

EUROPEAN PROTESTANTISM AND THE ORTHODOX TRADITION OF MASTERING THE BIBLE: THE VIEW OF THE KIEV THEOLOGICAL ACADEMY PROFESSORS OF THE XIX – EARLY XX CENTURIES*

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Abstract: The article examines the need for Sola Scriptura at the first stage of the reformation movement as the main tool for solving epistemological problems in order to find a reliable source of knowledge of God, bypassing the mediating role of the Catholic Church. Then the reformers tried to apply this principle to the practice, they faced the hermeneutical difficulties and the article shows the ways how they are solving these problems. Author demonstrated how the representatives of the Magisterial Reformation (the Lutheranism, Calvinism and others) limited hermeneutical highhandedness with the introduction of catechisms and confessions of faith, and representatives of the Radical Reformation (Anabaptists, Mennonites, etc.) mainly used the principle of congregational hermeneutics and hermeneutics of obedience.

In the Eastern European context, the idea of Sola Scriptura appeared several centuries later and was widely spread in the movements

of religious dissidence, and later in various groups of evangelical Christianity. The use of the Sola Scriptura' principle in these groups for a long time was based on the "common sense" approach, preserving the Anabaptist hermeneutic trajectory of naive realism, obedience and congregational control. At the early 90's of the XX century, after the arrival in this part of the world of the historical-critical approach, which gained popularity in evangelical schools, the principle of Sola Scriptura became more a slogan than a real program of actions. The article raises questions about the search for new hermeneutical strategy of biblical interpretation, which returns the researcher directly to the text, rather than to historical and cultural reconstructions.

Key words: Bible, biblical exegesis, biblical history, biblical criticism, the translations of the Bible, Reformation, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, Kiev-Mohyla Academy, Kiev Theological Academy.

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The past, but still memorable anniversary of the Reformation actualized the issue of its influence and moreover the impact of the world Protestant culture as a whole on various aspects of Russian religious and cultural history. This allows one to speak about some aspects of the formation of Ukrainian Orthodox tradition of reading, researching and using the Bible publicly. Not pretending on exhaustive list and analysis, the article will dwell on those aspects and phenomena, indicative and obvious from this point of view. The basis for this will be the reflections and assessments expressed mainly in the second half of the XIX and early XX centuries by a number of outstanding representatives of the biblical-theological and church-historical scholarship of the Kiev Theological Academy (KTA). Thus, this study continues the previous analysis of the Kiev Orthodox spiritual and academic tradition¹ – now with regards of peculiar connection with the European and world cultural and religious context.

It should be noted that it is entirely justified that many readers need to get more fully acquainted with the historical, spiritual and intellectual context of this topic. In particular, characteristic general trends in the development of spiritual education and biblical scholarship in Orthodox theological academies of the Russian Empire in general, as well as the KTA in particular, in the second half of the XIX – early XX centuries should be mentioned. Therefore, if necessary, one should turn to at least some classical basic surveys,² as well as to the main modern sources on these issues.³

It should be pointed out that KTA is discussed only as a phenomenon, the study of which at this stage already makes it possible to accumulate information about a centuries-

¹ See: Sergiy Golovashchenko, “Biblical Studies at the Kyiv Theological Academy (19th — early 20th Centuries): The Results and Prospects of the Research,” *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 2 (2015), 11–30. Accessed 05 October, 2015, doi:[10.18523/KMHJ51019.2015-2.11-30](https://doi.org/10.18523/KMHJ51019.2015-2.11-30).

