted from an exegetical study of the biblical texts.<sup>55</sup>

*Thirdly*, as the Christian culture advanced eastward, the hierarchy was compelled to ordain the entire generation of uneducated, or even practically illiterate priests and monastic clerics.<sup>56</sup> Therefore there were no qualified and educated teachers, interpreters and preachers who could exegetically and didactically explain Scripture, once they were distributed and became accessible to the people of Russia. In addition, the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 112.

<sup>53</sup> *Zernov*, 4-5.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. N. M. Nikol'skii, *Istoria Russkoi Tserkvi [History of the Russian Church]* (Minsk, 1990), 96.

<sup>55</sup> With exception of dogmatic meditations by Ilarion (Mitr. of Kiev) on the analysis of the relationships between law and grace. See his "Slovo o Zakone" in *Slavnic-Russian Manuscripts*, (M.: 1848); cf. E. Golubinskii, *A History of the Russian Church* (M.: 1997), vol. I, 741-870.

<sup>56</sup> D. Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 26.



among the East Slavs was for all intents and purposes nearly absent.<sup>57</sup> Even the occasional checking of Slavic manuscripts of the New Testament and service books against a Greek model was impossible under most circumstances.<sup>58</sup> (The low level of education caused some errors and textual discrepancies that later become one of the factors for the Great Schism.<sup>59</sup>) Of course, since there were no councils of educated clergy or central body of the highest authority in the church (such as the Pope), the interpretations of Christian writings were neither supervised nor encouraged. This third obstacle, in conjunction with the second, unveil the mentality and circumstances of Russian people, who, in the past, found “it easier to express their thoughts and feelings through music, colour, and design than through books and learned discourses.”<sup>60</sup> Only at the later time, the Russians succeeded to participate in translating and writing various theological, historical and literary works.

*Fourthly*, from the beginning of the Christianity in Russia there were many inner difficulties in the Orthodox Church. The type and style of Russian ecclesiastic consciousness was characteristically conservative-minded. A significant opposition to novelty in faith and practice tied the Orthodox Church only with antiquity. The reflection of this frame of mind, in the first centuries of the Russian Christianity, on the one hand, resulted in the lack of development of native Russian creative energies and consequently the whole early period of the ecclesiastic spirit was a period of ‘silence’ in bible interpretation. On the other hand, however, it shows that the early Russian Christianity treasured the pronouncements of the first ecumenical synods.

*Lastly*, the early Russian monasticism (esp. its founders St. Theodosius - *d.* 1074 and St. Anthony of the Monastery of the Caves (Kiev), who brought the traditions of Athonian monasticism to Russia in 1051) laid great stress on a social work of monks, rather than on the learning in theology and Bible<sup>61</sup> (as it was in the West). The early monks were zealous to assist lay people in both spiritual and material concerns, believing that the light of the Gospel

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Idem.*, 28. Contra Sol’skii, who suggests that the knowledge of Greek “was widespread among the best representatives of Russian Church at the very beginning.” S. Sol’skii “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO* 27/10 (1868): 176.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Henry R. Cooper, “Bible, Church Slavonic,” in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Religion in Russia and Soviet Union*, vol. 4 (Gulf Breeze, FL.: Academic International Press, 1991), 81.

<sup>59</sup> D. Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>60</sup> *Zernov*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> About Antony and the first Russian monasteries see V. Moshin, “Russkie na Afone i russko-vizantiiskie otnosheniia,” *Byzantinoslavica* vol. 9 (Prague, 1947-48), 55-85.

must illuminate the whole of man's life,<sup>62</sup> but the Gospel itself (the Bible) was not, however, the object of learning or the source of proclamation. Flourishing in monasteries were icon painting and literary art. Although the monasteries played a tremendous role in Russia and served the people in their purely spiritual and social work, they were not yet major centres of education (the monasteries, however, recorded in their chronicles all the major historical events in the life of the Russian people).

Therefore, one could not really speak about the biblical interpretation in Kievan Rus', for the appeal for interpretation neither emerged at the time of nor or soon after Rus' conversion. This, however, does not mean that there have been no attempts to exegete. In addition, the writings of the Greek Church Fathers served the more or less educated priests as the textbooks on how to approach the Bible. Their writings were ranked as a continuation of the writings of the apostles themselves and were considered a valuable source of the Church's teaching and history.<sup>63</sup> In addition, these writings explained the biblical teaching by offering the oral tradition of the early Christians received from the Twelve Apostles and from a group of the martyrs and major figures of the 1st and 2nd centuries in the Christian church. The writings of the early Christians were important for the Russians, who had recently received Christianity. Therefore, the early Russian Orthodox exegetes made an attempt to explain the Holy Scripture, as it seemed to them appropriate from the writings of Greek Church Fathers.<sup>64</sup> Of course, those who carefully

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<sup>62</sup> Zernov, 9.

<sup>63</sup> See Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (SPb.: Treia, 1859), 116, 119.

<sup>64</sup> The importance of allegorical exegesis was emphasized by the bishop of Kiev Kyril Smoliatich (d. 1164) who in 1147 was appointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople as the Metropolitan. The ancient historians have noted that Kyril was the greatest Russian scholar and philosopher of all the previous times. Smolaitich was very knowledgeable in Classical Greek and Byzantine literature. His allegorical interpretation of the Old and New Testaments and his advocacy of the validity of allegorical hermeneutics allows us to suggest that the Metraropolit Kiryl was exposed not only to Hellenistic philosophy and literature, but also to the methods of exegesis which began in the pre-Socratic period of Classical Greece and were conveyed to the Christianity by heterodox Judaism mainly in the works of Philo of Alexandria. [Cf. Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 20-36; Donald A. Hagner, "Philo," *NDT*, 509-10]. In order to explore the grace of God through Christ Jesus, who freed us from the Old Testament law, which enslaved the humanity Kyril advocated an allegorical interpretation of the NT. Cf. Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 20-36; Donald A. Hagner, "Philo," *NDT*, 509-10. Such advocacy of the allegorical method indicated the early conviction of the Orthodox Church that a Christological allegorization of the Old Testament had to be adopted.

Another important figure, who advocated the allegorical interpretation of the Bible, was a great Church writer and bishop Kiril of Turov (1130-1189). As a young monk, he had shown a great interest in poetry and drama. His contemporaries praised his eloquence. As the preacher, Kiril Turovski (or Kyril Turovsky) often reflects on magnificence of God's nature, heartbreaking stories,



read the Gospels and the Church Fathers were accustomed to the typological and/or the allegorical interpretation of the biblical texts. Their literary and homiletic materials have reflected the impact of ecclesiastical culture of interpretation of the Bible.<sup>65</sup>

### 3.2.7 Conclusion

As noted above, although the Holy Scripture was at the origin of the Russian Christianity and the Bible translations widely circulated in the nation, the illiteracy and the disposition of "Russian soul" to express itself through the art, but not through the literature slowed the foundation and rise of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church in its early period. The reading of the Bible was, certainly, not contemplated from the point of view of theoretical knowledge. It was the school of practical conduct. Although the Christian world-view penetrated deeply in to the Russian souls, this religious energy "did not awaken the *religious Logos* to creative activity, did not develop theological thought."<sup>66</sup>

The exegetical works and studies in the Bible were not introduced. In this period it was easier for Russians, "to express their thoughts and feelings through music, colour, and design than through books and learned discourses."<sup>67</sup> The books that were written during

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filled up with feelings and experience of saints (such as weeping Mary at the cross of her son Jesus), or prayers of saints. To explain the Scripture adequately and to amply express its message Kiril of Turov allegorises. Mitr. Makari, *Sv. Kiril kak pisatel'* (IORYAS, 1856); M. Sukhomlinov, *Rukopisi gr. Uvarova* II ed. 1, St. Petersburg; A.I. Yazimirskii, "Kiril Turovskii," *Khristianstvo*, vol. I, 755.

There also was a typological exegesis that rested on the assumption that God sustains creation and controls all of history and therefore had ordained that earlier events should foreshadow what was to come in the Orthodox Russia. The typological explanation of the Bible was the most popular among the monks from the Kievan caves monastery. In the first part of the thirteenth century, Bishop Simon of Vladimir-Suzdal, a former monk of Kievan caves, compiled *Patericon* in which he included the works associated with the monastery. From these works it is apparent that the most special status of the monastery and every significant event in its life were communicated in the Bible and can be seen typologically. See Samuel H. Cross and Olgerd Sherbowitz-Wetzor, eds., *The Russian Primary Chronicle* (Cambridge: MaSS, 1953); Muriel Heppell tr., *Pateric of the Kievan Caves Monastery*, Vol. I (Cambridge: MaSS, 1989); Dmitry I Abramovich, ed. *Das Patericon des Kiever Hohlenklosters* (Munch, 1964); *The Modern Encyclopaedia of Religion in Russia and Soviet Union*, vol. 4 (Gulf Breeze, FL.: Academic International Press, 1991), s. v. "Biblical Typology in the Kievan Caves Patericon," by David K. Prestel.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Riccardo Picchio, "The Impact of Ecclesiastical Culture on Old Russian Literary Techniques," in Henrik Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier, eds., *Medieval Russian Culture* (Berkeley, 1984), 247-279.

<sup>66</sup> *Zen'kovskii*, vol. I, 20 [his italics].

<sup>67</sup> *Zernov*, 5.

this period and the collections of devotional literature, such as poetry, legends and traditions, gave “a very slight concern with and talent for systematisation.”<sup>68</sup>

For many decades the government of the Church was in the hands of men who overstressed the importance of rituals, the expression of the faith through icon painting, rites and architecture.<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, during the Kievan Period (X-XIII cc.), the period of the foundation of the Orthodoxy in Russia, the lack of properly organized education disallowed the Russian clergies to advance either didactic reading or creative preaching of the Scriptures in the worship of the Russian Orthodox Church.

### **3.3 The period of Tartar invasion (1280-1480)**

#### **3.3.1 Historical Perspective**

The establishment of Christianity as the state religion in the principality of Kiev in 988 enabled Kievan Rus’ to move toward the partnership with civilized European states. The twelfth century, however, was the period of feudal divisions and this directly obstructed the Russians from active political actions in Europe. The Mongol invasion (1240) isolated the Russians from Europe for several centuries. The Tartar invasion brought a national disaster and a political catastrophe (Kiev was conquered in 1240 and Novgorod capitulated in 1259). The nation and the Orthodox Church had to bear the brunt of repeated attacks, which have seriously disrupted the course of its organic development.<sup>70</sup>

From beginning to end of the invasion, the Russian Church remained the only bearer of the idea of unity of the Russian people, resisting the centrifugal aspirations and feudal strife among Russian princes. The Tartar invasion, the greatest ever misfortune that had struck Russia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, however, failed to break the Russian Orthodox Church. Of course, the Mongols were generally tolerant in matters of religion and allowed the Church to enjoy her privileges.<sup>71</sup> During the invasion, esteemed by the Tartars, the bishops were

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<sup>68</sup> Fedotov, vol. 2, 40.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Zernov, 104-108.

<sup>70</sup> See E. Golubinskii, *A History of the Russian Church* (M.: 1997, repr. of 1901-), Vol. 2; John Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (London: Longman, 1995).

<sup>71</sup> John, Meyendorff. *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, trans. from French by John Chaplin. (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 104.



exempted from taxation. Every act of violence inflicted upon the clergy by any of the Tartars was punishable by death.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, the Church managed not only to survive as a real force and comforter of the people in their plight (during the invasion many South Slavic refugees fled to Rus'), but also to organize and expand her missionary activities.<sup>73</sup> It made a great spiritual, material and moral contribution to the restoration of the political unity of Russia as a guarantee of its future victory over the invaders.

The Tartar crusading spirit stimulated the Russians to follow after the ideals of Byzantine spirituality and to allow a spread of monasticism throughout the whole country. During the invasion, the primatial seat was transferred from destroyed Kiev to Moscow under the Metropolitan Petr (1308-1326). Since that time Moscow became the centre of the Russian Orthodoxy and the religious capital of all Russia.<sup>74</sup>

### 3.3.2 The Bible in Public Schooling

As early as the thirteenth century many Russians already achieved the sophisticated level of reading and writing. The Holy Scriptures became the basis for the public education and as a result, the highest level of education in Ancient Russia was pertained the study and knowledge of the books of the Bible.<sup>75</sup> It was the beginning of the Age of enlightenment in Russia.

Due to many factors related to the invasion and previously situated major crossroads, there was "the transmission of enlightenment" from the cultured South of Kiev to the North-East of Russia.<sup>76</sup> The number of learned increased. During and after the Tartar period a spirit of reading the books was clearly established in the Russian Medieval ages (XIII-XV cc.).<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Zernov, 25

<sup>73</sup> Regarding the Orthodox missions, see especially the monumental works of J. Glazik, *Die russisch-orthodoxe Heidenmission sie Peter dem Grossen* (Münster-Westfalen, 1954); *Ibid.*, *Die Islammission der Russisch-Orthodoxe Kirche* (Münster Westfalen, 1959). See also E. Smirnoff, *Russian Orthodox Missions* (London, 1903); S. Bolshakoff, *The Foreign Missions of the Russian Orthodox Church* (London, 1943).

<sup>74</sup> See John Fenell, *The Emergence of Moscow 1304-1259* (London, 1968).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. S. Sol'skii, "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* v. 27 10 (1868): 165.

<sup>76</sup> Florovsky, *Puti*, 9.

<sup>77</sup> XIII -XV cc. are the Medieval ages only as far as Russia is concern. Cf. Dmitry Pospelovsky, *Pravoslavnaia Ttserkov' v istorii Rusi, Rossii i SSSR* (M.: Institut St. Ap. Andreia, 1996), 49.

Great attention was given to the divine books and collections. The Bible played the all-pervasive role during those centuries. The mental and spiritual horizons were expanding and the spiritual development of the Russian Orthodoxy seemed to start.

### 3.3.3. Initial instructions for interpreting sacred books

As noted above, the reading of the Divine books were of great importance in Ancient Russia. According to the findings of George Fedotov, the very idea of “sacred” or “divine” books, however, was not yet corresponded to the theological idea of the “Holy Scripture” as God-inspired set of writings. He also emphasizes, that in Ancient Russia there was no attempt to make a distinction between divine revelation of the Bible and the dogmas or piety, represented in the writings of the Church Fathers. He notes that in the Ancient Russia “all religious literature is ‘sacred’ and ‘divine’ and tradition is included in the Scripture and participates in the charisma of divine inspiration.”<sup>78</sup> Still, the writings of the Old and New Testaments and countless fragments from the time of the Early Church Fathers were not considered as simply popular literature. These were placed as authoritative documents that have to be carefully read and correctly understood. Therefore, it is quite understandable that the Orthodox teachers felt compelled in this period to instruct the readers how to read “sacred” or “divine” books. They felt a need to instruct the readers by spelling out the role of the reader and to suggest a method of reading (a basic approach for interpretation). This whole attitude has found implication for treatment of literature and Bible and resulted in the composition of short instructions for the reading the books of the Church: the Bible and ecclesiastic tradition.

While on the one hand the Bible interpretation as the discipline within the Russian Orthodox Church had not yet been established, there were on the other hand the writings that gave an insight into the significance of reading of religious literature in general; for, as it is noted above, in Ancient Russia there was an extreme veneration of book reading - veneration of their wisdom by both learned clergy and ordinary people.

To illustrate, all the versions of the *Izmaragd* a very popular in Ancient Russia collection of poetry, legends and traditions created by unknown compilers, begins with a group of instructive articles on “books” and “book reading.” *Firstly*, for the benefit of the readers, together with a concentrated attention to the meaning of the text, the prayer was

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<sup>78</sup> See Fedotov, vol. 2, 41.



suggested as a key for understanding:

When you sit down to read or listen to divine words, first of all pray to God that He may open the eyes of your heart to enable you not only to read what is written but also to fulfil it... When you read the books do it attentively and observe the meaning with all your heart; read the words twice, do not only turn over the pages.<sup>79</sup>

Behind the instruction for this type of contemplative reading is the idea that for understanding man needs both reason and inner discerning of the truth, which, of course, comes through the prayer. The use of faculties of reason in an attentive reading should ensure the legitimate perception, based on the text features. The reading of divine words is treated as a guide of life. It is clear that sacred literature was considered as the manuals of morality.

*Secondly*, the Orthodox Christians are advised to read according to the reason and not to drift on unaware in the readings. The instruction says, "It is appropriate to read sacred books with understanding; without understanding, it is the same as with medicine. If one drinks it without knowing what harm it can do - he dies."<sup>80</sup> For the ancient Russian Orthodoxy, therefore, prayer for illumination, attention and intelligence were mandatory for a sufficient understanding of a divine literature. The encouragement to read with "all your heart" and "with understanding" and according to the reason indicate that in an ancient Russia the fact according to the complexity of man's abilities to perceive, was recognized.

*Thirdly*, fearing the misapprehension of such books, the scriptwriters of "Instructions" give the criteria for discerning the true sense of the sacred words. Consequently, in addition to prayer, attention and reason there were the criteria attached to the personality and qualities of the readers themselves. The readers must be the holy men, since only "the holy men have a spirit that is right and not perverted, [they have] the reason, given by God; and in having books, they do not pervert them in following their doctrine..."<sup>81</sup> This formulates a hermeneutical assertion that a certain kind of religious obedience and character of the individual interpreter is a framework for understanding.

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<sup>79</sup> *Izmaragd I*, ch. 2 in *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik* (Kazan, 1858), 179. Translation is taken from *Fedotov*, vol. 2, 43-44.

<sup>80</sup> *Izmaragd I*, ch. 62. Published in I. I. Sreznivski, ed. *Drevnie pamiatniki russkogo pis'ma i iazyka X-XIV vekov: obshchee povremennoe obozrenie* (SPb.: 1882), 195. The translation is taken from *Fedotov*, vol. 2, 44.

<sup>81</sup> In *Materiali* quoted by *Fedotov*, vol. 2, 46.

Furthermore, a holy man is one who does not misinterpret the text by following his own prejudices and doctrinal presuppositions. This implies that the reader in his understanding has to mirror the set of Church teaching, which serves as hermeneutical basis.

Then, of course, a requirement of holiness consents with the four qualifications established by the Church to bestow the honorary title of Church Father on an early writer. The Father of the Church must: (1) belong to the early period of the church; (2) lead a holy life; (3) write free from doctrinal error, defend or clarify the Christian doctrine; and (4) receive the approval of the church on his writings.

As far as biblical hermeneutics is concerned, the instructions of *Izmaragd*, warned against a pre-formed and unsubstantiated judgement or opinion in reading the “divine” texts either favourably or unfavourably in nature. It is unknown whether or not the anonymous compilers of *Instructions* were aware that in the history of interpretation of sacred literature the doctrinal presuppositions of the readers play a decisive role and that the reading is profoundly influenced by the formation of the meaning of the text. Nevertheless, the authors show a certain grasp of the effect of presupposition.<sup>82</sup>

The above-mentioned instructions to the readers, however, outline the practical and theoretical groundwork for Bible reading in the thirteenth century Orthodox Russia. Although all these instructions still fail to show any clear concern how to fit the Bible into the categories of understanding, nevertheless, from the attention given to the understanding of sacred books in general it becomes apparent that the Orthodox teachers of this period were desirous of discovering the right way to interpret the biblical books.

It is also clear that the concept of ecclesiastic authority as the supremacy for understanding the divine literature was not yet fully rationalized. “The word ‘Church’ was almost exclusively used in the designation of the temple,”<sup>83</sup> rather than in specification of the corporate establishment which fixes and secures the frame of reference for the readers. During this phase of the Church history in Russia the centralized dominion of the Church Tradition was not yet fully established.

Unfortunately, the elementary approach for reading the sacred books was not further developed or clarified as a direct system for interpreting the Biblical books, because a spirit

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<sup>82</sup> Recently, this theory is stressed by many biblical scholars. For example, see R. Bultmann, “Is exegesis without Presupposition Possible?,” in *Existence and Faith*, ed. S.M. Ogden (London, 1961-64); Grapham N. Stanton, “Presuppositions in New Testament Criticism,” in I. Howard Marshall, ed. *New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 60-71; Edgar McKnight, “Presuppositions in New Testament Study,” in Joel B. Green, ed. *Hearing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 278-300.

<sup>83</sup> *Fedotov*, vol. 2, 47.



of reading these books was carried away by the interest toward the mystical and ascetic literature. In addition to that, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries “religious consciousness became agitated and confused by eschatological expectations and by a general foreboding: ‘night is approaching, our life is ending.’”<sup>84</sup> In addition, in many Orthodox centres there was the deficiency of biblical texts, the worship services mostly emphasized singing and reading prayers, the time of liturgy was abridged (through the introduction of the parallel readers).<sup>85</sup> Such state of the Orthodox Church and its preoccupation with the question of the ecclesiastical independence from Constantinople took away the enthusiasm and energy so needed for continuation of guiding the readers and interpreters of the Bible.

### 3.3.4 The Text and Canon of the Bible in Ancient Russia

There is every reason to consider the insufficiency of the biblical texts as one of the main obstacles for maturing the art and science of Bible interpretation in the first five centuries of the history of the Russian Orthodox Church. The biblical texts had no definitive form yet. Moreover, perhaps from Constantinople and Mt. Athos into Russia came a mix of canonical and apocryphal, historical and fictional, pseudoepigraphal materials.<sup>86</sup> After receiving the baptism from Byzantium, the Orthodoxy of Kievan Rus’ still had close links with Constantinople and with a spiritual centre of the Orthodox world on the “Holy Mountain” (Athos)- the Orthodox monastic community that had abandoned the world for religious reasons and devoted itself to spiritual perfection.<sup>87</sup> Its monks played an important role in translating and copying religious literature. Those who were especially interested in mystical experience often recorded their own visions and dreams. Among South Slavic

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<sup>84</sup> Florovsky, *Puti*, 7.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Nikolai M. Nikol’skii, *A History of the Russian Church* (Minsk, 1990), 97.

<sup>86</sup> Athos (“holy mountain”), mountain, north-eastern Greece, 2,033 m. high. The monasteries were built on Athos, mainly, during the 9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>87</sup> About the relationships of the Russian Orthodox Church and the monasteries on the “Holy Mountain” (Athos) see the studies that contain abundant information and bibliographies on the spiritual enlightenment to the Southern Slavs see, for example: Prof. Dmitrievskii, *The Russians on the Athos* (1900); Porfirii (Uspenskii), *The Christian East [Vostok Khristianskii]* (K./SPb.: 1877-92); G.A. Il’inskii, “Znachenie Afona v istorii slovianskoi pis’mennosti,” [“A Significance of Afon for the Slavic Literature,”] *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia* 11 (1908): 1-41; A. E. Tachiaos, “Mount Athos and the Slavic Literatures,” *Cyrrillomethodianum*, V (1978): 1-35.

refugees, who fled to Rus' (after the fall of Bulgaria to the Turks in 1393) and later of Serbia (a few years later) there were the nonconformists who brought to Rus' the materials that embodied mystical philosophy and non-Orthodox ideas. There was a new Byzantine impact on the Church, particularly through mystical and ascetic literature. The most popular literary works were (1) *Paterikon* - the collection of quotation from the Fathers on the lives of worthy inhabitants in a specific monastery, often omitting reference; and (2) *Palaea* - the collection of Biblical history often replacing the historical books of the Old Testament, often merged canonical Biblical text with apocryphal and, at times, even non religious writings. As consequence of the influence of the last great Fathers of the Church Gregory Palamas and his pupil Nicholas Cabasilas the fourteenth century Russia witnessed an eremitic and monastic renaissance.

The result of these developments was a multiplicity of texts claiming biblical authority. The Church authorities there were broad-minded toward such a situation. For example, a hellenized Bulgarian Cyprian (†1406), chosen for the Russian metropolitanate in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, was learned a monk-hesychast from the Mt. Athos. Among his main concerns were the translations of liturgical, mystical and ascetic writings. The historians praise Cyprian for the translation and for celebration of the liturgical, devotional and extra canonical texts.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, there was also a great endeavour to produce fresh translations of biblical text into modern (for that time) language and to correct a former translation. Yet, the limited knowledge of grammar, oversights and theological ignorance of the copyists produced vast number of corrupted texts. There is a substantial truth that caused such divergence. The Bible, for the Ancient Russian people, was "their own property."<sup>89</sup> Every learned copyist, while diligently producing new copies, deliberately expanded or shortened the texts for he believed that it is his responsibility to make the text more comprehensible for the common people.<sup>90</sup> These Orthodox copyists exercised tight internal control over the wording of the text and its book production. In the Orthodox assemblies the written word had its sacred place. The radical shift, which Christianity brought into Russia, was how religion had to be understood. It owed a lot to the adoption of the religious literature and the commitment to it as the truth revealed by God. Moreover, for the medieval

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<sup>88</sup> See Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 10; A. V. Gorskii, *Mitropolitan Cyprian* (M.: 1848), 295-369; N. N. Glubokovskii, "St. Metropolitan Cyrill as the writer," *ChOLDP* (1892) 2: 358-424; E. E. Golubinskii, *The History of the Russian Church* (M: 1900-), v. II, 297-256.

<sup>89</sup> S. Sol'skii "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* 27/11 (1868): 260.

<sup>90</sup> S. Sol'skii "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO* 27/11 (1868): 259-61.



Russian copyists, accustomed to allegorical and typological interpretation, the Scripture was a continuing record of God's dealings with the people which reached even Russia. Therefore the copyists linked the text of the Bible with the Russian experience.

Under these conditions, neither individual text nor the biblical canon as a whole had a definite form in the Orthodox Russia before the end of the fifteen century, that was more of less five hundred years after the country has been converted. That the Bible, as a volume *per se*, did not exist is not surprising. In addition to the complicating factors mentioned above there was at that time the absence of both the sense of canon, that is, the completeness of Scripture based on a finite number of accepted biblical texts and a notion of textual integrity, that is, the accuracy of Scripture based on tradition and scholarship in the Orthodox Church.

### 3.3.5 Conclusion

During the period of feudal divisions and Mongol invasion the Orthodox Church had to bear a threat of disruption in the course of its organic development. Nevertheless, a focused concentration on the study of the Bible was not established during this time. *Firstly*, there was a too long preoccupation with the translations and corrections of the biblical texts caused by the multiplicity of the religious texts circulating in Russia.<sup>91</sup>

*Secondly*, a pessimistic state of the Orthodox Church and its preoccupation with the question of the ecclesiastical independence from Constantinople took away the enthusiasm and energy so needed for continuation of directing the readers and interpreters of the Bible.

*Thirdly*, the inheritance of ancient Greek manuscripts and religious beliefs from Byzantine had a double impact on the posterity of the Russian Orthodox Church. On one hand the Russians were advanced through the receiving of formulated fundamental elements of newly acquired religion. On the other hand, since the religious literature was channelled into Russia the Church's creative forces found the possibility to contribute in music, painting and architecture.

On the whole, this period shows that the biblical texts were regarded (among the other religious texts) as vital for the Russian Christians. Yet, the Bible was not considered an object of careful assessment. From the early centuries of the Russian Christianity a general view on the biblical texts (accepted in the Church) had been more important than the views of the Bible itself.

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<sup>91</sup> It, of course, corresponds with the historical Western Christianity where the interest toward writings of the Church Fathers dominated over the biblical studies.

### 3.4. Ecclesiastic self-establishment (XV-XVIII cc.)

#### 3.4.1. Historical-Ecclesiastical background

From the fourteenth century, divided Russian principalities began to unite around Moscow. The Russian Orthodox Church continued to play an important role in the revival of unified Russia. Outstanding Russian bishops and especially celebrated monks acted as spiritual guides and assistants to the Princes of Moscow.<sup>92</sup>

In 1448, not long before the Byzantine Empire collapsed, the Russian Church became independent from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Metropolitan Jonas, installed by the Council of Russian bishops in 1448, was given the title of Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia. Since that Moscow was considered as a centre of both the State and the Church even more.<sup>93</sup> If before the Tartar invasion, the chief hierarchs of the Russian Church had mainly been occupied with ecclesiastical matters, after the invasion, the Metropolitans together with the state rulers became equally concerned with the national revival of the country.

After the Ottoman Turks conquered the Byzantine and took Constantinople, bringing the empire to an end in 1453, some of the Orthodox Christians who gained the conception of imperial authority from the Byzantine cultural and ecclesiastical spheres were longing for the former primacy of Constantinople. The others wanted to secure an autocephalous status. "The Russian clergy and indeed all of the Russian society were divided by violent quarrel

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<sup>92</sup> For example, after mastering his mind, and subjecting his entire being in the forest, St. Sergius of Radonezh (born in 1314) was recognized by the Russian people as a prophetic figure. His loving kindness, his confidence in God made him known among the Russians. St. Metropolitan Alexis affirmed his spiritual leadership of St. Sergius, and even wanted to appoint this humble monk as his successor, but St. Sergius firmly refused this honor. This great ascetic of the Russian Church blessed Prince Dmitrii Donskoi (August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1380) to fight the Kulikovo Battle which marked the beginning of the liberation of Russia from the invaders. In his service St. Sergius always desired for and did everything to build the community, "that through gazing at the divine Unity might overcome the hateful divisions of this world." *Zernov*, 41; cf. N. Zernov, *St. Sergius, Builder of Russia* (London, 1938). Then, St. Metropolitan Alexis (1354-1378) a personal tutor for Prince Dmitrii Donskoi together with the Metropolitan Jonas (1448-1471), by the power of their ecclesiastic authority, helped the Prince of Moscow to put an end to the feudal discords and preserve the unity of the state.

<sup>93</sup> About Church and State of this period see, among the others M. Birnbaum M. and M. Flier, eds. *Medieval Russian Culture* (University of California Press, 1984); J. Fennell, *The Emergence of Moscow 1304-1359* (University of California Press, 1968); John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1989); Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood: NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 37-56; A. Shpakov, *Gosudarstvo i Tserkov' v ikh vzaimnykh otnosheniiakh v Moskovskom gosudarstve* [*The State and Church...*], 2 vols. (Kiev-Odessa, 1904-1912).



over the way in which the religious future of Russia was to be envisaged.<sup>94</sup> It raised two opposing theories supported by correspondent parties: (1) the theory of the Third Rome - a new Christian Muscovite Empire with established precedents for the harmony of church and imperial authorities (that persisted throughout the history of the Byzantine empire); and (2) the theory of virtue of monasticism, Church independence from the state and canonical loyalty to Constantinople.<sup>95</sup> The political controversies soaked the minds and activities of the clergies.

The repulsion from the Byzantium changed the linguistic character of the liturgical language in the Orthodox Church. On the basis of the reasoning that the Russian faith is *Christian*, but not *Greek*, the Russian Church attempted to have extended canonical emancipation from the Greek Church. In engaging into this course, the Russian Church dismissed Greek language as a liturgical language and consequently found itself in the linguistic isolation. Soon it found itself linguistically disjoined from the language of the New Testament and Greek Church Fathers not only in the liturgical services, but also in any form of the theological education. Hence, a produced linguistic barrier was of a troubled consequence for the theological knowledge as such. This circumstance locked the indigenous potential in the development of the Orthodox theological and exegetical dimensions, because it belated the linguistic proficiency of the Orthodox clergies and bible exegetes. The Russian Orthodox Church had to rely not only on the linguistic skills of the southern and western Slavs, but also became depended from the Western experts in Greek language in study and translation the religious Greek literature.

The developments in neighbourly provinces in the South (that formed the Ukraine) have also brought to the light of day new dilemmas for the Orthodox Church. Since the primatial seat of the Church was transferred from destroyed Kiev to Moscow, the Orthodox clergies that were still residing in Kiev have been attached to a distant Church of Constantinople, which after the collapse of Byzantine Empire lost its former strength. Their neighbours, the Catholic kings of Poland, have oppressed the Kievan people and the Church leaders. They assured their patronage if the Orthodox people would agree for an ally with the Roman Catholic Church. Although a small number of clergies were antagonistic for

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<sup>94</sup> John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, trans. by John Chaplin (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 107.

<sup>95</sup> See the standard studies e.g. H. Schaeder, *Moskau das Dritte Rom: Studien zur Geschichte der Politischen Theorien in der Slavischen Welt* (Darmstadt, 1957); W. K. Medlin, *Moscow and East Rome: A political Study of the Relations of Church and State in Moscovite Russia* (Geneva: 1952).

accepting Latinism, in 1596 the metropolitan of Kiev, Michael Ragoza, signed an act of reunion with Rome and established the so-called "Uniate Ukrainian Church."<sup>96</sup> Few years later the Orthodox people in the Ukraine were outnumbered. Only after reestablishment of the Orthodox succession in 1620 (by Theophanes, Patriarch of Jerusalem) and Russian triumph over the Polish kings (in 1686), the Ukraine was incorporated into the Moscovite Empire and the Metropolitanate of Kiev was connected with the Russian Orthodoxy under the rule of Moscow Patriarchate. During this term, the process of maturing of the Orthodox ideology in the Ukraine, of course, had been prolonged and influenced by the Roman Catholic theology.

In addition to a political agenda, some Orthodox priests (and sometimes the whole parish) disputed the veneration of icons, monastic life, authority of hierarchy, etc.<sup>97</sup> From the documents and historical studies it is known that toward the end of the fourteenth century the movement of so-called *Strigol'niki* ["shorn-heads"] appeared in Novgorod. They rejected: (1) a canonical right of the whole Russian clergy; (2) all the sacraments except baptism; (3) the authority of the Church after apostolic times; (4) the New Testament; (5) the theological fundamentals such as the afterlife, resurrection, the salvific role of Christ; etc.<sup>98</sup> In around 1470 in Novgorod appeared another heresy, which came to be known as the Judaizers (Ru.- *zhidovstvuiushchie*).<sup>99</sup> This heresy began from a Jew named Skharia (a personal physician of the prince Alexander Olol'kovich) who was a knowledgeable man. "His erudition impressed the poorly-educated Russian priests, and several of them secretly joined

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, Trans. from French by John Chaplin (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 112.

<sup>97</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> century controversies and their consequences, see W. K. Medlin, *Moscow and East Rome: A Political Study of the Relations of Church and state in Moscovite Russia* (Geneva, 1952); N. A. Kozakova, Y. S. Lur'e, *Antifeodal'noe ereticheskoe dvizhenie na Rusi XIV - nachala XVI veka* [*The Antifeudal Movements in Russia: 14-16 cc.*](M.: 1955); A. Klibanov, *Reformatsionnye dvizheniia v Rossii v XIV- pervoi polovine XVI v.* [*History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia*] (M.: 1960).

<sup>98</sup> See N. Pudnev, *Rassuzhdeniia o eresiakh i raskolakh...* (M.1838); Mitr. Makarii, *Istoriia russkoi Tserkvi* [*A History of the Russian Church*], (M.: 1886), vol. 4, 150-164; A. Klibanov, *Reformatsionnye dvizheniia v Rossii v XIV- pervoi polovine XVI v.* (M.: 1960), 118-136; D. I. Tsvetaev, *Protestanstvo i protestanty v Rossii* (M.: 1890); "Strigol'niki," *Khristianstvo* 2: 645-647.

<sup>99</sup> Iosif Volotskii, *Oblishenie Zhidovstvuiushchikh* (Kazan', 1857); *Ibid.*, *Poslania* (M.: 1959). N. D. Andreev, "The Judaizers," ["Zhidovstvuiushchie,"] *Khristianstvo* 1: 541-543; Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 14-19 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 13-17].



the heresy.”<sup>100</sup> Skharia and his followers introduced in Russia the *Judaizer* heresy in which they argued that: (1) the New Testament’s concept of trinity contradicts the Old Testament doctrine of the one and only God; (2) Jesus Christ is the prophet only in the Old Testament terms; (3) since Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament, the Old Testament is eternal and more significant than the New; (4) the Orthodox teaching about the formal about rituals, crosses, monasticism, etc. is inaccurate.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.4.2 The Gennagy Bible (Gennadievskaiia Bibliia)

In the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, after achieving an autocephalous status, the Russian Orthodox Church proceeded to develop its own religious literature. Predominantly, they were produced from the lives of saints and the liturgical texts.<sup>102</sup> The Orthodox Church stressed the importance of the Russian language as the liturgical language. All of these necessitated the translation of the biblical and liturgical texts into a relatively modern Slavonic language.

In addition, the Russian heretical movements of this period (named above) stimulated a very important theological project - the compilation and revision of the first complete Slavic Bible. According to Florovsky’s study, some of the Church’s clergymen were inclined to think that the heresies and doubts “began as the result of reading books” and were developed “precisely through the interpretation of [biblical] texts.”<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the books as such became ideologically significant for the Russian Church. Consequently, the polemical questions stimulated Orthodox theologising to write *pro* and *contra* to the concepts of

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<sup>100</sup> Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 52.

<sup>101</sup> A heretical group called ‘Judaizers’ ( or Non-Possessors, *netstiazhteli*) argued also against the ecclesiastic possession of land. A social-religious current over the political power of the land was developed by the Trans-Volga Elders during the reign of Ivan III (1462-1505). This ecclesiastic and political struggle that continued till the time of Ivan IV (1533-1584). The opposed fraction, led by St. Iosif of Volokolamsk and Gennadii of Novgorod, (so- called Possessors, *stiazhateli*) campaigned to stop the quarrel over the social issues (esp. social welfare of the Church) and defended the preservation of a true orthodoxy which, in their beliefs, was possible only with the support of substantial monastic properties. On the debate see N. A. Kozakova, Y. S. Lur’e, *Antifeodal’noe ereticheskoe dvizhenie na Rusi XIV v. - nachala XVI veka* [*The Movement of the Judaizers in Russia of XIV- beg. XVI cc.*] (M.: 1955); A. Klibanov, *Reformatsionnye dvizheniia v Rossii v XIV- pervoi polovine XVI v.* [*The Reformation Movements in Russia of XIV – beg. XVI cc.*] (M.: 1960).

<sup>102</sup> Cf. John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, Trans. from French by John Chaplin (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 108.

<sup>103</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 15 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 14].

existing controversies. The most famous polemist, St. Iosif Volosky (Sanin, 1439/40 - 1515) clarifies the interpretation of the Old Testament books perverted by the Judaizers in his *Enlightener* and stresses that Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Christ.<sup>104</sup>

Then, in the final decade of the fifteenth century, mainly as the response to: (1) the heresies (esp. to the heretical movement of the *zhidovstvuushchikh*); and (2) the multiplicity of the religious texts circulating in the Russian area (with Christian and non-Christian motifs), Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod (Gonozov or Gnzov, 1484-1504) was determined to compile the Church Slavonic Bible. Very likely, his decision was predetermined by the desire to respond with the heresy-hunting to any 'un-orthodox' group. Archbishop Gennady was convinced that the ideas of the primacy of ecclesiastic power and property possession, the obligation and authority to deal with heresy, required the use of the some kind of highest authority.<sup>105</sup> On the one hand, for self-justification, Gennady turned to Roman Catholic sources that were supposed to demonstrate the superiority of ecclesiastic authority. In his expectation the translations of these sources could bring about the support for his ambitions.<sup>106</sup> On the other hand, his search for the authority stimulated Gennady to appoint the Dominican monk Veniamin to lead the producing of the first complete Russian Bible.<sup>107</sup> It was his most important action against heresies.<sup>108</sup> To some extent the conscious step to cease the heresy and the diversity of the biblical texts taken by Archbishop Gennady, mirrored the significance of the creation of the Christian canon which was formed in reaction to Marcion and his movement.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Iosif Volotskii, *Prosvetitel'* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Kazan', 1882); about the works of Iosif see Khrushchov, *Issledovanie o sochineniakh Iosifa Sanina* (SPb.: 1868); also V. F. Botsianovskii, "Iosif Volotskii," *Khristianstvo* I: 640.

<sup>105</sup> N. P. Popov, "Afnas'evskii izvod povesti o Varlaame I Ioasafe," *Izvestiia ORIA* 31(1926), 222-224.

<sup>106</sup> See Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 17-18 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 15-17]. About the appearance of the Catholic spirit in the Russian ecclesiastic life see the essay of Donald W. Treadgold, "The Meetings of Moscow and Rome in the Reign of Vasiliij III," in *The Religious Worlds of Russian Culture. Russia and Orthodoxy; Volume II*. Ed. by Andrew Blane (Paris: Moulton, 1975), 55-74.

<sup>107</sup> Aidan Nichols, *Theology in Russian Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 8; Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 16-17 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 15].

<sup>108</sup> Cf. M. N. Diakonov, "Gennady," *Khristianstvo*, I, 404; Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 55.

