

## 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

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<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, *Istoriia 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 Ioann 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. Ioann 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 (Gennadievskaia 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 *zhidovstvuuushchikh*); 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 Vasilij 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 Pospelovskiy, *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.