² See: F. Eleonskii, “Otechestvennyie Trudy po izucheniiu Biblii v XIX veke,” [Domestic Works on Biblical Study in 19th ct.] *Khristianskoie Chtenie*, vol. I (1901), 5–28, 633–660; vol. I (1902), 39–64, 504–524; vol. II (1902), 107–125; N. Glubokovskii, *Russkaia bogoslovskaiia nauka v ee istoricheskom razvitii i noveisshem sostoianii* [Russian Theological Science in its Historical Development and Newest State] (M.: Sviato-Vladimirskoe Bratstvo, 2002); G. Florovskii, archpriest. *Puti russkogo bogosloviya* [The Path of Russian Theology] (M.: Institut russkoy civilizatsii, 2009); F. Titov, archpriest, *Imperatorskaia Kievskaiia Dukhovnaia Akademiia v ee trekhvekovoi zhizni i deiatel'nosti (1615–1915 gg.): Istoricheskaia zapiska* [Imperial Kiev Theological Academy in its three-century Life and Activity (1615 – 1619): Historical Note] (K.: Hopak, 2003).

³ See: N. Sukhova, *Vysshaia dukhovnaia shkola. Problemy i reformy. Vtoraia polovina XIX v.* [Higher Theological School. Problems and Reforms. The Second Half of the 19th ct.] (M.: PSTGU, 2006); S. Kuz'mina, *Filosofia osvity i vykhovannia u kyivs'kii akademichnii tradytsii XIX – pochatku XX st.: Monografia* [Philosophy of Education in Kyiv Academic Tradition: Monograph] (Simferopol: Orianda, 2010); N. Sukhova, *Russkaia bogoslovskaiia nauka (po doktorskim i masterskim dissertatsiiam 1870–1918 gg.)* [Russian Theological Science (according Doctoral and Master's Theses 1870–1918)] (M.: PSTGU, 2012); S. Golovashchenko, *Doslidzhennia ta vykladannia Biblii v Kyivs'kii dukhovnii Akademii XIX – pochatku XX st.: Monograph* [Research and Teaching of the Bible in Kiev Theological Academy 19 – early 20 ct.] (K.: Publishing House of Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 2012); S. Golovashchenko, “Uchebnyi protsess i nauchnyi potentsial KDA (XIX – nach. XX v.) Bibleistika,” [Educational Process and Scientific Potential of KThA (19th – early 20th ct.). Biblical Studies], *Pravoslavnaia Entsiklopedia* [Orthodox Encyclopedia], vol. 33 (2013), 110–116. S. Golovashchenko, “Bibliyeznavstvo v Kyivs'kii dukhovnii akademii (XIX – poch. XX st.): stanovlennia i rozvytok,” [Biblical Studies in Kyiv Theological Academy (19 – early 20 ct.; formation and development)] (Doctor of Science degree Thesis, Kyiv Dragomanova Pedagogical University, 2015); M. Tkachuk, “Kyivs'ka dukhovnaia akademii (1819–1924): storinkamy istorii,” [Kyiv Theological Academy: Pages of History], *Kyivs'ka Dukhovnaia akademii v imenakh: 1819–1924: Encyklopedia: v 2 t.* [Kyiv Theological Academy in the Names: 1819–1924: Encyclopedia, 2 vols.] (K.: Kyievo-Mohylians'ka akademii), vol. 1 (2015), 9–55.

old interaction and a mutual influence of the Orthodox and Protestant traditions of mastering the Bible. Of course, such experience of the KTA deserves to be compared in general with the spiritual and academic culture of the Russian Empire of the period. Such a comparison will be explored in the future – as scientific knowledge in this area is accumulated and systematized.

Reformation and the Formation of Orthodox Biblical Booklore

The well-known biblical scholar Prof. S.M. Solskii (1834 (35) – 1900) was the first in the KTA to turn to the history of the reading and mastering of the Bible by the Orthodox Church since the times of Kievan Rus. He explored this process in a broad European context and at the same time highlighted in details the specifics of local cultural and social development. Without exaggeration, prof. Solskii actually laid the foundation for the scholarly history of biblical studies in Ukraine. We are interested in his assessments of the Reformation and Western influence on the formation of the biblical consciousness of our ancestors.