<sup>109</sup> On Marcion, the heretic of the 2d century C.E. and his significance in the area of the Christian Canon see, for example, Stuard George Hall, "Marcion," *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* R. J. Coggins and J. H. Houlden eds. (London: SCM Press, 1990), 422-424; E. C.



The sources for the new Slavonic translation of the Bible, completed in 1499 (known as *Gennadievskaiia Bibliia*), were drawn from various printed materials: the Codex Alexandrinus, the codex Vaticanus, the Vulgate, ancient and contemporary Slavic manuscripts, and perhaps a German source; all these were mixed and used uncritically.<sup>110</sup> Still, given the state of biblical studies in Russia and the other conditions of that time, the Gennagy Bible's text was the best for possible production. Because book printing was introduced to Russia subsequently, this translation was published in 1580-82 (known as the *Ostrozhskii Bible*). *Gennadievskaiia Bibliia* became the "*Textus Receptus*" of the Orthodox Church Slavonic Bible.

The completion of this new translation of the Bible was an important fact as to proceed with a more focused interest in the Bible. Nevertheless, it only promoted the translation of the Church Father writings directly. The explanation for this is rooted in the character of certain ecclesiastic circles. Fr. Florovsky records that the hegumen Artemii and the celebrated Prince Andrei Kurbskii (1528-1583) had a special love for the great patristic tradition and strove for a creative renewal of the Byzantine heritage in the Slavic world. Kurbskii, according to Fr. Florovsky, believed that the future of the Russian Orthodoxy "depended upon its faithfulness to the tradition of the Fathers."<sup>111</sup> This was a revival of elements of Byzantine theology.<sup>112</sup> In addition, St. Iosif of Volotsk placed an emphasis on the Church Father in his compiled literary collection *Svodnaia Kormchaia* [*Collection of the Pivot*] - the book compiled for a frequent use by the clergies.<sup>113</sup> Typical of other *Collections of the Pivot*, common to medieval Russia, Iosif's book contained church law of both the

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Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London, 1948); H. von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*. Trans. J. A. (Baker: Philadelphia, 1972); R. J. Hoffmann, *Marcion: On the Restitution of Christianity*. AARAS 46. (Chico: CA, 1984.); H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*. Vol. 2. (Philadelphia, 1982).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. S. Sol'skii "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *POI*, 2 (1869): 196-202; I. A. Chistovich, *Istoriia Perevoda Biblii na Russkii Iazyk* (SPb.: 1877); *The Modern Encyclopedia of Religion in Russia and Soviet Union*, vol. 4 (Gulf Breeze, FL.: Academic International Press, 1991), s. v. "Bible, Church Slavonic," by Henry R. Cooper Jr; Erich Bryner, "Bible Translations in Russia," *The Bible Translator* 25, n.3 (1974): 318-331.

<sup>111</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 42 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 33]. See J. Fennell, ed. and transl. *The Correspondence between Prince A. M. Kurbsky and Tsar Ivan IV of Russia* (New York, 1955).

<sup>112</sup> N. Kapteev, *Snosheniia ierusalimskikh patriarkhov s russkim pravitel'stvom s poloviny XVI do kontsa XVIII stoletii* (SPb.: 1895); J. D. Isaevich, *Bratstva to ikh rol' v ruzvitku ukrainskoi kul'turi XVI-XVIII st.* (Kiev: 1966).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. N. P. Popov, "Afnas'evskii izvod povesti o Varlaame i Ioasafe," *Izvestiia ORIAS* 31 (1926): 222-224.

Greek and the Russian Church, decisions of the Church councils, epistles of metropolitans and accepted answers to doctrinal objections or disputes. In general, the statements on the merits of Orthodoxy, presented in this type of book, offered the insights into the daily issues that clergies had to face.<sup>114</sup> Perhaps, for some Orthodox leaders it seemed also reasonable that after the Bible has been completely translated, the commentaries that reflected the truth of the Church were needed for the clergies. Therefore, the task of translation of the writings of the Church Fathers, especially that portion of patristic literature, which expounds the Bible, was assigned to Maxim Greek (1470-1555). In the following section the focus falls on his accomplishments that succeeded a merely direct translation are.

### 3.4.3 Maxim the Greek (1470-1555)

Born in the Greek family and educated in Italy, Maxim the Greek's public activity served particularly the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian nation culture in general.<sup>115</sup> His path to the Eastern Orthodoxy crossed the Roman Catholicism, which Maxim accepted during his education years in Italy. In 1504, however, Maxim left Italy and returned to Greece where he became a monk of the Orthodox monastic community on Mt. Athos.

Maxim Greek's activity as Bible exegete and interpreter in Russia was initiated by the Grand Prince Vasilii III (d. 1505), who appealed to the Patriarch of Constantinople to find and send to Moscow someone capable of translating and cataloguing the Greek books of a large czar's depository (*at that time* in Russia there was no man equipped to carry out this task<sup>116</sup>). Maxim the Greek arrived in Russia (in 1516) from the centre of the Orthodox world on the "Holy Mountain" - the Orthodox monastic community on Mt. Athos. At that time "he was undoubtedly the best and most erudite scholar in Russia."<sup>117</sup> In the sixteenth

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<sup>114</sup> In the Medieval Russia the other types of the religious guidebooks for the Orthodox faith and moral were common: *Sinodik, Izmaragd, Izbornik, Trebnik*

<sup>115</sup> Maxim's collected works are his *Sochineniia* [Collected Works], 3 vols. (Kazan', 1894-1897); *Ibid.*, *Sochineniia dogmatico-polemicheskie* (M.: 1910). For his biography and the study of his literary and philosophical works see Vishelesskii, "About Maxim Greek," *KhCh* (1896) : vols. 1-6, 1896; A. I. Ivanov, *Literaturnoe Nasledie Maksima Greka* [Literary heritage of Maxim the Greek] (Leningrad, 1969); N. B. Siniztina, *Maksim Greek v Rossii* [Maxim the Greek in Russia] (M.: 1977); M. N. Gromov, *Maxim Greek* (M.: 1983); Jack Haney, *From Italy to Moscow: The Life and Works of Maxim the Greek* (Münich: 1973).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. S. Sol'skii, "The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia," *PO I*, 2 (1869): 202.

<sup>117</sup> Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 64.



century, Maxim was the most Westernised man in Russia. Yet, he can be identified with the strongest Orthodox currents in Russian religion and culture.<sup>118</sup>

After cataloguing the Greek books, Maxim was asked to endeavour the task of translation of the commentaries on Psalms (*Tolkovaia Paslyr'*), the Gospels and Acts into the Old-Slavonic language. Maxim was working with several Russians who knew the Latin.<sup>119</sup> Since he did not know the Old-Slavonic, the process of translation was complex. Consequently, he translated from Greek to Latin, and then the others translated the commentary on the Psalms to the Old Slavonic language.<sup>120</sup> After the translation of *The Commentaries on Psalms* had been completed, Maxim the Greek sent the report that intended to be both a general introduction to the Psalms and an introduction to the methods of interpretation to Grand Prince Vasilii III. He divided all the commentators into the three groups: (1) *the allegorical*, who detected an allegorical level of meaning (such as John of the golden mouth (Chrysostom) (327-407), Cyrill of Alexandria (†444 ) and Athanasius (†373); (2) *the anagogical*, who explained the texts *spiritually* (Origen, Diadem, Appolinarii, Asterii, Evsevii); (3) *the literal*, who stressed both historical and literal meanings according to the letter of the text (Feodorit, Theodore of Mopsuetia (c. 350-428), Didor). In his report to Grand Prince Vasilii III, Maxim indicated that all three ways of interpretation were legitimate and had to be used conjointly.<sup>121</sup> By studying the methods and approaches used by the Church interpreters, Maxim has laid down the rules of interpretation according to his own preferences. Speaking strictly about the commentators, Maxim the Greek noted, that to his opinion, Origen was of a great veneration and wisdom. He declared, however, that Origen “often moves away from the doctrinal tradition of the Church.”<sup>122</sup> Maxim, on the one hand

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<sup>118</sup> As his writings shows, Maxim, in general, showed a critical attitude towards the Roman Church; yet he still continued to admire certain aspects of Roman Catholicism. This does not imply that Maxim the Greek can be accused of spreading the concepts of the Roman Catholic Church as superior to the Russian Orthodox Church. Cf. Donald W. Treadgold, “The Meetings of Moscow and Rome in the Reign of Vasilij III,” in *The Religious Worlds of Russian Culture. Russia and Orthodoxy; Volume II*. Ed. by Andrew Blane (Paris: Moulton, 1975), 58-68.

<sup>119</sup> See S. Sol'skii, “The Use and Study of the Bible in Russia,” *PO I*, 2 (1869): 203.

<sup>120</sup> His translations of the sacred literature were often inaccurate. For this reason, his enemies, esp. Metropolitan Daniel accused Maxim the Greek in heresy, tried him and sentenced to life imprisonment in a monastery. Cf. Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church and the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1998), 64-64; A. Gornfel'd, “Maksim Grek,” *Khristianstvo II*, 76.

<sup>121</sup> Maxim the Greek, “The Works,” *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik* 6 (1861): 302.

<sup>122</sup> Maxim the Greek, “The Works,” *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik* 6 (1861): 301.

praised Theodore of Mopsuetia for observing a strict literal meaning of the text; yet, on the other hand, he disclosed some doubts in regard to Theodore's exegesis, for the later "ignores the prophetic meanings embodied in many passages".<sup>123</sup> By doing this, it seems, Maxim the Greek, unintentionally set up a special feature of Russian bible interpretation - to comment on the work of the other interpreters, to discuss their achievements and to underscore their misjudgements rather than to interpret the texts of the Bible from one's own viewpoint.

By studying the methods of interpretation, especially linked to the books of Psalms and Acts, Maxim the Greek formulated the elements of a general analysis of Bible interpretation from an Eastern Orthodox point of view. He indicated important and basic guidelines for the interpretation. Maxim stressed: (1) the weight in plurality of patristic hermeneutics, which by its nature synthesized different methods; and (2) ongoing dogmatic tradition of the rule of faith (*paradosis*) as a necessary framework for biblical interpretation. This judgment of Maxim's seemed to some to give the coup de grace to the raise of biblical hermeneutics in Russian Orthodox Church. Thus, Fr. Alexander Men' rightly concludes "Maxim the Greek formed the first known system of the hermeneutic principles for interpreting the Bible in Russia."<sup>124</sup>

Maxim the Greek marks a starting point not only in the biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church but in literary criticism in general. In his study Gornfel'd documents the scholarly opinion that in the history of the Russian literature, Maxim the Greek is a first link that tied the Russian literature with the Western scientific school of literary criticism.<sup>125</sup> His biographer says, "Maxim the Greek was the first man in Russia to treat the tasks of literature from all aspects and critically."<sup>126</sup> In this respect, in the person of Maxim the Greek, the Russian Orthodox Church, for the first time, received the penetration of the Western Enlightenment, especially in respect to a serious investigation of literary corpora.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Maxim the Greek, "The Works," *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik* 6 (1861): 301.

<sup>124</sup> See Men', 274; Cf. also M. N. Gromov, *Maxim the Greek* (M.: 1983).

<sup>125</sup> A. Gornfel'd, "Maxim Grek," *Khristianstvo* II, 75-77.

<sup>126</sup> V.S. Ikonnikov, *Maksim Grek i ego vremia: Instoricheskoe issledovanie [Maxim the Greek and his time: Historical Investigation]*, 2nd ed., (K.: 1915), 182.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Metropolitan Makarii (Bulgakov), *Istoria russkoi tserkvi... [A History of the Russian Church...]* (Ann Arbor, 1965), vol. 7, 254.



### 3.4.4 Development of Theological Education in Russia

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

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

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

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

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<sup>128</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 78 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 51].

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

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

<sup>131</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: One*, 85 [Ru. Florovsky, *Puti*, 56].

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

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

transformed into Slavonic-Greek- Latin Moscow Academy and then into the Moscow Theological Academy<sup>134</sup> - a graduate school of theology (the other three Orthodox academies were founded in St. Petersburg, 1809; Kiev, 1819; Kazan', 1842).<sup>135</sup> As long as the Likhud brothers were working at the school, the New Testament was read and studied in Greek. The Likhud brothers gave serious consideration to the works of Maxim the Greek on the Bible interpretation and correction of the Russian translations of the Holy Scriptures in the school of Bogoiavlensk monastery. However, they had very limited influence, for they had no time either to develop biblical studies at their school or prepare the theological learners for a more advanced investigation of the Bible. After the circumstances forced the Lukhud brothers to leave the school, the teaching of Greek soon was abolished and the character of the school was changed.<sup>136</sup> When czar Peter the Great (1672-1725) invited the West-Russian instructors of Kiev's Theological Academy to lead the Orthodox theological education in the Moscow Academy, this school was latinized. Most of the subjects were studied in Latin. The perplexity of this situation for the Russian Orthodox Church was unveiled later when at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when many of the Russian clergies were linguistically not ease either reading the Greek New Testament or the Greek Church Fathers, nor at for pastoral or educational activities in their own language - Russian.<sup>137</sup>

### 3.4.5 The Epoch of Disputes

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

<sup>139</sup> Zernov, 115.

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

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

These and the other disagreements and confrontations in Russian religious consciousness painfully resonated in a further development of Russian Orthodoxy in general<sup>145</sup> and in a biblical study in particular. "It was particularly tragic, that at the decisive hour in Russian history, the leadership in the Church should be in the hands of men who overstressed the importance of ritual."<sup>146</sup> More than a century the Orthodox theologians and teachers of the Bible were more preoccupied with defending or overcoming scholasticism and *new-old-* and- *non* orthodox doctrines, than with the problems of the Bible

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

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

<sup>143</sup> Cf. *Zernov*, 105 -109.

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

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Florovsky, *Puti*, 104 ff.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. *Zernov*, 104.



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

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

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

### 3.4.6 Toward the Biblical Studies

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

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

<sup>148</sup> Florovsky, *Puti*, 354; cf. *Men'*, 275.

<sup>149</sup> *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 115.

the theological schools in the place of Latin<sup>150</sup> as well as to introduce an advanced study of the biblical languages.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

The teachers and interpreters of the Bible must follow nine rules of interpretation<sup>163</sup>:

**Rule 1.** Open literal and historical meanings, and where it is dark<sup>164</sup>, because of translation or an ambiguity of the language, explain it in a such way that no passage is left for the students as being difficult for understanding, apart from the most extraordinary texts which are too perplexed to comprehend. [Ru. – “Открыть буквальный смысл, и где темно, или от перевода или по свойству языка, объяснять так, чтобы не осталось места, которого бы студенты не разумели, включая некоторые весьма редкие места, кои на удобь не понятны.”]

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

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

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

*Secondly*, Platon encourages the interpreters of the Bible, to search primarily for the literal and historical meaning of the text. Acknowledging that the practice of an allegorical interpretation in the Orthodox exegesis was still common, Platon does not dismiss allegorical interpretation, but stresses that Scripture is the book of Sacred History<sup>167</sup> and should be understood in context to the time and place of their authors.

*Thirdly*, Platon recommends understanding the Scripture literally - without searching a mysterious meaning where there is no such thing; and suggests the techniques how to solve the seriously contradictive passages in the Bible. Platon is aware that the reader of the Bible (or exegete) is capable to bring his own pre-supposition into the text and therefore Platon urges the interpreters to be alert in discerning the meaning of the text<sup>168</sup> and not to

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Florovsky, *Puti*, 106.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 716.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 691.



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

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

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

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

<sup>173</sup> *Contra Men'*, 275.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 119.

### 3.4.6.2 *Platon's Followers*

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

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

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

<sup>176</sup> *Men'*, 275.

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

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



### 3.4.7 Conclusion

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

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

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

<sup>180</sup> Cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 124-125.

### **3.5 Biblical Interpretation in the XIX c. Russia**

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

#### **3.5.1 Creation of the Orthodox Theological Consciousness**

##### ***3.5.1.1 The Religious-Philosophical Awakening***

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

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

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<sup>181</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*.



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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 54.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Alexey Khomiakov<sup>192</sup> is known as the Orthodox theologian and philosopher, although he did not receive any specialized formal education. Like Kireevskii, Khomiakov was

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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<sup>193</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 43.

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

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

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



is the unity of freedom. He reasons:

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

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

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

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

<sup>197</sup> A. S. Khomiakov, *The Works* (M.: 1884), 109.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

### 3.5.1.2 *Response to the Philosophical Awakening*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

### ***3.5.1.3 The Consequences of Biblical Criticism for the Orthodox Church***

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>220</sup> The great influence for the meaning of the Old Testament is set by Jilius Wellhausen (1844-1918) [see J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschishte Israel* (Berlin: Remer, 1905<sup>6</sup> [*Prolegomena to the History of Israel*] (trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzines; Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885)]. On him see J. Coppens, *The Old Testament and the Critics Paterson* (NJ: 1942) 30ff. In the New Testament studies, Adolf Harnack’s influence was very effective.



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

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

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

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

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

### 3.5.2 Study of the Bible in the First Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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

In addition, in 1814 the constitution of higher theological education announces the top priority for teaching Bible and exegesis in the Orthodox Academies. At this period of the history of the Russian Church, every doctrine was expected to be proven by the Scripture<sup>1</sup> and it was hoped that the Orthodox theology would be enriched from exegetical study of the Bible. If prior to 1808 the subject of Biblical interpretation was not obligatory in the Orthodox schools, then now the efforts were dedicated to the discipline of Bible interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Florovsky, *Puti*, 364.

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

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

<sup>4</sup> *Men'*, 274.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the biblical truth or its understanding derives from God himself through the body of Christ.<sup>10</sup> By applying this hermeneutical presupposition Filaret stresses that an accurate and truthful interpreter of the biblical passages is: “(1) the Holy Scripture itself and concurrently with it (2) the Church tradition, determined by the Creeds, the dogmas, the rules and definitions of Sts. Ecumenical Councils<sup>11</sup> and by Church Fathers.”<sup>12</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.5.2.2 Aleksandr Matveevich Bukharev (1824-1871)<sup>19</sup>

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

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

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

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

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



during the 1860s<sup>21</sup> - the clash with Victor Askonchenskii on the subject “Orthodoxy in Relation to Contemporary Life.”<sup>22</sup>

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

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

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<sup>21</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 117.

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

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

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

<sup>25</sup> A. Bukharev, *Investigation of the Apocalypse*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 120-121.

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.5.2.3 Gerasim Pavskii (1787-1863)

Gerasim Pavskii is known as the Bible translator<sup>33</sup> and biblical scholar.<sup>34</sup> He is regarded as "the founder of historical-philological analysis of the Bible and the originator of Biblical-historical school in Russia."<sup>35</sup>

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

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Men'*, 277

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Men'*, 277.

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

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

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

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



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

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

On the one hand, the majority of Pavskii's colleagues and the Orthodox authorities did not understand the importance of Pavskii's contribution to the biblical scholarship, and consequently, he was subjected to the ecclesiastic tribunal. Later, however, Ivan Evseev (1868-1921) did recognize that actions, taken against Pavskii in so-called "The Pavskii's case", negatively echoed on the development of the biblical studies in Russia<sup>36</sup> (see the further comments on "The Pavskii's case" below). On the other hand, among few, Fr. Mikhail (Luzin) (1830-1887) defended Pavskii's contribution, as "a careful scientific investigation that do not avoid the issues omitted or inadequately considered in the Orthodox scholarship."<sup>37</sup>

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

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<sup>36</sup> See *Men'*, 277-78.

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

### 3.5.2.4 Deficit of Further Developments

From about 1820 a new spirit of inquiry was clearly discernable in Russia. Mental horizons were expanding. The development of a more personal spirituality inside the church created a new intellectual and spiritual climate. It seemed, that following the advanced studies of Filaret and Pavskii a healthy expansion of the field of biblical studies could be expected. Nevertheless, very few and insignificant studies were produced and published by the Orthodox scholars during 1815-1860.<sup>38</sup> The most progressive Orthodox Bible teachers, observing the developments of the indigenous biblical scholarship during this period, recognized it in several publications.<sup>39</sup>

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

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

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

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

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 136.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Thirdly, from about the end of 1840 there was a new troublesome factor in the way of the development of biblical studies in the Orthodox Church. At the end of the third decade, the Holy Synod<sup>51</sup> has published *Gramoti Vostochnikh Patriarkhov* [*The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs*]. By utilizing these documents, one of the uppermost Church authorities demanded: (1) to prohibit the reading and interpretation of the Bible by any person, except when the intentions of reading and interpretation are examined by the Church authorities; and (2) to stress the highest ecclesiastic authority and importance of Church tradition (Ru.- *predanie*) in the understanding of the Bible.<sup>52</sup> From 1840, numerous Orthodox clergies tried “to elevate the Tradition as of a similar significance as that of the Holy Scriptures; and even prefer the Tradition to the Holy Scripture in the issues about the authenticity of a Holy text and about its accurate interpretation.”<sup>53</sup> Among the supporters *The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs*, Fr. Afanasii (Drosdov) the Rector of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy is especially noticeable. His position was defined in the book *Sokrachshennaia Germenevtica* [*A Concise Hermeneutics*]. He proposed to ratify a constitutional principle in interpreting the Scripture on the assumptions that: (1) the biblical doctrines are “intentionally covered with darkness” in the biblical texts; and (2) “the Scripture, frequently, does not present a kind of rightful (Ru.- *zdravogo*) teaching.”<sup>54</sup> Fr. Afanasii denied the Bible as a starting point (or point of regulation) in a true understanding of the Scripture and suggested to use the works of the Holy Fathers and the Church canons as a decisive factor of all Bible interpretations.<sup>55</sup> Fr. Affanasii’s book, intended as a standard textbook for the Orthodox Theological Academies, initiated for the Orthodox Bible interpretation the same methodological surmounting of *The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs* tendency, by furnishing an answer to the question of the Role of Tradition. He emphasizes: (1) because “the Bible does not contain all the doctrines of the Church” the Bible cannot be considered as “a beginning and canon of an accurate

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

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

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

<sup>54</sup> Afanasii (Drozdv), *Sokrashchennaia Germenevtica* [*A Concise Hermeneutics*] (M.: 1894).

<sup>55</sup> Afanasii (Drozdv), *A Concise Hermeneutics* (M.: 1878), 15.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

### 3.5.3 Study of the Bible the Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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

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

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

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

and to select the most enlightened, progressive biblical scholars to initiate the project.<sup>64</sup> The Metropolitan of St. Petersburg Isidor (Nikol'skii, (1799-1892) was elected to supervise the group of scholars-translators.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, several corrected editions of the New Testament were published during 1862-68.<sup>66</sup> Finally, in 1876, *Sinodal'nyi Perevod Biblii* [Synodal Bible] - the new Russian translation was published and soon became the common Russian Bible for many following decades.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>67</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 125.

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

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

<sup>70</sup> *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 115-116.



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

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

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

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

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 134-35.

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

<sup>75</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 135.

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

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

### 3.5.3.1. Biblical Hermeneutics

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

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

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

<sup>77</sup> *Pravoslavnaia Bogoslovskaiia Entsiklopediia* (SPb.: 1903), Vol. 4., 297.

<sup>78</sup> *Men’*, 281.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a) *Savvaitov's Biblical Hermeneutics*

The professor of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy Pavel Savvaitov (1815-1895) was mainly known as an archeologist and historian.<sup>83</sup> He also was attentive to the methods of Bible interpretation.<sup>84</sup> In 1844, shortly after the appearance of the abovementioned Synod's publication *The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs*, Savvaitov prints his<sup>85</sup> first edition of *Biblical Hermeneutics (Bibleiskaia Germenevtika)*.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, this study reflects the frame of mind, endorsed by *The Official Documents of the Eastern Patriarchs*. Still, *Biblical Hermeneutics* was far more advanced than any other study on the topic which was previously printed in Russia. Several features of this book underline its significance in the development of biblical scholarship within the Russian Orthodox Church.

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

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

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

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

<sup>86</sup> Pavel I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics*(SPb.: 1859), 59.

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



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

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

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

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

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

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

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

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 5.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.



subjects for explanation and proof<sup>95</sup> seems to be attractive, but remains unclear and undeveloped in the rest of the book.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 140-141.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

оградить истинность чудесного события и опровергнуть возражения лжеименного разума. Подобным же образом должно поступать и при изъяснении мест догматического и нравственного содержания.”<sup>100]</sup>

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

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

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

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-141.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>103</sup> *Idem.*



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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>107</sup> Antonii (Khrapovitskii), *Concerning the Book of Rules*, 4.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>110</sup> *Idem.*

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

<sup>112</sup> Antonii (Khrapovitskii), *Concerning the Book of Rules*, 14.



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

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

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

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

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>117</sup> Antonii (Khrapovitskii), *Concerning the Book of Rules*, 3.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.5.3.2 Textual Criticism

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.5.3.3 *The Questions of Introduction*

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

<sup>146</sup> Cf. *Men’*, 281.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>162</sup> This concept is generally associated with the development in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Germany, in particular by German Protestant theologian and scholar Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923). On the 19<sup>th</sup> century historicism in biblical studies see Gunter Scholtz, "The Notion of Historicism and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Theology," in Henning Graf Reventlow and William Farmer, Eds., *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of the Paradigms, 1850-1914* (JSOT, Supplement Series 192, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 149-167.

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



(a) *Hostility Toward Historical Criticism*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) Occurrence of Historical-Critical Exegesis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

On the whole, the presence of a rich and creative exegetical life in the West had a negative as well as a positive significance for the Orthodox biblical interpretation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the one hand, in uniting themselves in response to the historical-critical exegesis of the West, the Orthodox interpreters seemed to block their own ascent to the heights of interpretative thought and practice, and instantly lost themselves in the complex problems of free academic investigation of the Bible. Thus, in Bible interpretation, original creative work was very much hindered in the Russian Orthodox Church by what Russians found in the West. On the other hand, the Orthodox bible commentators were captured by the West, following its creation and quests in responding to the life of the Western scholarship. The Bible interpretation, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox Church, consequently, was both alienating itself from the West by devoting itself to the elements of the Orthodox dogma and tradition, as well as learning from the West. As the result, the combination of these two elements of interpretative creativity in the biblical studies signify the strength of the Orthodox own genius to live by its own inspirations, its own problems and solutions.

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

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

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

(c) Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.5.3.5 The Exegetical Works

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



### 3.7 Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ORTHODOX VIEW OF MAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines *selected* aspects of the Russian Orthodox view of man that exercise both a direct and indirect impact upon Russian Orthodox biblical hermeneutics. After presenting a general overview of some key Orthodox anthropological beliefs, the chapter will then examine several specific features of Orthodox anthropology particularly helpful to understanding how the Church's anthropological ideas are linked with its hermeneutics.

Before commencing the chapter in earnest, perhaps a few words are in order as to how Orthodox anthropology and its relationship to biblical hermeneutics fit into the general scheme of the present study. *First*, for a better analysis of Orthodox biblical hermeneutics, it is important to narrow the focus from a general historical perspective to a specific theoretical position of the Church that directly relates to the issues of hermeneutics themselves. In other words, attention to a theoretical-dogmatic position will allow for an opportunity to concentrate on Orthodox hermeneutics from a perspective much more closely tied to the internal dynamics of the discipline itself. [A subsequent chapter, CHAPTER FIVE, will proceed even further into the analysis of how a hermeneutical position is actually developed. That chapter will present a case study, limiting analysis to the writings of just one particular scholar.]

The choice of anthropological theoretical construction from among other potential topics for study (for example, Ecclesiology or Pneumatology) is made from the awareness that in Orthodox anthropology the Church is dealing with several importantly interwoven themes that bear directly upon biblical interpretation: (1) the human being *per se*, and his capacity to perceive divine truth; (2) the Church, understood as the corporate body of Christ, and as the people of God; and (3) the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church, i.e. who dwells within the people of God. In addition to these three substrands, Orthodox literature also

shows that some important features of Orthodox anthropology not only relate closely to the Church's hermeneutics, but, in fact, actually determine it.

*Second*, the attention to the Orthodox view of man is preconditioned by the observations made in the previous chapter, CHAPTER THREE. There, for example, it was discussed how Orthodox exegetes emphasize that the corporate Body of Christ holds within its hands the living revelation of God himself, and that the power of biblical truth or its understanding derives from God himself through the Body of Christ, the people of God (i.e. in the person of the Holy Spirit who operates both in the individual Christian and in the corporate Body of Christ to assure an accurate and truthful interpretation of Scripture).<sup>1</sup> This central belief of Orthodoxy, of course, leads quite naturally into an inquiry of what the Orthodox believe to be the true concept of the human being and, accordingly, how the individual Christian can act in facilitating his understanding of divine truths. Such an inquiry will help not only to better understand the Orthodox perspective on biblical interpretation, but also indicate how Orthodox anthropological ideas actually determine Orthodox hermeneutics.

*Third*, for decades Orthodox scholars have produced numerous works investigating various anthropological aspects of Orthodox theology. Yet, to date, there has been no formal study undertaken to show the connections between Orthodox anthropology and biblical hermeneutics. This study, then, will hopefully bridge some of those gaps between these two all-important disciplines within the Orthodox tradition.

#### **4.2 General Remarks**

Due to its religious context Orthodox anthropology is oriented neither toward the issues of *physical anthropology* (which is primarily concerned with human evolution, human biology, and the study of other primates) nor toward social or *cultural* approaches to anthropology. The Orthodox Church views anthropology as a religious question. It does not consider man solely in terms of relationship to himself or to his world, but deals with every aspect of human life and character in its relationship to God and Christ. As the Russian philosopher and historian of Russian thought Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdiaev (1874-1948) says, "A true anthropology can be found only within the revelation of Christ. The fact of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mitr. Filaret, "Zamechaniia na Rukovodstvo k germenevtike," ["Observations on the Guide to Hermeneutics,"] in *ChOLDP* (M.: 1892), 160.



Christ's appearance in the world is the basic fact of anthropology. A higher anthropological consciousness is possible only after Christ.<sup>2</sup>

It should not be surprising, then, that as an academic discipline Russian Orthodox anthropology lacks systematic character.<sup>3</sup> Associated foremost with a religious mysticism, Orthodox anthropology represents an enterprise that is somewhat beyond that which is of a strictly scientific or rational nature. This approach to the study of man, of course, can be explained with reference to the characteristics peculiar to Russian thought, a way of thinking that is based on intuitiveness rather than on systematic scientific investigation and formulation.

#### *4.2.1. Three Sources of Orthodox Anthropology*

In agreement with Archimandrite Cyprian (Kern), this paper recognizes that there are three authoritative sources from which Orthodox anthropology is formed: "the Bible, direct mystical insights, and independent conjectures."<sup>4</sup> Of the three, the first two are the more significant.<sup>5</sup>

##### 4.2.1.1 The Bible

The biblical anthropology of the Orthodox Church represents a 'Christian anthropology' typical to both Eastern and Western religious understandings of man. In constructing its anthropology here the Orthodox Church subscribes to a biblical understanding of what man is, and not unexpectedly arrives at a radically different conception of humankind than that, for example, embraced by the modern scientific and secularised West.

To the Orthodox faith, the human being represents the capstone of the creative energy of God. In this being, the body represents the validity of God's established physical order and the spirit reflects a divine spiritual order. Man was created after the image of God, and is therefore a creature that bears both the divine image and a concomitant orientation toward God. "The image of God (here) should be understood realistically (of

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<sup>2</sup> N. Berdiaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 78.

<sup>3</sup> On the mode of Russian reasoning and comprehension see S. L. Frank, *Russkoe Mirovozenie [The Russian World View]* (SPb.: Nauka, 1996), 161-205.

<sup>4</sup> Cyprian (Kern), 73.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Cyprian (Kern), 73.

course), in a sense of the imitation, rather than the equivalence with the First-Image.”<sup>6</sup> The concept of ‘*after the image of God*’ postulates a realistic scenario of a human being cognizant of a cognisable God. As the image of God, man follows the pattern of the Divine nature; in fact, he is God *in potentia*, and because of this divine potentiality he is capable of ‘deification.’<sup>7</sup> As the image of his Creator (cf. Gen. 1:26-28), man, too, is endowed with a certain creativity, and seeks in countless ways to realize himself in the expression of that creativeness. Man was also created to exert dominion over other aspects of creation, and so strives to do in small on this earth what God does on a much grander scale.

Besides teaching that man was created in the image of God, Orthodox anthropology bases its understanding of the general human condition on the biblical testimony about man being created for eternal life (cf. Gen. 2:22-23). Through sin humankind separated itself and its offspring from God; and sin not only separated from God, but also left man severely tainted in every area of life - social, personal, sexual and spiritual. As far reaching as it was in its damaging effects, however, sin did not totally eradicate the image of God in man. However distorted, that image is still there and clearly discernable as such; but its tragedy is that it is now weighed down with the guilt, power, and destructive burden of its own sin. The good news according to the biblical story, however, is that there is a possibility of escape from this condition (*i.e.*, salvation from sin) - the prospect of re-creation, and with it a return to God. This re-creation was provided for in the cosmic and anthropological incarnation of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; 3:18; Eph. 4:24; Gal. 6:15; etc.). Despite the vast differences that exist among individuals in time and place, their solidarity as a race is indisputable on the ground of the biblical understanding of the Adam – Christ archetypal relationship (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). And despite their solidarity, not all people respond to the divine provision for personal recreation. Some accept it; many reject it.

In this context, then, Orthodox anthropology holds to the biblical concept of the duality of the physical and non-physical state of mankind, animated as it is by the breath of life and empowered by the Spirit of God. As to spirit the consensus of Orthodox theologians generally seems to be that the human spirit should not be viewed as a third aspect of the self, as distinguished from body and soul. A clear dichotomy does arise, however, in the Orthodox understanding of the distinction between ‘believer’ and

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<sup>6</sup> S. Bulgakov, *Svet Nevechernii [The Unfading Light]* (M.: Put’, 1917; repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 242.



‘unbeliever’. The distinction here is in the sense of (1) being ‘wise’ or ‘foolish’ (cf. Prov. 2:15-16; 14:16; etc.); (2) living in accordance with sinful human nature (cf. Rom. 8: 5-13; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 7:1, etc.), or living as newly born and recreated by God (cf. John 3; 2 Cor. 5: 17-18; etc.). The differentiation here between the godly and the ungodly is one made primarily in the realm of the spirit, suggesting something about its primacy in the decisions of life that result in eternal consequences.

On the basis of biblical teaching about the inner and outer nature of man (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16), the Orthodox Church sees vastly different qualities in the believer and the unbeliever. Regenerated by the Spirit of God, the spirit of the believer passes from one stage of existence to another; from being a member of unregenerate mankind to being a member of the mystical Body of Christ. He advances from out of the fullness of his own individuality into the fullness of Christ, a condition that enables him to participate in the divine life of the Church (cf. Eph. 1:23; 3:19) and in the eschatological end (cf. esp. 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4:14-18, the Book of Revelation). Since mankind lives within a larger divine order than just mere earthly existence, Orthodox anthropology holds to the biblical teaching of the liberation from mortal existence to a life beyond death through the new humanity to be found in Jesus Christ.

The male and female identities within the human race in no way alter the picture here. In the beginning God created two people - a man and a woman who had physical and behavioural differences that distinguished them according to their functions in the reproductive process. The role of sex, or the *sexual characteristics* of man or woman denote all other distinctions between the two sexes. Yet, because the creation of humanity is viewed as a single act of creation, a basic unity transcends the distinction between male and female in or outside of marriage.<sup>8</sup> And it is this unity, as described above, comprised of the physical and the spiritual, and bearing the image of the Creator, that constitutes the biblical basis of the Orthodox anthropological view of man.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put', 1917; repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 243.

<sup>8</sup> The Orthodox view of the role of sex in the divine order for men and woman is explained in S. Bulgakov, "Sex in Man," *Khristianskaia Mysl'* (1916) // Reprinted in S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Respublika, 1994), 250-265.

#### 4.2.1.2 Direct Mystical Insights

The mystical theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church, viewed as a systematized discipline, is derived from: (1) St. John and St. Paul as the first great Christian mystics; (2) Neoplatonism, through the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite (1st century AD)<sup>9</sup> and St. Gregory Palamas<sup>10</sup>; and (3) from the dynamic lives of many Russian mystics, known for their complete self-renunciation in sobriety, unceasing prayer, confession of thoughts and obedience to their elder monks.<sup>11</sup>

In the Orthodox tradition it is argued that mystical understanding can offer a valid knowledge of God and things divine, because it apprehends God's mysteries about Himself, the world, the beginning and the end of everything - in short, about the things which remain out of reach for the learned theologian.<sup>12</sup> A mystical type of anthropological construction, then, "furnishes the Church with (an additional) awareness<sup>13</sup> about the world and man".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Member of the Areopagus in Athens and convert to Christianity through the preaching of St. Paul, as related in Acts 17:34. Another tradition confuses him with the apostle to France, St. Denis. The works ascribed to Dionysius include *Mystic Theology*, in which the author expounds a form of intuitive mysticism.

<sup>10</sup> See esp. Bishop Alexii (Dorodnitsin), *The Christian Mysticism and its Major Representatives* (Saratov: 1913); Cyprian (Kern), *The Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1950); I. Sokolov, *The State of Monasticism in the Byzantine Church in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Kazan': 1894); S. Smirnov, "Ancient Spiritual Guidance and Its Origin," *BV* (1906).

<sup>11</sup> Among the others see Arch. Philaret (of Chernigov), *The Saints of the Southern Slavs* (Saint Petersburg: 1882); I. Sokolov, *How the Ascetics of Ancient Russia served the World* (Holy Trinity St. S. Lavra, 1903); S. Zarin, *Asceticism* 2. vols., (Saint Petersburg: 1907); E. Poselianin, *Russian Ascetics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*, Vol. I (Saint Petersburg: 1910); E. Trubetzkoi, *Icons: Theology in Color* (M.: 1916); George Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality* (New York, 1948); Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood: SVS Press 1976); I. Kontzezevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia* (USA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Cyprian (Kern), "Spiritual Predecessors of St. Gregory Palamas," *Theological Thought* (1942), 26.

<sup>13</sup> For the mystical element in the history of the Russian ecclesiastic consciousness see *Zen'kovskii*, Vol. I, 31-33, 40-41, 108-109.

<sup>14</sup> *Cyprian (Kern)*, 219 [my italics].



#### 4.2.1.2.1 A Description of Orthodox Mysticism

Prior to determining the main features of mystical anthropology, it is first essential to explain the basic characteristics of Russian Orthodox mysticism. Such a description, hopefully, will clear away any possible misconceptions, while at the same time delineating the basis for an understanding of Orthodox anthropology.

Mysticism has always been an integral part of Orthodox thought and practice. According to Bulgakov, mysticism may be defined as the very “air of Orthodoxy... Life, in Orthodoxy, is linked with the vision of other worlds... mystical realism is a total presupposition of Orthodox worship-service.”<sup>15</sup> This mysticism, however, is not to be confused with a state of mind so other worldly that it loses sight of the realities of this world, for, as in Zen’kovskii’s interpretation, a *mystical reality does* recognize empirical reality, but sees *behind* it another reality. Both spheres of being are real, but they are of hierarchically different value.<sup>16</sup> In the Orthodox tradition itself is mystical monasticism, a Church phenomenon which explains mysticism as “*the acceptance of the angelic image*, i.e. the departure from the world and the service to it by prayer and *podvig* [i.e. ascetic exploit, (or) spiritual struggle].”<sup>17</sup> Whatever its form, Orthodox mystical consciousness invariably presupposes the transformation of man, created as the image of God, into the ever growing likeness of its First Image. This transformation is practically reflected in a holy life and ascetic service, obliged to self-renunciation in sobriety and unceasing prayer (and not experienced as some transcendent state or other, free from all individual consciousness or involvement in the physical world).<sup>18</sup> In brief, Orthodox mysticism may be described as “*the reception or the experience of the divine*, which is expressed not in a narrow-minded activity of intellect, but as something embracing the whole being of man...; divinity felt chiefly as a *metaphysical source of a spiritual-physiological process* transpiring within the individual.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodoxy* (Paris: YMCA, 1965), 309.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Zen’kovskii, Vol. I, 27.

<sup>17</sup> S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodoxy* (Paris: YMCA, 1965), 323.

<sup>18</sup> This mysticism should be contrasted with traditional Buddhism’s emphasis, for the purpose of the latter is to achieve not only an enlightenment through spiritual exercise and right living, but also to achieve mystical transcendence in the state of nirvana - a transcendent state free from suffering and individual phenomenal existence, an ultimate religious goal. On the difference between Orthodox anthropology and Hindu religious philosophy, see B. Viasheslavtsev, *The Heart in Christian and Hindu Mysticism* (Paris: 1933).