According to Solskii, widespread public use of the Bible since the time of Christianization of Rus became a sign of entering the global community of civilized nations. Christian worldview was largely shaped by the assimilation of the biblical picture of the world, biblical cultural and symbolic codes, moral and legal norms that determined the everyday behaviour of our ancestors. The Bible was regarded as a common European heritage. The perception of it in the ancient Russian era was accompanied by active contacts with European culture, in particular, with the traditions of translating the Bible into European languages.⁴

The peculiar fate of the Ukrainian and Belarusian lands, which at the end of the XV – beginning of the XVI centuries were part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and later Rzeczpospolita, determined, according to prof. Solskii, inclusion of our ancestors' life in the "general flow of life of Western peoples."⁵ In particular, it means joining to the European educational system, intensifying contacts with the West Slavic lands, getting acquainted with both religious and political processes there, and with their cultural achievements (for example, printing). From the historical panorama outlined by Solskii, it is clear that the Reformation, first of all the experience of translations of the Bible into national languages, had a definitive impact on the modernization of Orthodox biblical literature. German and Czech (Hussite) reformational biblical booklore influenced the appearance of the "Biblia Ruska" [Russian Bible] by Francis Skaryna (Prague, 1517-19 – Vilna, 1525). In the Ukrainian lands this experience inspired appearance of such outstanding works as the Peresopnytsia Gospel, written in folk model of language and, finally, the first locally printed Bible – the Ostrog Bible. Prof. Solskii, analysing the process of the appearance

⁴ S. Solskii, "Upotreblenie i izuchenie Biblii v Rossii ot kreshchenia Rusi i do XV v.," [Use and Study of the Bible in Russia from Baptism of Rus to XV ct.], *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*, vol. 27, no. 10 (1868), 146–147, 153–154.

⁵ S. Solskii, "Obozrenie trudov po izucheniyu Biblii v Rissii s XV veka do nastoyashchego vremeni," [Review of the Works on the Study of the Bible from XV ct. to the Present Day], *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1869), 212.

of the Ostrog Bible, noted the aspiration of its publishers to establish succession with the Kiev-Rus Christianity. So, the publication was based on one of the copies of the Slavonic Gennady's Bible, which was thought to be a Cyril and Methodius translation from the Septuagint, inherited from the time of Prince Vladimir. However, according to the practice of the times, publishers used elements of European printed Bibles. New edited text was collated not only with the available Church Slavonic versions, but also with West-Slavic Reformation translations, in particular, Czech ones.⁶

The motives of Western biblical culture, born by the Reformation and relevant at the end of the XVI century, received a vivid expression in Ostrog edition. Among these were the new possibilities for distribution of the Bible opened by book printing and the development of bookselling business, attitude towards the Bible not only as an object of church liturgical utensils, but also as a “national treasure”, and shoots of critical perspectives based on scientific criteria.⁷ These pan-European motifs were combined with local needs: the need to satisfy “religious inquisitiveness”, the need for “parting words in piety”, the need to find new instruments of religious polemics with the infidels.⁸ The estimates of prof. Solskii allow to conclude that the Ostrog Bible became a sign and a means of transforming the Russian Orthodox culture in the context of Post-Reform intercultural and interconfessional contacts of European peoples.

Protestantism and the Kyiv-Mohyla Biblical Culture

It is extremely important that the possibility of studying the Scripture from philological, literary, historical perspective and, consequently, reading it through the prism of so-called “high criticism” and on the basis of qualitatively expanded range of primary sources took roots in the Orthodox academic culture. This process had already been taking place since the XVIII century, in the Kiev-Mohyla era, during the so-called “old Kiev academy”.⁹

It seems, at first this possibility expressed in the form of borrowing from the West. Institutionally, this was associated with the church “synodal” reforms of the “Petrine era”, and personally – with the efforts of the reformer, bishop, and later Archbishop of that time Feofan Prokopovich. Quite widespread opinion of the well-known Orthodox theologian Archpriest Georgi Florovskii that Feofan's actions were based on some “reformational principles”,¹⁰ which already presupposes the presence of a Protestant influence on his church-political and theological-pedagogical (including bibliological) ideas. Without going into discussion on this matter, it would be noted that the contribution of Feofan Prokopovich protégé – the Kiev-Mohyla teacher Simon Todorskii, the future archbishop – is more interesting and really connected with the Protestant influence. The development

⁶ Solskii, “Obozrenie trudov po izucheniyu Biblii v Rissii s XV veka do nastoyashchego vremeni,” 212–220.