<sup>19</sup> E. Trubetskoi, *Mirovozrenie V. Solovyeva* [*The World-View of V. Solovyev*] (M.: 1913), Vol. 1, 435 [my italics].

As just mentioned, prominent within traditional Orthodox mysticism have been the monks, who in the course of their devotions have sought to perceive God in the full measure of his reality. Certainly nothing within man would be able of its own power to achieve this level of experience; it must be evoked by some transcendent energy - a quickening Spirit, which comes from beyond the human soul and makes the individual a special residence place or carrier of the Spirit of God. This concept is best rendered by the phrase 'acquisition of the Holy Spirit' or 'aspiration to charismatic disposition.' The spiritual energy of the mystics here is radically different from that of 'ordinary' men. The mystics are the "charismatic prophets"<sup>20</sup> who to some degree experience the way of illumination, a certain fellowship with, but as of yet not complete union with the 'great life of the All'. As the prophet, a mystic "*sees the soul of man, his past, present and future.*"<sup>21</sup> Consequently, mysticism is traditionally understood, first of all, as "*a special charisma of the Holy Spirit*".<sup>22</sup>

Mystical experience in Orthodox life is of an *antirational* character,<sup>23</sup> but should not be identified with *irrational* experience. This is especially true in the duality inherent within the mystical perception. Since a mystic can perceive the supernatural world, there is the possibility of contact with both the powers of good and the powers of evil. Thus at least something of the rational judgment used in human reasoning (*i.e.*, the 'normal' state of mind) is necessary to distinguish between false and true visions.<sup>24</sup> In the history of Russian Orthodoxy, this sober attitude toward mystical experience has been a critical element in distinguishing 'authentic' from 'heretical' mystical knowledge.<sup>25</sup> In the final analysis, however, any conflict between mystical knowledge and the Church's great repository of

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodoxy* (Paris: YMCA, 1965), 318;

<sup>21</sup> I. Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia* (USA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1988), 64 [my italics].

<sup>22</sup> Cyprian, "Spiritual Predecessors of St. Gregory Palamas," *Theological Thought* (1942), 3.

<sup>23</sup> The Orthodox theologian and historian Lev Karsavin (1882-1952), for example, admits that mystical experience is not rationally demonstrable and cannot be rationally grounded. See Lev P. Karsavin, *O Nachalakh [Concerning Principles]* (Paris: 1925), 12.

<sup>24</sup> This is especially true in the so-called concept of *prelest* - spiritual deception or delusion. For the concept of *prelest* see I. Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*, 59-61. Frank stresses that spiritual sobriety and rational measurement in the ascetic mystical experience constitute a vital component of the Russian mentality. Cf. S. L. Frank, *Russkoe Mirovozenie [Russian World View]* (SPb.: Nauka, 1996), 165.

<sup>25</sup> As early as the eleventh century there was an active resistance to the Christian faith being led by shamans (*volkhvy*) who claimed to possess mysterious knowledge, supernatural powers and the gift of prophesy. On pagan and heretical mysticism see E. V. Anichkov, *Yazychestvo i drevniaia Rus' (Paganism and Ancient Russia)* (SPb.: 1914).



accepted truth is to be settled by an appeal to the authority of the Church, for in matters relating to mystical knowledge ecclesiastic authority is recognized as taking precedence over claims made by any individual mystic.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.2.1.2.2. *An Outline of Mystical Anthropology*

In surveying the anthropology of Orthodox mysticism it is important to bear in mind that it does not allow for the construction of knowledge about man on a strictly rational basis. In addition, it needs to be remembered that the focus of this mysticism is on the Christian man in particular, rather than on man in general.

The mystics recognise that since the creation of mankind, God's image has been reflected in the nature of both the believer and unbeliever alike. However, that image is not deeply rooted in human nature generally. As to its possible development, there are but two options - striving for personal perfection by living without God, or striving for deification in a union with Christ. In this latter case, a man created in the image of God is thus capable of the highest perfection. Original sin has obscured the God-likeness within the human race and separates its members from the Source of life, but the incarnation of Christ, in turn, grants to mankind the prospect for the deification of human nature. This deification is of a saving nature, and may be defined as the "personal path of every mystic, his inner longing and ecstatic experience through self-cleansing."<sup>27</sup> Importantly, there are several anthropological implications that can be directly traced to an analysis of this concept of *saving deification*.

*First*, the major result is the resolution of the tragedy of duality in man. For Orthodox mystics this solution can be explained in a twofold idea of deification: (1) through mystical experience in its many forms, a Christian can be perfected in this earthly life; but (2) at the eschatological end there will be the final and realised association with God's nature in the realm of his presence. Thus, a saving deification pertains to a present and a future experience, a real ontological glorification of the whole human being, now and in the hereafter.<sup>28</sup> It must be remembered here, of course, that when the mystics speak of the deification of man they do not presuppose transformation into the actual state of being God, but only into the likeness of God. Consequently, in Orthodox anthropology there is the

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<sup>26</sup> See Fr. S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put', 1917; repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 60.

<sup>27</sup> *Cyprian (Kern)*, 231.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Cyprian (Kern)*, 239.

concept of a present reality consisting of the *inseparability* of the divine and human worlds. Each of the two worlds remains distinct from the other, but to the mystic's initiated eye the two are seen so closely interrelated that they can only be perceived and understood as an organic whole.

The concept of deification in mystical experience is also connected with the Christology of man, i.e. an attaining of godlikeness in human nature through participation in the image and likeness of Christ - the genuine image and likeness of God. As Berdiaev concludes, "Only the mystics, transcending all times and seasons, have glimpsed the truth of the Christology of man."<sup>29</sup>

*Second*, a present state of deification assumes a level of mystical comprehension of divine knowledge that is beyond mere natural means. As Gregory Palamas says, "Being removed from (the) material, [a mystic] proceeds to the Truth by the unuttered power of the Spirit, and by unutterable spiritual reception he hears unutterable words and sees the unutterable."<sup>30</sup> The divine vision for the Greek Fathers, termed *θεωρία*, is, therefore, an act of receptivity of God's unutterable truth. The experiences of *θεωρία* are also linked to the liturgical dimension of the Church's worship, where the saving power of God's presence and God's word is transcendent.

*Third*, in the concept of deification there is the idea that "man becomes divine by suppressing all that is human, by the disappearance of man and the appearance of Divinity in his place."<sup>31</sup> In the human soul there are three acting powers: (1) the intellect; (2) the passions; and (3) the will. The individual struggles in mind with passions rooted in the soul and needs to distract his attention from these passions by the effort of his will and intellect. "He must actively and firmly resolve to rebut the images of sin assailing him, and not to return to them again."<sup>32</sup> In this vein, ascetic literature stresses a *negative anthropology*, i.e. a doctrine of passions and the liberation from them. This liberation is possible because "the Spirit of God penetrates man's heart through his spirit and acts upon it."<sup>33</sup> In so doing, God influences the organ of the spirit - the intellect. Therefore, the rational power behind the

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<sup>29</sup> N. Berdiaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 81.

<sup>30</sup> Cyprian (Kern), "Spiritual Predecessors of St. Gregory Palamas," *Theological Thought* (1942), 130.

<sup>31</sup> N. Berdiaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 84.

<sup>32</sup> I. Kontzezevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia* (USA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1988), 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.



spirit of man is God. Thus it is that without obtaining strength in prayer and keeping a watchful guard a man is powerless against sinful impulses and temptations and is consequently liable to sin. In the words of mystic Paisii Velichkovskii (d. 1794), “being significantly removed from the loins, it (the mind) can easily alert the burning desire of the flesh which has become inherent in our nature since Adam’s fall into sin.”<sup>34</sup>

*Last*, the deification process is reflected in the ethical concerns of mystical life. All the problems pertaining to the role of the will in the dynamics of spiritual life, labour and effort are given their due attention. Since “the most important thing in a man is not feeling or knowledge, but work,”<sup>35</sup> the moral theory of mystical anthropology is both a significant condition and result of the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

In arriving at an understanding of Orthodox anthropology, it is not enough to limit examination to mystical constructs and the concept of deification. An analysis of the Orthodox concept of anthropological dualism as it relates in particular to the concept of the inner and the divine in man deserves further clarification.

#### 4.2.1.3 Independent Theoretical Constructions

A third source of Orthodox anthropology involves a number of independent theoretical constructions offered by various Orthodox thinkers and theologians. For the present purposes an analysis of the idea of *inner man* is selected and discussed in the light of how it is treated in these particular constructs.

A man is of two natures, body and soul. Between these two entities exists a fundamental unity free from any dualistic conflict that places spirit and body within any inherent opposition to each other.<sup>37</sup> The importance of the human spirit in this context is connected to the possibility of a direct and personal communication from God to man. “The

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<sup>34</sup> *The Life and Writings of the Moldavian Elder Paisius Velichkovskii* (M.: 1847), 128; Cf. *Anthology on Prayer* (Valaam: 1936), 124.

<sup>35</sup> A. Khomiakov, *Sochineniia [The Complete Works]* (M.: 1887), vol. VIII, 129.

<sup>36</sup> *Cyprian (Kern)*, 231.

<sup>37</sup> The idea that man is a compound whose body was fashioned by the devil and whose soul was created by God was promoted by well-known medieval heretics in the Balkan Slavic lands, so-called *Bogomils* (after a Bulgarian priest by the name Bogomil). The Orthodox Church fought against this doctrine. For the anthropological theoretical elements of Bogomilism see, in detail, in D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils. A Study in Balkan New-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948).

Spirit [of God] can only be revealed to spirit and this revelation involves inner illumination... [T]he denial of a highest spiritual nature in man, which renders him God-like, is tantamount to a denial of the very possibility of revelation, for there would be nothing to which such revelation could be made.<sup>38</sup> The spirit within man, then, is that which provides him with a direct link to God.

In the history of Orthodox teaching and practice, this concept of a divine component within the human make-up finds its expression in the dynamic idea of spiritual interchange between God and man as being the direct result of man having been created in the image of God. Thus it is true to say, as Orthodoxy emphasizes, that such communion is possible because of *man (being) in God* and because of *God (being) in man*. Consequently, the concept of soul or spirit as divine component in man accords with the Orthodox theology of the Holy Spirit - the Sanctifier of the Church, who leads and guides the Church and its members. The activity carried on by God within man is seen in this guidance of the Holy Spirit. An example of how this inner guidance works is offered by Gregorii Skovoroda (1722-1794) - the first Russian theologising philosopher to link this concept with the interpreting process applied to the Bible. For Skovoroda, to have faith means to be filled with the Spirit and to be transformed within the invisible inner nature. He asks, "What is faith if not the illumination or clarification of the unseen Nature as grasped by the inner heart [of man]?"<sup>39</sup> Thus "a sacred force, a kind of magic" within man is the key for reading and understanding the Bible.<sup>40</sup>

### **4.3 Distinctive Aspects of Orthodox Anthropology**

From this general consideration of Orthodox anthropology it is important to take special note of the Russian Orthodox anthropological construction as represented below in three of its more distinct aspects: (1) the nature of Russian man; (2) the wholeness of man; and (3) the concept of *theurgy*. These three distinctives are closely related to the larger concern here with Orthodox biblical hermeneutics.

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<sup>38</sup> N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), 94-95.

<sup>39</sup> Grigorii Skovoroda, *A Conversation Among Five Travelers* in *Anthology of Russian Philosophy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), Vol. 1, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Idem.*, 56.



### 4.3.1 *The Nature of Russian Man*

Since the event of the baptism of Rus' in 988 there was a belief that the conversion of the Russian people was not only marked by the rejection of paganism; it also made Rus' new people, a chosen people of God.<sup>41</sup> The Russian nation consciously assumed the self-appointed role of archetype and guardian of the truth of Orthodox Christianity as early as the years immediately following the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. Thereafter the theory of Moscow as the 'Third Rome' (after the fall of the first two Romes - Rome and Constantinople) predetermined the ecclesiastical and philosophical disposition of Orthodox anthropology in stressing that the people of the Russian Church had been "elected from above as the guardian of Christ's truth."<sup>42</sup>

This universal rendering of Russian Orthodoxy has historically produced a frame of mind that clearly shows a marked contrast between Eastern and Western Christianity, and invites the inevitable comparison between Russian and Western man. In this comparison, the 'otherness' (discussed below) of the Russian consciousness is not derived from an *ethnic-political* or *national-cultural-historical* basis, but from the perspective of the *religio-metaphysical* character of man. This approach to man carries with it several distinct implications when speaking of Russian man *vis a vis* Western Man. These implications are well summarized by Semen Frank (1877-1950). *First*, there is the uniqueness of the Russian mode of comprehension - from *sum* to *cogito*. Russians perceive the particulars from the whole, but a Western man moves from *cogito* to *sum*.<sup>43</sup> *Second*, Russians, from their more religious viewpoint, cherish only one value in life - holiness and spiritual transformation, while Western man is more accustomed to a variety of spheres and values (*i.e.* religion, ethics, science, law, ethnicity, etc.).<sup>44</sup> *Third*, if Russian man approaches his world from the sole viewpoint of God and man as such, Western man constructs his world-view from the stand point of natural laws and natural order of a "physical nature."<sup>45</sup> Therefore, given the radically different mindsets of these two world views, it is certainly not out of place to conclude that a supernatural and mystical experience of divine truth has a much more natural

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. D.M. Shakhovskoi, "The Significance of the Baptism of Rus' in the Development of Russian Culture," in Giuseppe Alberigo and Oscar Beozzo, eds., *The Holy Russian Church and Western Christianity* (London: SCN Press, 1996), 1-9.

<sup>42</sup> *Zen'kovskii*, vol. I, 34.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. S. L. Frank, *Russkoe Mirovozrenie [Russian World View]* (SPb.: Nauka, 1996), 169.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 183-184.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 187.

affinity to the Russian mind. That mind perceives empirical reality through the higher reality of God-man relationships, and not, as does the West, from the rationalistic view of a '*man-physical nature*' phenomenon.

#### 4.3.2 *The Wholeness of Man*

The emphasis on the pre-eminence of the Orthodox Church over the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches is not based solely on *theocentric* grounds (i.e. from a dogmatic or ecclesiastic consciousness). The formulation of Orthodox anthropology, too, furnishes its own supportive reasons for the substantial difference that lies between the East and West,<sup>46</sup> and the inherent superiority for the former. From the Orthodox point of view the main error of 'Western Christian anthropology' lies in the stress it places on the cognitive faculties of man as *the sole organ for searching out truth*. In contrast to this notion stands the Orthodox idea of the *wholeness of man*.

The doctrine of the *wholeness of man* contains within it the concept of individuality, but relates the individual to the larger context of the Church and nation, within which entities the individual is viewed as but part of the whole. This idea postulates that only within the Church, and only in accordance with the Church's teachings, is the individual able to realize the full potential of his humanity. Orthodox anthropology stresses this understanding of the totality of the human being in terms of its relationships to significant others, rather than the understanding of the nature of the individual in isolation from its proper social and spiritual contexts. Although not completely denying individuality, Orthodoxy emphasizes the understanding of the individual human being in terms of the *whole* - of the whole body of Christians, clergy and laity together, who are empowered by the Spirit to act together in concert as one. The Orthodox philosopher and theologian Alexey Khomiakov (1804-1860) plainly states that Orthodox anthropology rejects any form of radical individualism. He writes,

Each human being finds himself within the Church, not in the impotence of spiritual isolation, but in the strength of spiritual oneness with his brothers and his Savior. In the Church he finds his own self and its perfection; more precisely, he finds there what is perfect in him.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. I. V. Kireevskii, *Izbrannye Stat'i* [Selected essays] (M.: 1984), 262.

<sup>47</sup> Alexey Khomiakov, *Works* (M.:1900), Vol. 2, 111. Cf. S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put', 1917; repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 343.



In contrast to the Western worldview, with its foremost I-centeredness, the Russian mentality, then, emphasizes a WE-philosophy, a WE-world view.<sup>48</sup> This is the key element in understanding the epistemology of the Orthodox Church in general, and in understanding Orthodox anthropology in particular. And it is this key that explains why Orthodoxy's interpretation of the Bible is first and foremost an ecclesiastic venture.

### 4.3.3 The Concept of Theurgy

This section will examine Orthodox anthropology's approach to creativity - a basic element in many human endeavours, including art, music, literature, and the performing arts. Special attention will be directed to the concept of theurgy, an idea framed by Fr. Sergius Bulgakov (1871- 1944)<sup>49</sup> in his essay *Art and Theurgy*.<sup>50</sup> In this essay, Bulgakov makes a serious attempt to deal with the relationship between human creativity [*anthrourgy* from Gr. ἀνθρώπου ἔργον) and the notion of *theurgy* (a term that originated from Vladimir Solovyov's teaching on the performing arts<sup>51</sup>) - the *act of God* in man [Ru. *Bogodeistvie*; Gr. Θεοῦ ἔργον ].

Bulgakov emphasizes that the creativeness expressed by man is a direct reflection of God's nature. On the one hand, this idea is common to all Orthodox theologians and religious philosophers.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, however, Bulgakov expands the concept and raises the question of God's direct *participation-and-guidance* in the creative process itself, especially in a temperament characterized by a distinctly aesthetic and religious bent. *Theurgy*, for Bulgakov, is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church (in general) and in the

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. S. L. Frank, *Russian World View* (SPb.: Nauka, 1996), 159-160.

<sup>49</sup> On Bulgakov see L. A. Zander, *Bog i mir; mirovozrenie o. S. Bulgakova* [*God and the Worlds: The World view of Fr. S. Bulgakov*], 2.vols., (Paris: 1948); Elena, "Prof. Father Segii Bulgakov," *BT* #27 (1986). The bibliography of his works is compiled by K. Noutov, *Bibliographie des oeuvres de p. Serge Bulgakov* (Paris, 1984).

<sup>50</sup> First published in the journal *Russian Thought* 12 (1916). Recently it was included in Fr. S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: 1994).

<sup>51</sup> Solovyov's concept of *theurgy* was first advanced in his essay *Philosophical Basics of Whole Knowledge*. Theurgy, in Solovyov, is "the mystics' elegant and technical creativeness" taken as the whole of "mystical creativeness." Vladimir Solovyov, *Sochineniia* [*The Complete Works*] (M.: 1988) vol. 2, 156; 320, n. 157.

<sup>52</sup> For example, Arch. Alexander Bukharev says, "the creative forces and the ideas [of a man] are only a reflection of the Word of God" that revealed for us God's creativeness, as shown at the creation of the Universe. Alexander Bukharev, *Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World*, 317. The same conception is also found in the philosophical construction of Fyodor Golubinskii (1797-1854). Fyodor Golubinskii, *Lectures on Philosophy* (M.: 1884), Pt. II, 66.

believer (in particular). He interprets the words of Christ in John 20:21-22 and Acts 1:8 as the promise of a theurgic power, and the Pentecost event he understands as the descent of this power to the Church and the Apostles (see Acts 2:1-4). For Bulgakov, “Pentecost is an absolute foundation of the Christian theurgy.”<sup>53</sup> As understood here the concept of theurgy is directly linked to the sending of the Spirit (πνεῦμα ἅγιον, “Holy Spirit”). The Lukan narrative in Acts 2, in Bulgakov’s interpretation, is an authentic account of the coming of theurgy [the Spirit], when the people of the Church received the power they needed for all operative and creative tasks. Orthodox Christians, then, are to be understood as being moved by an unseen power of theurgy [the Holy Spirit] in “every spiritual activity”: (1) the practice of personal piety;<sup>54</sup> (2) the performance of religious cult (prayer, worship and practices of the ecclesiastic mysteries);<sup>55</sup> and (3) the engagement in creative activities of a religious nature (icon-painting, architecture and music).<sup>56</sup>

Bulgakov further links the concept of theurgy to comprehension in general.<sup>57</sup> Since the holy mysteries divulge themselves only to the spiritual faculties (the mind attuned to the spiritual), Bulgakov specifies how theurgy works if applied to Bible interpretation. *First*, he underscores that the Bible is a God-inspired book. The biblical authors were divinely illuminated. They had “a direct acceptance of God’s power - some kind of transubstantiation of their human nature, that enabled them to record the Word of God.”<sup>58</sup> *Secondly*, Bulgakov stresses that because of the presence of theurgy in the Church, spiritually experienced men understand Scripture both at the level of the “letter” (the *historia*, or narrative meaning) and at the level of “mystery” or “spirit” (the *theoria*, or spiritual meaning). The key for understanding the Holy Bible is “an illuminated eye”, an enlightened understanding which receives its ability to comprehend the Scriptural message from a *theurgic* power (the Holy Spirit). In this way, Bulgakov seeks to construct a hermeneutics that (1) includes the necessity of establishing a proper biblical anthropology and pneumatology (the dwelling of

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<sup>53</sup> Fr. S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put’, 1917; repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 320.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Idem., 325-6.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Idem., 323, 326.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Idem., 326ff.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. with the view of Berdiaev, “In man there is an active creative beginning to which comprehension is connected. Comprehension in itself includes a theurgic element.” N. Berdiaev, *The Kingdom of Caesar and the Kingdom of the Spirit* (Paris, YMCA-Press, 1947; reprint. M.: Nauka, 1995), 295.

<sup>58</sup> See Fr. S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put’, 1917; repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 324.



God's Spirit in believers); and (2) explains the possibility of a correct and proper body of interpretation of the Sacred Bible through the Spirit's illumination. Bulgakov's anthropology, in its synthesis with theological concepts of the Church and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, forms a 'Christian epistemology.' All human creative efforts to know must be made in the name of Jesus Christ, and be inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

In regards to biblical hermeneutics the concept of *theurgy* is linked to the Orthodox conviction that the Bible is of both a divine and human nature. On the one hand, it contains a religious dimension - the revelation of God. On the other hand, the biblical writers who presented the revealed truths of God, organized and presented them in a very human form, shaped by the individual writer's own language, personal identity and historical-cultural context.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the human race is not only a recipient to the Word of God but also, in the persons of the biblical writers, co-author with God of the biblical texts. In other words, mankind is a very active participant in the creation of the Bible. This fact in itself has far reaching methodological and theoretical implications for biblical hermeneutics. (see CHAPTER SIX).

#### **4.4 Hermeneutical Implications**

As important as they are in and of themselves, the distinctive features of Orthodox anthropology nonetheless also hold certain important implications for Church hermeneutics. *First*, in the anthropological difference between *man prior to faith* and *man under faith* can be seen the hermeneutical key for the understanding of the Bible. The understanding of *man prior to faith* operates solely on natural principles and cannot attain unto the spiritual; the nature of *man under faith*, however, apprehends God's divine truth through the Spirit of God. Thus the possibility of understanding the Bible corresponds exactly with the antithesis that lies between the old nature without Christ and the new nature created in Christ. Any study of the Bible conducted without genuine Christian faith, even if it represents a scientific approach to the texts, "cannot open its eternal and religious substance, which is given only to the believing heart [*i.e.* to man under faith]."<sup>61</sup> This understanding constructs a category of

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<sup>59</sup> Fr. S. Bulgakov, *Social Teaching in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology* (Evanston, Ill: Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1934), 16.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Antonii, *Dogmaticheskoe Bogoslovie [Dogmatic Theology]* 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (SPb.: 1862), 6; S. Bulgakov *The Orthodoxy [Pravoslavie]* (Paris: YMCA, 1965), 63.

interpretation that is both epistemological and existential in nature, and which signifies new possibilities for humanity to comprehend the Bible.

*Second*, Orthodox anthropology, based as it is on mystical experience, presupposes a fairly free rein on the cognitive search for truth, even striking upon that which goes beyond the material world as perceived by the senses (but which is not necessarily in some kind of opposition to it). Perhaps, this element of mystical experience led Lev Karsavin to the generalized conclusion that “Theology is a *spontaneous* force of *free* cognitive searching.”<sup>62</sup> The mystical component to human cognition presupposes here a direct connection with the highest source of knowledge. The known, in this case, cannot always be rationally demonstrated; for as any Orthodox exegete can attest, the mystical dimension postulates the legitimacy of a particular kind of comprehension that lies outside of any purely scientific investigation of literary text. This is not meant to suggest, of course, that Orthodox theologians argue that mystical understandings of biblical texts lack any rational element to them. Karsavin, for example, writes, “We defend rationally-expressed knowledge of God, which in part is rationally demonstrable.”<sup>63</sup> Bulgakov, too, in arguing that mystical revelation from the Holy Spirit is an open possibility, nonetheless maintains that any such knowledge of a mystical character comes within a distinct rational framework. For him, rational examination of religious revelation must be conducted under the authority of Church tradition – for, as he words it, “personal intuitions [of a mystical nature] have to be measured according to Church tradition, because the Church is seen and understood as the pillar and bulwark of the truth” [cf. 1 Tim. 3:15].<sup>64</sup> He concludes that for the Orthodox theological consciousness both Church authority and personal mystic experience are needed; for only in a balance between the two can the Orthodox Church escape a subjectivity of understanding that is open to suspect because of the lack of outside criteria against which to judge it. Therefore a predominantly mystical bias as the means of a *comprehensive* exposition of the Bible is irredeemably one-sided and ineffective. The one-sidedness of a mystical interpretation, then, would – if it were regarded as the sole comprehensive hermeneutic – be disastrous for Orthodox biblical interpretation and do grave violence any understanding of the Bible. The operative principle of Orthodox hermeneutical theory thus presupposes a much more complex dimension involving the

<sup>61</sup> Fr. S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put’, 1917; repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 84.

<sup>62</sup> L. P. Karsavin, *O Nachalakh [Concerning Principles]* (Paris: 1925), 90.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



historical relationship between Church tradition and individual mystical experience. The over-arching and ongoing divine activity of the Holy Spirit demands submission of any individually derived mystical knowledge to the rational exposition of the truth as determined by the great body of corporate truth built up within the Church over the centuries. This principle of interpretation becomes even more evident in the understanding of the anthropological concept of the *wholeness of man* as the existential hermeneutical principle.

*Third*, the Orthodox tendency to view man as part of the much larger *whole* (i.e. the Orthodox Church itself) assumes an agreement and unity as already existing among those within this *whole* – i.e. the whole body of Orthodox Christians. The anthropological concept of the *wholeness of man* is the existential hermeneutical principle here. For Russian Orthodox hermeneutics, solely private interpretation of the Scripture is excluded. Guidance in theology cannot be derived from the authority of only one particular expert, or even from a select group of exegetes, by reason of their exclusiveness leading to the possibility of error. Such guidance is possible and valid only if “it is concluded in the harmony and agreement of all Christian pastors and teachers.”<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the Orthodox scholar cannot begin his work by taking himself as the sole point of departure in his interpretation, but must always work within the larger context of the Orthodox community itself, and within the unity of the Orthodox worship, liturgy, scholarship, preaching, sacraments and prayer that he discovers there. Because “the universal spirit of the Orthodox Church preserves the interpreter of the Bible from needless individualistic mysticism and heretical misunderstanding,”<sup>66</sup> the corporate element thus plays a critical role as the interpretative context for individual exegetes. Fr. Bulgakov underscores this principle very clearly when he states:

“[T]o understand the word of God solely from within-oneself is in itself a contradictory idea... it means to separate oneself from the whole of mankind, and to place the self alone in a direct relationship with God, who teaches us to appeal to Him not as “*My Father*”, but as “*Our Father*”, converting any human I into the solidarity of WE.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Fr. S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put', 1917; repr. M.: Respublika, 1994), 60.

<sup>65</sup> Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 11.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Pavel Evdokimov, “An Eastern Orthodox Bible Study,” *Student World* XLII/12 (1949): 152.

<sup>67</sup> S. Bulgakov, *Pravoslavie [The Orthodoxy]* (Paris, 1965), 52.

Thus the Church becomes the arbiter for the Scriptural interpretations and beliefs of all Orthodox Christians. In participating in this great body of believers (the so-called concept of *sobornost*'), the individual must subsume into the organic truth of the whole. To be subordinated to this truth of the larger body is the only possible way to experience oneness with that whole. Of course, only a voluntary subordination (*a free union*) is assumed in identifying with the whole of the Orthodox Church. Such a subordinating also presupposes that: (1) *the truth of the whole is of the most absolute surety*, i.e. the individual cannot deviate from this truth, but, conversely, must be either corrected or affirmed by it; and (2) private thoughts or interpretations are validated by the whole only so far as they are admissible to it. In Orthodox anthropology, individualism is conceivable only to the extent of subordinating the ideas and beliefs of the individual to the Orthodox community as a whole. Because the Orthodox Church is the guardian and keeper of divine truth, any individual interpreter of the Bible who claims to be part of the Church, must protect the truth and follow the doctrinal and interpretative criteria established by the Church. This approach provides the direction necessary for the individual interpreter of the Bible to keep himself from error. In the concept of subjecting the one to the truth preserved by the many, the Russian Orthodox Church does not see any restriction being imposed upon human creativity, but rather sees a positive check against any individual straying from the truth. Moreover, Orthodox teaching, in theory, constitutes a unified and organic approach to Bible interpretation, one possible interpretation presupposing another, and the denial of any particular, commonly accepted interpretation leading, as a consequence, to the denial of the basis of all.

*Fourth*, the depth of mystical realism and the ecclesiastical consciousness that stresses the *religio-metaphysical* uniqueness and otherness of the Russian Church, as over and against the Western Church, is also significant in linking the ontological feature of the Russian approach to the matters of understanding Scripture. The otherness of the Russian mind, perhaps only indirectly, implies its "superiority" in understanding and knowing God. This bias has always influenced the way in which Russian Orthodox interpreters have read the Bible. In their view, because the truth belongs to the Russian Church, their way of reading the Scriptures cannot possibly be mistaken; or since Russians are perceived to be a more God-fearing people, divine truths are revealed to them in an indisputable form and essence through the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

*Fifth*, Orthodox anthropology stresses the Spirit's creative energies within the individual and links the concept of understanding with the power of the Holy Spirit (the source of illumination). Thus a man is capable of understanding Scripture in its deepest sense



if the Holy Spirit, the *illuminating agent*, enables him to comprehend the Sacred Bible correctly. The Spirit also restricts the individualistic impulses of the interpreter, thus preventing him from misconceptions. Exegesis, then, is a divine-human enterprise based upon *synergy*, a cooperation between the divine Spirit and the human interpreter. Interpretation of the Bible is possible in the sense of a synthesis of human creative effort and the enabling of the Holy Spirit who dwells within the Church. Thus the exegete must submit himself and his skills to the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit, if his efforts are to bear fruit for the body of Christ. A scholar who approaches Scripture solely on scientific criteria, without any dependence upon the Holy Spirit, is, according to the Orthodox point-of-view, restricted to discovering only a meaning that is limited to the surface of Scripture,<sup>68</sup> not too different, perhaps from the meaning he might derive from the reading of any other literary text.

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. M. N. Nikol'skii, "Our Biblical Science," *Orthodox Review* 1 (1875): 190.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DMITRII IVANOVICH BOGDASHEVSKII (1861-1933): HIS HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

The hermeneutical perspective of bible interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church (as it was attested in its history) and hermeneutical implication of the anthropological theoretical construction formed the frame of reference that is vital in discerning the New Testament hermeneutics constructed by Bogdashevskii. Thus, the discussion turns to Bogdashevskii.

This chapter does not present a comprehensive study of Bogdashevskii as such. This chapter attempts to examine Bogdashevskii's career as an exegete of the New Testament. The investigation of his understanding of the New Testament interpretation and hermeneutics will serve as the test case study in the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics. A case study of Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics will be performed because it is advantageous to have a detailed study of one writer as an example of the hermeneutical trends attested in the Russian Orthodox Church. The focus on Bogdashevskii should help us understand how the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics cohere in one person's thoughts. Yet, as we have previously stated, Bogdashevskii is only contributory to the larger development of the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics (i.e. the location of the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics lies in the interaction of ideas of many).

Bogdashevskii is chosen for his significant contribution to the Russian Orthodox New Testament scholarship and for his priestly role in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church. For many years he was a professor of New Testament at Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy and later the Rector of Kiev's Academy. In recognition of his academic achievements and credentials all three Russian Orthodox Ecclesiastic Academies appointed him as a distinguished professor of the New Testament (Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy in 1914; St. Petersburg's and Kazan's Academies in 1915). What is more, Bogdashevskii represents more than just a tiny minority in the Russian Orthodox Church – its learned scholars. Bogdashevskii never isolated himself from the practical life of the Church. He was received into the priesthood of the Russian Orthodox Church and earned the high regard in both ecclesiastic and scholarly circles. These supportive factors prove Bogdashevskii to be a



legitimate target for a case study in the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics. Moreover, there is not a single book, dissertation, monograph or scholarly journal article devoted to Bogdashevskii's exegetical and homiletic material. Such deficiency gives the additional reason for a focused study devoted to Bogdashevskii.

While this chapter touches some aspects of Bogdashevskii's life, its main focus is the work of exegete he committed himself to during his years of lecturing at Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an exposition, analysis and interpretation of Dmitrii Bogdashevskii's hermeneutical approach<sup>1</sup> to the New Testament, primarily as expressed in his published works, though an examination of Philosophy, New Testament exegesis, and Christian ethics as the disciplines that witness closely to his hermeneutical procedures. The analysis of his philosophical ideas will serve as the gate to his worldview that controlled his exegetical decisions. In interpreting the New Testament, Bogdashevskii emphasized its ethics and in doing so he had to make the decisions preconditions by his hermeneutical approach, i.e. a set of the assumptions that controls the exegete in the process of interpreting biblical text.

This chapter is the first more detailed study of the biblical scholarship of Dmitrii Bogdashevskii as it finds expression in his published works.<sup>2</sup> It is here contended that: (1) Bogdashevskii's personal and educational background, his teaching career and ecclesiastic involvement afford data useful in interpreting and analyzing his thought; (2) a comprehension of Bogdashevskii's perspective on selected specific philosophical themes is requisite for a correct understanding of his work as the New Testament exegete; (3) Bogdashevskii's theological and methodological axiomatic assumptions constructs his theory of reading of the New Testament; and (4) the course of Bogdashevskii carrier and his published writings, taken together, as a whole, may be interpreted as consulting his New Testament hermeneutics.

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<sup>1</sup> By hermeneutical approach we mean a set of the assumptions that controls the exegete in the process of interpreting biblical text. For our definition of hermeneutics see Chapter One, note 4.

<sup>2</sup> In the course of his life and career Bogdashevskii was received into the priesthood of the Russian Orthodox Church. Consequently, he signs his publications adjustably, namely: D. I. Bogdashevskii (from 1890), Protoerei Vasilii (from 1913), and Bishop Vasilii (from 1914). In referring to Bogdashevskii's publications we will maintain his choice of a signature.

## 5.1 The Life of Bogdashevskii

This section will examine the life and career of Dmitrii Bogdashevskii. We shall first set forth a biographical account of Bogdashevskii career (5.1.1). Included here is a description of his background and formal education, and a chronicle of his career ordered around his appointments. Then, we shall provide an overview of his contribution (5.1.2). Finally, we shall outline the historical setting of his life (5.1.3). Included here is a short description of a situation in Russian nation and Church.

### 5.1.1 The Biographical Details

Dmitrii Ivanovich Bogdashevskii was born in the Volyn' guberniia (province) in the Western region of the southern Russia (presently the Ukraine), on 19 October 1861.<sup>3</sup> The atmosphere of traditional Orthodox Piety impregnated the household. Bogdashevskii's autobiographical remarks indicate that he cherished his childhood years.<sup>4</sup> He grew up in a Church environment.

After completing his primary schooling, Bogdashevskii began this theological training first in the faculty of Volyn' Seminary and next at Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy. The theological and classical learning, especially literature and languages, were easy for him.<sup>5</sup> In 1886, he graduated from Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy and was awarded the degree *Candidate of Theology*.

The Academy's professors were pleased with Bogdashevskii's academic achievements and he was invited to remain at the Academy for additional preparation to teach in the Department of History of Philosophy. From 1887 to 1890, he was lecturing at

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<sup>3</sup> The biographical information included in what follows is drawn from a number of brief notices, notably: B. Vorob'ev ed. *Za Khrista Postradavshie. Goneniia na Russkuiu Pravoslavnuuiu Tserkov': 1917-1956* [*The Suffered for Christ. The Oppressions on the Russian Orthodox Church: 1917-1956*] *Biographical Dictionary, Book One (A-K)* (M.: Orthodox St. Tikhonov Theological Institute, 1997), s.v. "Vasilii (Bogdashevskii Dmitrii Ivanovich), Archbishop," pp. 221-222; Z. "From the Academic Life," *TKDA* III (1914): 194ff [About Bogdashevskii's appointment as the Rector of Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy and his short biography]; "Bogdashevskii, D. I." in *Pravoslavnaia Bogoslovskaiia Entsiklopediia* [*The Orthodox Theological Encyclopaedia*] Vol. 2, 727-729.

<sup>4</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Chtenie. Neskol'ko slov o teosofii," ["Lecture. Several Remarks on Theosophy,"] *TKDA* III, 11 (1912): 344.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Idem*.



the Academy as the acting docent in the faculty of Philosophy. Soon, in 1890, he was appointed senior lecturer (Ru. – доцент) subsequently after being awarded a Master Degree<sup>6</sup> for the Master thesis, the bulk of which was published in the Academy's scholarly journal (*Trudy Kievskoi Theological Academy*) in the form of a series of articles under the title *The False Teachers in the First Letter of John* [*Lzheuchiteli v Pervom Poslanii Sv. Apostola Ioanna*] *TKDA* (1890) 3: 483-520; 4: 674-713; 5: 60-91; 6: 280-305; 7: 408-441; 8: 545-564 (it was reprinted shortly afterwards under the title *The False Teachers Denounced in the First Letter of John* [*Lzheuchiteli Oblichayemye v Pervom Poslanii Ap. Ioanna*] (Kiev: 1890).

In 1897, Dmitrii Ivanovich voluntarily left the Department of History of Philosophy and joined the Sub-Faculty of the New Testament. This decision can be explained from Bogdashevskii's own conviction that in its essence the New Testament is "the most perfect philosophy, which gives solution to all the important problems of the [human] mind."<sup>7</sup> Consequently, he dedicated the rest of his academic and pastoral life continually studying and preaching the New Testament.

In 1902, Bogdashevskii received a position of Professor Extraordinary of the New Testament. In two years, he was awarded a Doctoral degree in Theology for his doctoral thesis, which, again, was first published in the Academy's journal (1900-1904) and finally appeared in the form of monograph (1904).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Holy Synod awarded the degree on 17 November 1890 for the thesis submitted on 17 August 1889.

<sup>7</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Sound Metaphysics," Book review of P. Linitzkii, *Guide to the Study of Philosophy* (Kharkov': 1893) in *TKDA* II (1898) 5: 125. Everyplace, he voiced that without the Church and faith, man cannot find a satisfactory answer for the basic philosophical questions: where are the people from and where they are going? Cf. Ibid., "Slovo. Pri vospominanii strastei Khristovykh (Luk. 23:21)," ["Sermon. In Remembrance of Christ's Suffering (Luk 23:21),"] *TKDA* II, 5 (1988): 56. Also, "In the faith in God and Lord Jesus Christ... in religion we will find calmness in everything that indeed disturb and concern us. Ibid., "Slovo. Pri vospominanii strastei Khristovykh: Gde naiti uspokoenie v postigaiushchikh nas smushcheniakh? (In. 14:1)," ["A Sermon. In Remembrance of Christ's Suffering: Where to find Peace for Our Doubts? (John 14:1),"] *TKDA* II, 5 (1891): 3-10. For the analogous argumentation see also his "Where to find Peace for Our Doubts? (John 14:1)," *TKDA* II, 5 (1891): 8-9; "Slovo. Pri vospominanii strastei Khristovykh: Protiv Izvrashcheniia L. Tolstovym Khristianstva," ["In remembrance of Christ's suffering: Against Tolstoy's perversion of Christianity,"] *TKDA* I, 4 (1982): 591.

<sup>8</sup> For the set of articles see D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Poslanie Apostola Pavla k Efesianam," ["Paul's Letter to the Ephesians,"] *TKDA* (1900) 3: 435- 476; 6: 254-285; (1901) 2: 159-210; (1903) 2: 254-304; 4: 505-537; 6: 213-274; 10-12: 273-368; (1904) 1-9: 369-678. Also Ibid., *Poslanie k Efesianam: Isagogiko-Ekzegeticheskoe Issledovanie* [*The Letter to the Ephesians: An Isagogical-Exegetical Investigation*] (K.: 1904).

In 1905, he became the Supernumerary Ordinary Professor of Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy at the Department of the New Testament. Soon after (in 1909), the Holy Synod appointed Bogdashevskii to be the Inspector of Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy. With this post he accepted certain administrative responsibilities.

Being obstinate from marriage, Bogdashevskii, in 1910, was received into the priesthood of the Orthodox Church. He was ordained as a Priest (*Iereii*) and elevated to the Archpriest office (*Protoerei*). At this stage of his life, he acknowledged that both teaching and ecclesiastic service were going relatively smooth for him.<sup>9</sup> On September 24, 1913, the Grace Flavian (Gorodetskii), the Metropolitan of Kiev and Galitsa, admitted Archpriest Bogdashevskii to the monastic vows and gave him the name *Vasilii*. Next month (on the 5th of October) he was elevated to the Archimandrite office.

After this moment, Bogdashevskii entered into a period of administrative responsibilities. First, in 1914, he became the Superior of Kiev's Btratsko-Bogoiavlenskii Monastery. Soon afterward, on July 29, 1914, just before the academic year started, the Holy Synod appointed Archimandrite Vasilii for the Rectoral office of Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy (He replaced Innokentii, Bishop of Kanev, who was transferred to the Episcopate of Vitebsk and Polotsk). Simultaneously with the position of the Rector, Archimandrite Vasilii was elevated to the Bishopric office (on August, 5<sup>th</sup>, 1914). The Grace Flavian (Gorodetskii) Metropolitan of Kiev and Galitsa, together with the other Russian Orthodox authorities, concentrated him as the Bishop of Kanev.

As the Rector of Kiev's Academy, Bogdashevskii enthusiastically emphasized the academic proficiency and breadth of theological knowledge. In his commencement ceremonial speech for the academic year 1916-1917, he said:

The academic knowledge is a great power... Only the enemies of the Church may suggest that the pastors should be humble dedicated readers [of the ecclesiastical literature]. The urgency of the Church life is complex; and, the various things are needed in order to get ready for making defense to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). The Church reform... demands the knowledgeable and well-grounded clergies... May the academic knowledge advance!<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. Several Remarks on Theosophy," ["Chtenie. Neskol'ko slov o teosofii,"] *TKDA* III, 11 (1912): 344.

<sup>10</sup> Bishop Vasilii, "The Ceremonial Speech for Opening Academic Year 1916-1917 at Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy," *TKDA* III (1916): iv.



After the Red Revolution, in 1917, the Bolsheviks closed Kiev's Academy. In April 1923, Bishop Vasilii was arrested together with Mikhail (Ermakov) the Metropolitan of Kiev and Bishop Dimitrii (Verbitskii) and shortly imprisoned at Moscow Butyraskaia Prison. Consequently, he was sentenced for one year in exile (May 1923- August 1924) in the village Ishma, Komi (North-East of Sybirian District). In 1924, released from his banishment, Bogdashevskii returned to Kiev. In 1925, Bishop Vasilii was elevated to the Archbishopric office. He died on February 25, 1933, in Kiev.

### 5.1.2 His Contribution

Bogdashevskii writings include 10 books and monographs, more than 80 journal articles<sup>11</sup> and reviews.<sup>12</sup> He contributed to *Orthodox Theological Encyclopaedia* and translated the dogmatic writings of Tertullian.<sup>13</sup> He has published in a variety of popular Orthodox media, frequently addressed professional association, learned societies and research institutes, often is invited to speak at different ceremonies, and regularly preached at the Btratsko-Bogoiavlenskii Monastery. It is rightly noted that Bogdashevskii distinguished himself with unusual productivity.<sup>14</sup>

The career of this ordained Orthodox priest mirrors the ambition and diversity of his publication. He has taught at Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy and has served as its Rector. For his achievements in teaching and researching, the Russian Orthodox ecclesiastic authorities honored Bogdashevskii. In recognition of his academic credentials all three Russian Orthodox Ecclesiastic Academies welcomed him as a distinguished professor of the New Testament by appointing him as a distinguished member of the Faculties of Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy (1914) and of St. Petersburg's Academy and of Kazan' (both in 1915).

Yet, apart from the reviews of his books and articles,<sup>15</sup> there has been little scholarly attention to the work of Dmitrii Bogdashevskii. There are only passing references to him in

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<sup>11</sup> Mainly in *Works of the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy (TKDA)* published by the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed chronology and documentation of his writings see *The Works of Archbishop Vasilii (D. I. Bogdashevskii, 1861-1933)* in BIBLIOGRAPHY.

<sup>13</sup> Tertullian, *The Dogmatic Writings*, trans. by Bishop Vasilii (K.: 1915).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Men'*, 280

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Protoerei A. G. "Bishop Vasilii, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Kiev: 1915)," *TKDA* III (1915): 536-538; Z. "From the Academic Life," *TKDA* III (1914): 194ff; "Bogdashevskii," in *The Orthodox Theological Encyclopaedia* Vol. 2, pp. 727-729; M. Tareev, "On the Translation of John

scholarly writings and occasional biographical profiles.<sup>16</sup> Despite his many publications and the esteem in which he was held in both ecclesiastic and scholarly circles, there is not a single book, dissertation, monograph or scholarly journal article devoted to Bogdashevskii's published work in whole or in part. On the one hand, the Red Revolution, in 1917, interrupted not only Bogdashevskii's accomplishments as the exegete and writer; but also almost put a stop to all religious reflective thinking. Without doubt, it resulted in deficiency of the studies devoted to Bogdashevskii's published works. The current circumstances of Russian Christianity, however, allow and stimulate for rethinking and reconsidering the Orthodox past. In this context we locate our interest in Bogdashevskii.

### 5.1.3 The Historical Setting of His Life

In order to indicate something of the change in climate in the Orthodox Church and the Russian State during Bogdashevskii's life, during the time he was growing in his theological consciousness to the end of his life, a few words of the Russian history of this period may be in order.<sup>17</sup> This will indicate Bogdashevskii's time of history prescribed by the philosophy of historical investigation.

During years of his childhood, adolescent, and student life, the young Bogdashevskii experienced unquestioned and unquestioning religious domination. The majority of Orthodox churchmen accepted the great Tsarist autocracy, which ruled up until the middle years of the reign of Nikolas II. The Russian Empire, under the reign of Alexander II, was involved in domestic wars and partial reforms. When Serbia and Montenegro revolted against Turkey in 1876, Russia intervened on their behalf (Russo-Turkish War of 1877 and 1878). The essential failure of the war increased popular discontent with the government. A bomb

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8:44," *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* II (1904): 141-161; M. Tareev, "The Response to Prof. D. I. Bogdashevskii," *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* III (1904): 209-212.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., Protoerei B. Vorob'ev ed. *'Za Khrista Postradavshie. Gonenii na Russkuiu Pravoslavnuu Tserkov' (1917-1956) [The Suffered for Christ. The Oppressions on the Russian Orthodox Church 1917-1956] Biographical Dictionary, Book One (A-K)* (M.: Orthodox St. Tikhonov Theological Institute, 1997), s.v. "Vasilii (Bogdashevskii Dmitrii Ivanovich), Archbishop," pp. 221-222;

<sup>17</sup> Among the many accounts of the immediately pre-Revolutionary periods, see J. S. Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia: The Last Years of the Empire 1900-1917* (New York, 1940); A. V. Kartashov, "Revoliutsiia i Sobor, 1917-1918 gg.," ["Revolution and Council,"] *Bogoslovskaiia mysl'* 4 (1944): 75-101; A. A. Bogolepov, "Church Reform in Russia 1905-1918," *SVTQ* 10 (1966): 12-66; G. Simon, "Church, State and Society," in G. Katkov et al. (eds.), *Russia Enters the Twentieth Century* (London 1971, 1973), 199-235; G. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth Century Russian Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton: 1983).



thrown by revolutionaries assassinated Alexander II in 1881. Alexander II's son, Alexander III, instituted rigid censorship and police supervision of intellectual and religious-educational activities. The Russification programs were forced upon the various racial minorities within the Empire. The oppression of Jews was particularly severe. Russian factory workers eagerly accepted revolutionary propaganda, and Marxist theories found many supporters.

At the same time, the Russian Church paid special attention to the development of religious education and missions in the provinces. Old churches were restored and new churches were built. If the beginning of the 19th century was marked by the work of brilliant theologians (Russian theologians also did much to develop such sciences as history, linguistics and Oriental studies), then the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by harvesting the results of a religious-philosophical and intellectual advancement. In some cases, the Orthodox Church also began to persecute the heretics who deviated from orthodox doctrine or practice. The majority of books or sermons of this period opposed to the spreading of Protestantism in Russia. Printers were required to submit all manuscripts to the church authorities, and a work could be printed only after it had been approved. The Ecclesiastic Academies occasionally published lists of books that were not recommended for reading by the Russian Orthodox.

Nicholas II, the eldest son of Alexander III, ascended to the throne in 1894. He was regarded as a weak ruler, out of touch with his people, easily dominated by others, and a firm believer in the autocratic principles taught him by his father. Autocracy, oppression, and police control increased under Nicholas. They were met by an upsurge of terrorist acts. The Russian revolutionary leaders, including notably Vladimir Lenin, directed the Socialist movement. On January 22, 1905 thousands of persons marched to the Winter Palace to present their demands, but they were fired on by imperial troops. This massacre was the signal for a revolution. Strikes and riots began throughout the industrialized sections of Russia.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 put a temporary halt to the revolutionary activities of the radicals. By the end of 1914 severe defeats had been inflicted on the Russian army, notably in East Prussia. The defeats increased in 1915. Except for temporary victories, the defeat began to assume the proportions of the Crimean and Japanese disasters. Moreover, repression and corruption in the government continued. The emperor Nicholas II, largely under the control of Grigorii Yefimovich Rasputin (1872-1916) was rumoured to have become the chief influence in the empire, controlling even military decisions. Revolutionary agitation increased, and in February 1917, riots began in Moscow. Demands for changes in the government finally resulted in the abdication of Nicholas II on March 15.

The abdications ended the Russian Empire. On the night of November 6, Red Guards duly occupied key sites in the capital and captured the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg.

Early in the 20th century the Russian Church began preparations for convening an All-Russian Council. But it was to be convened only after the 1917 Revolution. Among its major actions was the restoration of the patriarchal office in the Russian Church. The Council elected Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (1917-1925). St. Tikhon of Moscow and exerted every effort to calm the destructive passions kindled up by the revolution. The Message of the Holy Council issued on 11 November 1917 says in particular:

Instead of a new social order promised by the false teachers we see a bloody strife among the builders, instead of peace and brotherhood among the peoples - a confusion of languages and a bitter hatred among brothers. People who have forgotten God are attacking one another like hungry wolves... Abandon the senseless and godless dream of the false teachers who call to realize universal brotherhood through universal strife! Come back to the way of Christ!

For Bolsheviks who came to power in 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church was an ideological enemy a priori. Since the Church has been an institutional part of tsarist Russia, it resolutely defended the old regime after the October revolution. This is why so many bishops, thousands of clergymen, monks, nuns, as well as, lay people were subjected to repression up to execution and murder. When in 1921-1922 the Soviet government demanded that church valuables be given in aid to the starving population because of the failure of crops in 1921 a fateful conflict erupted between the Church and the new authorities, which decided to use this situation to demolish the Church to the end.

The above outlined historical background is relevant to our task to examine Bogdashevskii's writings. His philosophical, exegetical and homiletic materials reflect the circumstances of the Russian people. Bogdashevskii was immediately concerned not only with what Scripture meant to its author and the original readers (i.e., the literal sense) and what it has to mean in subsequent ecclesiastical theological usage, but also what Scripture meant to the Russian people in his generation. This posed a religious question about the implication of Scripture for the life of the Orthodox faithful in Russia.

Bogdashevskii lived during the climax of time (the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century) and through the religious repression (initiated by Bolsheviks who came to power in 1917). His writings and sermons reflect Bogdashevskii's concerns for the Russian society. This will be clear in our arguments in the following sections (esp. dealing with his ethics). Thus, the discussion turns to Bogdashevskii.



## 5.2 Fundamental Philosophical Ideas

### 5.2.1 General Remarks

Bogdashevskii was introduced to the discipline of philosophy during his formal education at Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy. Throughout its history, this particular school of the Orthodox theological persuasion was inclined not only to focus on religious and moral education particularly related to the Russian Church, but also to cover the core curriculum of general interdisciplinary studies, among which philosophy was of particular significance. During the years 1830-36 Kiev's Academy, under the rectorship of Bishop Innokentii (1800-1857), experienced an important philosophical awakening. Following this period, it was understood that the Academy must teach this subject as a truly academic discipline and that it was to be offered to all perspective clergy of the Church on a respectable level of study.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, Orthodox dogmatics and Patristics defined the fundamental boundaries and paths of reflection; on the other hand, the rich philosophical tradition of the Western Europe permitted the selection from among various philosophical systems the themes for constructing Russian religious philosophy. Although the Kiev school, similar to other Orthodox Academies, offered philosophy in the light of Church doctrines and "in accord with the true reason of Holy Scripture,"<sup>19</sup> it has also endorsed Plato as the teacher of 'a true philosophy,' and otherwise bore the influence from its inception of German metaphysics. The Church historian George Florovsky well specifies the character and consequence of philosophical studies in the Orthodox academies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He says:

[From the beginning], "the teachers and students [of the Orthodox schools], especially in Kiev, read a great deal, often from the modern philosophers... In the charter of the 1814 school reform, the seminaries are urged to familiarize their students with the disagreements among the most renowned philosophers in order to give them 'a conception of the true spirit of philosophy' and 'to train the pupils themselves for philosophical investigation and acquaint them with the best methods for such study'... Of course, the Academic Charter subordinated philosophy to revelation. 'Anything not in accord with the true reason of Holy Scripture is in essence falsehood and error and must be mercilessly refuted...; the philosophy teacher must be inwardly certain that neither he nor his students ever think they see the light of higher, true philosophy unless it be sought in the doctrines of Christianity. But the charter also recommended Plato as a teacher of 'true philosophy,' along with his followers in both ancient and modern times. And from the very beginning the greatest influence on academic instruction was modern German metaphysics... The

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. S. Askoshentsev, *Kiev's Academy* (K.: 1856), Vol. 2, 45-52.

<sup>19</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 5.

foundation for systematic philosophical culture were laid in the ecclesiastical schools... Russian love of wisdom [Ru.- *liubomudrie*] had its beginning precisely in the ecclesiastical schools.<sup>20</sup>

While Bogdashevskii, as a student and later as a lecturer on the History of Philosophy at Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy, was growing in his philosophical consciousness, Russia was experiencing a genuine religious-philosophical awakening. The questions about social ethics and political philosophy, adequate knowledge and virtuous behavior, wisdom and power, religious and aesthetic values, ideas and ideals of human life - all of these were central themes of the philosophical discussions of the day. Bogdashevskii studied philosophy just after the time of the so-called "Great Reformers" - the time when "everyone in Russia wanted to recover their senses, began to think, read and study."<sup>21</sup> In the concurrent philosophical environment, Bogdashevskii was encircled by an anti-historical utopianism; the fight between the "objectivity" of idealism and "subjectivism" or "dogmatism"; rampant interest in the philosophy of history and science; the ideas of unity of man with God, and the unity of the Church and the Russian nation; the tendencies to synthesize religion, scientific knowledge, and mystical experience toward the founding of a scientifically oriented thinking; etc.

As to the influences which are evident in Bogdashevskii's theoretical construction, it must be emphasized, foremost, that in his theoretical views [esp. in the problems of epistemology] he associated himself with Alexander Vvedenskii (1856-1925, Professor of philosophy at St. Petersburg University, from 1890) and also with the most important representative of Kiev's Orthodox philosophical school, Pamphil Yurkevich (1827-1874), who produced a profound critique of materialism and whose works prepared a decisive move from Kant's transcendental idealism to the direction of a metaphysical idealism in the spirit of Plato.<sup>22</sup>

Turning to an analysis of Bogdashevskii's philosophical views, it must be noted that he himself never reduced his philosophical views to a system. In the bibliography of Bogdashevskii we do not find a finished philosophical system, but the makings for a system are nonetheless there. Bogdashevskii possessed a highly integrated nature, not surprisingly, strove for integration in the realm of ideas. Only the fact that he turned from pure philosophy

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<sup>20</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 4-9.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 54.

<sup>22</sup> On the philosophy of Yurkovskii see *Zen'kovskii*, vol. I, 313-315.



to exegetical-theological writings most probably prevented him in the end from systematizing his philosophical concepts. However, our purpose is not to try to offer a comprehensive account of Bogdashevskii's philosophical development; rather, the aim is to select for inquiry Bogdashevskii's philosophical fundamentals, not pedantically following the chronology of his creative energies, but at the same time never going beyond the limits of what can be found in Bogdashevskii himself. Let us turn to a study of his thought in relation to: (1) Platonism, Epistemology; (2) Kantianism; and Philosophy and Science.

### 5.2.2 First period in the development of Bogdashevskii's world-view (Platonism, Epistemology)

Bogdashevskii's initial interest in philosophy is expressing itself by the attraction he felt to the body of philosophical concepts developed by the Greeks, particularly during the flowering of Greek civilization between 600 BC and 200 BC. The appeal of the ancient world is not accidental. *First*, Greek philosophy forms the basis of all later philosophical speculations in the Western world to which 19<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox scholarship felt it must respond. *Second*, for 19<sup>th</sup> century Russians, "Greek philosophy answered to the spirit of [their] times."<sup>23</sup> *Third*, the intuitive hypotheses of the ancient Greeks foreshadowed many theories of modern science, and many of the moral ideas of Greek philosophers have been incorporated into Christian moral doctrine.

Bogdashevskii's attraction to Greek philosophy is mainly limited in to the domain of epistemology. In examining Greek philosophical problems, he accents how Greeks defined knowledge and its related concepts especially in regards to what they consider to be the sources and criteria of knowledge. In his exposition of Greek philosophy, Bogdashevskii attempts to make known (according to an ancient philosophy) the kinds of knowledge possible and the degree to which each is certain, as well as and the exact relation between the one who knows and the object known.

Hence, in his early essay of 1895-96, *On Sources for the Study of Socrates' Philosophy*<sup>24</sup>, Bogdashevskii looks into the thinking of Socrates (c. 470-c. 399 BC). Because

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<sup>23</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, "Istochniki dlia izucheniia Sokrata," ["On Sources for the Study of Socrates' Philosophy,"] *TKDA* 9 (1895):123-152; 8 (1896): 547-574; 6 (1897): 242-336; 7 (1897): 381-401.

the main aim of this essay was to outline and summarize the polemical literature on Socrates, Bogdashevskii's personal insights are very elementary and few in number. Nonetheless, there are three noticeable emphases in his analysis of Socrates' philosophical thought:

*First*, he underscores the validity of Socrates' particular emphasis on rational argument and his quest for general definitions. Since Socrates' effort to determine the conditions under which one is justified in passing conclusion is considerable, Bogdashevskii stresses the importance of logic in the development of rational argument. The theory of rational argumentation in Socrates, according to Bogdashevskii, resulted in a particular understanding of the relationship between the suppositions and the conclusion in an argument (*esp.* in the developed rules for correct syllogistic reasoning of Aristotle, 384-322 BC). In speaking about logic itself, Bogdashevskii is not sure whether or not the logical argumentation is of an inductive or deductive nature. On the one hand, the premises of a valid argument contain the conclusion, and thus the truth of the conclusion must follow from the truth of the premises with necessary certainty. On the other hand, Bogdashevskii believes that if the premises are evidence for the conclusion, the truth of the conclusion must be of a certain possibility.<sup>25</sup>

*Second*, he notes that although Socrates profoundly affected the entire subsequent course of Western speculative thought, the characteristics of Socrates' philosophy are essentially ethical in outline and "positive for understanding how Christian ethic operates."<sup>26</sup> For Bogdashevskii, the basis of Socrates' teachings, the postulated and purely objective understandings of such concepts as justice, love, virtue, and self-knowledge form the grounds for ethical enlightenment. The normal state of any human being, argues Bogdashevskii, indicates that Socrates is right in suggesting that all vice is the result of ignorance and that those who know the right will act rightly.<sup>27</sup> It is knowledge that directs men to act in ethically apt ways. Bogdashevskii does admit, however, that knowledge is and of itself is no guarantee of high morals and does not reduce the possibility of immoral behavior by men.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, "On Sources for the Study of Socrates' Philosophy," *TKDA* 8 (1896): 565-567

<sup>26</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, "On Sources for the Study of Socrates' Philosophy," *TKDA* 9 (1895): 146.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-150.

<sup>28</sup> *Cf. Ibid.*, 155.



*Third*, Bogdashevskii agrees with Socrates that wisdom consists of critical knowledge, and that autonomous wisdom is no wisdom at all. It would be tempting, he suggests, to argue, with Socrates that a true wisdom is one defined by a capability to know and to understand completely; and to distinguish humans as individuals who do not possess such levels of knowledge. However, the main point of epistemology, for Bogdashevskii, is not merely who has knowledge and how it becomes known, but “what kind of knowledge is factually obtainable for a human intellect alone and what kind of knowledge is not.”<sup>29</sup> Bogdashevskii concludes that for many things it is impossible for man to understand without enlightenment from a divine wisdom that extends the horizon thought for anyone searching to understand concepts of reality that differ from a simple material nature. This does not prevent us from voicing the suspicion that, along with Socrates, Bogdashevskii carries a quite similar implication for his theory of knowledge with its particular emphasis on rational argument. However, his insight into the concept of illumination *from outside*, especially in particular areas of knowledge (such as the knowledge of God), assumes that “the factor *from outside* (the Spirit of God, perhaps, is not out of sight) can intervene in the course of understanding of being which is not possible to grasp *from within*, even with the use of a logical argumentation.”<sup>30</sup>

Bogdashevskii emphasizes the shortcomings of a purely logical argumentation by pointing to the Sophists (from Gr., *sophistes*, [σοφός, ἡ, ὄν]<sup>31</sup>) – a class of Greek philosophers and rhetoricians of Socrates’ day (the leading 5<sup>th</sup> century Sophists included Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias of Elis, and Prodicus of Ceos). In Bogdashevskii’s exceedingly superficial summary and assessment of the Sophists, presented in his essay of 1897,<sup>32</sup> it is noted that the Sophists popularized the ideas of various early philosophers; yet, based on their understanding of that prior philosophical thought, most of them concluded that truth and morality were essentially matters of opinion and persuasion. Thus, in their own teaching,

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<sup>29</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, “On Sources for the Study of Socrates’ Philosophy,” *TKDA* 8 (1896): 570.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

<sup>31</sup> σοφός, ἡ, ὄν - (Pind., *Hdt.*; LXX; Ep. Arist., Philo, Joseph.)—1. *clever, skilful, experienced*; 2. *wise, learned* of human intelligence and education above the average, perh. related to philosophy (Pind. et al.; Jos., Bell. 6, 313). Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>32</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, “Grecheskie Sofisty,” [“The Greek Sophists,”] *TKDA* 8 (1897): 455-493.

they tended to emphasize different forms of persuasive expression, such as the art of rhetoric, which provided men with skills useful for achieving success in life (particularly public life). Bogdashevskii stresses that the Sophists were popular for a time, especially in Athens; however, their skeptical views on absolute truth and morality eventually provoked sharp criticism. He says, “the Sophists challenged the knowledge of being and reduced wisdom to a power of speech which may be taught... they went down under the devastating criticism, for they misunderstood expressiveness and persuasiveness of language with the wisdom of reason and heart.”<sup>33</sup> Bogdashevskii determines that the Sophists were of minor importance in the development of Western philosophical thought, because their practical insights for rhetoric and public education, although pragmatically effective, have been unsatisfactory in dealing with philosophical problems related to epistemology.<sup>34</sup> This last matter leads Bogdashevskii to object to two of the Sophists’ critical ideas: (1) that nothing really exists, if anything did exist it could not be known; and if knowledge were possible, it could not be communicated; (2) that no person's opinion can be said to be more correct than that of another, because each in his own way is the sole judge of his or her own experience. Bogdashevskii, in contrast, concludes that knowledge is communicable and “it is possible to have exact and certain knowledge” and that “there is a judge above an individual point of view.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, knowledge is obtainable; and there should be an outside arbiter who is supreme in so far as delineating what is right understanding.

Part of Bogdashevskii’s purpose in extending the body of philosophical concepts on the theory of knowledge as developed by the Greeks was his attraction to Plato (428-347 BC), one of the most creative and influential thinkers in ancient Western philosophy. Bogdashevskii’s interest in Plato was derived from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian religious-philosophical environment in which Plato was conceived as the Father of Philosophy.<sup>36</sup> Interest in Plato has been cultivated in academic circles at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., because Vasilii N. Karpov [pupil of Kiev’s academy and later Prof. of Philosophy in Kiev and St. Petersburg schools (1853-1900)] translated and published Plato’s writings [Plato, *Collected*

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<sup>33</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, “The Greek Sophists,” *TKDA* 8 (1897): 491.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 482-83.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 492.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. “In Ancient time, divine Plato furnished the most developed philosophy and laid the foundation on which herein after the temple of a philosophical goddess was built.” D. B. Veneviktinov, *Collected Works* (M.: 1934), 254. Many ancient Russian thinkers praised Plato; a pure philosophical estimate he received in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia. For the first half of the century see esp., A.



*works* 6 vols. (SPb.: 1858-1879)].<sup>37</sup> Plato's concept of "harmonious mind-observant understanding" was commonly regarded as corresponding with the basic nature of the Eastern Church and Orthodoxy.<sup>38</sup> It was assumed that in the teaching of Plato "religion and philosophy are in the most intimate union."<sup>39</sup> Moreover, it was generally thought that Plato had been the frame of reference for the Eastern Church Fathers, while the philosophical systems of Aristotle (384-322 BC) had influenced the western Fathers.<sup>40</sup> Hence, in his 1897 essay "*Plato's Teaching of Knowledge*", Bogdashevskii discusses Plato's *theory of knowledge*.<sup>41</sup> He explains this theory in close connection with another of Plato's theories - *the theory of forms*. He correctly finds that Plato's *Theory of Knowledge*, influenced by Socrates, suggests that knowledge is attainable and that it is characterized by two essential features: (1) knowledge must be certain and infallible; and (2) it must have as its object that which is genuinely real, as contrasted with that which is appearance only. Bogdashevskii agrees with Plato that true knowledge must be fixed, permanent, and unchanging; and, therefore, the real must be identified with the ideal realm of thing or being as opposed to the physical world of becoming. Together with Plato, Bogdashevskii rejects empiricism, the claim that all knowledge is derived from sense experience, for the propositions derived from sense experience have, at most, only a degree of probability. They are not certain, for they pertain to the changeable phenomena of the physical world. Consequently, Bogdashevskii agrees with Plato that the objects of sense experience are not proper objects of knowledge.

Bogdashevskii also maintains Plato's distinction between two levels of awareness: opinion and knowledge. For him, the claims or assertions about the physical or visible world, including both common sense observations and the propositions of science, are opinions only. Some of these opinions are well founded some are not; but none of them qualify as

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I. Galich, *A History of philosophical systems* (SPb.: 1818); N. I. Nadezhin, "Plato..," *Vestnik Evropy* 5 (1830).

<sup>37</sup> Plato's element in Russian philosophy is presented by A. I. Abramov, "The Assessment of Plato's Philosophy in Russian Idealistic Philosophy," in *Plato and His Epoch* (M.: 1970).

<sup>38</sup> Acc. to A. I. Abramov, "Platonism," in *The Russian Philosophy* (M.: Nauka, 1995), 406.

<sup>39</sup> *A Jubilee Journal of Moscow Ecclesiastic Academy* (M.: Sergiev Pasad: 1915), Part. 1, 153, 193.

<sup>40</sup> For example, Kireevskii, in presenting his view of the dissimilarities between western and Russian rationale, suggested that they be seen in terms of the contrast between Plato's *inner self-knowledge* and Aristotle's *rational thinking*. Such a contrast, for Kireevskii, was primarily reflected in the Church Fathers. See. I. V. Kireevskii, *Collected Works* (M.: 1911), Vol. 1, 199.

<sup>41</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, "Uchenie Platona o znanii," ["Plato's Teaching of Knowledge,"] *TKDA* III, 12 (1897): 557-579.

genuine knowledge. The higher level of awareness is knowledge, because reason, rather than sense experience, is involved in the understanding. Reason, properly exercised, results in intellectual insights that are certain, and the objects of these rational insights are the abiding universals, the eternal forms or substances that constitute the real world. Therefore, Bogdashevskii concludes, “to form the awareness about any subject or discipline means to know the subject thoroughly, to get to the bottom of its true nature, because the proper awareness of the subject concerns with what is essential (opposite to what is an accidental).”<sup>42</sup> To attain to real knowledge, one must escape the bonds of the physical world of appearances in order to grasp the real world, the world of full and perfect being, the world of forms, which is the proper object of knowledge. Because Bogdashevskii accepts Plato’s conceptual reality of the world of forms, he links Plato’s *theory of knowledge* with his supplementary theory - the *theory of forms*. The later introduces a concept of reality that has a logically conceivable form, but does not in fact exist in the physical world of space and time. It exists as a changeless object in the world of forms or ideas, which can be known only by reason. These forms have greater reality than the objects in the physical world, both because of their perfection and stability and because they are models, resemblance to which gives ordinary physical objects whatever reality they have.

Since Plato tries to solve epistemological questions on the basis of abstract beings (forms) or abstract concepts, at first sight, it might seem surprising that Bogdashevskii looks to Plato for support of his own views on the philosophical problems surrounding the theory of knowledge. Yet, it is possible to view Bogdashevskii’s relationship to Plato’s philosophy in at least two ways, which are not necessarily incompatible with one another. *First*, noting that Plato conceived the forms to be arranged hierarchically (from the supreme form down to all the others) and that the highest form illuminates and explains the others, Bogdashevskii understands that a such structure of reality reveals an ultimate principle for explaining and interpreting the world in general. *Second*, in philosophical terms, Bogdashevskii finds Plato’s theory of forms to be essential for both an epistemological (theory of knowledge) and an ontological (theory of being) thesis. Therefore, any science, concludes Bogdashevskii, must be both synthetic and analytical. He says, “On the one hand it has to bond its ideas, pursue their unity and submit them to the highest kind [*i.e.* idea]; on the other hand, in order to encounter the highest diversity, [science] has always to distinguish its ideas - to proceed from plurality to unity through the intermediate classified meanings.”<sup>43</sup> The totality in the

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<sup>42</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, “Plato’s Teaching of Knowledge,” *TKDA* III, 12 (1897): 557.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 579.



discerned object can be obtained from the subservient elements of the whole. This, according to Bogdashevskii, pinpoints one of the most persistent problems of the understanding. On the one hand, one has, first, to arrive at the understanding of the whole in order to know the composites. On the other hand, however, the whole can be perceived only through its parts. Accordingly, if the abstract reasoning yields genuine knowledge, then reliance on elements of perception produces inconsistent opinions. Again, Bogdashevskii shows that the understanding, analogous to logical argumentation, is both of inductive and deductive nature.

Although Bogdashevskii presents a well-researched introduction to Plato's *theory of knowledge*, he makes no attempt to specify how this theory, tempered with his own insights, is specifically applicable to the science of biblical study or how it contributes to New Testament interpretation. The author's treatment of Plato, however, does construct the background of his own approach toward the issues of understanding. While we do not suggest that Bogdashevskii goes so far as to demonstrate the absolute validity of Greek philosophy, his writings, however, do go a long way toward removing the older traditional notion of subjectivity from the absolutist position of the Church tradition or doctrine in tracing the philosophical background to the discussion of objectivity in general science and to the role of reason in understanding. His attempts to overcome subjectivity, nevertheless, do not suggest a free and lawless state of mind. Quite to the contrary, Bogdashevskii urges that in exploring and interpreting physical reality, the mind should be inextricably bond up with the world on its highest reality. It is an important element in his hermeneutics. Later on we will see that Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics necessitate for the exegetes a religious world and connection with a divine agent of the highest religious reality (i.e. revelation) in order to understand the reality that has been revealed from above. In addition, Bogdashevskii leans towards the supremacy of opinion not in the individual point of view, but rather in the hierarchical wisdom that is above private mind.

### 5.2.3 Second period in the development of Bogdashevskii's world-view (Kantianism)

The most probing and lucid understanding of Bogdashevskii's philosophy may be drawn from his analysis and critique of Kant in his perceptive 1898 study, *Philosophy of Kant*.<sup>44</sup> In this study, Bogdashevskii concentrates on the critical features of Kant's philosophy, expounded in *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *Critique of Judgement*. On the one hand, this reflective work of the "later" Bogdashevskii derives from his previous concern with both the nature of ultimate reality (*i.e.* metaphysics)<sup>45</sup> and the sources, criteria and kinds of possible knowledge (*i.e.* epistemology). On the other hand, Bogdashevskii's regard for Kant was influenced by the broad developments of Russian philosophical culture in the higher schools where the focus on Kant was widespread.<sup>46</sup> In the same vein as other Russian Orthodox philosophers, Bogdashevskii discusses Kant's philosophy predominantly in a spirit of slight reproach and as something in *contrast* to Western Christianity.<sup>47</sup> In his analysis of Kant, Bogdashevskii focuses mainly on Kant's theoretical construction, while deliberately straying away from discussing his transcendental methodology.<sup>48</sup> His main task is to present an overall exposition of Kant's philosophy, rather than to give a detailed critical analysis of its components.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, the merely formal overview of Kant's philosophy offers no way of determining

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<sup>44</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, "Filosofiiia Kanta," ["Philosophy of Kant,"] *TKDA* (1898) 2: 181-203; 5:54-74; 6: 201-228; 7: 389-431; 9:24-68.

<sup>45</sup> His concern with describing the most general traits of reality may be established from two book reviews of 1892-93, *In the Defence of the Metaphysics of Mind and Sound Metaphysics*. D. Bogdashevskii, "In the Defence of the Metaphysics of Mind," Book review of N. G. Debol'skii, *Philosophy of the Phenomenal Formalism* (SPb.: 1892) in *TKDA* I (1892): 664-650; D. Bogdashevskii, "Sound Metaphysics," Book review of P. Linit'skii, *Guide to the Study of Philosophy* (Kharkov': 1893) in *TKDA* II (1898) 5:125-138.

<sup>46</sup> That Kant was regarded in Russia as an outstanding philosopher as early as the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is evident from the translations of various philosophical works of Kant during the years 1803-1807. For the specific influence of Kant on Russian philosophy at the very beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see *Zen'kovskii*, Vol. I, 106-107, 300-301, 677-705.

<sup>47</sup> Zen'kovskii rightly observes that such a pattern was characteristic of the whole of Russian philosophy at the time. "Material for this critique was frequently found in Western Christianity itself - in the Protestant thinkers and theologians against Catholicism, and in the Catholics against Protestantism." *Zen'kovskii*, Vol. I, 300.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. D. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 5 (1898): 60.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 9 (1898): 68, n. 66.



Bogdashevskii's own position. Still, several personal insights, supplied by Bogdashevskii, are noteworthy.

In discussing Kant's view that the mind furnishes the archetypal forms and categories (space, time, causality, substance, and relation) to its sensations, and that these categories are logically prior to experience, although manifested only in experience, Bogdashevskii concludes that "Kant's theory of space and time is the most significant, but also it is the most troublesome point in his theoretical system."<sup>50</sup> Bogdashevskii rejects the Kantinian assumption of the existence of *things in themselves*. He says:

According to Kant, it is impossible to say that time *is*, but one must emphasize that time *is for us*, or that we have an idea of time. Yet, the idea of time is existing in time, in time there is a display of the idea of time, etc., therefore time is something objective... [It] is hard to understand how Kant, on one hand, rejects the objectivity of space; and on the other hand, accepts the existence of an external world, the existence of material things. We can understand the later only in space; analytically, from the concept of material is deducing the concepts of complexity and of prolongation and, consequently, the concept of space. Without doubt, time and space are not some kind of categories, but they express the real relationships, and therefore they are real forms of being.<sup>51</sup>

So, Bogdashevskii's thought differs from that of Kant in that according to the former, one is not obliged, in a critically constructed and integrated world view, to admit that the archetypal forms and categories exist in themselves.

Further, for Bogdashevskii, it is possible that something exists apart from *us*, but until the grounds are discovered on the basis of which *a priori* concepts (such as time) may be extended beyond the limits of the phenomenal world, the choice of answers to the question of the existence or non-existence of things in themselves cannot be made by science with its

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<sup>50</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 5 (1898): 70. In his analysis of Kant's understanding of time and space Bogdashevskii associated himself with Alexander Vvedenskii's interpretation of Kant. Cf. "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 5 (1898): 71.

<sup>51</sup> "По учению Канта нельзя сказать, что время *есть*, а нужно утверждать что, что время есть для нас, или что мы имеем представление времени. Но ведь, представление времени само совершается во времени, во времени происходит и представления времени и т.д., и значит время есть нечто объективное... Наконец, совершенно непонятно, каким образом, отрицая объективность пространства, Кант мог признавать существование внешнего мира, бытие материальных предметов. Мы можем понимать последнее только в пространстве; но понятия материальности чисто аналитически выводятся понятия сложности, протяженности, следовательно пространственности. Пространство и время не суть, без сомнения, какиянибудь сущности, но они выражают реальные отношения вещей, суть реальные формы конечного бытия." D. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 5 (1898): 73-74

empirical experiments, but only by faith.<sup>52</sup> Thus, one may say that Bogdashevskii admits three types of knowledge: (1) indisputable knowledge (based in *a priori* elements of faith); (2) *a posteriori* knowledge; (3) knowledge in the order of faith. Bogdashevskii is attentive to the argument by which Kant sought to fix the limits of human knowledge within the framework of experience and to demonstrate the inability of the human mind to penetrate beyond experience. Their logical priority to experience makes these categories or structural principles transcendental; they transcend all experience, both actual and possible. Although these principles determine all experience, they do not in any way affect the nature of things in themselves. The knowledge of which these principles are the necessary conditions must not be considered, therefore, as constituting a revelation of things as they are in themselves. This knowledge concerns things only insofar as they appear to human perception or as they can be apprehended by both faith and experiment.<sup>53</sup> In this way, Bogdashevskii argues, contra to Kant, that there is a real possibility of knowing God directly. His conception that faith is the basis of knowledge, a vital cognitive act in the recognition that anything is true corresponds to the main convictions of the Orthodox philosophers that: (1) our knowledge is given in faith as a total partaking of Divine Truth; (2) true knowledge can be fully grounded only in faith.<sup>54</sup>

Although Bogdashevskii wrote no philosophical-ethical treatises as such, his exposition of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*) put forward an important component of his own theoretical system - critical ethics.<sup>55</sup> For Bogdashevskii, ethical problems are essential as integrating components of philosophy. After explicating Kant's principles of morality, Bogdashevskii frames the dilemma inherent within Kant's ethics and attempts to address several of his objections to Kant's ethical system. *First*, as he comments on the basic concept of obligation as the cornerstone of the deduction of natural rights in Kant, Bogdashevskii protests against the distinction between obligatory and willing in the concept of good. He says,

[Kant's conclusion is that] an act is required not because it is good, but it is good because it is prescribed; because it is ruled by obligation... It is impossible to agree with Kant on this point. Why Kant is reasoning that to start with the concept of *good* is to accept the concept of *good subject* as the foundation; i.e. to correspond the

<sup>52</sup> Cf. D. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 5 (1898): 73.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 57-59.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. L. P. Karsavin, *O nachalakh [Concerning Principles]* (Paris: 1925), 68

<sup>55</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 9 (1898): 24-68.



material and egoistic character? The concepts of good and moral, obligatory and willing are the coordinate concepts and it is impossible to start with one without the other.<sup>56</sup>

*Second*, although Bogdashevskii agrees with Kant that men have always conceived of a realm of obligation, involving moral appraisals, acting from duty and not from sensory motives alone, he is cautious in regard to how Kant seeks to reconcile science and religion in a world of two levels, one level comprising *noumena*, objects conceived by reason although not perceived by the senses, and the other comprising *phenomena*, things as they appear to the senses that are accessible to material study. Bogdashevskii's position is marked by legitimizing at its root the basis for epistemological distinction between theory of knowledge and the autonomy of moral impulses.