⁷ S. Solskii, “Ostrozhskaia Bibliia v sviazi s tseliami i vidami ee izdatelia,” [The Ostrog Bible in Connection with Goals and Types of Its Publisher], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 7 (1884), 296–297.

⁸ Solskii, “Ostrozhskaia Bibliia v sviazi s tseliami i vidami ee izdatelia,” 303–304, 307.

⁹ This refers to the Kiev (Mohyla) collegium, later the academy, founded in the XVII century; the activists of the reformed in 1817-1819 KTA by using this name emphasized the continuity with the previous spiritual and intellectual tradition.

¹⁰ Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviya*, 119–121.

associated with Todorskii, became the subject of research in one of the candidate's thesis¹¹ written in the KTA in the late nineteenth century; these materials were introduced into the scientific circulation only in the early 2000s.

They inform that Simon Todorskii, having studied at one of the pietistic universities in Germany (most likely in Halle), in 1730s introduced in the Kiev Academy a new tradition of studying Greek and Hebrew languages and, consequently, reading and mastering the Bible. Here he became the pioneer of the Hebraic and philological studies of the Bible, based on a new approach. This was associated with a special, namely Protestant origin focused on learning the Hebrew language as the language of the Scripture. This interest, in turn, was generated by the adoption by the Protestants of the Masoretic text as the only source of the Old Testament text for translation and interpretation.¹²

From this the following conclusion is drawn: in Orthodox bibliography a kind of “cultural revolution” was initiated: the adoption of the Hebrew Masoretic text as a legitimate source of its own tradition. The comparison of the Church Slavic biblical text, not only with the LXX, but also with the Masoretic text, conditioned the need to raise and resolve not only text critical issues. In the second half of the XVIII century the philological, literary, even historical and cultural issues – stemming from the differences of the LXX and the Masoretic tradition – became relevant for the Orthodox believers even from a dogmatic point of view. Thus, the Orthodox “biblical studies” was originating as a “critical” aspect of the traditional “bibliology” (namely, from “high criticism”).

The “cultural revolution”, which began in Kiev, with its orientation to “high criticism” of the Bible and comparative textual criticism of the Greek and Hebrew text, impacted the discussions, conflicts, and, finally, the “constructive” part of the creation of the Orthodox Church Slavonic textus receptus – the Petrine-Elizabeth Bible in the XVIII century. Leading “actors and executors” of this “constructive act” were the pupils of the Kiev “Simon Todorskii school”: the monks Varlaam Lyashchevskii, Yakov Blonnitskii, Gideon Slominskii (Slonimskii); we specifically highlight these evidences from the essay by prof. S. Solskii mentioned and analysed above.¹³

The “material”, so to say, basis of this qualitative upheaval in the Orthodox bibliographical consciousness can be traced thanks to one of the most famous historians of the Kiev Academy, Prof. Nikolai Petrov (1840-1921). One of the volumes of his famous documents collection contains Catalog librorum Bibliothecae Academiae Kiioviensis compiled approximately in 1792, which is a rather extensive description of the academic book collection of the late XVIII century, where the editions of the Bible and various

¹¹ V. Shchukin, “Simon Todorskii, ego znachenie v istorii nauki staroi kievskoi akademii” [Simon Todorskii, its significance in the History of Science of the Old Kiev Academy. Thesis, Kiev Theological Academy, 1895], (K.: Institute of Manuscripts of Vernadskii National Library of Ukraine, Document code 1418).

¹² See: V. Nychyk, *Symon Todors'kyi i gebrayistyka v Kyievo-Mohylians'kii Akademii* [Simon Todorskii and Hebrew Studies in Kyiv-Mohyla Academy] (K.: KM Academia, 2002).

¹³ S. Solskii, “Obozrenie trudov po izucheniyu Biblii v Rissii s XV veka do nastoyashchego vremeni,” [Review of the Works on the Study of the Bible from XV ct. to the Present Day], *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1869), 554–557, 562–563, 577; no. 6 (1869), 803.

auxiliary literature occupied a significant place.¹⁴ The analysis of this description¹⁵ indicates a powerful Reformation and Post-Reformation Protestant (in particular, pietistic) intellectual influence.

The library of the Kiev Academy of the late XVIII century contained Bible editions (in Hebrew and New European languages) and Bible commentaries created by numerous Protestant authors. Among them were the classics of Reformation thought – such as Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, Theodore de Beze, Hugo Grotius, Johann Ecolampadius (Geisgenne), and later Protestant theologians: Abraham Kalov, Johann August Ernesti, Martin Geyer, Johann Georg Pritius (Priz), Wolfgang Franz, Salomo Glassius, Johann Heinrich Michaelis, Johann Joachim Lange, August Hermann Francke, Johann Franz Budde, Aegidius Hunnius, Johann-Jacob Rambach, Johann Hübner. On the one hand, the collection of such literature (along with the works of European Catholic authors) can only testify to a general openness of the Kiev Orthodox community to European biblical theological culture of the time. But already a fairly large set of technical bibliological sources, written by representatives of the Pietistic movement and published in the university centres of Pietism, speaks in favour of effective intellectual contacts with German biblical scholarship that have developed in the mainstream of the Kiev “Simon Todorskii school”.

Thus, the publication of the Bible in the Hebrew language by Johann Heinrich Michaelis (Halle, 1720); Bible commentaries and lectures by August Hermann Francke (Halle-Magdeburg, 1709, 1724); “historical and theological isagogics” of Franz Budde (Leipzig, 1730), were applicable to the isagogic and exegetical exercises. However, they were supplemented by auxiliary means of lexical-grammatical, linguistic and literary work, which made it possible to read the Bible: a) with the obligatory account of the Hebrew text as one of the original; b) through the prism of “high criticism”. These were the publications that helped in mastering the rules of reading Hebrew and Aramaic texts of the Bible and in working with the original Bible lexis: “Chaldean, Talmudic and Rabbinical Lexicon” by Johannes Buxtorf (Basel, 1639); the thesis by Johann Heinrich Michaelis on the Hebrew Nekudoth (Halle, 1739); “The Key to Jewish Reading” by Joachim Lange (Halle, 1735). The Hebrew grammar by J.-H. Michaelis (Bratislava, 1748), obviously, was available for active use in teaching (the Academic library held 17 copies of it). The basis for the linguistic and literary mastering of the Bible were: The Dictionary of Ancient Bible lexis (1727) and The Dictionary of Bible Onomastics (1721) by Adam Erdmann-Miri, published in Leipzig; Old Testament Onomasticon by Johann Simon (Halle, 1741).¹⁶

¹⁴ N. Petrov, ed. *Akty i dokumenty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii Kievskoi Akademii* [Acts and Documents relating to the History of Kiev Academy], Section II, Vol. 5 (K., 1908) № LXXVII, 300–470.

¹⁵ S. Golovashchenko, “Biblia i bibliologicheskaya literature v Kievo-Mohilianskoi akademii konca XVIII – nachala XIX v.: teksty, zhanry, tradicii (iz opytov rekonstrukcii dukhovno-intellektual'nogo nasledia KDA),” [The Bible and Bibliological Literature in Kiev-Mohila Academy in 18 – early 19 ct.: the texts, genres, traditions (from attempts to reconstruct the heritage of KThA)], *Trudy Kyivs'koyi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 15 (2011), 23–40.