*Third*, Bogdashevskii questions Kant's carefully formulated view of morality as a doctrine of happiness. For him, because this view recognizes nothing but sensory motives, it can never get truly clear of sensory description in all its illusory transcendence of experience. What is beyond sense cannot be accepted without proper emphasis on "man's own moral impulses, often so opposite to sensory motives of happiness."<sup>57</sup>

*A fourth and final* point on Kant's ethical construction, however, does not directly connect to ethics itself, but to Kant's proposed solution for the philosophical problems surrounding ethics in the theory of knowledge - in the sphere of knowing good and evil. On the one hand, Bogdashevskii agrees with Kant in maintaining that, because God, freedom, and human immortality are *noumenal* realities, these concepts are understood through moral faith rather than through scientific knowledge. He stresses that, Kant is right in emphasizing supremacy of practical mind over against theoretical mind.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, "The knowledge [of moral virtues] that is limited to mere experiment is non reliable, because there is something

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<sup>56</sup> Кант настаивает: - "Поступок обязателен, не потому что он добр, а потому он добр, что обязателен, что его предписывает нравственный закон... Очевидно, с этим рассуждением Канта нельзя согласиться. Почему Канту представляется, что начинать с понятия *добраго* значит непременно поставить в основание понятие *добраго предмета*, т. е. сообщить нравственности материальный и потому эгоистический характер? Понятия *добраго* и *нравственно обязательного*, или *согласного с нравственным законом* - это понятия тождественные и нельзя начинать с одного, не имея в виду другого." D. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 9 (1898): 45-46 (his italics).

<sup>57</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* 9 (1898): 68.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. "Заслуживает, без сомнения, глубокого размышления тот основной вывод, к которому пришёл Кант в "Критике чистого разума". Имеем в виду так ясно выраженное им учение о примате разума практического над разумом теоретическим. Последний делает свое дело независимо от разума практического, не вторгаясь в его область, но он не может игнорировать его требований, а должен подчиниться ему." *Ibid.*, 68.

that is beyond such knowledge - the sphere of demand of practical reason, the sphere of moral faith to which *theoretical mind has to be subjected*.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, Bogdashevskii argues that “Kant leaves out the point that knowledge is not duty, for the principles of knowledge act by themselves, yet to act morally is obligation.”<sup>60</sup> Later, when we will turn to his ethics it will be clear how Bogdashevskii’s views are reflected in his writings.

After examining Bogdashevskii’s critique of Kant, it seems as if his criticism is so far-reaching that to accept it is necessarily to reject Kant’s whole perspective. This is not the case, however. Bogdashevskii, together with Kant, renounces the idea that knowledge is not merely a reflection of human perceptions, but it is a representation of external reality. He also agrees with Kant in accepting the theory that knowledge of reality is derived from *a priori* principles, and not from experience alone. Moreover, he affirms Kant’s disapproval of the idea that although ultimate reality exists it is altogether inaccessible to human knowledge, which is necessarily subjective because it is confined to a state of mind. Besides, Bogdashevskii appraises Kantian dialectics:

In itself, the outcome of Kant’s critique is that one must fear neither materialism, naturalism nor atheism, for these are only theories; as all the theories of metaphysics they know no more than all the opposite directions. This result is very valuable.<sup>61</sup>

It is not necessary to catalogue further points at which Bogdashevskii considers Kant’s philosophy to be fruitful and constructive. Although none of the schools of Kantianism or Neo-Kantianism had a serious influence on Bogdashevskii; yet in his basic propositions he remains a faithful and rigorously consistent Kantian. This does not prevent us from voicing the belief that Bogdashevskii’s own theoretical construction carries a full understanding of Kant’s thought.

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. “На одно, следовательно знание, - которое, как показала “Критика чистого разума”, ограничивается исключительно сферой опыта, - положиться нельзя, ибо есть нечто возвышающееся над знанием, - область требований практического разума, область моральной веры, *перед которою должен склониться теоретический разум*.” D. Bogdashevskii, “Philosophy of Kant,” *TKDA* (1898): 68 (my italics).

<sup>60</sup> “Но Кант опускает из виду, что познание есть не долг, принципы познания действуют сами собою, а поступать нравственно есть долг.” *Ibid.*, 67-68.

<sup>61</sup> “Уже тот результат Кантовской критики, что нечего опасаться ни материализма, ни натурализма, ни атеизма, ибо все эти теории, как теории метафизические, знают не больше, чем и противоположные им направления, - уже этот один результат имеет немалую цену.” “Philosophy of Kant,” *TKDA* III (1898) 9: 426-427.



In an exposition of Bogdashevskii's philosophical views it is also important to consider his conception of philosophy and of the interrelationship of philosophy and science. This is one of the most basic and decisive points in his theoretical construction.

#### 5.2.4 Third period in the development of Bogdashevskii's world-view (Philosophy and Science: The overcoming of the secular orientation)

Bogdashevskii's philosophical tendency gravitated not only toward an ancient Greek or the latest critical philosophy of Kant, but also toward the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian philosophical trend of thought known as 'scientific philosophy'. This particular trend was preconditioned by the worship of science, especially dominant during the second half of the nineteenth century when a cult of scientific knowledge and the concomitant striving for a broad dissemination of the results of Russian science became the creed not only of scientists, but also of a wide circle of Russian society. Some Russian philosophers, especially Vladimir Lesevich (1837-1905)<sup>62</sup> and Nikolai Grot (1852-1899),<sup>63</sup> called for the search for a "scientific philosophy." The distinguished Russian Orthodox philosopher and theologian Vasili Zen'kovskii (1881-1962) in his monumental work of 1948, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, offers a fair assessment of this trend among Russian philosophical circles:

[It] implies the search for a 'scientific philosophy', a philosophy based on science and often limited to a synthesis of scientific generalization. Indeed, there is more interest in a '*scientific world view*' than philosophy. A faith that all existence is scientifically comprehensible, and a worship of the methods and results of science, is the creative basis and unshakable foundation of these searchings.... The very term 'scientific philosophy' implies a conversion of philosophy into *an ancilla scientiae* and testifies to the impoverishment of philosophical sensitivity.... In all of the tendencies which gravitated toward a 'scientific philosophy' we find three essential features. To begin with, there is a faith that only scientific methods are capable of comprehending existence, a worship of scientific methods of thought and a naïve rationalism, i.e. an assumption that our thought 'corresponds' to the structure of being. On the other hand there is the conviction suggested by science that all knowledge is *relative*, in constant evolution and that 'absolute knowledge' is impossible, i.e. a conviction that all knowledge is historically conditioned. A third

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<sup>62</sup> See esp., Vladimir Lesevich, *Opyt kriticheskogo issledovaniia...* [*An Essay in the Critical Investigation of the basic Principles of Positive Philosophy*] (SPb.: 1877); *Ibid.*, *Pis'ma o nauchnoi filosofii* [*Letters on Scientific Philosophy*] (SPb.: 1878); *Ibid.*, *Chto takoe nauchnaia filosofia* [*What is a Scientific Philosophy*] (SPb.: 1981).

<sup>63</sup> See Nikolai Grot, *Otnoshenie Filosofii k nauke* [*The Relationship of Philosophy to Science*] (K.: 1883); *Ibid.*, *Napravlenie i zadachi moei filosofii* [*The Direction and Tasks of My Philosophy*] (M.: 1894)

characteristic of this tendency of thought is an antecedent rejection of all metaphysics.<sup>64</sup>

These are the philosophical thoughts and assumptions that Bogdashevskii seeks to challenge in his essay of 1894, *O Vzaimnom Otnoshenii Filosofii i Estestvoznaniia* [*The Interrelationship of Philosophy and Science*]. The general tenor of his view of philosophy and of the interrelationship of philosophy and science throughout the discussion of these problems is exemplified by his remarks in the argument on natural science. Bogdashevskii seeks to reconstruct an understanding of philosophy from the viewpoint of its interrelationship with science. In response to the claim of Lesevich that philosophy is “a direct and immediate continuation of the development of scientific knowledge, the culmination of this development,”<sup>65</sup> Bogdashevskii offers the epistemological contra argument to the idea of fashioning philosophy as an “output” of science. He says:

Every positive science is a totality of all known knowledge, discovered on the ground of a learned and particular method. Yet, there is no positive science that is solving the most significant question - what is the knowledge in itself.... The questions about knowledge, its condition, scope and limitations, the questions of relation between knowledge and object - all these questions are beyond the sphere of natural science.... A pure science that lacks the investigation of its own cognitive abilities cannot be a capacious science and, therefore, a science will become a blind dogmatism without its own understanding.... In such case, philosophy is self-understanding of science, without which the later is simply non-substantiated. Thus, even because of this, philosophy has its own rights for self-existence.<sup>66</sup>

Bogdashevskii’s philosophical strategy demands that every particular scientific discipline has to accept the philosophical thought with the intent of considering exactly what a

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<sup>64</sup> *Zen'kovskii*, vol. 2, 706-709 (his italics).

<sup>65</sup> Vladimir Lesevich, *An Essay in the Critical Investigation of the basic Principles of Positive Philosophy* (SPb.: 1877), 120.

<sup>66</sup> “Всякая положительная наука есть совокупность известных знаний, приобретенных по известному, определенному методу. Но ни одна положительная наука не решает существеннейшего, важнейшего вопроса: что такое самое знание.... Вопросы о знании, его условиях, нормах, пределах и границах, отношении знания к познаваемой действительности, - все эти вопросы выходят из сферы естественнонаучного знания.... [Н]аука не есть вполне сознательная наука, если отсутствует исследование самой умственной деятельности, которую она созидается. Тогда наука будет чисто догматическою наукою, не понимающею самой себя. ... Рассматривая с этой точки зрения философия есть самопознание науки, без которого последняя является необоснованною, и таким образом уже по тому одному философия получает право на самостоятельное существование.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “O Vzaimnom Otnoshenii Filosofii i Estestvoznaniia,” [*The Interrelationship of Philosophy and Science*,”] *TKDA* III, 12 (1894): 530-531.



philosophical theory regards to the understanding of this particular science, for a science “does not exclude a theory of science and cannot rule out the theory about itself.”<sup>67</sup>

After presenting positions of various kinds in regard to the superiority of natural science over philosophy, Bogdashevskii comments on the misunderstanding of philosophy and shows that its distinctive characteristics do not oppose the concepts of natural science, because both philosophy and science directly or indirectly assume the idea of a pure experiment:

On the basis of an experiment [*opyta*] alone, philosophy cannot be built up, because an experiment is always of a component and of a single character. Yet, on the other hand, speculation [*umozrenie*], separated from experiment, is absolutely fruitless. It is impossible to build up the theory of knowledge without an attention given to the real facts of thinking; it is impossible to create the ethics, by declining to consider the factual activities of will. The elements of the ideal and the reality of the subjective and objective have to be correspondent by subjoining and questioning each other. By no means, any kind of true philosophy should be at liberty to ignore the reaches of knowledge, fixed by empirical science, and the philosophy that contradicts to an experiment should be rejected. A philosopher takes an experimentative only as the basis; then he proceeds toward a super-experimentative...; from the established principles he reaches conclusion... by testing both principle and conclusion with the criteria of logical probability and improbability, of correspondence and disagreement... It is possible to argue against the premises or conclusions of the philosopher, but it is impossible to reject that he is operating in a pure empirical way.<sup>68</sup>

As the qualifying phrases in the above quotations suggest, Bogdashevskii makes it clear that the important motif in which he specifies the relationship between science and philosophy is his assumption of a scientifically fashioned philosophical world-conception.

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<sup>67</sup> “Наука, значит, взятая в своей целостности, не исключает особой теории науки, или науки о самой науке.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Interrelationship of Philosophy and Science,” *TKDA* III, 12 (1894): 531.

<sup>68</sup> “...на одном опыте философия не может быть построена, ибо опыт всегда носит характер единичный, частный. Но, с другой стороны, умозрение, оторванное от почвы опыта, является совершенно бесплодным. Нельзя построить теорию познания без внимания к фактическим действиям мышления; нельзя создавать этику, отрешившись от фактических действий воли. Элемент идеальный и реальный, субъективный и объективный должны идти в философии рука об руку, восполняя и проверяя друг друга. Никакая истинная философия не может игнорировать богатыми сокровищами знания, доставляемого опытными науками, и та философия должна быть отвергнута, которая стоит в противоречии с опытом. Философ берет исходным пунктом опытное и идет к сверхопытному... проверяя как самый принцип, так и выводы из него не только их логическою мыслимостью, или не-мыслимостью, но и их согласием, или не-согласием.... Можно не соглашаться в данном случае с посылками и заключениями философа, но нельзя отрицать, что он идет чисто научным путём.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Interrelationship of Philosophy and Science,” *TKDA* III, 12 (1894): 540-41.

Although he refuses to regard the difference between philosophy and science as relative and does not concern himself with distinguishing these two fields sharply,<sup>69</sup> Bogdashevskii emphasizes his support for a scientific world-view, where empirical experiment in the development of knowledge is meaningful. It is obvious, as he forms his concept of knowledge, that Bogdashevskii takes immanent material as his point of departure. The influence of Kant's epistemology at this point is unquestionable. Bogdashevskii's presupposition in which the independent characters of philosophy and science are exhibited, however, is that a 'pure science' or a 'pure experiment' alone cannot be employed for solving philosophical problems.<sup>70</sup> "The research and experiment serve only as helpful tools in any given process of comprehension; the idea or thought always should be prior to [the empirical investigation]."<sup>71</sup> In this connection, it is extremely interesting to note how Bogdashevskii utilizes such a structure for comprehending the world. As an example, in his construction of ethics, Bogdashevskii emphasizes that all the components of valuation and ethical construction are not based on 'pure scientific' observations with respect to human activity, but are rooted in the understanding of a human soul as the creation of God, because the will of any individual is not the ultimate essence of being, but is something injected into his nature by God.<sup>72</sup> This demands that the idea of God, and the idea of his intervention into the course of nature as the divine agency active in the creating of the human soul should not be overlooked, but should be accepted as the initial and authoritative ground for all scientific considerations of human behaviour. So, the truth concerning God becomes exceedingly valid and it should be taken as the foundation for any and all scientific research. This is *precisely* Bogdashevskii's point.

Bogdashevskii frequently turns to a treatment of the claims that all knowledge is relative and that a true scientific philosophy accepts the authenticity of knowledge only conditionally. The antithesis to the relativity of knowledge and the evolution of scientific concepts is of fundamental importance for Bogdashevskii. He attacks all attempts to dismiss the concept of unconditional or indubitably veridical knowledge and argues against the idea that only facts have unconditional significance. Bogdashevskii argues that if some events or phenomena suggest that the concept of an indubitably veridical knowledge is in error, then

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Interrelationship of Philosophy and Science," *TKDA* III, 12 (1894): 539.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 541.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 543.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Philosophy of Kant," *TKDA* (1898) 9: 34-36.



scientific evidence would still be needed to show that this is true. Thus, phenomenalism must be necessarily proven scientifically, but this “is possible only from the stand point of metaphysical theory.”<sup>73</sup> Bogdashevskii, on this point, of course, opposes Kant’s agnostic repudiation of the possibility of a strict knowledge of ultimate reality, but he maintains Kant’s view of the *a priori* character of the structural principles of any empirical knowledge. However, in the discussion of questions of knowledge and validity of facts, as the starting point, “one has not to take the structural principles of natural science, but of philosophy.”<sup>74</sup> Any affirmation, according to Bogdashevskii, deserves to be proven and on the bases of philosophical theories it is impossible to prove that knowledge is conditional over against the absolute significance of facts.

The most remarkable aspect of Bogdashevskii’s theoretical constructions is, of course, his break with exposition of a pure history of philosophy and his subsequent movement towards defining the limits of a secular ideology. The *theocentric* conception of the world which he professed, the living sense of the universal reason, the compatibility of genuine faith in the God-man with freedom of thought, and the interpretation of cosmological and anthropological themes in the light of these ideas - all turned Bogdashevskii’s consciousness toward the problematics of philosophy as related to religious life in Russia, especially to Russian secularism, which retained a specific religious psychology.<sup>75</sup>

Following the common tendency of Orthodox philosophers and theologians to reorganize entire world-view into the spirit of Christianity, Bogdashevskii turned to a study of the philosophical concepts, which he found in the spiritual crisis of an outstanding philosophical figure Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Interrelationship of Philosophy and Science,” *TKDA* III, 12 (1894): 535.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 537.

<sup>75</sup> Zen’kovskii gives an apt description of the phenomenon of Russian secularism during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See *Zen’kovskii*, Vol. I. 376- 77.

<sup>76</sup> On Tolstoy’s philosophy and life see *O religii L. Tolstogo* [*On Tolstoy’s Religion*] (M.: 1912); D. Y. Kvitko, *Filosofia Tolstogo* [*Tolstoy’s Philosophy*] (M.: 1928); See *Zen’kovskii*, Vol. I 387-399; T. I. Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife*, trans. N. Wreden (New York, 1945); E. J. Simmon, *Leo Tolstoy* (Boston, 1946); N. Berdiaev, “The Old Testament and the New Testament in the religious conscience of L. Tolstoy,” in his *Types of religious thought in Russia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), 119-144; Y. Lur’e, *Posle L. Tolstogo...* [*After Lev Tolstoy...*] (SPb.: 1993).

### 5.2.5 Conclusion

Bogdashevskii's main philosophical concern is to seek out an epistemological method that would emphasize the claims of a *theocentric* approach, that is, an approach which identifies truth with a wisdom sanctioned through divine or inward revelation. Only thus could one hope to avoid the excesses of a narrowly rationalist outlook closed to all sources of imaginative insight. With an eye open to the mind of the Church, he has sought to rethink the "ancient quarrel" between Christianity and philosophy, faith and reason, or creative intuition and enlightened self-critical understanding

The most significant way in which Bogdashevskii's philosophical perspective reveals itself is in his language about science and philosophy. In Bogdashevskii's philosophy, the alliance of science and faith is both possible and necessary. This well agrees with his account of theory of knowledge, perhaps more clearly shown than any other aspect of his thought. He says, "The most basic question of philosophy is epistemological, because any resolution, conceived for this question, will shape by itself the answers on the other philosophical questions."<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, his view of philosophy is coherent from the point of Orthodox doctrine. On the one hand, Bogdashevskii speaks about mutual harmony of philosophy (in the sense of love of wisdom) and Church teaching. In emphasizing the teaching of Christ as the most significant system of thought, he appeals for expansion of philosophical training of the Orthodox clergies:

The necessity of philosophical education [in Russia], undoubtedly, is very perceptible. As the best evidence for this serves is the reception of [negative] ideas ... The enthusiasm for these ideas would be impossible if for many the education of a whole world view was not a new thing, but was the soul that we have to make alive and to which we must direct all the particular types of knowledge. Yet, what should be laid down as the foundation in the development of a whole view about the world and life? Without doubt, it should be Christ's teaching, which is not only a superlative religion, but also it is the most perfect philosophy. Thus, Christianity gives solution to all the important problems of our mind....<sup>78</sup>

On the other hand, Bogdashevskii, in his treatments of philosophical systems of different kinds, is extraordinarily uninvolved in building the argumentation of the problematic

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<sup>77</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Sound Metaphysics," Book review of P. Linitkii, *Guide to the Study of Philosophy* (Kharkov': 1893) in *TKDA* II (1898) 5: 126.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.



questions of philosophy in the light of the Orthodox faith. There are, however, two exceptions. First, partly, perhaps, in the light of Kant's approach to ethics, Bogdashevskii equates his notion of ethics to a Christian concept of the divine imperative of the good. Second, in his epistemology, Bogdashevskii stresses that "the sphere of faith cannot be mixed with knowledge, these two should be differentiated," but not disassociated.<sup>79</sup> He argues:

In the sphere of faith the foremost importance has a historical experience, *i.e.* the universal voice of the Church; the science, however, is moving and advancing, in the first place, by the personal and particular experience. But in differentiating the sphere of faith from the knowledge, we unconditionally have no right to separate them, and moreover to oppose one to the other. Faith, in its practical character, has the element of knowledge, for the religious ideas give a theoretical view of world and life... For this reason, the unity of faith and knowledge is possible in so-called speculative theology where the religious concepts are explained rationally and/or restrained to the basics of mind's intelligence."<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, in its ideology Bogdashevskii's theoretical construction is entirely based upon Christian faith in God<sup>81</sup> but is permeated with a genuine enthusiasm for scientific investigation. In his approach one may find a very cautious, even a solicitous attitude toward areas which he places outside of Christian faith. This gives unquestionable value to his theories. Bogdashevskii's philosophical talent, however, lay primarily in the direction of making empirical reality philosophically intelligible. In doing so he never overcomes his Russian bias to view Western thought from a critical stand point. Nevertheless, in Bogdashevskii's philosophical erudition he boldly takes from other thinkers whatever he finds in them that seems correct, but without at all being eclectic.

Again, since Bogdashevskii's philosophical writings largely ignored the development of ecclesiastical consciousness in preserving a proper equilibrium between the divine and human principle of knowledge, it is not surprising that he gives no particular consideration to the Orthodox belief systems as the framework to his philosophy. In order to understand this paradox, we have to recall that in 1897 Bogdashevskii voluntarily left his career in the area of the history of philosophy and thereafter specialized in New Testament studies. This decision was the result of Bogdashevskii's own conviction that a biblical teaching of Christ is

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<sup>79</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Sound Metaphysics", 126.

<sup>80</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Sound Metaphysics", 126.

<sup>81</sup> Among the other Orthodox philosophers who agree with Bogdashevskii's position that without a foundation in faith philosophy is reduced to hypothetical knowledge, Karsavin argues, that if philosophy wishes to stay truly philosophic, philosophic knowledge "must be a handmaiden of theology." L. P. Karsavin, *O nachalakh [Concerning Principles]* (Paris: 1925), 88.

“ the most perfect philosophy”; and, that only Scripture, preached by the Church, “offers solution to all the important problems of [the human] mind.”<sup>82</sup> In one of his early sermons, Bogdashevskii comments:

If we consider the whole history of human understanding, in all the respect to philosophy, selflessly inclined to comprehend the truth, we will not find in this field the satisfaction for our mind. We will be stopped and astonished by the variety of opinions and by their contradictions. What is formed in the subject during one period is demolished in the other age... There is no end for this continuous change of the philosophical systems and teaching. Can we find here the satisfaction for our mind?... In this perplexity, the holy Christian faith arrives as the help. She is - although many do not perceive it - the greatest intelligence, resolving for us, in the most clear and simple way, every theoretical question which is important for us... Thanks be to God, that in the midst of different and strange teachings, surrounding us, we have His revelation, to which we should well pay attention *as to a lamp shining in a dark place* (2 Peter 1:19).<sup>83</sup>

It is highly conceivable that the above quotation is, in fact, Bogdashevskii’s autobiographical confession. Perhaps, because of his personal convictions, Bogdashevskii was not comfortable with the idea of ‘a pure philosophy’ and was not able (or simply had no intention) to fit more specifically his religious world-view into discussion of a selected body of philosophical concepts, developed throughout the history of philosophy. Thus, he dedicated the rest of his academic and pastoral life to the study of the New Testament.

Conceivably, his decision to change his field of specialization was indirectly influenced by the tendencies to combine Scripture and philosophy in such way as to show the dependence of biblical wisdom upon ancient philosophical trends. This is one of the main statements in his response to Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), a leading German Protestant theologian and historian, whose critical views were a major influence in late 19th- and early 20th-century theology, and who traced the evolution of the Early church from biblical

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<sup>82</sup> D. Bogdashevskii, “Sound Metaphysics,” Book review of P. Linitzkii, *Guide to the Study of Philosophy* (Kharkov’: 1893) in *TKDA* II (1898) 5: 125. He concludes that without the Church and faith, man cannot find a satisfactory answer for the basic philosophical questions: where are people from, and to where are they going? Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Slovo. Pri vospominanii strastei Khristovykh (Luke 23:21),” [“Sermon. In remembrance of Christ’s suffering (Luke 23:21),”] *TKDA* II, 5 (1888): 56. Also, “In faith in God and Lord Jesus Christ... in religion we will find calmness in everything that indeed disturbs and concerns us.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “A Sermon. In remembrance of Christ’s suffering: Where to find Peace for Our Doubts? (John 14:1),” *TKDA* II, 5 (1891): 3-10. For the analogous argument see also his “Where to find Peace for Our Doubts? (John 14:1),” *TKDA* II, 5 (1891): 8-9; “In remembrance of Christ’s suffering: Against Tolstoy’s perversion of Christianity,” *TKDA* I, 4 (1982): 591.

<sup>83</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “A Sermon. In remembrance of Christ’s suffering: Where to find Peace for Our Doubts? (John 14:1),” *TKDA* II, 5 (1891): 4-5 [his italics].



Christianity, which he claimed had been corrupted by the introduction of Greek metaphysics.<sup>84</sup> For Bogdashevskii, Scripture, above all, is the revelation of God, based on His wisdom. Scripture is self-reliant. It should be considered as the source of human wisdom rather than its product.

In addition, Bogdashevskii's pastoral 'heart' stipulated that in philosophy as such there is no practical help for the Church neither in the questions of dogma nor in pragmatic or ethical element of human life. Observing the history of philosophy, Bogdashevskii says, "There were many religious and philosophical teachings, but none of them could possibly be called the Gospel, because it did not give birth to a man or renew him; none of them healed human broken heart or bring a true freedom, freedom from sin."<sup>85</sup>

Bogdashevskii, of course, did not view philosophy and science as completely opposed to the Orthodox faith. Nevertheless, in his way of thinking, the tragedy of mankind, so in need of the eschatological and moral salvation in Christ, was caused not by the inadequate philosophical theory, but by unbelief in God and the Church. In solving this tragedy, "none of the philosophies could possibly replace religion."<sup>86</sup>

From the moment of his leaving the Department of Philosophy, Bogdashevskii did not publish a single study on a philosophical topic.<sup>87</sup> This fact does not suggest, however, that he stopped his creative work in philosophical reflection.

On the whole, the elements of Bogdashevskii's philosophical thought form basis for his hermeneutics. There are four main elements that really influenced the way in which he treated texts of the New Testament. *First*, Bogdashevskii stresses the importance of logic in the development of rational argument where is a particular understanding of the relationship between the suppositions and the conclusion. Thus, religious suppositions are important in dealing with religious reality of biblical texts.

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<sup>84</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Adolf Harnack, *Sushchnost' Khrisianstva*," ["Adolf Harnack, *The Essence of Christianity* (M.: 1906),"] *TKDA* III, 9 (1907): 151-155.

<sup>85</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "O Evangelii i Evangel'skoi Istorii: Protiv sovremennogo ratsionalizma," ["Lecture. About the Gospels and Its History: Against Contemporary Rationalism,"] *TKDA* 2 (1902): 270.

<sup>86</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Chtenie. Neskol'ko slov o teosofii," ["Lecture. Several Remarks on Theosophy,"] *TKDA* III, 11 (1912): 341.

<sup>87</sup> Aside from his insignificant response to theosophical systems purporting to furnish knowledge of God, and of the universe in relation to God, by means of direct mystical intuition, philosophical inquiry, or both, see D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. Several Remarks on Theosophy," *TKDA* III, 11 (1912): 341-351.

*Second*, in Bogdashevskii's philosophical thought it is impossible for man to understand without enlightenment from a divine wisdom that extends the horizon thought for anyone searching to understand concepts of reality which differ from a simple material nature. In his hermeneutics it is correspondent to the role of the Holy Spirit as the illuminating agent for understanding the scriptures.

*Third*, for Bogdashevskii, on the one hand, one has, first, to arrive at the understanding of the whole in order to know the composites. On the other hand, however, the whole can be perceived only through its parts. This is closely related to Bogdashevskii's high regard of the corporate mind of the Church and tradition as the interpretative context of the Bible.

*Last*, Bogdashevskii emphasizes his support for a scientific world-view. He argues, however, that a 'pure science' or a 'pure experiment' alone cannot be employed for solving philosophical problems. Correspondently, in his hermeneutics, Bogdashevskii does not merely endorse a pure scientific approach of bible study. He emphasizes that all the components of biblical interpretation are not based on 'pure scientific' observations with respect to human activity, but are rooted in the understanding of the Bible as divine-human book. This demands that the idea of God should not be overlooked, but should be accepted as the initial and authoritative ground for all scientific considerations of bible interpretation. The truth concerning God becomes exceedingly valid and it should be taken as the foundation for any and all scientific research.

The applicability of these philosophical ideas and their influence on his hermeneutics will be noticeable when we turn in the following sections to the analysis of his exegetical and homiletic writings.



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

### **5.3.1 Introduction**

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

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

### **5.3.2 Theological Axiomatic Assumptions**

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

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

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

### 5.3.2.1 The Matter of Ecclesiology Within Hermeneutical Frame

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>112</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Chtenie. O Evangelii i Evangel’skoi Istorii: Protiv sovremennogo ratsionalizma,” [“Lecture. About the Gospels and their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,”] *TKDA* 2 (1902): 281.



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

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

### 5.3.2.2 The Nature of the New Testament

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 5.3.2.3 The Supernatural Element of the New Testament

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 5.3.3 Methodological Presupposition

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

(c) *The Restrictions of Historical Inquiry*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

#### 5.3.3.4 Acquiring Supplementary Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

### 5.3.4 Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## 5.4 The New Testament Ethic and Hermeneutical Strategy

### 5.4.1 Introduction

Having traced the contours of Bogdashevskii's approach to the New Testament and formulated some conclusions about the way in which he reads the New Testament the focus of this section is in seeking to reconstruct how Bogdashevskii interprets the New Testament in addressing ethical issues as an example of his hermeneutical strategy.

Before plunging into the substance of the investigation, it would be well to note two major reasons for the choice of New Testament ethics as a test of Bogdashevskii's hermeneutical strategy. *First*, in his works Bogdashevskii shows the predominance of moral problems by taking them as essential for the Russian society of the 19<sup>th</sup> -beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Second*, from the reading of Bogdashevskii's works it is clear that he maintains continuity with the Russian orthodox practice of bible interpretation in which the exegetes are forming the moral teachings which directly outcome from the Scripture.<sup>199</sup> These two reasons allow us to discuss Bogdashevskii's New Testament ethics in order to identify his hermeneutical strategy as visible condition that corresponds to the Orthodox hermeneutics.

Bogdashevskii has not produced a major systematic treatment of Christian ethics; most of his writings have taken the form of occasional essays. The exegetical studies, on which we shall concentrate our attention, stand as his most significant constructive contribution on the issue. Also, of importance for understanding Bogdashevskii's ethics are his sermons. Taken together, these works provide the basis for an assessment of his use of the New Testament for constructing Orthodox ethics.

In order to show how Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics is applied to New Testament Christian ethics, it is necessary first of all to understand his general construction of the ethical system. His ethics are based on a coherent set of convictions. First, in the understanding of his ethical material it is important to remember that precisely from the Orthodox theological point of view Bogdashevskii is trying to find support for his ethical prescriptions. This requires us to build his theological framework. Second, Bogdashevskii's moral vision is intelligible only when his anthropological perspective is kept in mind. This leads us to consider how his anthropology is worked out in handling the ethical issues. Since the methodology of Bogdashevskii's ethics takes the nature of man (in relation to God) as a

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<sup>199</sup> Cf. Platon (Levshin), *The Complete Works* (SPb.: 1913), Vol. 1, 691.

starting point for understanding the ethical obligations, an anthropological framework will be outlined as a part of his hermeneutical strategy for constructing Orthodox ethics. Third, in our task to analyse how the New Testament functions in Bogdashevskii's ethics the focus will be placed on two issues most noticeably demonstrated by Bogdashevskii: ethnonationalism and violence. The analysis of these two issues in Bogdashevskii's ethics will supply the matters of direct observation on his hermeneutical strategy. Fourth, without doubt Bogdashevskii's approach in constructing an ethical core requires a certain process of valid reasoning and argumentation. In order to see how Bogdashevskii's ethics is constructed in its logical weight, the relationships between the premises and the conclusion (such that if the premises are true then the conclusion is true) will be outlined.

#### 5.4.2 The Theological Framework

The power of Bogdashevskii's ethical system is not in its rules or dictum; rather it is on the basis of this system. There are two decisive bases that determine the ethics of human beings: (1) the world of a man; and (2) the world of God. Every person is in interdependent relationships with the other beings of the human society; yet, for Bogdashevskii, the ethical system of "this world" is not absolute, since "this world does not act decisively upon our will."<sup>200</sup> Therefore, Bogdashevskii sees both God and Christianity as a substantial basis of ethics.<sup>201</sup>

His theological framework is fourfold: (1) God and Christ; (2) the Church; (3) eschatological judgement; and (4) an identity with God (a mystical unity with God in the concept of sonship).

*First*, since a sound argumentation for ethics must not degenerate into impersonalism the idea of a symphony of personalities, in which ethics is reflected, is based on the character and deeds of God and especially of the Incarnated Word (historical figure of Jesus Christ). It is the most essential archetype for the human ethics.<sup>202</sup> Ethics has a *theocentric* orientation. This saves ethics from impersonalism without committing ethics to any humanistic personification. The prayer to God is a device where by an initial submission to the will of

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<sup>200</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Last Visit of Christ the Savior in Galilee: Mt. 17: 1-18:35 and parell.," *TKDA* III, 11 (1913): 358.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Letter of James," *TKDA* III, 11 (1907): 462.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 288-89.



New Testament, is absolutely faithful to the Orthodox seminarian text-books are not valid (contra Prof. M. Tareev<sup>194</sup>).

For example, he is opposing the traditional understanding of ὁ μικρότερος in Mt. 11:11 (cf. Luk. 7:28) as a greater rating of Jesus to that of John the Baptist. Bogdashevskii argues that this interpretation, despite its attestation in the Church tradition cited in the Orthodox text-books, is not convincing. He suggests that the contrast is not between two individuals, but between two eras, where the new reality of the Kingdom of God dawning through the ministry of Jesus places least in the new order of the kingdom everyone who is not the member of its kingdom. In the clause ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν ["but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"] has not a Christological, but eschatological echo. "It is impossible to suggest that Christ the Saviour is speaking of Himself as of 'the greater in the kingdom of heaven', for He is not the member of this kingdom, but its Founder."<sup>195</sup> The era of the present state of Old Testament fulfilment in the person of the John the Baptist, for Bogdashevskii, does not overshadow the era of promise, when all believers will share a greater state in existing together with the Founder of the kingdom. He disagrees with one view attested by the Church Fathers, and argues for the other interpretation, also supported in the Patristics.<sup>196</sup> Next, in his writings Bogdashevskii argues against an allegorical interpretation of Luke 5:36 suggested by St. John Chrysostom († 407) who takes ἐπίβλημα ὀπὸ ἱμάτιον καινοῦ as high Christian commandments and ἱμάτιον παλαιόν as "not yet the renewed nature of Christ's disciples, and implies, until disciples renew their hearts Jesus will not demand from that they follow His principal commandments. Bogdashevskii's argument against Chrysostom is as follows: "This interpretation does not correspond with the context, for Christ does not explain here, why He does not inform His disciples about high and difficult teaching, but rather shows why His disciples must follow this particular teaching, fleeing from the Judeo-Pharisaic understanding of righteousness."<sup>197</sup>

<sup>194</sup> M. Tareev, M. "K voprosu o perevode In. 8:44," ["On the Translation of John 8:44,"] *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* II (1904): 146.

<sup>195</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Exegetical remarks: (1) Mt. 11:19...", *TKDA* II, 7/8 (1909): 481.

<sup>196</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Exegetical remarks...", *TKDA* (1910) I, 3, 480ff.

<sup>197</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Christ as the Miracles Performer: Mt. 8:1-9 and the corresponding texts," *TKDA* III, 11 (1911): 392.

Bogdashevskii shows a critical evaluation of both the Patristic<sup>198</sup> and modern (for his time) exegetical studies. For example, Bogdashevskii also argues against Chrysostom, Origen, Augustin, Feokfilat Bolgarskii who identified *only the heretics* (those who are not within the Church) in the weeds of the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Mt 13:24-30) on the basis that the weeds are not the result of natural processes, but of a deliberate attempt to ruin the plantation of good seed (within the Church) from outside. Bogdashevskii says, that the weeds are all the sinners of the present age (in both human society and the Church) preserved as fuel for burning for the time of the harvest (*i.e.*, eschatological judgment). Among actual members of the Church there are many sinners that are warned by this parable to turn away from sin.

The hermeneutical issues in Bogdashevskii's exegesis are especially vital in the relationships between an accurate historical critical task (where faith in relative degree is passive) to engage in the understanding of the text and the limits of historical-logical positivism (where reason is philosophically and sceptically biased). In his view, the Orthodox theological claims cannot be dismissed on account of historical objectivity, because of Scripture's sacred status and the value of encountering the Church witness.

In most cases, Bogdashevskii works with very acceptable principles of interpretation. One the one hand it seems, therefore, that the Orthodox Church (for example, in case of Bogdashevskii) had a knowledge of the exegetical methodology. Then, the question is: why did exegesis not flourish in the Russian Orthodox Church? One of the possible answers is that there has been an obvious domination of the Church interpretation over the individual exegesis. Thus, the individual exegetes felt being uncalled for a task of exegetical inquiry.

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<sup>198</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Pritchi Khrista o tsarstvii nebesnom: Mf. 13:1-52, i parall.," ["Christ's Parables on the Kingdom of Heaven: Mt. 13:1-52 and parall.,"] *TKDA* III, 10 (1912): 194-95. Against the allegorical interpretation of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt. 18:23-35), offered by Feokfilat Bolgarskii, see his "Poslednee prebyvanie Khrista Spasitelia v Galilee..." ["The Last Visit of Christ the Savior in Galilee: Mt. 17:1-18:35 and parall.,"] *TKDA* III, 11 (1913): 375.



God is taking place, because both liturgical and private prayer serve as the paradigm for receiving God's supplying grace and help for any human mediums and activities<sup>203</sup>

Furthermore, since the revelation of the Word of God is communicated through Scripture, the Bible represents an ultimate authority over the conduct of people.<sup>204</sup> No reader of Bogdashevskii will have any difficulty identifying the focal image that serves to unify his reading of Scripture. The person of Jesus Christ who is the ground and the content and form of the divine claim, is the unifying centre; all Scripture bears witness to him and his truth and places Jesus' life as the exemplification of righteous living. Human life must be infused with Christ's spirit and everything must be done for the sake of Christ.<sup>205</sup> His New Testament ethics testifies to *Christocentric interpretation*, for Christ is the main subject of Scripture, and, therefore, he is the end of biblical interpretation and application.

Bogdashevskii's strategy demands that one read Scripture thoroughly with the intent of obeying exactly what is commanded there. Throughout all his writings and sermons, Bogdashevskii reminds us about moral duties stated in Scripture as being *mandatory*. Scriptural portrayal of Jesus and the Apostles provides, therefore, the norms for the life of the Orthodox Church. The New Testament, as such, however, is not reduced to an abstract ethical codex. It expresses both the core of the ethical commandments and their actual application in a real environment of human life.<sup>206</sup> Yet the New Testament text(s) do not form a sole authority for ethics. The ethical system of Bogdashevskii is built on the theological framework of ecclesiology. The Church receives more emphasis than the New Testament in the sense that the Church is the keeper of Divine truth, and consequently knows and lives according to the Divine moral imperative.

*Second*, the Church is a realized ethical system of God because only within Church life are the applications of ethical norms visible in their greatest pragmatic perfection.<sup>207</sup> The

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Slovo. O Molitve...", ["On Prayer. Luk. 22:40; cf. Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38,"] *TKDA* I, 4 (1907): iii.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Archpriest Bogdashevskii, "Slovo. O dukhovnoi khritianskoi bor'be," ["Sermon. About Spiritual Christian Warfare,"] *TKDA* I, 3 (1911): vii.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Archpriest Bogdashevskii, "Slovo. O khristianskom dolge," ["Sermon. On Christian Responsibility,"] *TKDA* I (1913): xiv-xv.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 288-89.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Archpriest Bogdashevskii, "Slovo. Evangelie v ego otnoshenii k zemnomu blagoustroeniiu," ["The Gospel and its Relationship to an Earthly Equipping,"] *TKDA* III (1912): vi-vii.