¹⁶ Golovashchenko, “Biblia i bibliologicheskaya literatura v Kievo-Mohilianskoi akademii konca XVIII – nachala XIX v.,” 26–27, 30–34, 38.

This potential created the conditions for the formation of a strong tradition of teaching the Hebrew language as the language of the Bible in the Kiev (Mohyla) Academy and later in the KTA¹⁷ as well as the practice of translation of the Bible. Therefore, it wasn't contingency that the issues of the referred "cultural revolution" in Orthodox bibliology attracted attention in the XIX century, in connection with attempts to "acquire" another local Orthodox textus receptus – the Russian Bible. The discussions and conflicts that accompanied these attempts (from the experiments of the Russian Bible Society to the creation of the Synodal translation) were based, inter alia, on the comparison of LXX with "Masora", as well as on determination of the boundaries of textual, philological, literary, historical criticism application for the sake of preservation "authenticity" and "incorruptibility" of the text and meaning of Scripture. But most importantly – and this will be demonstrated on the example of the following subjects – the rethinking by Kiev Orthodox intellectuals of new opportunities for the social and cultural "being" of the Bible text and the application of relevant Western experience.

The Bible and Social Development: Turning to the Protestant Experience

Prof. S. Solskii's turn to the historical experience of the cultural implementation of the Bible in a broad European context,¹⁸ was not accidental in the mid-1860s. As it is known, during the reign of Emperor Alexander II, another attempt was made to modernize the Russian Empire. This attempt, carried out, as always, "from above", on the initiative of the top leadership, demanded appeals to the former experience. Therefore, S. Solskii's attention to the attempts of mass distribution of the Bible in the past echoed the hopes for new opportunities.

Hence the attention of Solskii to the ideas and intentions of the era of Emperor Alexander I – in particular, to the experience of creating a publicly available Russian translation of the Bible. Let us assume that the establishing in the Orthodox state of a purely Protestant institution in the early XIX century – the Bible Society – was also an attempt at cultural and partly political modernization on a Western European model. Quite naturally, prof. Solskii assumed that at the centre of such modernization stood the Bible: "when the Western nations became stronger in the Christian religious consciousness, when from the time of the Reformation they enriched themselves with national translations of Bible books made from original texts, they created a whole culture under this kind of influence."¹⁹ By the creation of a special institution for the nationwide distribution of the Bible, the Russian

¹⁷ S. Golovashchenko, "Drevneevreiskii yazyk v KDA kak yazyk Biblii: konfessional'nye i ideologicheskie obstoiatel'stva izucheniya i prepodavaniya," [Hebrew in KThA as a Language of the Bible: the confessional and ideological circumstances of study and teaching], <http://www.jcrelations.net/.3424.0.html?L=7>

¹⁸ See: S. Golovashchenko, "Istoriya vitchyznianiï pravoslavnoi recepcii Biblii u tvorakh prof. Stefana Sols'koho: vidnaidennia vlasnoho miscia v Ievropeï's'komu konteksti," [History of domestic Orthodox reception of the Bible in the works of prof. Stephen Sol'skii: finding of own place in European Context], *Pravoslav'ia v Ukraïni. Zbirnyk*. (K., 2017), part 2, 60-67.

¹⁹ S. Solskii, "Ob uchastii imperatora Aleksandra I v izdanii Biblii na russkom yazyke," [On the Participation of the Emperor Alexander I in the Publication of the Bible in Russian], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 1 (1878), 172-173.

Empire “was attached to the family of Western peoples”.²⁰ A common Bible translated into many languages of the empire, systematically studied in the reformed theological and educational institutions of the country, was to become a means of “enlightening of strangers”, a “spiritual union” that would “fasten the most remote parts of the state”, a factor of “self-supporting moral and religious development.”²¹

And in the 1860s, the preparation of the Russian Synodal translation was gaining momentum, through which the Bible, as at the times of the Russian Bible Society, was conceived as a means of social integration, shaping a general civil ideology, a system of education and upbringing. According to prof. Solskii, the common text of the Holy Scripture was to become the basis of such religious enlightenment which would teach “to honour the Church of God, the Tsar-autocrat, to honour parents, to submit to the authorities”;²² such a result would be the perfect embodiment of a social model long realized in the West.²³ The attitude of prof. Solskii found a consonant approval with a number of his colleagues. Thus, a theologian and historian Alexander Voronov (1839 – 1883) noted the importance of attracting the European experience of spreading Bible knowledge for the sake of overcoming “public alienation from the church”.²⁴

It would be appropriate to assume that the enculturation of the Bible according to the Western pattern objectively determined the possibility of introducing Western forms of religious and socio-political culture in the Russian Empire that had developed in the world under the influence of Bible norms and principles. It is also impossible to deny that in the overwhelming majority of cases it was necessary to speak about turning to the experience of Protestant states. That is why the view of Kiev academicians on European models of Bible usage became extremely important.

Thus, Vladimir Rybinskii (1867-1944) found out, especially on the example of German states of the XVIII and XIX centuries, that the issue of biblical education at the school level acquired a general civic importance there and was considered by the authorities as strategic for the education of citizens. It was believed that the Bible as a source of knowledge was able to unite the family and the school in their joint educational influence on the younger generation.²⁵ An important aspect of the Protestant experience, highlighted by Kyiv researchers, was the emphasis on the social and practical side of the biblical preparation of future theologians and pastors – precisely as educators of the people’s civil and moral consciousness. The theologian and educator Nicola Makkaveyskii (1864-1919), analysing the foreign Protestant experience, noted that the use of the Bible in pastoral professional work should not be limited to church walls, but also be carried out in the public

²⁰ Solskii, “Ob uchastii imperatora Aleksandra I v izdanii Biblii na russkom yazyke,” 174.

²¹ Ibid., 185, 190.

²² S. Solskii, “Tserkovno-prikhodskaia shkola,” [Church Parochial School], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 9 (1886), 154–155.

²³ Solskii, “Tserkovno-prikhodskaia shkola,” 160.

²⁴ A. Voronov, “Zametki iz tserkovnoy zhizni Zapada (otritsatel’nye napravleniia v sovremennom khrisťianstve),” [Notes from the Church Life of the West (the negative trends in modern Christianity)] *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 6 (1866), 252.

²⁵ V.P. Rybinskii, “Biblia dlia detei,” [The Bible for Children], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no.1 (1897), 3–5.

sphere – in the “people’s school” and in the private, home education and upbringing. Thus, the pastors acted as peculiar mediators in the process of wide public mastering of the Bible, and public Bible ministry becomes the most important factor in strengthening their doctrinal position and theological beliefs. It provides “not only the recalling of university knowledge, but also their further development ... encouraging independent activity and firm religious beliefs ... preaching, catechetics, Bible lessons serve the purposes of purely practical preparation.” This experience contrasted with the habits of Orthodox religious education and upbringing, where “laziness” and “untidiness” dominated. It was recognized that only “Protestant theologians were seeking to respond to the great demands that the present time raises before pastors.”²⁶ N. Makkaveyskii stressed the benefit of the European (often namely Protestant) experience of maximizing the popularization of Bible-based education among people for the upbringing of the universal virtues of “religiosity” and “nation” (*narodnost'*).²⁷