Church is “a living ethic” that fully brings to life the silent testimony of the New Testament texts. Thus, the ethical norms are rooted in the essence of the Church; for as such, they reflect the Body of Christ in a real world. “Sustenance of Christian unity [or the Church itself] confirms on every one of us specific moral obligations.”<sup>208</sup> The unity of the Church is based on faith, but it is love that builds up this unity.<sup>209</sup>

Moreover, since Bogdashevskii stresses that an absolute freedom of man is impossible, because “an absolute freedom of a man leads him to absolute self-rule and arbitrariness,”<sup>210</sup> a thinkable freedom of man is not in his independence from society, but in belonging to an appropriate community of the people. Such community is the Church. Bogdashevskii argues that the Orthodox Church is the guarantee and guide for the freedom of man, because the truth of God is in her. Since freedom is not possible without truth, the freedom of a man to act ethically is not realistic outside of the Church.<sup>211</sup> According to Bogdashevskii, Paul’s expression *δικαίῳ νόμος οὐ κεῖται* [“the law is not made for a righteous man”] (1 Tim. 1:9) denotes the highest moral state of human being, for it expresses the condition of man having the law as an essential component of being.<sup>212</sup> If the moral law becomes part of our being, we do not need any external supremacy for direction. The paradox of moral life, however, is the autonomy from both inner or external powers and standards. This autonomy is dissolved in the corporate Christian togetherness of the Church in which the people are not regarded merely as elements or cells of the whole, but part of the organism in direct and immediate union with Christ and His Father. The Church outgrows and transcends the limits of the people to be organically united with the others on the basis of God’s ethical code.

In Bogdashevskii’s thinking, the New Testament functions in relation to ethics from the stand point of the Church, rather than from its own pragmatic essence. Accordingly,

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<sup>208</sup> “Сохранение христианского единения возлагает на каждого из нас и особенные нравственные обязанности.” D. I. Bogdashevskii “About Christian Unity (John 17:21),” [“O Khristianskom Edinenii (In. 17:21),”] *TKDA* I, 4 (1902): 585.

<sup>209</sup> Esp. his sermons “About Christian Unity (John 17:21),”] *TKDA* I, 4 (1902): 576-586; “About Christian Unity (John 17:21),” *TKDA* I (1905): 566-575.

<sup>210</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,” [“Chtenie. O Tserkvi,”] *TKDA* 2 (1904): 192.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Slovo. Istina i Svoboda,” [“Truth and Freedom,”] *TKDA* I (1900): 533-545; Ibid., “Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands,” *TKDA* 2 (1904): 195.

<sup>212</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Slovo. Radovat’sia ili Plakat’? (Luk. 23:28),” [“To Rejoice or to Cry? (Luk. 23:28),”] *TKDA* I, 3 (1906): xvii.



Church tradition, prayer and mystical perceiving at the holy places are the ceaseless sources of morality.<sup>213</sup> In his sermon “The Significance of the Holy Places for an Orthodox Christian” (pronounced at one of the most sacred buildings of the Russian Orthodox church, the large Kiev-Percherskii monastery (or Cave, founded early 11th century, known for its catacombs), he emphasizes the necessity of visiting some holy places, particularly the tombs connected with the life or death of the early Orthodox saints, with religious intent such as an act of thanksgiving or penance, to solicit supernatural aid, or merely as an act of devotion. Bogdashevskii notes, that a holy place, such as Kiev-Percherskii monastery, is of a special significance for the Russian Orthodox people. He says about the holy places, “These are the centres of national religious life; these are the living witnesses to the truthfulness of our faith, here many times the Lord has shown his saving wonders.”<sup>214</sup> In some way, the holy places, particularly the tombs of the saints, contain an ethical requirement. They are “the ceaseless sources of moral comfort and encouragement.”<sup>215</sup> The meditation at the tombs makes ethical demand upon the human spirit. At the holy places believers experience, learn and envision not only an individual religious ethic, a complete obedience to God, but also the integrity and beauty of the human spirit that has both a vertical dimension between the loving will of God and the will of man to follow God’s commandments and a horizontal one between the loving people of the Church in society.<sup>216</sup> It is of course not to assert that Bogdashevskii concludes that Orthodox people can understand and practice the moral codex of God after they contemplate on it or ‘see’ it in the lives of the saints. He considers it necessary to have some understanding of the practical, moral life of other exemplary Christians (from the past and present), before a personal action is possible. Thus, in Bogdashevskii’s view, the ethics of an individual are shaped beyond Scripture, by Church living tradition, by attending to the examples of those who have been morally capable and thus worthy of teaching from their life style.

*Third*, Bogdashevskii empowers his moral system with the concept of obedience, personal responsibility and accountability before God. He says, “the nearness of the Second

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<sup>213</sup> Cf. D.I. Bogdashevskii, “O Znachenii sviatykh mest...,” [“The Significance of the Holy Places for an Orthodox Christian,”] *TKDA* III (1911): vi.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. “Это- центры его [т.е. русского православного народа] религиозной жизни; это живые свидетели истинности его веры; тут Господь не один раз являл дивные знамения для его спасения.” *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. “здесь [т.е. на святых местах, в обителях святых угодников Божиих] обретаем неизсякаемый источник нравственного утешения и ободрения.” *Ibid.*, vi.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, vi-viii.

Coming does not have a chronological, but one ethical meaning.”<sup>217</sup> The responsibility derives from a theological context of the Judgement. Bogdashevskii notes that if the idea of accountability is abandoned, the moral norms under such a dictum receive a worldly or unrestricted character.<sup>218</sup> In contrast, the acceptance of this dogmatic element consequently leads every human being not only to a careful examination of God’s ethical codex, but also to its practice.

*Last*, the concept of obedience and personal responsibility of the people in relation to God is interrelated with a theological theme of identity with God. In constructing an ethical system Bogdashevskii uses *Father - Son- child* language as an integrated part of the larger metaphorical network of New Testament ethics. In his lecture, “About the Gospel and Its History: Against Contemporary Rationalism”<sup>219</sup> he attempts to emphasize the elements of the familial imagery of Father-Son in the Fourth Gospel that on the basis of family ethics requires obedience of the children to their father. He begins with a brief survey of pertinent texts in the Fourth Gospel, attempting to establish the essence of familial imagery of Father-Son. *First*, the Son is identical with the Father (referring to John 3:13; 8:58; 10:30; 17:5). The family relationship between the Father and Jesus Christ includes a moral identity, but their identity of course is not limited to a moral sameness. The Son as well as the Father has the same power (John 5:21); is the object of worship and reverence (John 5:23); gives eternal life (3:15-16; 5:24; 6: 35, 48), judges the world (3:17; 5:22, 27) ... he has everything that the Father has (17:10). The Jews, actually, recognized that Jesus stands for the Father, but they did not believe Him (10:33; cf. 5:18; 19:7).

*Second*, in the Fourth Gospel Bogdashevskii visualizes the calling into the family of *God-Son-children of God* (i.e. believers) that requires family ethics based on obedience exemplified in *Father-Son* relationships. The adoption of the believers into the family of Father-Son has to be reflected in a moral conduct, i.e. to act according to the will of the Father. Bogdashevskii then summarizes the results of his survey in the following way: the realized ethics according to Father-Son image (i.e. moral sonship) is fundamental for stating our identity with God (sonship in nature). The general tenor of his use of familial imagery

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<sup>217</sup> “Близость второго пришествия имеет не хронологический, а этический... смысл.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Letter of James,” *TKDA* III, 11 (1907): 460.

<sup>218</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Slovo. O Pokaianii,” [“Sermon. On Repentance,”] *TKDA* I, 4 (1910): 504.

<sup>219</sup> Esp. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 290-91.



Father-Son-children of God, in the Fourth Gospel, is to base the call for ethical conduct as the reflection of people's identity with the Father and His Son.<sup>220</sup>

### 5.4.3 The Anthropological Framework

New Testament ethics, in Bogdashevskii, rest upon the anthropological concept of the *inner and divine* of man and the understanding that a divine force acts as the ordering principle in human nature. This does not necessarily have a dualistic sense in which the flesh or the body is evil in contrast to the spirit, for both are stained (Jesus came in the flesh, and the flesh has a share in the resurrection). In Bogdashevskii, nevertheless, there is a tendency to associate human natural desires more strongly with the flesh. Although there is a certain ascetic thrust, yet there is no flight from the flesh, which is to be kept like a temple, which becomes immortal through union with the Holy Spirit, and which will finally be raised again. Consequently, dualism is present only in the sense of ethical conduct. "The dualism of the spirit and flesh can be extinguished not by the synthesis of both, but by submission of the flesh to spirit, or by transformation of the flesh."<sup>221</sup> Thus, the *inner man* cannot be substituted by the *outer being* and the outer being of man has to be transformed according to divine power,<sup>222</sup> because the outer being is guided by its chaotic and contradictory instincts.<sup>223</sup> Thus, salvation from sin, i.e., proper ethical behaviour is the overcoming of the flesh by the spirit in submission to the will of God. This submission is possible only through the Holy Spirit which dwells in the human *being*. Because of the Spirit, a man can escape the slavery of evil carried out from a fleshly heart to which the fact of *progenitor* - Adam's sin

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<sup>220</sup> The metaphor of the family in the interpretation of the ethical dynamics in the Forth Gospel is analysed in a recent study by J. G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: The Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel According to John* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

<sup>221</sup> "Дуализм духа и плоти устраняется не их синтезом, а подчинением плоти духу, или преобразованием плоти." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Chtenie. O Prichinakh Sovremennogo Neveriia," ["Lecture. About the Basis for Modern Unbelief,"] *TKDA* I, 2 (1910): 168-169.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. Truth and Freedom," ["Slovo. Istina I Svoboda,"] *TKDA* I (1900): 542.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 192.

brought about a state of the sinful or immoral man in whom “there is continuous discord between spirit and flesh.”<sup>224</sup>

Bogdashevskii contrasts the sphere of the flesh with that of heaven or spirit. He argues that the spirit of man denotes a heavenly relationship, “Our spirit is of a Divine origin; it is the flame from God’s fire, it is from heaven; therefore ... it is seeking justice, searching truth, longing for an eternal ... satisfied only by God’s law.”<sup>225</sup> On the other hand, flesh denotes an earthly relationship. This relationship is not evil, because in every man there is some deposit of good; but it is also not absolutely positive, because it is sealed with wrongdoing as norm.<sup>226</sup> Thus, moral principles according to the flesh mean morals according to the categories of this world. God’s promise is the opposite of flesh and in Christ the divine sphere has invaded the human. The Holy Spirit is regenerating humans for a new life, characterized by obedience to God.<sup>227</sup> It means that ‘fleshly’ humanity as a whole cannot inherit the kingdom of God without transformation through Christ that starts as birth from the Spirit:

All behaviour of a man must be oriented toward the highest purpose [be transformed by Christ]. Our life must be transformed in the highest form of life; the purpose of an ethical act results in creating a new spiritual person..., born of the Holy Spirit (ref. John 3:6).<sup>228</sup>

Moreover, the transformation of a mankind, in Bogdashevskii, has eschatological perspective. He is concerned not only with the present life of a man, but also with his future. Thus, Bogdashevskii stresses, the present presence of a divine component in a human being

<sup>224</sup> “... замечается всегдашний разлад между духом и плотью....” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “O dukhovnoi khristianskoi bor’be (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38),” [“About the Christian Spiritual Struggle (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38),”] *TKDA* I, 3 (1904): 364.

<sup>225</sup> “Дух наш есть начало божественное; он пламень от божественного пламени; он —от неба, а потому, естественно, обращается к небу, как своему истинному отечеству.... Он жаждет правды, стремится к истине, тяготит к вечной и неизменной красоте; он ищет горнего, услаждается только законом божественным.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “About the Christian Spiritual Struggle (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38),” *TKDA* I, 3 (1904): 361; cf. *Ibid.*, “The Gospel and its Relationship to an Earthly Equipping,” *TKDA* III (1912): iii.

<sup>226</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “About the Christian Spiritual Struggle (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38),” *TKDA* I, 3 (1904): 365.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Bogdashevskii, D. I. “The Letter of St. Apostle of Jude,” *TKDA* III, 11 (1908): 388.

<sup>228</sup> “Все поведение человека должно быть направлено к достижению этой цели [т.е. преображенное существование во Христе]. Наша жизнь должна быть преобразована в высшую духовную форму жизни; цель морального действия заключается в том, чтобы создать новое духовное человечество..., рожденное от Духа.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Basis for Modern Unbelief,” *TKDA* I, 2 (1910): 169.



makes it illogical and risky to live a human existence according to the motto found in 1 Cor. 15:32 - Φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν, αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν (“let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”).<sup>229</sup> Bogdashevskii follows traditional Orthodox lines and signifies the transition from living by human passions to living by God’s will as the reality of a realized eschatology. Christian faith and the works of the Holy Spirit are essential for the process of liberation from an earthly manner of life.<sup>230</sup>

In light of the foregoing sketch of Bogdashevskii’s anthropology, let us now summarize his outline. The relation to God who is the creator and life giver of human beings qualifies humanity. Salvation does not lie in a retreat from the physical to the spiritual. Flesh is not a separate and intrinsically bad sphere, but becomes bad only with orientation to it in moral conduct. The flesh as a wrong disposition away from God seems to become a controlling power. Salvation through Christ means liberation from earthly goals in a life that is lived in obedience to God by God’s gift of a new spiritual nature to man.

The ethical imperatives of Scripture are for all Christians. To implement these imperatives is a continual task. In this sense every Christian has to be ascetic. Bogdashevskii says,

...in essence, the life of a Christian is the life of asceticism; it is ceaseless activity that is longing to give the victory of spirit over the flesh, to make our body a worthy instrument of spirit and through the development of spirit to transform our body into a spiritual body as much as possible.<sup>231</sup>

#### 5.4.4 Moral Logic

Christianity, in Bogdashevskii’s opinion, does not reject the positive sides of a human being, but it stresses ethical purification. This ethical purification is a triumph of Christian living.<sup>232</sup> He says, “Man is not only an intelligent being, he is also a moral being; therefore

<sup>229</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “A Sermon. Truth and Freedom,” *TKDA* I (1900): 542-43.

<sup>230</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “About the Christian Spiritual Struggle (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38),” *TKDA* I, 3 (1904): 366-67.

<sup>231</sup> “... по существу жизнь христианина есть аскетика – всегдашнее деятельное стремление дать торжество духовному началу над плотным, сделать тело достойным орудием духа, преобразовать через развитие духа уже здесь, насколько это возможно, тело душевное в тело духовное.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “About the Christian Spiritual Struggle (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38),” *TKDA* I, 3 (1904): 363-64.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 363, 365.

the moral issues, as such, trouble us greatly.”<sup>233</sup> The theological and anthropological framework constructs the basis of Bogdashevskii’s logical chain of arguments that supports the requirement of Christian ethics and answers to the question of what is the aim of Christian ethics.

As noted above, Bogdashevskii rejects the concept of absolute freedom or the ideas of *self-control* and *self-guidance* as sufficient governing factors in human behavior. Although it is good to live according to a personal state of mind, “to live without the external authority is impossible, for the longing to deny each and every authority will be captured by much exceeding authority [perhaps, of self-contradictions].”<sup>234</sup> Thus, self-control is necessary only in respect of controlling oneself to adapt the moral standards fixed by the controlling authority (*i.e.*, God and the Church). “The norm of life derives not from what man *is*, but from what he *ought to be*, and this [*i.e.* what man ought to be] is perfectly pointed out by Christianity.”<sup>235</sup> Thus the Church is not only the source of the norms of conduct, it is also the source of empowerment for the moral life.

Therefore, Bogdashevskii also dismisses the concept of a *moralistic human society* that develops common ethical principles and serves as the guide of an individual to practice a morally righteous life.<sup>236</sup> If separated from the Church whether can the State of the constitutional or monarchal government of the state be considered as an authoritative guide in ethical instruction and code? Only the Church is a sole and trustworthy institution on the Earth, upon which God bestowed a perfect awareness of moral norms.<sup>237</sup> Therefore, the Church brings out the best principles or standards of human conduct rather than science or

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<sup>233</sup> “Человек есть не только разумное, но и нравственное существо, а потому, нас постигают, далее, смущения нравственные в собственном смысле этого слова.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, D. I. “A Sermon. In Remembrance of Christ’s Suffering: Where to find Peace for Our Doubts (John 14:1),” (In. 14:1),” *TKDA* II, 5 (1891): 5.

<sup>234</sup> “... [в жизни] без авторитета обойтись невозможно, и кто желает отрешиться от всякого авторитета, тот попадает еще более тяжкому руководителю.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “To Rejoice or to Cry?” *TKDA* I, 3 (1906): xvii.

<sup>235</sup> “Норма жизни заимствуется не из того, что человек *есть*, а из того, чем он *должен быть*, а это должное совершеннейшим образом указывается христианством.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Slovo. O Khristianskoi Pravde (Mf. 3:15),” [“Sermon. About Christian Truth (Mt 3:15),” *TKDA* I (1912): xiv (his italics).

<sup>236</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “A Sermon. To Rejoice or to Cry? (Luk. 23:28)” *TKDA* I, 3 (1906): xvi.

<sup>237</sup> Archpriest Bogdashevskii, D. I. “Sermon. About Christian Truth (Mt 3:15),” *TKDA* I (1912): xv.



different kinds of the literary art. The Church in its full dimension (teaching, art, music, rites, etc.) establishes the way of life. She cultivates the ethical principles in Christians.<sup>238</sup>

Bogdashevskii sees the danger that the moral principles could be viewed as license for obtaining public recognition. Therefore, he reasons that the ethical norms do not serve mainly for the purpose of delighting other people. To please the people is not only impossible, but also needless, because the expectations of the people are quick to be modified accordingly to society's majority. Moreover, the people expectations are of a self-centred nature. He says,

The Christian never should long for and search for praise from all the people in order that all the people will say about him: 'good and moral.' This false motivation for any activity essentially perverts our ethical life and makes our conduct clearly unchristian.<sup>239</sup>

Two corollaries of Bogdashevskii's approach to the problem should be noted. *First*, not all the worldly moral principles are acceptable for a Christian; thus to act in agreement with people's standard or expectation is a potential contradiction to the Christian ethical system. *Second*, to observe moral principles for the sake of getting respect from the people is to submit oneself to merely human values; rather, the motivation for a living moral codex is to obey God, to submit oneself to God. Since, human values are morally legitimate only if in accord with God's moral system, Christians have to live exclusively for the purpose of pleasing God, aiming to receive God's acclamation. Sincere people might wish to serve God but even in so doing they fall into the sin of establishing their own righteousness. Right desires become carnal action; so that only in retrospect can one differentiate the will which opposes the fleshly nature of man.

Since, in Bogdashevskii, the New Testament is used in regard to Christian ethics as a historically reliable document, the reality of facts in the life of Christ, the Apostles and the Apostolic Church determine the meaning of an ethical system in a sense of its actual realization. Thus, the New Testament is the crucial source of ethics, because it functions authoritatively by exemplifying the real people that utilized the ethical system given by God. Moreover, the moral system of Bogdashevskii is to extend the chain of Church lifestyle

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<sup>238</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Truth and Freedom," *TKDA* I (1900): 540-41.

<sup>239</sup> "Христианин никогда не может желать и стремиться к тому, чтобы у всех людей стяжать похвалу, чтобы все говорили о нем: "добр", "добр". Это совершенно ложное побуждение в деятельности, в корне извращающее нашу нравственную жизнь, делающее наше поведение явно не - христианским." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Slovo. O Lozhnoi Pokhvale," ["A Sermon. About False Acclamation,"] *TKDA* I, 4 (1903): 540.

tradition by attending closely to the example of the Church saints, who have given an example of a moral life. These saints, in their life-journey, together formed a community of the Orthodox Christian character and conduct.<sup>240</sup> Being concerned with the morality of the Orthodox community, as the locus of God's saving and transforming power, Bogdashevskii links the moral teaching with the Russian Orthodox identity. He urges Christians to live as the Orthodox, to live according to Orthodox faith in order that unbelievers "will not doubt in the holiness of our beliefs, in the power of our Saviour, in the renewing and sanctifying action of His grace."<sup>241</sup>

Bogdashevskii's logic for ethics derives also from his personal encounters. His appeal to the ethical issues is formed from two environmental factors. *First*, there is the personal factor. Bogdashevskii indicates that he himself shares the tragedy of all human beings who by their own power want to change the morals and life, but are not capable of staying on the legitimate moral principles and immediately return to a former ethically lawless path of acting. Such a condition of the people or even of the whole society, Bogdashevskii argues, comes from the confidence in the rightness of the judgment of a personal or corporal human mind. The human mind, Bogdashevskii emphasizes, is not sufficient but contradictory, and, therefore, it is not reliable for constructing ethical values. The human mind, without being brought to light through faith in God, gives only the possibility to identify good and evil, but it does not guide a human being in choosing moral good over against evil.<sup>242</sup>

*Second*, Bogdashevskii is concerned with the morality of Russians in general and especially with the ethics of the Orthodox people. His sermons have a number of ethical themes that stress: (1) the collision of Russian believers with worldly tendencies; (2) obedience as a paradigm for action; and (3) the Orthodox community as the locus of God's saving and transforming power. Obedience assumes the humbling of one's mind before the teaching of the Church.<sup>243</sup> In Bogdashevskii, belonging to the Church overlaps with one of his most distinctive moral concerns - to live according to the Orthodox faith in order to

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<sup>240</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. About False Acclamation," *TKDA* I, 4 (1903): 546-47.

<sup>241</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "In Remembrance of Christ's Suffering (Luk 23:21)," *TKDA* II, 5 (1988): 56; also cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "About Christian Unity (John 17:21)," *TKDA* I (1905): 574-75.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. In Remembrance of Christ's Suffering: Where to find Peace for Our Doubts (John 14:1)," *TKDA* II, 5 (1891): 6-7

<sup>243</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. In Remembrance of Christ's Suffering (Luk. 23:21)," *TKDA* II, 5 (1988): 58.



transform the whole of Russian society.<sup>244</sup> In his vision, as soon as the saving message of Scripture and the normative aspects of the Church become a living experience, in the *praxis* of the Russian Church, it becomes an existential access to a new life of the whole country. Christian ethics, which demonstrates the unity with God and Church, is a spiritual movement that will drive an ongoing health and renewal of Russia. Bogdashevskii argues that Christian ethics cannot be linked with *the spirit of time*, breathed in Pre-Revolutionary Russia.<sup>245</sup> “We cannot”, he says, “justify our unchristian deeds due to the spirit of the times.”<sup>246</sup> *Moralistic society* in Russia is the outcome of the Christian paradigm. The example of Christian ethics should affect the life of every individual, national culture (art, music, literature, etc.), etc., - the whole human life-environment.<sup>247</sup> Bogdashevskii’s stress of the implementation of the ethical code, however, is not aimed to form a human society with a certain ethical quality that advocates democratic and economic well-being<sup>248</sup>; rather, its necessity and result is mainly concerned with the spiritual or religious state of individuals and to bring a person close to God’s holiness.<sup>249</sup> Ethics, foremost, is not a concern with the well-being of the people, in terms of their wealth or health. “The soul is greater than the body, greater than food and clothes.”<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “A Sermon. In Remembrance of Christ’s Suffering (Luk. 23:21),” *TKDA* II, 5 (1988): 56.

<sup>245</sup> Bogdashevskii speaks in great detail about the moral corruption of the nation. See especially his sermons “To Rejoice or to Cry? (Luk. 23:28)” *TKDA* I, 3 (1906): xiv-xv; On Christian Responsibility,” *TKDA* I (1913): xi-xviii.

<sup>246</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Truth and Freedom,” *TKDA* I (1900): 543.

<sup>247</sup> Archpriest D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Gospel and its Relationship to an Earthly Equipping,” *TKDA* III (1912): vi-vii.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, i-vii.

<sup>249</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Sermon. About Christian Truth (Mt 3:15),” *TKDA* I (1912): xii-xiii.

<sup>250</sup> “Душа больше тела, больше пищи и одежды.” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Gospel and its Relationship to an Earthly Equipping,” *TKDA* III (1912): iii.

### 5.4.5 The Function of the New Testament

The main purpose of this section, is to ask how the New Testament functions in Bogdashevskii's ethics on two most apparent issues: ethnonationalism and violence and to see how Bogdashevskii places the Russian Church within the world articulated by the text. The analysis of these two issues in Bogdashevskii's ethics will supply the matters of direct observation on his hermeneutical strategy.

#### 5.4.5.1 Ethnonationalism

A racial or ethnic question is at the heart of Bogdashevskii's ethics. Bogdashevskii's concern with the ethical issues is linked to an ethnically diverse Russian Empire. On the one hand, the events in Russia of the attacks against ethnic minorities (after 1881) perhaps stipulated Bogdashevskii to address the issue.<sup>251</sup> On the other hand, voicing the issue in the language of *ethnicity - morals* was his prophetic warning.

He does not have a racial or anti-national element in his ethics. Knowing that all human beings can be classified according to common descent and superficial physical characteristics Bogdashevskii builds his concept of race not particularly from a sociological or biological point of view, but from the point of a specific human environment created by Orthodox Christianity. In determining behaviour and lifestyle, he is considering the Church a far more important factor than race.

Bogdashevskii argues, that the Orthodox Church does not ask any human being *where you come from* or *what is your national identity* in order to limit his or her personal freedom on the basis of the race.<sup>252</sup> In this sense, the Church is a community of people that

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<sup>251</sup> Being a national minority in tsarist Russia, Jews, for example, have experienced the organized attack and massacre (so-called *pogrom* "devastation") which occurred in 1881, following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II by revolutionary terrorists. This massacre took place in 1903 in the Bessarabian city of Chisinau. Later, after the failure of the Revolution of 1905 in Russia, pogroms occurred in about 600 villages and cities; thousands of Jews were slaughtered, and the property of many of the victims was looted and destroyed. Ostensibly, these pogroms were spontaneous uprisings of Christians outraged by alleged Jewish religious practices, especially the hypothetical and supposed ritual murder of Christian children in connection with the festival of Pesach, also known as Passover. As established by documentary evidence, however, the pogroms were deliberately organised by the tsarist government to divert into channels of religious bigotry and ethnic hatred the Russian workers' and peasants' discontent with political and economic conditions. See the standard sources on the History of Russia.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Truth and Freedom," ["Slovo. Istina i Svoboda,"] *TKDA I* (1900): 537.



overcomes ethnic division not only within the Church, but also serves as a paradigm for ethics of love and acceptance in ethnic issues toward the ‘outsiders.’ Thus, Bogdashevskii’s ethics has no assumption that inherited biological differences cause some human sub-populations to be fundamentally different from, or superior to, others and therefore a generalized body of rights, such as the right of individuals to act as they choose (*individual liberty*) or the sovereignty of nation (*national liberty*), etc. have to be granted to all and be accepted by all the people across ethnic and racial lines.

Further, Bogdashevskii addresses the issue that every society has its culture, and therefore its own cultural biases. He sees no grounds for the tendency to make judgments by reference to the values shared in the subject's own ethnic group, as if it were the centre of everything (*i.e. ethnocentrism*). Being aware that the high profile of the issue of race is a result of the political uses of notions of superiority, Bogdashevskii solves the issue from the Christian anthropological assessment of the dualism among human beings (*i.e. the people without faith and the renewed men in Christ*). This leads him to argue that there is no reason for Anti-Semitism as a political, social, and economic agitation and activities directed against Jewish people, historically regarded as the killers of Jesus Christ, because there were and many still are people without faith. As such, Bogdashevskii argues, the Jews and the Russians have the same moral standards which are formed from a general disobedience to God. Moral wrongdoing is the tragedy of all nations.<sup>253</sup>

In the light of the above, it is remarkable to see that Bogdashevskii is troubled with the New Testament accounts that contrast Jews with the other nations. In his public lecture “About the Gospels and Its History: Against Contemporary Rationalism” of 1902, Bogdashevskii comments that the author of the Gospel of John notably develops a theme - the Jews of Jerusalem contra the Samaritans and the people of Galilee.<sup>254</sup> Unfortunately, he gives no supportive arguments for this (doubtful in our opinion) conclusion, nor does he explain the significance of the point. Further, his interpretation of The Parable of the Two Sons (Mt. 21:28–32), offered by Jesus to the Jewish leaders who had just questioned Jesus about his authority, argues that the purpose of this parable is not to depict the unfaithfulness of the Jewish leaders exclusively, but to criticize the whole Jewish nation. Thus, the polarity of this parable, Bogdashevskii places not between the sinners, the tax collectors and harlots,

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<sup>253</sup> See esp. his sermon “In Remembrance of Christ’s Suffering (Luke 23:21),” *TKDA* II, 5 (1988): 43-58.

<sup>254</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287.

who believed both John and Jesus and the Jewish leaders, as opposed to Jesus' authority, but between the Gentiles and the Jews in general.<sup>255</sup>

In addition, Bogdashevskii argues that in the Letter of James, the writer accuses Jews (*i.e.* rich men) whose grievous sin lies not in what they do to themselves but in how their misconduct affects the others (esp. in 4:13–17; 5:1–6). The essence of what he finds at fault, are the Jews with a possessive and selfish outlook regarding material goods and gains. Bogdashevskii notes that a person may be outwardly religious, yet if the desire for material gain becomes the dominant force in which the rich place their confidence in one's earthly goods, these expose the hidden danger of a discontented, lustful spirit that is always seeking for more.<sup>256</sup> In his view James interprets social crimes as offences that contravene the divine law and so entail divine retribution. He notably identifies the rich men charged in James as the rich Jews; not genuine Christians. He stresses that, according to the Letter of James, the Jews are guilty in the folly of accumulation of goods, the crimes of dishonesty and selfish greed with no concern for the poor. He says,

If we identify the rich, rebuked in the Letter, not as Christians, but actually as Jews, then a demoralized state of the Christian Churches, to which the Letter was intended, is significantly reduced.<sup>257</sup>

From the above quotation it is obvious that Bogdashevskii is leaning rather to accuse the Jews (by the authority of the New Testament document) than to admit that James addresses social problems in general and charges a specific class of the people (*i.e.* Christian believers) rather than a specific national group for charitable actions. Bogdashevskii's attempt is to exclude the possibility that among the rich there were both the Jews and Gentiles is not convincing.

Nevertheless, although his interpretation of the New Testament has an anti-Semitic element, in general, he avoids making any implication or conclusion that the New Testament text(s) indicate the validity of ethnonationalism. But it is in the Church that he sees the roots for the establishment of reconciliation of different ethnic groups. Within the Body of Christ,

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<sup>255</sup> See Bishop Vasili, "Deiatel'nost' Khrista Spasitelia ot vkhoda v Ierusalim do Paskhi stradanii....," ["The Activity of Christ the Savior During the Entry into Jerusalem and the Passover of His Suffering: Mt. 21:1-26:2 and parall.,"] *TKDA* II, 5 (1914): 21.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Letter of James," *TKDA* III, 10 (1907): 194.

<sup>257</sup> "Если... под богатыми, обличаемыми в послании, разумеются богачи не христиане, и именно иудеи, то мрачная картина состояния церквей, которым назначено послание, значительно смягчается." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Letter of James," *TKDA* III, 10 (1907): 195.



that expands the task of Scripture, the identity of the human community is not marked by merely ethnical distinct characteristics, but by the Christian moral feature that surpasses ethnic division and antipathy.

#### 5.4.5.2 Violence

Similarly to the concern of the ethnic problem, the issue of violence in Bogdashevskii thought is crucial. As noted above, in ethnical matters of Bogdashevskii's ethics there is no stipulation for any sort of violence based on ethnonationalism (such as the impulse to impose the will of one nation on the other through violence or the approval of the practice of 'ethnic cleansing').

Nevertheless, attached to a socio-political environment of the Russian Empire, violence is legitimate. Bogdashevskii's ethnical theoretical system is not neutral to the use of violence in armed conflicts between Russia and other states. Bogdashevskii seems to favour violence by encouraging Russians to show patriotic devotion in supporting or defending their country in wars. For example, in the sermon "About the Christian Spiritual Fight (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38)" he connects the themes of spiritual warfare and ethical issues with patriotic motifs involved in wars.<sup>258</sup> In this sermon, delivered on February 20, 1904 soon after the military conflict between the Russian and Japanese Empire (a Japanese attack was on February 8, 1904) Bogdashevskii stresses,

[W]e need spiritual watchfulness and sobriety, because the fight with an external enemy can be triumphant only if we are victorious in the internal battle in the inner purification of self [*i.e.* resistance to sin, immorality in general]. Thanks be to God, our spirit is watchful! As one, we battled against our enemy - pagan [*i.e.* non-Christian nation]... In the name of the Gospel, let us courageously fight, hoping for God's help; let us fight with the enemy that disturbed our blessed peace.<sup>259</sup>

<sup>258</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "About the Christian Spiritual Struggle (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38)," *TKDA* I, 3 (1904): 359-368. Of course, Bogdashevskii was well aware about military affairs in the history of Russia and knew about the later developments of the Russian Empire, esp. the series of conflicts between the Russian and Ottoman Turkish empires (known as Russo-Turkish Wars), during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries during the reign of Tsar Peter the Great (assumed power in 1689), Catherine the Great (empress of Russia, 1762-1796); Tsar Nicholas I (led to the Crimean War in 1853-1856); Tsar Alexander II (declared war on Turkey in January 1877). For details see standard historical studies.

<sup>259</sup> "...нужна нам духовная бодрственность и трезвенность. Потому что борьба с внешним врагом только тогда может быть успешною, когда победоносно ведется нами борьба внутренняя, - внутреннее очищение себя. Богу благодарение, дух наш бодр! Мы возстали, как один человек, на врага язычника, попирающего всякие христианские отношения.... Во имя Евангелия мира будем смело, в надежде на помощь Божию, вести борьбу с врагом, нарушившим наш благословенный мир." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "About the Christian Spiritual Struggle (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38)," *TKDA* I, 3 (1904): 368.

It seems that Bogdashevskii literally does not forbid self-defence and does not preclude fighting in defence of countrymen, and the Russian Motherland. The perfectionistic ethic view of non-violence has no case in Bogdashevskii's thought if the people of Russia are the innocent party. Moreover if Christianity in Russia is in danger, Bogdashevskii felt that the battle of the State is the battle of the Church or vice versa, because the Russian Church, State and all the Russian people in general form a single *being* - "one ecclesiastic body and one governmental body."<sup>260</sup>

Later, the theme of violence in Bogdashevskii becomes on the one hand more definite, but on the other hand more complex. His view, on this issue, was revived after so-called Bloody Sunday (22 January, 1905) when a demonstration of student and labourers led by Socialistic groups and by Georgy Appolonovich Gapon, a revolutionary Orthodox priest, marched to the Winter Palace to present their social and political demands. They were fired on by imperial troops, hundreds were killed and wounded. Such violent preservation of political stability in the country became the subject of public debate.<sup>261</sup> Moreover, at the same time within the Orthodox Church, the defects of ecclesiastic discipline and organization reflected in commotion and conflicts which urged the initiation of Church reforms.<sup>262</sup> These circumstances stimulated Bogdashevskii to address the legitimacy of violence.

In his sermons "About Christian Unity" (11 March 1905, at the Church of Kiev-Bratsk Monastery) and "To Rejoice or to Cry? (Luk. 23:28)" (24 February 1906, at the same Church) Bogdashevskii depicts the difficult situation in the country. These pastoral messages seek to find the answer for a dispute in society and in the Church - What to do? Where to go? A call for unity is his dominant response. Nevertheless, Bogdashevskii especially emphasizes the issue of violence. *First*, he stresses, "The Church does not know any kind of violence; she persuades the consciousness of the people as a single sphere in her influence....

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<sup>260</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. About Christian Unity (John 17:21)," *TKDA* I (1905): 573. See "Мы одно тело церковное, как одно тело и государственное, а потому твёрдо должны стоять на защите крепости, целостности, правильного развития этого тела...." *Idem*.

<sup>261</sup> This massacre was the signal for a revolution. Strikes and riots began throughout the industrialized sections of Russia. The rush of events, combined with continued disaster in the war, influenced the government to make concessions. For the account of the immediately pre-Revolutionary period see J. S. Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia: The Last Years of the Empire 1900-1917* (New York, 1940); A. V. Kartashov, "Revolution and Council: 1917-1918," *Bogoslovskaja mysl'* 4 (1944): 75-101; G. Simon, "Church, State and Society," in G. Katkov *et al.* (eds.), *Russia Enters the Twentieth Century* (London 1971, 1973), 199-235.

<sup>262</sup> On Church reform, see A. A. Bogolepov, "Church Reform in Russia 1905-1918," *SVSQ* 10 (1966): 12-66; G. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth Century Russian Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton: 1983).



[The Church] cannot approve horrible factors of our society... [but] in no circumstances can the Church approve violence. She says: love your neighbor and be merciful.”<sup>263</sup>

*Second*, by endorsing the Letter of James, Bogdashevskii argues that Christians have to be patient even until the coming of the Lord; do not complain against one another, that you not be judged (cf. James 5:7-9; but the printed sermon incorrectly refers to James 4:7-9).<sup>264</sup> Violence, according to Bogdashevskii derives from a constant faultfinding and criticism. A criticizing mind extinguishes everything positive in a human being and this leads to the extremes of violence.<sup>265</sup>

*Third*, in Bogdashevskii’s argument, specifically related to the political environment in Russia, he re-contextualizes 1 Peter 2:13 (ὑποτάγητε πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει διὰ τὸν κύριον / “submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human [state] institution) and calls for obedience to the Russian state authorities rather than for a fight against it. Thus, by submitting themselves to the monarchical throne, the Russian people will refrain from violent activity toward the government.<sup>266</sup> It is noticeable that Bogdashevskii does not speak, however, on 1 Peter 2:14 that implies the use of violence in the punishment of evildoers, the needless offenders of civil authority. Also it is not clear what Bogdashevskii’s view is of the responsibility of civil government to “punish” offenders (cf. Paul’s use of ἔκδικος εἰς ἐργήν (Rom 13:4)). He does not comment on whether or not civil authority is a “servant of God” (θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν) and whether the punishment of the crime exacts a divine punishment.

*Fourth*, the Church has not only the voice of consolation, but also of correction, repudiation and even punishment.<sup>267</sup> Punishment, as such, does not mean violence. Bogdashevskii indicates that for Church disciplinary purposes expulsion from the Church is optional. The act of removal from the Orthodox Church, in his opinion, however, cannot be

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<sup>263</sup> “Церковь Христова на знает никакого насилия; она воздействует только на совесть людей, - вот единственная область ее влияния. ... Никогда и ни при каких обстоятельствах Церковь не может одобрять насилия. Она говорит только одно: люби ближнего, будь милостив...” D. I. Bogdashevskii, “About Christian Unity (John 17:21),” *TKDA* I (1905): 571; cf. *Ibid.*, “A Sermon. To Rejoice or to Cry? (Luk. 23:28)” *TKDA* I, 3 (1906): xix.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “A Sermon. About Christian Unity (John 17:21),” *TKDA* I (1905): 572.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “To Rejoice or to Cry? *TKDA* I, 3 (1906): xv.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “A Sermon. About Christian Unity (John 17:21),” *TKDA* I (1905): 571-572.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. *Idem.*, 572.

considered as violence. The Church expels from its Body only those people who themselves already have left the Church (directly or indirectly). For example, because an individual is professing a heresy he or she completely, with premeditation departed from the Church. Thus, the expulsion is only an authoritative identification of a self-made choice to withdraw from the Church rather than a violent act toward a human being.<sup>268</sup> In his interpretation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Mt 13:24-30) which states that sinners will be burned at the time of the harvest (*i.e.*, points out to the eschatological judgment), Bogdashevskii argues that this parable does not suggest an immediate separating of the good seed from the weeds (*i.e.*, complete cleansing of the Church from sinners), but allows them to grow together until full maturity of the wheat and the time of harvest. Thus, Church discipline is a spiritual assistance rather than violence, war, bloodshed or killing. Since the renewal of wrongdoers is not only desirable but is possible, violence may lead to the slaying of the devout members of the Church (in God's conception and grace).<sup>269</sup>

With regard to the issues of violence, as example, it is obvious that Bogdashevskii overrides the witness of the New Testament against any kind of war (just war, holy war, world war, civil war, etc.). The New Testament does not even suggest the nonbelligerent use of military force to assist warring parties in reaching a settlement. The New Testament calls the Church to take up the cross and follow Jesus in suffering and death, it calls to absolute obedience and thus self-denial, putting one's life on the line. In Mt. 10:30 Jesus categorically stated: καὶ ὃς οὐ λαμβάνει τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὀπίσω μου, οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος (if you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine). In any case the New Testament makes the point that the enemy can and should be treated as God treats people, treating enemy and friend alike (Cf. Matt 5:43-8). Yet, in surveying the use of the New Testament by Bogdashevskii it seems that he appeals to the biblical texts in certain mode of "de-emphasising" Scripture. He gives hermeneutical primacy to the Church and tradition that carry insights about the ethical code of the people.

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<sup>268</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. About the Church: On Contemporary Religious Demands," *TKDA* 2 (1904): 192.

<sup>269</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Pritchi Khrista o tsarstvii nebesnom: Mt. 13:1-52, i parall.," ["Christ's Parables on the Kingdom of Heaven: Mt. 13:1-52 and parall.,"] *TKDA* III, 10 (1912): 195.



### 5.4.6 Conclusion

In Bogdashevskii's ethics there is the distinction in the emphasis between the authority of a proposed set of hermeneutical guidelines for ethical evaluation based on the normative texts of the New Testament and the authority of life experience of the Orthodox Church. Being less concerned with interpreting the authoritative text of the New Testament as a sole source of Christian ethics, Bogdashevskii operates on the inside of the life or experience of the Church lifestyle tradition, to which Orthodox theology testifies. His concept of Church life is a more valuable basis and criterion for ethics, than the New Testament itself. Consequently, Bogdashevskii does not first determine the meaning of the New Testament text(s) and on its basis draw out the concepts of the text for the construction of an ethical system; rather the New Testament, for him, is known in the experience of the Orthodox Church, and, thus, the meaning of the text is not crucial as such. The New Testament functions authoritatively only within the Orthodox Church and therefore the mind of the Church (its Tradition) determines both the meaning of the New Testament texts and forms Christian ethics.

The Church, for Bogdashevskii, is the final discernment for ethics; rather than a merely. He says, "it is apparent, how mistakes are made by those who take the Scriptures as a single source of the Christian faith and life and reject all the significance of the Sacred Tradition."<sup>270</sup> Bogdashevskii does not limit ethics to conceptual evidences - to *texts* of the New Testament. Not excluding the *texts*, he is searching for *existential* evidence of the living experience of the Church, as a precise meaning and significance for Christian ethics. The Church constitutes the transcendent grounds for ethics. His maxim is "*Believe as the Church prescribes, live as the Church commends.*"<sup>271</sup> The Church is the locus of the ethical authority that augments the textual evidence. In this regard, Bogdashevskii's hermeneutical strategy can be formulated as agreeing with Georges Florovsky's statement: "Only the inner memory of the Church fully brings to life the silent testimony of the texts."<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> "Понятно..., 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: In Apposition to Contemporary Rationalism," *TKDA* 2 (1902): 281; cp. p. 301.

<sup>271</sup> "Веруйте так, как учит Церковь, живите так, как повелевает Церковь." D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. On Significance of the Church," *TKDA* 3 (1913): 457 [my italics].

<sup>272</sup> Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 304.

## **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. - *obshchetserkovnoe*]."<sup>273</sup> Agreeably, "In the sphere of faith the foremost importance has ... the universal voice of the Church."<sup>274</sup>

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.<sup>275</sup> 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.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> "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.

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

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

<sup>276</sup> 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.”<sup>277</sup> 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,<sup>278</sup> 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.<sup>279</sup>

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

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<sup>277</sup> “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.

<sup>278</sup> 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.

<sup>279</sup> 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.”<sup>280</sup> 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.<sup>281</sup> 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* <sup>282</sup>).

### 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.<sup>283</sup> 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

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<sup>280</sup> “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.

<sup>281</sup> 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.

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

<sup>283</sup> 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 qualities<sup>284</sup>) as well as with the needs, wants and character of the believers to whom the writings were addressed.<sup>285</sup> The New Testament writings are primarily theological story rooted in history, but not limited to a strict historical record.<sup>286</sup>

Although Bogdashevskii admits that the New Testament and its teaching "is addressed, in the first place, to a separate person,"<sup>287</sup> 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.<sup>288</sup> As a living Word of God it brings the believer into a dimension of hearing and living.<sup>289</sup>

[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.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> 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.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. *Idem.*

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

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

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

<sup>290</sup> "[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.<sup>291</sup>

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.<sup>292</sup>

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.<sup>293</sup>

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

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<sup>291</sup> "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.

<sup>292</sup> 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.

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

truth.”<sup>294</sup> 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.<sup>295</sup> 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.”<sup>296</sup> Tradition, as a whole, supplies the interpreter with the necessary information base to understand the New Testament documents.<sup>297</sup>

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.”<sup>298</sup> 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

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

<sup>295</sup> 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.

<sup>296</sup> “... 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.

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

<sup>298</sup> 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.<sup>299</sup>

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.<sup>300</sup> 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.<sup>301</sup>

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

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 465.

<sup>301</sup> "[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 усомниться 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.”<sup>302</sup> 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.<sup>303</sup> Church dogma is both tradition and reflection of the mind of the Church. It is an authoritative tool for understanding the New

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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.

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

<sup>303</sup> 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.<sup>304</sup>

*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.<sup>305</sup> 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

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

<sup>305</sup> 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."<sup>306</sup>

Next, his essay "A Secret Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ" [Tainaia Veheria 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.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> "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).

<sup>307</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Tainaia Veheria 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.<sup>308</sup> 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)."<sup>309</sup> 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.<sup>310</sup> 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

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<sup>308</sup> 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.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>310</sup> 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.<sup>311</sup>

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.<sup>312</sup>

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.<sup>313</sup>

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

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<sup>311</sup> 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.

<sup>312</sup> 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.<sup>314</sup> 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 liturgy<sup>315</sup>, 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.<sup>316</sup> Bogdashevskii assumes, that in the

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<sup>313</sup> 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.

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

<sup>315</sup> 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. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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."

<sup>316</sup> 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.<sup>317</sup> Quoting an Old-Slavonic version of Rom. 10:8, Bogdashevskii uses a striking citation Paul's and an interpretation of Deut. 30:14<sup>318</sup>, 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."<sup>319</sup> 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,"<sup>320</sup> 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

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

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

<sup>318</sup> 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 ).

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

<sup>320</sup> 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.”<sup>321</sup> In this regard, he stresses the concept of *transformative hermeneutics*<sup>322</sup> 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*.”<sup>323</sup>

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.

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

<sup>322</sup> 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.

<sup>323</sup> 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."<sup>324</sup> 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.<sup>325</sup>

Bogdashevskii argues, that the study of the New Testament the authority belongs to "the specialists, rather than to a person, accidentally examining the text."<sup>326</sup> 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

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

<sup>325</sup> 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.

<sup>326</sup> 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.<sup>327</sup> The mind of the Fathers, no less important than the word of Holy Scripture<sup>328</sup>, 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.<sup>329</sup>

### 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”,<sup>330</sup> Bogdashevskii designates his hermeneutics as co-centered (together with ecclesiology) in *pneumatology*. The accent on the Holy Spirit is typical to Orthodox theological

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

<sup>328</sup> Cf. Florovsky, *BCT*, 107.

<sup>329</sup> 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).

<sup>330</sup> 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.<sup>331</sup> 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*."<sup>332</sup> 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*."<sup>333</sup>

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

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<sup>331</sup> 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.

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

<sup>333</sup> *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.<sup>334</sup> 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."<sup>335</sup> On the one hand, "the Holy Spirit guarded the Apostles from misconceptions in the transmission of the New Testament truths."<sup>336</sup> On the other hand, the role of the Holy Spirit is to prevent false, self-individual interpretation of the biblical text.<sup>337</sup> 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.<sup>338</sup>

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

<sup>335</sup> *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.

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

<sup>337</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 469.

<sup>338</sup> "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."<sup>339</sup> 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.<sup>340</sup>

#### 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.<sup>341</sup> Thus faith is of epistemological significance.

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

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

<sup>341</sup> 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.<sup>342</sup> 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.”<sup>343</sup> 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.”<sup>344</sup> The meaning of the text becomes clear in the light of faith. Thus, he

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<sup>342</sup> 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.

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

<sup>344</sup> 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."<sup>345</sup> In Bogdashevskii, however, faith is not the key for conceptual understanding alone, but also to the holiness of the life of interpreter.<sup>346</sup> 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."<sup>347</sup>

**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

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divine and spiritual world." N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), 107.

<sup>345</sup> Archpriest Bogdashevskii, "Sermon. On Christian Responsibility," *TKDA* I (1913): xv.

<sup>346</sup> 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.

<sup>347</sup> 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 rationalism<sup>348</sup> (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,

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<sup>348</sup> 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."<sup>349</sup> 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."<sup>350</sup>

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,<sup>351</sup> but it is "from faith and by faith that Scripture becomes forceful and effective."<sup>352</sup> 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."<sup>353</sup> 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

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<sup>349</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Sound Metaphysics" Book review of P. Linitzkii, *Guide to the Study of Philosophy* (Kharkov': 1893) in *TKDA* II 5 (1898): 126.

<sup>350</sup> Idem.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "A Sermon. In Remembrance of Christ's Suffering (Luk 23:21)," *TKDA* II, 5 (1988): 54-55.

<sup>352</sup> 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.

<sup>353</sup> 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 relics<sup>354</sup>).

Bogdashevskii, in general, is defending scholasticism, because “the fight against scholasticism switched over into the fight against Christianity.”<sup>355</sup> 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.<sup>356</sup>

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

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<sup>354</sup> 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.

<sup>355</sup> 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),<sup>357</sup> 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.<sup>358</sup> 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.<sup>359</sup> Thus, “one should attribute claims to it that are not applicable.”<sup>360</sup>

However, Bogdashevskii's starting point is that in interpretation the historical reliability of the New Testament must be presupposed and fully accepted, for it's 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).<sup>361</sup> Otherwise,

<sup>356</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross,” *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 284.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 287.

<sup>358</sup> Cf. Idem., 288; also his “Exegetical remarks: (1) The Genealogy of Christ (Mt. 1:1-7)...,” *TKDA* I, 3 (1910): 290.

<sup>359</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, “The Chronology of Acts,” *TKDA* I, 1 (1911): 1-29.

<sup>360</sup> 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.<sup>362</sup> 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,

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<sup>361</sup> 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.

<sup>362</sup> 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.”<sup>363</sup>

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.<sup>364</sup> 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.”<sup>365</sup>

### 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.”<sup>366</sup> 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

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<sup>363</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Lecture. The Lord’s Entry into Jerusalem,” *TKDA* II, 5 (1910): 34.

<sup>364</sup> This is clear in Bogdashevskii arguments in “Lecture. About the Gospels and Their History: Against Contemporary Rationalism,” *TKDA* 2 (1902): 269-302.

<sup>365</sup> *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.<sup>367</sup> (the majority if the Social Democratic groups were of an anti-religious character<sup>368</sup>). 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.<sup>369</sup> 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.<sup>370</sup> 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*

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<sup>366</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 379.

<sup>367</sup> 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).

<sup>368</sup> 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.

<sup>369</sup> For brief but useful comments of the issue see Florovsky, *Ways: Two*, 233 ff.

<sup>370</sup> 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)<sup>371</sup> 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).<sup>372</sup> 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].<sup>373</sup>

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

<sup>371</sup> This softbound edition first appeared in *TKDA* I, 4 (1906): 547-576.

<sup>372</sup> 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.

<sup>373</sup> 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.<sup>374</sup> 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.<sup>375</sup> 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."<sup>376</sup>

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."<sup>377</sup>

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.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Lord's Beattitudes: The Gospel's Truth and a 'Truth' of a Modern Socialism," *TKDA* I, 2 (1909): 207.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>376</sup> 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.

<sup>377</sup> 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.

<sup>378</sup> 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.<sup>379</sup>

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.”<sup>380</sup> 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.<sup>381</sup> In light of the above interpretations, Bogdashevskii concludes, “We do not diminish the significance of the biblical

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<sup>379</sup> 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.

<sup>380</sup> 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.

<sup>381</sup> 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."<sup>382</sup>

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.<sup>383</sup> 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";<sup>384</sup> 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.<sup>385</sup>

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

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<sup>382</sup> 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.

<sup>383</sup> On the debate see N. A. Kozakova, Y. S. Lur'e, *Antifeodal'noe ereticheskoe dvizhenie na Rusi XIV - nachala XVI veka.* (M.: 1955); A. Klibanov, *Reformatsionnye dvizheniia v Rossii v XIV- pervoi polovine XVI v.* (M.: 1960).

<sup>384</sup> John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 35b* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1998), on the passage.

<sup>385</sup> 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.<sup>386</sup> 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.<sup>387</sup> 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."<sup>388</sup> 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;<sup>389</sup> (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.<sup>390</sup>

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

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<sup>386</sup> See D. I. Bogdashevskii, "The Modern Enemies of Christ's Cross," *TKDA* III, 10 (1908): 282.

<sup>387</sup> Vladimir Ern, "Khristianskoe uchenie o sobstvennosti," ["A Christian Teaching about Private Enterprise,"] *Voprosy Zhisni / The Questions of Life* 8-9 (1905).

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>389</sup> 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.

<sup>390</sup> 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.<sup>391</sup>

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.<sup>392</sup> The New Testament's intention is "to free us from earthly vanity."<sup>393</sup>

### 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."

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<sup>391</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, D. I. "The Letter of James," *TKDA* III (1907) 10 :181-210; 11: 439-462.

<sup>392</sup> 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.

<sup>393</sup> 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 prophecies to the person and activity of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.<sup>394</sup> 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.<sup>395</sup> 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.<sup>396</sup>

### 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,

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<sup>394</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Paul's Letter to the Hebrews," *TKDA* I (1905): 341.

<sup>395</sup> Cf. Bishop Vasilii, "Interpretation of John 3:1- 6:71," *TKDA* (1917): 158.

<sup>396</sup> 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.”<sup>397</sup> 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.”<sup>398</sup> 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?”<sup>399</sup> 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.”<sup>400</sup> 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

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<sup>397</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, “Sound Metaphysics,” *TKDA* II (1898) 5: 126.

<sup>398</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>399</sup> 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.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

comprehension the idea or thought should always be a priory.<sup>401</sup> 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

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<sup>401</sup> 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.*"<sup>402</sup> It postulates, *interpret and understand as the Church apprehended.*

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<sup>402</sup> D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. On the Significance of the Church," *TKDA* 3 (1913): 457 [my italics].

## CHAPTER SIX

### BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH: A HERMENEUTICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 6.1 Introduction

It is true that once established, biblical studies in Russian Orthodoxy “formed its personal ways and developed its personal fundamental principles.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there are many fundamental and interrelated principles in the Orthodox tradition that can be described only as “personal”. Yet these many principles correlate and correspond so closely with common principles of biblical interpretation, that in their basic nature they form a fundamental part of “Russian Orthodox Hermeneutics.” These principles will be defined in the following sections according to their significance as reflected in the works of Orthodox biblical scholars - to a lesser or greater degree, from the somewhat highly individualistic to the more mainstream. Both the general hermeneutical tendencies of Orthodox biblical interpretation and the more specific principles of interpretation that have been established within the overall historical development of biblical studies within the Orthodox Church will be discussed.

This chapter will summarize and interpret the fundamental principles and main features peculiar to Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation, using as a basis the attestation to these principles in the foregoing study above. The arguments that follow seek to clearly delineate the essential elements of Orthodox hermeneutics as revealed in: (1) the history of biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church from the Kiev period of its history (X-XIII cc.) to the *Synodal Period* (1721-1917); (2) the hermeneutical implications of Orthodox anthropology; and (3) Bogdashevskii’s model for approaching the understanding of the New Testament. In some cases evidence for important parallels to be found in modern Orthodox scholarship (of the Eastern Orthodox Church) of more key traditional principles will be cited in footnotes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Men*, 272-274.



## 6.2 The Hermeneutical Principles

### 6.2.1 The Patristic Feature

Without doubt, the nature and character of Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation and exegesis is deeply influenced by patristic exegesis. The patristic concept of interpretation is agreed to be “the first and the most important principle” of Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation.<sup>2</sup> In the already cited *Hermeneutics* by Pavel Savvaitov, the emphasis on the writings of the Greek Church Fathers indicates that until relatively modern times patristic literature was “almost the single consideration of Orthodox Church teachers in the study of the Bible.”<sup>3</sup> This emphasis, of course, says much about Orthodoxy’s understanding of its identity as something very closely tied with the Church’s past.

This orientation of the Church to its patristic exegetical heritage is dictated by the following factors:

(1) The patristic writings and their interpretative methodology indisputably support the authority and significance of the Bible as the communicated Word of God to the Church and society.<sup>4</sup>

(2) The works of the Church Fathers pertaining to biblical exposition and interpretation establish and maintain the most important guidelines for Orthodox tradition, teaching and dogma. The grand theological achievement of the Church Fathers is, of course, one of the main arguments of the Russian Orthodox Church for the validity of the patristic heritage. It is patristic literature, for example, that provides the Orthodox Church with the framework for the theological understanding of the sacraments.<sup>5</sup>

(3) The patristic approaches to Scripture and the practice of “typological”, “allegorical,” and “spiritual” exegesis is highly appealing to Russian Orthodox exegetes.

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<sup>2</sup> *Men'*, 272.

<sup>3</sup> See P. I. Savvaitov, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (SPb.: 1859), 119; Mitr. Mikhail also sees the unique distinction of the Russian Orthodox interpreters in their love for the patristic heritage. Cf. *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 125.

<sup>4</sup> As early as 1866 Sol'skii gives an overview of the role of Patristic exegesis and evaluates it as the exemplary model for biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church. See S. Sol'skii, “A brief outline of the history of sacred bibliology and exegesis,” *TKDA* (1866) 10: 157-190; 11: 305-320.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 10-11; Fr. Grigorii, “Svaiashchennoe Predanie ne nizhe Sviashchennogo Pisaniia,” [“The Holy Tradition is not beneath the Holy Scripture,”] *Dushepoleznoe Chtenie* III (1914): 94-97; Illarion (Troitskii), *Sviashchennoe Pisanie i Tserkov'* [The Holy Scripture and the Church] (M.: 1914).

(4) The Church Fathers establish a pattern of Bible interpretation in which a *Christocentric* emphasis and the idea of an unbroken and organic unity between the Old and New Testaments are closely interrelated.<sup>6</sup>

(5) The Patristics historically serves as the basis for the Orthodox identity.

The interpretative legacy of the Church Fathers, which was historically matured and preserved in the dogma of the Orthodox Church and which gave life to the message of the Scripture for the Church and society, established the patterns of Bible interpretation that subsequently directed the biblical scholars of Russian Orthodoxy to a theologising interpretation. Such interpretation goes directly to the theological essence of the biblical texts and allows the Church to establish its theological concepts. The faithfulness to patristic theology, argues the Orthodox theologian and historian Lev Karsavin (1882-1952), does not limit free investigation of the Bible; it is rather a rich source of inspiration for biblical interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

## 6.2.2 The Relationships Between Scripture, Church and Dogma

If a unique distinction and feature of Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation is its “faithfulness to the spirit of the Church,”<sup>8</sup> it means that the interpretation of the Bible is fundamentally *ecclesiastical*. All inquiries, either of a scientific or an exegetical kind, then, presuppose that Scripture and Church could not be separated or opposed to each other. Every biblical passage that the interpreter attempts to understand must be placed within the context of the Church. Scripture finds its true understanding in the Church,<sup>9</sup> for the Church does not speak from out of itself, but from the Holy Spirit. The Church “cannot be wrong, it does not falsify, but is the same as divine Scripture - always sinless and significant.”<sup>10</sup> In this mode of thought, the Church’s reality supersedes that of Scripture (since it is the reason

<sup>6</sup> Esp., in the above cited work of I. Korsunskii, *A New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament* (M.: 1885).

<sup>7</sup> This view is seen throughout his monograph L. P. Karsavin, *Sviatye Ottsy i Uchitelia Tserkvi* [Sts. Fathers and Teachers of the Church] (Paris: 1926).

<sup>8</sup> *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 125.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Pavel Evdokimov, “An Eastern Orthodox Bible Study,” *Student World* XLII/12 (1949): 154. In the words of a modern Orthodox biblical scholar “The Church is the proper locus for interpretation....” Cf. John Breck, “Orthodoxy and the Bible Today,” in *The Legacy of St. Vladimir*, ed. John Breck and others, (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1990), 144.

<sup>10</sup> Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 12.



for the Scripture's existence) and must, therefore, be the final authority in Bible interpretation. The main supportive argument here for the Church as *a priori* in the reading of the Bible is the argument that the Church existed before many books of the Bible (the entire New Testament) were authored and that these books were written "for an already existing Church".<sup>11</sup> Scripture had its origin in being the book for God's people; and, for the Orthodox, it was meant to be read in the Church among the people of God.

The outstanding Orthodox writer and theologian Fr. John Meyendorff, in emphasizing the connection of the interpreter to the Orthodox Church says, "The Church has received the Scripture and acknowledges in it the Truth, fixed in its limits for all time and interprets this corpus of writings with the help of the Spirit."<sup>12</sup> Hence, the Scripture was given to the Church as to its interpretative community. In this sense, then, the Church preserves the truth that the Apostles received from Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In fact, for Russian Orthodoxy, the Church is "the preserver of God-revealed truth."<sup>13</sup>

The belief that truth is inseparable from the life of the sacramental community also provides the basis for the Orthodox understanding of the apostolic succession of bishops. Consecrated by their peers and occupying the "place of Christ" at the Eucharistic meal around which the church gathers, bishops are the guardians and witnesses of a tradition that goes back, uninterrupted, to the apostles and which now unites local churches within the community of faith. This unity of the Church is not imaginary, but a true and substantial unity, such as is the unity inherent within the many members of a living body. Since the Church, then, is the organism and the place where God's words are heard, it must be the arbiter of how those words are to be understood. "In order to understand the Bible it is necessary to go to the Church, because the Bible came to the Church and always remained there; the Church, therefore, is the best interpreter of the spirit and meaning of the Bible."<sup>14</sup> It is important here, of course, to remember that in the mind of the Russian Orthodox Church the Church is not limited to the formal body of believers (the congregation) or to a corpus of priests. It is the corporate body of all believers, and as such, is not some firmly definable entity.

Throughout the history of biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church, the majority of exegetes have been led by the conviction that the Church is not

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Illarion (Troitskii), *The Holy Scripture and the Church* (M.: 1914), 16-18.

<sup>12</sup> John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, Trans. from French by John Chaplin (USA: Pantheon Books, 1962), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Fr. Grigorii, "The Holy Tradition is not beneath the Holy Scripture," *Dushepoleznoe Chtenie* III (1914): 94.

<sup>14</sup> V. Rybinskii, "O Biblii," ["About the Bible,"] *TKDA* 3 (1902): 382.

only an external authority set up to preside over the Scripture, but also the appointed keeper and guardian of that divine truth which has been deposited and stored in the Bible. In interpreting the Bible, these exegetes have rigidly adhered to the Church Fathers' argument of *refula fidei* (rule of faith). The assumptions that the authority of the Scripture rests upon the judgment of the Church and that the Church, for its part, is accountable to the Scriptures' inspired testimony have always been common among Orthodox interpreters. For them, Scripture has always belonged to the Church. It is only within the Orthodox Church, within the community of a rightly held faith, that Scripture can be adequately understood and correctly interpreted, and whatever is opposed to dogmatic truth and the *phronema ecclesias* (the mind of the Church) must be set aside.<sup>15</sup> The books and studies of Russian Orthodox interpretators reveal the principle of the *ecclesiasticae intelligentiae auctoritas* (the authority of ecclesiastical understanding), that in the Orthodox determination is an important key to unlocking the meaning of the biblical texts. Nikol'skii speaks for them all: "(I)n the first place there is no need for us to search for scientific methods ..., for in our Church we have, as in a treasury, all the authentic foundations for interpreting the Word of God."<sup>16</sup>

### 6.2.3 Church Tradition

If the above tenet, i.e., "the authority of ecclesiastical understanding", is taken to be interpretive custom, then the next principle of Orthodox biblical interpretation is closely connected to it. This principle deals with the role of Church Tradition.<sup>17</sup>

In the Orthodox tradition the authority of Scripture is thought to be mediated through the lives of the saints. Thus Orthodox exegetes must look to those who have most nearly learned the Word of God by exemplifying its teachings through their lives. Church tradition, then, does not derive from what has been officially canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church, but rather from: (1) a consciousness of all departed fathers and mothers

<sup>15</sup> This is obvious, for example, in Evdokimov's judgment when he says, "any idea of the brothers of the Lord as the children of Joseph and Mary contradicts the dogma of the virginity of Mary and must be considered as false." See in "An Eastern Orthodox Bible Study," *Student World* XLII/12 (1949): 154.

<sup>16</sup> M. N. Nikol'skii, "Our Biblical Science," *PO* 1 (1875): 188.

<sup>17</sup> In the words of American Orthodox theologian Fr. Thomas Hopko, "the understanding of Holy Scripture must be based on tradition. ... when one undertakes to understand the Word of God from the point of view of faith and dogma, one must necessarily be in accord with the interpretation of the Church as handed down by the divinely-inspired Fathers and teachers of the Church from apostolic times." Thomas Hopko, "Bible and Church History" *The Orthodox Faith*, Vol. 3., p. 23.



in the Orthodox faith who have not only preserved the truth, but also have contributed to the stream of Orthodox tradition in which the Church stands; (2) a consciousness of all living Orthodox people who continue to carry the story and teaching of God in the world. Thus, for Orthodox exegetes, an attention to the individual church member is not only the way of preserving the truth, but also a method of theological investigation and knowledge. Here, the understanding of Scripture is possible to the extent that one holds fast to the tradition of the Church. The understanding is not given individually to the exegete, but is granted to the Church at large in the full unfolding of truth, without error. Therefore, the exegete must welcome the wisdom that lives within the tradition of the Church and is not to consider the exegetical investigation of the Bible as being a private affair that occurs outside the context of the Church as a community whose members develop and hold to shared understandings. In this respect, exegesis may be defined as a living communion with the mind and spirit of the Church, both historical and present.

The concern for continuity and tradition so very much characteristic of Russian Orthodoxy does not imply worship of the past as such, but rather a sense of identity and consistency with the original apostolic witness, as realized through the sacramental community of each local church. The Holy Spirit, bestowed upon the church at Pentecost, is seen as guiding the whole church “in all truth” (John 16:13). It is not the person or a group of individuals, but the Spirit of God dwelling in the Church, who continually preserves and ‘writes’ tradition in the Church. The power of teaching and guiding the community, of course, is bestowed on certain ministries (particularly that of the bishop of each diocese) or is manifested through certain institutions (such as councils). Nevertheless, because the Church is composed not only of bishops, or of clergy generally, but also of the entire laity as well, Russian Orthodoxy strongly affirms that the guardianship of truth is the work of the Holy Spirit among the entire “people of God”. It is this inclusive element that helps stamp Tradition with its unique features as an important interpretive principle.

Russian Orthodox hermeneutics and exegesis is grounded on the proposition that “the Apostolic and Church Tradition of the Orthodox faith is the indispensable guide in the understanding of Scripture and the ultimate warrant of right interpretation.”<sup>18</sup> Tradition is not an independent or complementary source of faith, but the living experience of the Church in an indivisible communion with Scripture. Both scripture and tradition give rise to and express concisely and accurately theology of Orthodoxy.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Florovsky, *BCT*, 77.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 10-11.

For Russian Orthodoxy, true Christian teaching and faith is evident in tradition, and in this source is to be found a true interpretation of the Scripture. Since the Bible contains many ambiguous texts, it is “the tradition (that) helps discover a correct understanding of the Scripture,”<sup>20</sup> and brings clarity to what otherwise would be confusing. Tradition is important to the Orthodox because it frames and clarifies understanding of the Bible<sup>21</sup>, while setting the parameters within which to conduct any spiritual or scientific investigation of it..<sup>22</sup>

#### 6.2.4 The Nature of Revelation, Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

The Orthodox Church defines every doctrine as truth revealed by God. The Lord revealed his Truth to the apostles, prophets, bishops, and fathers of the Church, who then lived it and, as the Holy Spirit moved them and as the needs of the Church dictated, wrote it down. The all-important written sources that contain the revelation of God, and from which Orthodox Christian doctrines are constructed are: (1) the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments), (2) the Church Fathers and (3) the Church Councils.

In Orthodox terminology, the formulas "The Holy Scripture" and the "The Word of God" are synonymous terms for the Bible. God is the author of Scripture, the inspired writer is the organ of the Holy Spirit, and Scripture is the Word of God. God's inspiration is one of those actions common to all three persons of the Trinity. However, within the context of the Church, inspiration is directly linked to the work of the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is involved in the formation of Scripture, the latter is of “a religious-symbolical nature, *i.e.* it has a religious reality.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the Bible is “*a religious myth in written word,*

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<sup>20</sup> Fr. Grigorii, “The Holy Tradition is not beneath the Holy Scripture,” *Dushepoleznoe Chtenie* III (1914): 94.

<sup>21</sup> Florovsky stresses tradition as a living operative, a hermeneutic principle for Scripture; without tradition scripture loses what otherwise would be its correct interpretation. See Florovsky's articles on the subject of scriptural interpretation in Florovsky, *BCT*. The contemporary Orthodox scholar Fr. Thomas Hopko, however, recognizes the interdependence of scripture and tradition. For Fr. Hopko, tradition can be used as the framework for Bible interpretation, but scripture also supports the merit of tradition. He says, “Tradition is recognized when founded on Scripture.... Tradition always supports itself by Scripture: it is an interpretation of Scripture.” Thomas Hopko, “Bible and Church History” *The Orthodox Faith*, Vol 3., p.18.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Pavel Evdokimov, “An Eastern Orthodox Bible Study,” *Student World* XLII/12 (1949): 152-154.

<sup>23</sup> S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put', 1917; repr. M.: Respublica, 1994), 85.



continually shedding its divine light.”<sup>24</sup> Consequently, this light can not be seen by those who approach the Bible solely on a scientific basis, but is revealed only to those who come to the Scripture from a religious perspective.

For the Orthodox, then, the Bible is the collection of books found in the Old and New Testaments, “originally written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and therefore described as God-breathed.”<sup>25</sup> The word ‘God-breathed’ (Ru.: - *Bogovdukhnovennos’ t*) is a major metaphor, used in Orthodox writings to describe the divine status of the Bible and its foremost significance. It means that the Bible has its origin in God himself and that the Bible is God’s word, communicated to the Church by his Spirit. It therefore may be said that the Bible possesses an inherent authority - “it is the main source of the Church’s teaching; and, a living, fundamental understanding of the dogmas is impossible without a complete knowledge”<sup>26</sup> of its content. For Orthodox exegetes and theologians, the concept of ‘God-breathed’ is also important in approaching the Bible for interpretative purposes. Bulgakov argues in this regard, that

There is a substantial difference in respect to the Word of God as far as science and faith are concerned, even when both are established methodologically. The fact is that if *the method of unbelief* is equated with science [i.e. scientific-critical investigation applied to the Bible] ... *the method of reverence* is characteristic to religion... science cannot see what exists for the religious... [The] depth of the meaning of the Word of God is endless and absolutely immeasurable in comparison with the depth of (mere) human books... Many times this thought is expressed in differentiation of a twofold or even threefold meaning of a Sacred Scripture: *literal* (which corresponds to the scientific investigation of the text); *allegorical* (the meaning of which is hidden, but which still can be seen by the human eye); and *hidden* or *mystical*, which is uncovered only because of a divine enlightenment. The Bible is at the same time a ordinary book, accessible to a scientific study, a monument of Jewish literature, and the Book of books, the eternal Symbol, coming to light only to faith, prayer and (holy) reverence. Individuals experienced in the spiritual life testify that the Word of God has infinite and (thus) a continually deepening meaning (to them).<sup>27</sup>

The inspiration of the Holy Scripture means that “everything that the biblical writers recorded they recorded as a result of a direct quickening of the Holy Spirit; hence, being guarded from misconception, the writers received thoughts and words without violation of

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<sup>24</sup> S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put’, 1917; repr. M.: Respublica, 1994), 85.

<sup>25</sup> Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 6.

<sup>26</sup> M. N. Nikol’skii, “Our Biblical Science,” *PO* 1(1875): 186.

<sup>27</sup> S. Bulgakov, *The Unfading Light* (M.: Put’, 1917; repr. M.: Respublica, 1994), 84-85.

their natural abilities”<sup>28</sup> to arrange and express biblical material. Both the divine and human dimensions of the Bible are recognized in the Orthodox Church, but the inspiration of the Bible is not rooted in the letter; that is, inspiration is not based on, or fixed by, any given text or book (or even the entire Bible), but resides in the revelation that belongs to the Church, the revelation of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the Church.

For the Orthodox Church the Bible is not a single book, but a compilation of a number of books, written at different times, by different writers working under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God inspired the writers of the biblical books to convey His divine and saving message to man. Though revealed under conditioned historical events and within different literary forms, these books communicate God’s absolute and universal values.<sup>29</sup> These, the canonical books of the Bible, are, according to the Orthodox Church, the only books anywhere that can lay true claim to divine inspiration. They are truly the ‘Word of God’.

The revelation of God is not limited to one source - the Bible. The Orthodox Church also venerates its early leaders and relies heavily on their teachings because the Church Fathers (or Apostolic Fathers) are not just historical figures to Orthodox Christians - they are saints to whom God unveiled the Truth. This is why one of the first principles of Orthodox hermeneutics is to ascertain how the Fathers interpreted canonized Scripture, for in their understanding of Scripture is to be found divine revelation of the truth.

Beyond the writings of the Church Fathers, the Russian Orthodox Church, in its doctrinal statements and liturgical texts, strongly affirms that it holds to the original Christian faith that was common to both the East and West during the first millennium of Christian history. More particularly, the Church recognizes the authority of the ecumenical councils at which East and West were both represented. These were the councils of Nicaea I (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680), and Nicaea II (787). Later doctrinal affirmations by the Orthodox church—for instance, the important 14th-century definitions concerning communion with God—are seen as developments of the same original revelatory faith given to the early Church. In this way the councils held by the early Church to resolve issues when less formal dialogue failed to produce a consensus, permitted the decrees of later years to gain

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<sup>28</sup> Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 6; cf. Ioann Domaskin, *Tochnoe Izlozhenie Pravoslavnoi Very [A Genuine Report of the Orthodox Faith]* (M.: 1998), 310.

<sup>29</sup> As the Word of God, the Bible “is read in all services of public worship and its passages form the basis for preaching and instruction in public worship and in private devotion and study (cf. Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 7). Therefore, throughout the history of the Church, the language of the Bible has influenced and shaped the preaching, prayers and liturgy of Orthodox Christianity.



widespread acceptance on the basis of the belief that “God’s revelatory work (continued) through the councils of the Church.”<sup>30</sup> The judgements of these councils have over the centuries exercised a powerful influence on the life and direction of the Orthodox Church.

As noted above, for Russian Orthodoxy, God’s revelation of truth is not limited to the Bible. The revelation is disclosed to the whole Church of all ages; it is the Church that holds the revelation of God, and faithfully preserves and transmits it from one generation to the next. The Bible is still of *prima* status within the Church, but its divine or inspired character requires directions of both (1) a negative character, preventing (a) all irreverence and (b) the admission of any error and heresy; and (2) a positive nature, which invites the interpreter to respect (a) the definitions of the Church, (b) the patristic interpretation, and (c) the principle of faith.

### 6.2.5 The Christological Basis of Biblical Interpretation

The interpretation of the Bible is interrelated with the understanding of Christ, for, as Orthodox scholars point out, if credence is not given to the divinity of Christ and his supernatural deeds, the study of the Bible is violated by a massive interpretive flaw, not only in all the texts directly concerned with Jesus Christ himself, but also through the entire range of the Bible – for the fullness of the revelation of Christ is the chief and most important theme of the Bible. A brief look, then, into the Orthodox understanding of the person of Christ is helpful.

Because Orthodox Christology seeks to explain the saving work of Christ in terms of Jesus’ unique identity as both God and man, in the traditional Orthodox view it logically precedes not only soteriology (the doctrine of Christ’s saving work), but also the emphasis upon Ecclesiology. Throughout the history of the Russian Church, Ecclesiology has always been interconnected with Christology, because the belief, not only in Jesus’ incarnation and saving role, but also in his dwelling among Christians establishes the claims about who he was. Orthodox Christology, then, is the formulation of revealed propositions from both the Bible and within the Church – and adds up to the experience of the phenomenon of Jesus. He becomes the very life of the Church, and so close is his identity with the Church that it becomes his ‘body’.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 12.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Bishop Ioann, “Mysli ob Iisuse Khriste: Kristologicheskie razmyshleniia ob Iisuse Khriste,” [“Reflections about Jesus Christ: Christological Contemplation,”] *KhCh* 3 (1874): 517 ff.; 2 (1875): 103 ff.; 149 ff.; 2 (1876): 69 ff.

Orthodox scholars maintain that the earliest Christians gained their understanding of Christ by looking back to his earthly life as that of an eschatological prophet and servant of God and by looking forward to his coming again as the Messiah, the Son of Man (see Acts 3:13, 20-21) who had become Lord, Christ, and Son of God at his resurrection and exaltation (see Acts 2:22-24, 36).<sup>32</sup> In the Orthodox Church, this Christ is especially expressed in the Christological liturgical hymns, which identify Him with the Divine Wisdom, or Logos. The earthly Jesus is seen as the incarnation of this Logos (see Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3, John 1:1-18) - not an unknown God, but the same God previously encountered in creation, in human religious experience, and in Israel's salvation history.<sup>33</sup> In regards to his earthly incarnation the Orthodox Church follows the Council of Chalcedon, which in 451 affirmed for Mary the title of Theotokos (God-bearer),<sup>34</sup> and which defined the incarnation as an event which changed Jesus' identity into the one person of the Trinity now uniquely imbued with two natures and two wills, but who remained truly as only one in personhood.

The Orthodox view of the Christ of the New Testament is contrary to the opinion that Jesus did not explicitly teach that he was the Christ (the 'Anointed One', or Messiah); rather, the Church teaches that he gave rise to its Christological views of him through his words and works. After his death on the cross, the hopes of the disciples were vindicated by their experience of Jesus' resurrection, and they responded to what they believed God had accomplished through Jesus by formulating an understanding of who he was from the eschatological consciousness that governed the times.<sup>35</sup> More generally, according to Orthodox teaching, the New Testament is a testimony to the incarnation predicted in the Old Testament. Thus the mystery of Scripture and the mystery of Christ in his inseparable human and divine aspects must be approached both historically and spiritually, and in a balanced, integrated way.

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<sup>32</sup> See esp. M. Muretov, "Christ as the bearer of our weaknesses...", *BV* I (1900) 3: 403-450.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. M. Skriabin, "God is the Word... The view of John 1:1-19," *TKDA* 1874 '5, 162-188; Filaret (Gumilevskii), *John's Teaching about the Word* (Chernigov, 1869).

<sup>34</sup> In Orthodox theology, the Virgin Mary is venerated as the Mother of God. Mary's intercession is invoked because she was closer to the Saviour than anyone else and is, therefore, the representative of fallen humanity and the most prominent and holiest member of the Church. Certain Mariological developments, however, such as the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, are foreign to Russian Orthodoxy.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Archimandrit Sergii, "Otnoshenie otechestvennoi nauki k inoslavnomu bogosloviu," ["The Position of our Theology to non-Orthodox Theology,"] *BV* III (1895), 8: 141-156; T. Butkevich, *Zhizn' Gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista [The Life of the Lord...: Response to Negative Criticism]* (M.: 1883, 2 ed.- SPb.: 1887).



Based on these presuppositions, then, the Church assumes that the fulfillment of the Old Testament is found in the fullness of the historical revelation of Christ - the chief and main subject of Scripture and, therefore, the *beginning - centre - and end* of biblical interpretation. In both biblical revelation and biblical interpretation the living Christ personally reveals himself as the ultimate interpreter in the person of the Holy Spirit. In an important way, interpretation is not only about Christ, but it is also the fruit of the personal revelation of Christ (*i.e.* the Word) to the interpreter.

### 6.2.6 The Role of the Holy Spirit in Understanding the Scripture

In Orthodox theology, the *christological* aspect of the Church (the Body of Christ) cannot be separated from the *pneumatological* aspect – the guidance of the Church by the Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup> The ecclesiastical principle behind the understanding of the Bible embraces the idea that the Holy Spirit is *the illuminating agent* that dwells in the Church. The prominent Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958) argues that the illumination of the Holy Spirit is a general principle for our understanding of God and of everything that bears the mark of God's nature.<sup>37</sup>

If tradition is important for Orthodoxy as the proper framework within which to understand the Bible, no less is the Holy Spirit the perfecter of the interpreter's faculties for perceiving and receiving the true meaning of Scripture. The Holy Spirit allows the reader to understand the divine truth through the imparting of a distinct kind of religious illumination. Again, however, the exegete must satisfy himself that he has not been guided in his interpretation by 'false spirits' by subjecting the outcome of his exegesis to the time-honoured criteria set by Church teaching and tradition. If the Bible becomes transparent only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then the successful exegete may be said to be participating in the process of divine revelation within the Church. But he must ever submit himself and his skills to the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit. In Orthodox thinking, as Fr. Troitskii says,

It is prohibited to acknowledge Scripture as the one and only master for its own interpretation.... Obviously, if this were to be the case, a human mind would once again become the starting point for interpretation the Holy Scriptures; one should not rely on the human mind... Is there any other option but to rely on an inner

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood: SVS Press, 1976), 145-149.

<sup>37</sup> See *Ibid.*, 217-235.

illumination of the Holy Spirit in reading the Holy Scriptures. *Yes, the illumination of the Holy Spirit is the best rule for interpreting the Holy Scriptures.*<sup>38</sup>

Exegesis, then, is a divine-human endeavour based upon *synergy*, or cooperation between the divine Spirit and the human interpreter. Therefore, any scholar who sticks exclusively to scientific methodology, and conducts his work without reliance upon the Holy Spirit is restricted to uncovering only that meaning which lies upon the surface level of Scripture.<sup>39</sup> This reliance upon the Holy Spirit serves to underscore the complexity of biblical interpretation, combining, as it does, both natural and supernatural processes. Orthodox hermeneutics maintains that there is an understanding of the text that can be obtained through hard exegetical work that applies sound hermeneutical and exegetical principles; but it also teaches that there is a spiritual understanding that cannot be obtained through intellectual study alone. The Holy Spirit here does not necessarily discard exegetical methodology as he guides the interpreter, but true spiritual discernment into the meaning of a text is still impossible without his illumination.

### 6.2.7 The Actualisation of the Value of Scripture in Personal and Corporate Life

Directly and indirectly, Russian Orthodox hermeneutics affirms that when reading and interpreting biblical texts, it is never possible for the interpreter to be entirely free from preconceptions or presuppositions. The objectivity that all scholars seek is largely unreal, and in fact does not at all exist in the area of pure biblical science. Every biblical scholar is a human being who carries with him all his personal beliefs, prejudices, and experience that play an essential, even if only subtle, part in his scientific commitment to objectivity. Even if he is not conscious of his inner biases they still remain as an important factor in his choice of hypotheses. This is why, from the time of Mitr. Platon (Levshin) on, that Bible interpreters in the Orthodox tradition have always been reminded to be cautious in

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<sup>38</sup>“Нельзя признать единственным руководителем изъяснения Св. Писания самого Писания... Тут очевидно началом изъяснения Св. Писания опять будет ум человеческий, на который полагаться нельзя.... Остается надеяться на внутреннее озарение Свят. Духа при чтении Св. Писания? Да, *озарение от Св. Духа самое лучшее правило при изъяснении Св. Писания.*” I. Troitskii, “*Osnovaniia ucheniia pravoslavnoi Tserkvi ob istochnikakh veroucheniia,*” [“The ground rules for the teaching of the Orthodox Church on the sources of dogma,”] *The Missionary Review/Missionerskoe Obozrenie* October (1897): 645 [my italics].

<sup>39</sup> Cf. M. N. Nikol'skii, “Our Biblical Science,” *PO* 1(1875): 190.



discerning the meaning of text and not to read into it meanings which the biblical authors never intended.

Russian Orthodox scholars have always stressed that between the text and the interpreter there is a distance that not only encompasses the historical, socio-cultural and linguistic factors, but also includes an existential separation between the divine nature of the sacred texts and the human nature of the interpreter. There is the distinct need, then, to uncover the spiritual or doctrinal (theological) dimension of the text. To achieve this goal, i.e. to distinguish between the “letter” and “spirit” of the text and to formulate its correct meaning, the exegete himself must participate in the process of divine revelation by which the Holy Spirit works through the Body of Christ, the Church. In this sense the exegete must belong to the Orthodox Church for, as Archbishop Illarion (Troitskii, d. 1929) emphasizes, only “if a man believes in the Church (will) he conceivably... receive an accurate message of the Holy Scripture.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, in the tradition of Orthodox biblical interpretation, there is little room for the individuality, or self-sufficiency of the exegete. Scholars and theologians acknowledge that guidance in theology cannot be derived from the authority of any one particular expert, or from a selected group of exegetes, by reason of their liability to error. Such guidance is possible only if “it is accomplished in the harmony and agreement of all Christian pastors and teachers.”<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the Orthodox scholar, knowing that ‘spiritual’ truth is above and beyond him, cannot begin his work by taking himself as the sole point of departure, but must work within the Orthodox community, the unity of the Orthodox worship, liturgy, scholarship, preaching, sacraments and prayer. Because “the universal spirit of the Orthodox Church preserves the interpreter of the Bible from needless individualistic mysticism and heretical misunderstanding,”<sup>42</sup> the corporate element has a highly critical role to play in the interpretative context.

In concluding this section it should be noted that in the course of the history of biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church, the studies of biblical scholars have little emphasized or developed the concept of biblical interpretation as primarily a liturgical experience.<sup>43</sup> It is true that in specialized studies on liturgy the Bible has been

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<sup>40</sup> Illarion, *Sacred Scripture and the Church* (M.: 1914), 17.

<sup>41</sup> Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 11.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Pavel Evdokimov, “An Eastern Orthodox Bible Study,” *Student World* XLII/12 (1949): 152.

<sup>43</sup> Such emphasis, however, is reflected in 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*

recognized as not so much history or theology as it is ultimately a liturgical book for the Church; but it is also true, however, that given the centrality of both the Bible and worship to the Orthodox creed, that it is somewhat surprising to find, historically, a lacking in emphasis among biblical scholars and theologians upon the liturgy itself as a real worship experience of the Bible's timeless truths.<sup>44</sup>

### 6.2.8 The Scope of the Historical-Grammatical Interpretation

It has been noted above that both the divine and human elements of the Bible are recognized in the Orthodox Church. Although the Holy Spirit had directly inspired the biblical authors, they nonetheless arranged and expressed biblical material in keeping with their *language-individuality-and context* situation.<sup>45</sup> This last notion presupposes that the study of the Bible, in part, consists of acquainting oneself with the extent to which the 'human' element of Scripture can be explained. Because Orthodox biblical interpretation spells out a method for determining the meaning of literary texts in general, it therefore acknowledges scientific interpretation as far as its value derives from the learning of the commentator, from the weight of his arguments, and from his faithful adherence to the rules of historical-grammatical exegesis. Orthodox biblical interpretation welcomes the universal rules of literary exegesis as applicable to the biblical books; yet, as noted above, the sacred character of the Bible demands the additional consideration of *ecclesiasticae intelligentiae auctoritas* (the authority of ecclesiastical understanding).

Orthodox biblical scholars have always been aware that the meaning of a text must be derived from language according to the same law which regulates the expression of thought in language. Since it has been recognized that the biblical writers: (1) used the code of their day and of their own peculiar circumstances; (2) employed language in accordance with its peculiar usages and its rules of grammar; and (3) followed in the expression of their thoughts the sequence of their logic, and in their words reflected their mental as well as physical and social conditions, the Russian Orthodox hermeneutic stresses that if the interpreter wishes to fully understand the writer, he must be guided by the following quasi-

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*Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures*. Ed. by Kenneth Hagen. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Milwaukee Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1994), 59-99.

<sup>44</sup> See esp., Konstantin Nikol'skii, *Rukovodstvo k Izucheniiu Bogoslužhenia v Pravoslavnoi Tzerkvi* [*Guide for study the Orthodox Liturgy*] (SPb.: 1901).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Antonii, *Dogmatic Theology* (SPb.: 1862), 6; S. Bulgakov, *Pravoslavie* [*The Orthodoxy*] (Paris, 1947), 63.



criteria for determining the author's meaning: his language, his train of thought or context, and his psychological and historical condition at the time of writing.<sup>46</sup> Hence, one of the more important principles of Orthodox hermeneutics can be formulated as follows: find the sense of a book by way of its language (grammatically - philologically), and by way of the writer's mental and external condition (psychologically and historically). Expressing the same truth negatively, it could be said that any meaning of a passage which does not agree with its grammar, its context, and the internal and external conditions of its author, cannot be accepted as the true sense. Of course, in the case of Scripture, the fact of its divine character and of its authentic interpretation by the Church must be added to the designated criteria of interpretation as of no lesser significance; hence, any meaning not in keeping with the spirit of the Church's interpretation and tradition cannot be the true sense of Scripture. It is only the joining of the later with the previous which gives birth to true Orthodox Bible interpretation without destroying both the rational and doctrinal character of the interpretation.

In literary interpretation in general, a grammatical and philological knowledge of the language in which the work is written, an acquaintance with the laws of logic and rhetoric, and a familiarity with the data of psychology and the facts of history are all presupposed. In the case of the Scriptures, the scientific interpreter must be well-grounded in the so-called Biblical language; he must be well-versed in Biblical history, archaeology, and geography; he should know the various Orthodox dogmas bearing on the Bible; and finally he must be instructed in Patrology, ecclesiastical history, and Biblical literature. Before entering on the explanation of any particular book of Scripture, the commentator must also be versed in the dogmatic, moral, philosophical, and scientific questions connected with his particular area of study.

Orthodox Bible interpretation, by reason of the very human character of the Bible, demands a historical-grammatical interpretation. So the commentator must ever keep in mind the significance of the literary dimension of its sacred and Scriptural language, and strive for the sense of its literary element, which is determined by the subject matter of the writing, by its occasion and purpose, by the grammatical and logical context, and by parallel passages. The historical setting of the book and its author too have to be given due attention.

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<sup>46</sup>Perhaps it was Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who first stressed a concern for the *language* circumstances in which the text was written (*grammatical interpretation*) and called for a consideration of the *character-mood-context* situation of the author as the vehicle of understanding (*psychological interpretation*). He said, "Understanding always involves two moments: to understand what is said in the context of the language with its possibilities and to understand it as a fact in the thinking of the speaker." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*. Ed by H. Kimmeler (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 98.

### 6.2.9 The Ethical Feature

Although the exegetical heritage of the Church fathers did not offer methodologies or hermeneutical principles to advance and lead Russian Orthodox scholars to critical discussion of the problems arising from critical and historical approaches to the Bible, yet the Scriptures were embraced with a greater appreciation because the Fathers were more concerned with the theological consciousness of the Church than with the linguistic or critical-historical analysis of the Bible. For this very reason, Mitr. Platon urged interpreters “to consult and scrupulously read the best Church teachers and their interpretations.”<sup>47</sup> Consequently, there is now a large number of exegetical works in the Orthodox Church that are furnished with good theological arguments, but which at the same time frequently show a deficiency on the part of their authors in providing adequate support for these arguments by giving due attention to the grammatical- historical elements of the text.

The patristic exegetes modelled for the Russian Orthodox interpreters who later followed them the concern with deriving ethical ideals from the biblical texts. The Church Fathers’ task of delineating the practical and moral elements of the Bible for the Church has always been significant for Orthodox exegetes.<sup>48</sup> Fr. Mikhail (Luzin) aptly concludes that the emphasis on a strong ethical element of the Bible is “an achievement of Russian Orthodox exegesis.”<sup>49</sup>

This ethical and moral orientation is perhaps also the most obvious influence of Orthodox biblical interpretation on the philosophical and theoretical constructs in Russian thought generally. The possibility of a reciprocal influence here is also conceivable, because both biblical scholars and religious philosophers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia showed a predominant interest in moral problems and considered a full discussion of them as essential to the well-being of Russian society. Zen’kovskii, who argues that anthropocentrism is an important characteristic of Russian religious philosophy, also rightly notes that this strong moral orientation, along with an intensive interest in social problems, is the most creative source for almost all Russian thinkers.<sup>50</sup> The ethical bias, of course,

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<sup>47</sup> Platon (Levshin), *Collected Works* (SPb.: Soikina, 1913), 691.

<sup>48</sup> Among the earliest see, for example, Ioann Domaskin, *Tochnoe Izlozhenie Pravoslavnoi Very [A Genuine Report of the Orthodox Faith]* (M.: 1998).

<sup>49</sup> Mikhail (Luzin), 125. The literature on “the ethical element” and on the moral teaching of the Bible is vast. For our purposes it suffices to note two articles that underline the importance of biblical interpretation for the establishing of moral precepts specifically tailored to the Russian people. See P. Golubev, “Blagotvornoe vliianie Biblii na zhisn’ narodnyiu,” *RKCB* 9 (1892): 36-58; Vladimir Rybinskii, “About the Bible.” *TKDA* 3 (1902): 357-382.



derives from an interest in biblical ethics; and the role that Orthodox biblical exposition and interpretation has had in the understanding of that biblical ethics is considerable.

### 6.3 Conclusion

To pronounce the final word on the biblical hermeneutics of the Russian Orthodox Church is a perplexing task. Its analysis requires careful thought and continuing investigation. Yet, as this study has shown, the main hermeneutical features of the Russian Orthodox Church are clear enough that they may now be summarized as follows:

*First*, the characteristics of Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation and exegesis deeply reflect the influence of patristic exegesis. Thus, the principle of the authority of ecclesiastical understanding is an important key to unlocking the meaning of biblical texts. All inquiries of a scientific or exegetical kind, then, presuppose that Scripture and Church can not be separated or opposed to each other. The church is *a priori* to the reading of the Bible. The supposition of dogma is a quintessential criterion if the interpreter is to bring forward unanimity between scientific investigation of the Bible and faithfulness to the Church. In addition, Church tradition is important to Orthodox exegetes, because it frames the understanding of the Bible and so serves as a check against any deviation from Church doctrine in interpretation.

*Second*, it is assumed that the fulfilment of the Old Testament was found in the historical revelation of Christ - the centrepiece of all Scripture. Christ is, then, the *beginning-centre-and end* of biblical interpretation. He is *the* hermeneutical key to Scripture.

*Third*, interpretation of the Bible may be understood as a synthesis of human creative efforts and divine illumination imparted by the Holy Spirit who dwells within the Church. Thus, the exegete must submit himself and his skills to the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit.

*Fourth*, the Orthodox scholar cannot begin his interpretive work by taking himself as the sole point of departure, but must look to the Orthodox community with its great body of teachings and tradition as the outside reference point that gives shape and direction to his exegesis.

*Fifth*, Orthodox hermeneutics stresses that if an interpreter wishes to fully understand the biblical writer, he must be guided by these quasi-criteria in determining the

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Zen'kovskii*, vol. I, 6.

author's meaning: his language; his train of thought; the context; and his psychological and historical state at the time of writing. Thus, one might arrive upon the sense of a book by way of its language (grammatically – philologically) and by way of the writer's mental and external condition (psychologically and historically). Yet, above all, any meaning not keeping with the spirit of the Church's interpretation and tradition cannot bear the true sense of Scripture.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Summary of the Discussion

Identification of these issues which are of specific importance towards understanding biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church, determined the main goal of the preceding chapter of this study.

We purposefully aimed at keeping the emphasis on the history of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Orthodox biblical hermeneutics - Russian biblical scholarship was regarded from a neutral point of view. Outlining the historical character and accompanying crucial factors on the process of the study of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church, was the issue of importance. The biblical interpretation in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church as implemented during the Kiev period (x-xiii cc.) up to the Synodal period (1721-1917), has been the object of this survey which furthermore concentrated on the Orthodox biblical hermeneutics within the same period. Thus, both the historical perspective of the biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church and the hermeneutical perspective, which specifically serves as understanding of biblical interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church, formed the centre of our focus. A summarized account of our discussions precedes the results of this study.

Chapter 2 addressed the methodological issues. We emphasized the fact that it is not at all possible to live and understand the “present” in isolation from the context of “history” which enfolds a broader space of time. The current circumstances in the Russian Orthodox Church and the international and interconfessional relationships within the Christendom formed the motivation to undertake the study of the history of Bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church in order to give greater meaning to the interaction with the Russian Orthodox Christianity (at least on regarding study of the Bible). Rösen underlines this idea by stating, “Experiencing the antiquity of the past open up the future potential of the present.”<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 3 we mainly focused on characteristics and factors that played the main role in determining the inquiry of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church

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<sup>1</sup> Jörn Rösen, *Studies in Metahistory* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1993), 89.

during the Kiev period (x-xiii cc.) up to the Synodal period (1721-1917). In the course of our study, it was established that although the Holy Scripture formed the basis of the Russian Christianity and the Bible translations were widely circulated in the nation, the reading of the Bible (i. e. in the early period of the Russian Orthodox Church) was definitely not approached with theoretical knowledge in mind and thus did not motivate nor lead to creative activity in the theological sphere. During this period Russian found it easier to “express their thoughts and feelings through music, colour and design than through books and learned discourses.”<sup>2</sup> Although the Russian Orthodox Church’s organic development was threatened by disruption in the period that followed (i. e. the period of the Mongol invasion, 1280-1480), our study revealed a preoccupation with the translations and corrections of the multiplicity of the religious text circulating in Russia at that time. The Bible was not yet considered a highly valuable object of study. Furthermore our study established that from the early centuries of the Russian Christianity the Biblical text itself had been regarded as of less importance than the biblical texts (accepted in the Church).

The exemplified exegesis of the Church Fathers was of prime significance as source of learning during the following centuries of the Church’s history (xv-xviii cc). The importance of Russian heretical movements stimulated a new Slavonic translation of the Bible. The Church’s clergymen attributed the heresies and doubts to the reading and misinterpretation of biblical texts. At this point a proper understanding of the biblical literature gained its first significance (ideologically spoken). In the attempt to discover such understanding, the Church has traditionally followed the Patristics as a dogmatic-doctrinal guide.

The Russian Orthodox exegetes’ concentration on the works of ancient Church interpreters laid a huge constraint on them, albeit voluntarily. From about 1820, a new spirit of inquiry is clearly discernable in Russia. The advance made in theological education lead the Orthodox exegetes to an awareness of the critical methods in historical and literary scholarship which had developed in the West at that time. They furthermore witnessed the religious philosophical awakening in Russia. The line of intellectual thought of the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided the Orthodox biblical interpretation with the following aspects: (1) a basis for theorizing, (2) the prospect of interdisciplinary studies, and (3) an openness for the new solutions. All this brought about an era of practical enthusiasm in the field of bible interpretation.

Chapter 4 examined *selected* anthropological aspects relevant to the Russian Orthodox Church that exercised both a direct and indirect impact upon the Orthodox

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<sup>2</sup> Zernov, 5.



biblical hermeneutics. This chapter presented a general overview of some key Orthodox anthropological beliefs, followed by an account of several specific features of Orthodox anthropology as examined, such as: (1) the nature of Russian man, (2) the wholeness of man; and (3) the concept of *theurgy*; which proved to be particularly helpful in understanding of how the Church's anthropological ideas are not only linked with Orthodox hermeneutics, but actually determine it.

Conclusively chapter 4 stated that the existential difference between *man prior to faith* and *man under faith* (established in the religious categories of the Orthodox anthropology), is the hermeneutical key for understanding God's divine truth of the Bible. The Orthodox anthropology, based on mystical experience, presupposes a fairly free rein on the cognitive search for truth, even entailing that which lies beyond the material world as perceived by the senses. The principle of Orthodox hermeneutical theory, however, implies a complex dimension that involves the historical relationship between Church tradition and individual mystical experience. Evidence to this fact becomes more prominent in the assessment of the anthropological concept of *wholeness of man* as the existential hermeneutical principle. In the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics this excludes any individual interpretation of the Scripture, for the interpretation is only acceptable in an interrelating context of the Orthodox community, correlating with that which already exists within this *whole*. Mystical realism and the ecclesiastical consciousness (e.g. the truth belongs to the Russian Church) accentuate the *religio-metaphysical* superiority of the Russian Orthodox interpreters in perceiving divine truths of the Bible (e.g. through the teachings of the Orthodox Church). The Orthodox anthropology links the Spirit's creative energies within the individual with human creative efforts. The Orthodox exegesis can be indicated as a divine-human initiative based on collaboration between the divine Spirit and the human interpreter.

Chapter 5 gives an account of Bogdashevskii's life and scholarship, emphasizing his hermeneutics. A performed case study which focused on the analysis of the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics according to the work of one particular scholar, is reflected in this chapter and it served as an example of the hermeneutical trends as observed in the Russian Orthodox Church. It has been concluded that Bogdashevskii's philosophical perspective (especially in his view about science and philosophy) reveals the important Orthodox feature, namely to accept religious (or ecclesiastic) faith as frame of reference for any scientific investigation which is related to Christian faith. Thus, Bogdashevskii leaves no room for critical historical inquiry without reference to the Church and Tradition as of prime importance for his understanding in his field of study. There is a clear relation between Bogdashevskii's exegesis and hermeneutics and the general tendency in the

hermeneutics of the Russian Orthodox Church to support, secure and clarify the accepted understanding of the Church. In Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics the accent moves from the present to the past, from the modern exegetical method to that of the Church Fathers. His hermeneutics does not reflect a personal-individual point of view, but rather incorporates a language that represents the meaning "for the Church". In Bogdashevskii, reasoning and searching for this meaning shows the ecclesiastic mind to be epistemologically superior to the individual human. In this respect, Bogdashevskii's work well serves as an example of the Orthodox exegetical tendencies that prevailed in the investigation into the historical realities of the Bible as seen from the perspective of the ecclesiastic point of view. The ecclesiastic approach bears hermeneutical significance as far as the conflict between the Church's historical exposition of the New Testament and the findings of the modern historical inquiry is concerned. On the whole, Bogdashevskii's hermeneutics attributes to a many-faceted *rule of trust* in the mind of the Church. His maxim, - believe as the Church prescribes, live as the Church commends<sup>3</sup>- follows the main lines of the Russian Orthodox hermeneutics.

Chapter 6 summarized and interpreted the fundamental principles and main features peculiar to Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation, using the attestation to these principles in the foregoing study as a basis. The chapter demonstrated that the main hermeneutical features of the Russian Orthodox Church: (1) are deeply influenced by patristic exegesis; (2) show that the Orthodox Church is *a priori* in reading the Bible; (3) place an entire dogmatic premise as a quintessential criterion for the Bible interpretation; (4) exalt the Church tradition as the indispensable guide to the understanding of Scripture; (5) consider Christ as the *beginning-centre-* and *end* of biblical interpretation (Christ is *the* hermeneutical key to Scripture); (6) base Orthodox exegesis upon cooperation between the Holy Spirit and the human interpreter; (7) demands a critical reading of the Scriptures guided by the Church dogmatics, and a multidisciplineed approach to the text which includes proper attention to questions of grammar, logic, history of the text, translations, criticism of editions, and exegesis proper.

Having summarized our discussion and conclusions, our conclusive findings on the question of the hermeneutics in the Russian Orthodox Church now follow.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. D. I. Bogdashevskii, "Lecture. On the Significance of the Church," *TKDA* 3 (1913): 457 [my italics].



## 7.2 The Conclusions on the Orthodox Hermeneutics

The hermeneutical issues relevant to the Russian Orthodox Church are firmly rooted in a set of theological and ecclesiastic convictions. A particular point of view is consequently maintained, namely that the processes of Bible interpretation must be governed by three indicative factors, which are: (1) the Bible itself as a self-interpreting device; (2) the Church; (3) tradition of the Fathers of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

Our study pointed out that at the very dawn of the Russian Orthodox Church's life, both Scripture and Tradition were both regarded as the instructive agents for all the activity of the Orthodox Christians. The Orthodox hermeneutics regards the view that the content of the Bible can be clearly perceived by self-interpretation favourable, yet it disagrees to the Bible as the only foundation of the Christian faith. The Orthodox Church has never allocated for Scripture (*alone*) a role of exceptional importance. The Church has always maintained fundamental significance of biblical writings alongside the tradition of the Church in defining and preserving the Orthodox faith. The "orthodox" conditions which are laid down for biblical interpretation confirm the two-source theory that both the Bible and the Christian Orthodox tradition represent the sources for authentic Orthodox Christian faith and theology. This forms a sharp difference to the Protestant theory that the Bible alone is a sufficient source.

Moreover, a style of reading and interpretation of the Bible, which resulted in the acceptance of certain doctrines and the condemnation of others, was determined by tradition. Thus, the Orthodox biblical hermeneutics suggests that the biblical scholars take as starting point Scripture and tradition in a total reflection of faith (i.e. as it officially interpreted by the Church). Hence, there is no room for doubt left for the scholars about the reliability of the way of transmission of the Bible, nor can they consider portions of the Bible as contradictory to the factual historical events. Where the biblical accounts on a particular event vary in detail (especially in the Gospels) the scholars are obliged to seek correspondence of the texts and affirm their authenticity. (Bogdashevskii's exegesis exemplified this practice very well.) The Orthodox biblical hermeneutics intends to put the Bible into the exclusive realm of ecclesiastical interpretation. The specific way, in which the Bible functions in the Orthodox experience, rests upon the fact of ecclesiastic prescription. Regarding this observation, it can be said that the approach of Orthodox biblical hermeneutics is *not* open-ended and searching. The weakness of the attempts to interpret

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ignatii (Semenov), *Primechaniia k chteniiu i tolkovaniiu Sviashchennogo Pisaniia po ukazaniiu samogo Pisaniia v tolkovanii sviatootecheskikh* [*The Remarks for Reading and Interpretation of Holy Scripture according to itself and Patristic interpretations*] (SPb.: 1848), 2.



Scripture in a confessional setting, can be observed in the following: (1) answers are sometime offered before questions are asked; (2) creativity can be threatened; and (3) challenges are met with anti-intellectual or separatist responses.<sup>5</sup>

Traditionally the Russian Orthodox exegetes give significant attention to the works of the Church Fathers, who lived so close to the apostolic times that it leaves no doubt that they represent the doctrine as they received it from the Apostles to the Orthodox Church. The Apostles received the doctrine from Christ and the Holy Spirit who both directed them the Apostles in what they taught, wrote and ordained.

The Russian Orthodox biblical hermeneutics does argue for the Orthodox theological hegemony, i.e. hegemony of Orthodox ways of reading the Bible. It does not encourage the people to read the Bible self-consciously and self-critically within their own context. In this regard, the Orthodox biblical hermeneutics leaved no possibility of a fresh approach towards reading biblical texts. In the Russian Orthodoxy, there is definite way of reading and that is the reading of the Church which excludes various contextual readings of the Bible.

Our study has shown that the biblical interpretation as practiced by the Russian Orthodox Church is best understood within a historical-dogmatic tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church and the history of the Russian nation. There has always been a correlation between the interpretation of the contemporary situation in the Church and nation on the one hand and interpretation of the scriptural texts on the other hand. For example, all the attempts to alter Slavic biblical and liturgical texts by using Greek or Hebrew as standards were met with resistance, rejection and repression.<sup>6</sup>

This study demonstrated that the Russian Orthodox Church firmly maintains the Scriptural roots and dimensions of every theological discipline: dogma, ecclesiology and moral theology. The Russian Orthodox interpreters of the Bible, however, were restricted

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 176. "Before the Russian Revolution, free discussion of the problem arising from a critical and historical approach to the Bible was heavily censored if not completely forbidden, in official academic theology." Alexander Schmemmann, "Russian Theology: An Introductory Survey," *SVTQ* 16 (1972): 176.

<sup>6</sup> *The Modern Encyclopedia of Religion in Russia and Soviet Union*, vol. 4 (Gulf Breeze, FL.: Academic International Press, 1991), s. v. "Bible, Church Slavonic," by Henry R. Cooper Jr. Copper is also right that such attempts were made by Metropolitan Alexis in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Maxim the Greek in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Patriarch Nikon in the 17<sup>th</sup>, Peter the Great in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the Russian Bible society in the 19<sup>th</sup>. For a specific example, Ignatii has clearly indicated that his book on the rules of Bible interpretation have been stimulated by the Church historical circumstances. See Ignatii (Semenov), *Primechaniia k chteniiu i tolkovaniiu Sviashchennogo Pisaniia po ukazaniiu samogo Pisaniia v tolkovanii sviatootecheskikh* [*The Remarks for Reading and Interpretation of Holy Scripture according to itself and Patristic interpretations*] (SPb.: 1848), 1-4.



from theologising and theorising merely with a pure scholarly approach. The Orthodox Church “implicitly rather than explicitly rejects the isolation of Scripture in a closed and self-sufficient field of study.”<sup>7</sup> The slow advance in the process of the Orthodox Bible interpretation is associated with the fact that often the Russian Orthodox scholars have not been paying proper attention to the previous works and systems of their own predecessors. Subsequently the Orthodox biblical scholarship seems to be lacking a gradual development in its own legacy. On the contrary, the larger context of the Orthodox Bible interpretation strongly reflects a reactive and apologetic character (fixed on the “external” developments: such as heresies, novelties, etc.).

Orthodox hermeneutics demands the effectiveness of biblical literary exegesis not to be overestimated. Exegesis does not implicitly search for the writer's meaning which is a matter which is settled by the Church's canons; it does not question what is true or false, but only communicates what the writer intended to say. Hence an exegetical truth may be an objective falsehood, unless the work subjected to the application of hermeneutic principles endowed with the quality of inerrancy (which is not the case in Orthodoxy). Furthermore, the Russian Orthodox exegesis does not investigate the authenticity of a work, or the integrity of its text. Orthodox biblical hermeneutics requires that the exegete to be equipped with an applicable knowledge of the history of the canon of both the Old and New Testaments, be acquainted to the results of lower or textual criticism, and to have a thorough knowledge of the Church's teaching.

### **7.3 The Contribution of this study**

This study has shown that the interpretation of the Bible in the Orthodox Church has been undertaken for many years. These results must be studied. A modern historiography of biblical interpretation should not stay restricted by confessional or national boundaries and should not ignore the Bible interpretation and biblical hermeneutics within the Russian Orthodox tradition.

This study also points out the fact that once established, biblical studies in the Russian Orthodoxy formed its personal fundamental principles for interpretation. Many of these principles correlate and correspond closely with common principles of biblical interpretation attested in the other Christian traditions. Yet, basically, they form “Russian

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, “Russian Theology: An Introductory Survey,” *SVTQ* 16 (1972): 177.

Orthodox Hermeneutics.” The main purpose of this study was more than formulating the hermeneutical question as reflected in the works of Orthodox biblical scholars, it also intended to give those both in the East and in the West who are outside the Russian Orthodox confessional borders a comprehensive introduction to the historical and hermeneutical perspective of the biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church. The prevailing circumstances accentuate its importance: (1) a general ignorance of the Russian Orthodox Church; (2) ignorance of the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church influences the mentality and self- understanding of the Russian people.<sup>8</sup> Our study should be of assistance to those who want to teach the Bible in the Russian context and who are not well familiar with the history and hermeneutics of biblical research in the Russian Orthodox Church. In addition, in our opinion, all the attempts of developing the contextual theology among the Russian Christians due regard should be paid to the heritage of the Orthodox Church.

The relation between the Orthodox Christianity and the Bible should be clarified in order to establish a deeper comprehension of God’s revelation and the understanding of a development of the Christianity in Russia. Those outside the Russian Orthodox confession (in the East and in the West) will gain better understanding of the Eastern Church through the knowledge of theological and historical resources as provided through this study. Our analysis provides a basis for comparison between the Russian Orthodox approach to the Bible and other praxis and theories of Bible interpretation.

Our study showed that the Russian Orthodox Church has the privilege of benefit from many centuries of church history during which the Orthodox Christians made a contribution through their reading and reflection on many various passages of the Bible. This is in a strong hermeneutical link between the Russian Orthodox Church and Christianity of the early centuries. Our study observed that the Orthodox Church is trusty to many earlier theologians of the Church. The intellectual heritage of the Fathers and close relationship to the hermeneutical praxis of the Patristics should be respected. The Orthodox Church maintains the special theological authority of the Fathers of the Church (as a group the Fathers of the Church were presumably connection with the apostles or at least with early Christian antiquity).

The Russian Orthodox Church maintained an example of reverence and trust as far as non-canonical writings of the early church are concerned. In this regard, the Bible

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<sup>8</sup> Russian self- understanding is faithfully linked to the history of Russian Church, monasticism, Russian sanctity. This is one of the major thesis in a historiography of the Russian culture. Cf. M. O. Koyalovich, *Istoriia russkogo samopoznaniia po istoricheskim pamiatnikam i nauchnym sochineniiam* [*History of the Russian Self-Awareness According to Historical Monuments and Scientific Works*] (SPb.: 1884).



interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church stands in contrast to the other parts of the Christianity that failed to respect and learn from the Fathers.<sup>9</sup>

#### 7.4 The Prospects for Further Studies

I trust that my attempt to address the historical and hermeneutical issues that are relevant to the Bible interpretation within the Russian Orthodox Church will stimulate the appearance of new works in the field under review and will help researchers at the start of their careers.

The history of bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church might be investigated further with the detailed developments within a particular period in the Church History (19<sup>th</sup> century, for example) in mind or with special reference to a select individual (for example, Feofan Propokovich (1681-1736)<sup>10</sup>, Aleksandr P. Lopukhin (1852-1904), or Sergius Bulgakov (1871- 1944)<sup>11</sup>).

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<sup>9</sup> Erickson, among the others, self-critically argues that in general the conservative or evangelical segment of Christianity is guilty of being critical of earlier theologians. Cf. M. Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 79.

<sup>10</sup> Feofan Propokovich (1681-1736) - politician, Church leader and theologian was one of the chief supporters of Peter's reforms. Some called him "the Deputy of Petrine Reforms." Florovsky, *Puti*, 90. In his writings, Propokovich: (1) insists in biblical foundation for preaching; (2) stresses the importance of careful biblical exegesis in making any doctrinal conclusion; (3) defends "the wholeness and self-sufficiency of Scripture"; and (4) confesses that the Bible, as the Word of God, is the full and sufficient guide in all matters of faith and practice. The Bible, for him, is *principium cognoscendi* for all theological and practical questions [cf. Florovsky, *Puti*, 92-93]. He calls to interpret the Bible through the glance of itself. "The *consensus patrum*, for Feofan, is only the *humanum testimonium*." Ibid., 93. In his theological views Feofan was very close to the protestant positions (esp. to Luther's teaching on *sola fidei*). Some even claim that Feofan actually was a Protestant. Cf. Ibid., 94.

<sup>11</sup> The Russian Orthodox theologian Sergius Bulgakov mainly is known for his work on such issues as: (1) a Christian social system, i.e., the Orthodox view on the alleviating adverse social and economic conditions in Russia politics and socialism; (2) religion and culture; (3) the essence and development of the Russian intelligentsia, i.e., the class of intellectuals regarded as possessing culture and political initiative; (4) the problem of the church's life; (5) the problem of art, especially when viewed as an activity which includes a distinctive way of looking at the world; (6) the response to historicism, that is, the recognition that the past is radically different from the present and can be grasped only in terms of its own context, and the tendency to regard all knowledge and all experience as subject to historical change, etc. Bulgakov's contribution to hermeneutical theory is not well recognized in theological literature. For example, a well-known Orthodox writer remarks briefly about Bulgakov's hermeneutical theory and he fallaciously condenses it to mere biblical symbolism. In this study we have paid attention only to his concept of *theurgy* Alexander Men', "Toward the History of Russian Orthodox Biblical Studies," *BT* 28 (1987): 281.

The entire study can and should be done to evaluate a theological system of Socio-Critical and Socio-Pragmatic strands of the Russian Orthodox bible interpretation in the beginning of the twentieth century. 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 (we briefly discussed the issue in Chapter 5).

It is also possible to approach the history of the Russian Orthodox biblical interpretation (and hermeneutics) in *comparison* with the developments attested in the Roman Catholic and Protestant confessions. In our judgement, however, the bible interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church *should not be measured in comparison* with the Western biblical scholarship, but assessed in the context of its own situation - within the historical frame of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

Our study of the Orthodox hermeneutics was primarily focused on the use of critical tools in private reading of the New Testament. It is not to say that biblical understanding in the Orthodox Church occurs mainly in private reading and investigation of the Bible. On the contrary, in the Russian Orthodox Church the biblical interpretation is grounded in the church's exposition, not in the theoretical analysis of the academy. The exposition of the Word of God is of utmost importance in the Church's worship. Yet, as we noticed in case of Bogdashevskii (Chapter 5), the Russian Orthodox exegetes do not develop the conception that exposition of the Word is the centre of Orthodox liturgy. We recognize, however, that the Russian Orthodox Christians (for the most part) experience Scripture more in a liturgical celebration, than in their private reading and study. Therefore, further study of the hermeneutics in the Russian Orthodox Church should pay closer attention to the liturgical use of the Word of God.

On the whole, the final word on the history of biblical interpretation in Russian Orthodox Church is a perplexing task, because "for a simply curious mind and all the more for the mind longing for a serious study of the development of Biblical studies in Russia, its observation presents many things that make one think, rejoice and sorrow, meditate and search."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> I agree with Zernov's claim, - "The secret of Russian culture is that it is both Christian and non Western. Russians follow the Byzantine version of Eastern Orthodoxy, which is neither Roman nor Reformed." *Zernov*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> "Для мысли и просто любознательной, а тем более желающей серьезно изучать эту область, обозрение ее представляет много такого, что заставляет задуматься, порадоваться и поскорбеть, помыслить и размыслить." *Mikhail (Luzin)*, 115.



APPENDIX 1

TRANSLITERATION TABLE FOR THE RUSSIAN CHARACTERS  
(The Library of Congress and the American Library Association)<sup>1</sup>

А а - A a	Р р - R r
Б б - B b	С с - S s
В в - V v	Т т - T t
Г г - G g	У у - U u
Д д - D d	Ф ф - F f
Е е - E e	Х х - Kh kh
Ё ё - Ёё	
Ж ж - Zh zh	Ц ц - Ts ts
З з - Z z	Ч ч - Ch ch
И и - I i	Ш ш - Sh sh
І і - I i	Щ щ - Shch shch
Й й - i i	— ь - “
К к - K k	— ы - y
Л л - L l	— ь - ‘
М м - M m	Б б - E e
Н н - N n	Э э - E e
О о - O o	Ю ю - Iu iu
П п - P p	Я я - Ia ia

<sup>1</sup> See “Congress Cataloging Service,” *Bulletin 119* (Fall, 1976): 63; *ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for Non-Roman Scripts/Approved by the Library of Congress and the American Library Association*. Compiled and ed. by Randall K. Barry, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1997), 184.

## APPENDIX 2

NINE RULES OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION BY THE METROPOLITAN OF  
MOSCOW PLATON (1737-1812)<sup>1</sup>ИНСТРУКЦИИ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЯМ.

а) толкователям Свящ. Писания.

1) Открыть буквальный смысл, и где темно, или от перевода или по свойству языка, объяснять так, чтобы не осталось места, которого бы студенты не разумели, включая некоторые весьма редкие места, кои на удобь не понятны. 2) Истолковать смыслы духовный и таинственный, особливо в Ветхом Завете, б тех местах, где оный прямо сокрывается. При сем надобно остерегаться, чтобы сего не делать с принуждением, то-есть, о том искании таинственного смысла, где онаго нет, разве по некоторому натягиванию, как у многих толковников сие примечается; но где оный прямо и из слов, и из связи, и из параллельных мест следует, держась притом наилучших толкователей. 3) Для большого разумения темных мест надобно сводить места параллельные, ибо сие весьма облегчит понятие: поелику очень нередко, что в одном месте сказано темно и кратко в другом тоже, но уже ясно и пространно. 4) Не забывать при толковании, чтобы выводить и нравоучение, прямо оттуда следующие. 5) Пророков толкуя, надобно показывать, когда их пророчества исполнились и при каких обстоятельствах. 6) Где места Св. Писания найдутся, из коих одно, кажется другому противоречит, те объяснять и соглашать с помощью на то изданных гармоний. 7) Где найдутся места, из коих некоторые выводили превратные толкования, и что подавало случай к расколам и ересям, надобно тех мест прямой и истинный смысл показать и опровергнуть мнения и доводы еретиков и раскольников. 8) Где найдутся такие места, на которыя мудрование человеческое может делать некоторые возражения, таковые возражения не скрывать, но их решать ясным и удовлетворительным образом. 9) Для помощи и всего того надобно учителю прилежно читать лучших церковных учителей и толковников, хорошо знать церковную Историю, а паче всего молить часто и усердно Отца светов, да откроет очи его к разумению чудес от закона Его.

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<sup>1</sup> Platon (Levshin), *Polnoe Sochinenie [The Complete Works]* (SPb.: 1913), Vol. 1, 691.



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<sup>1</sup> The Russian sources are arranged according to the Russian alphabet and transliterated accordingly.

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## **II. The Works of Archbishop Vasilii (D. I. Bogdashevskii, 1861-1933)**

### **2.1 Monographs and Brochures**

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