A well-known researcher of the Western European church life, prof. Athanasius Bulgakov (1859-1907) pointed out that in the history of Post-Reformation Europe, also mainly in Protestant countries, the Bible played the role of a “theocratic constitution” – the basis for the whole system of socio-political, civil, moral agreements and decisions. “Obedience to the will of God on earth must be expressed in obedience to the Law of God, as it is given in the revelation to man in the books of Holy Scripture.”²⁸ The reference to the Bible as a civil “constitution” sometimes played a revolutionary, humanizing role, such as in the emergence of the phenomenon of German humanism.²⁹ Sometimes this role was controversial, for example, because of theological liberalism, which used Bible knowledge (such as “examples taken from Bible history”) to form a “universal moral education” within the people’s school, sometimes even free of confessional colouring.³⁰

Therefore, the fact of forming in the West, along with the church one, a secular model of using the Bible for civic education did not remain off the purview of the Kiev researchers (here again we will cite the example of Prof. V. Rybinskii). Recognizing the historical, cultural and moral value of the Bible, such upbringing could contain “the propaganda of a universal non-confessional religion,” an appeal to reason as the “only criterion,” as well as the rationalized, quite capitalist forms of spreading Bible knowledge among the masses, based on sociological information about the structure of society and the psychology of age-related perception.³¹

²⁶ N. Makkaveyskii, “Vopros o prigotovlenii k pastorstvu v sovremennoy protestantskoy Germanii,” [The Question of Preparing for Pastoral Work in Modern Germany], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoī Akademii*, no. 4 (1894), 543–553.

²⁷ N. Makkaveyskii, “Religiia i narodnost' kak osnova vospitaniya,” [Religion and Nationality as the basis of education], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoī Akademii*, no. 11 (1895), 444–448.

²⁸ Af. Bulgakov, “Ideal obshchestvennoy zhizni po opredeleniyu katolicheskogo, reformatskogo i luteranskogo veroispovedaniy,” [Ideal of Social Life According Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran confessions], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoī Akademii*, no. 9 (1891), 91.

²⁹ Af. Bulgakov, “Chetyriokhsotletie Novoy istorii,” [The Four Centuries of Modern History], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoī Akademii*, no. 9 (1893), 106–107.

³⁰ Af. Bulgakov, “Iz zagranichnoy religioznoy zhizni,” [From Foreign Life], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoī Akademii*, no. 10 (1893), 285–286.

³¹ Rybinskii, “Biblia dlia detei,” 9–10, 14, 18, 21, 23, 29–30.

Educational and cultural secularism was criticized by Orthodox academicians as an alien phenomenon, allegedly brought from the West by “foreign teachers and educators of our noble youth”; this opinion expressed a famous theologian and the homiletician Vasily Pevnitskii (1832-1911).³² Thus, it is not surprising that since 1880s a moderate “Westernist” position on this issue gave way to a reactionary, protectionist one. The leitmotif of such a reaction was the call to strengthen everything “indigenous”, “autochthonous”, the search for “one’s own path”, “independent national development, free from total adoration of Western European life”; academician Nikolai Drozdov (1849-1919) was by no means alone in this position.³³ The Western secular model of reading the Bible was criticized as such that “undermines the historical foundations of Christianity, denies the genuineness and authenticity of its primary sources”; and here the theologian and biblical scholar Demetrius Bogdashevskii (1861-1933) also expressed the dominant opinion of the professorial corporation.³⁴

However, the search for “their own way”, ultimately based on the imperial triad of “Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality”, could be combined with attempts to borrow foreign experience in mastering of the Bible only under certain conditions. In our opinion, they acquired meaning only under the condition that the ideal of public life, which with the help of biblical statements could be embodied in various spheres of life, was as clearly articulated as possible. Therefore, in the early 1900s, during the famous revolutionary events, it was not haphazardly that the question arose: how socially and politically relevant can a Bible ideal be? The answer again demanded a reference to the experience of the Protestant part of world civilization. The study of world experience convinced the Kiev Orthodox thinkers that the vulgar usage of the Bible in “social” rhetoric is harmful. The voices of professors Dimitry Bogdashevskii, Vladimir Rybinskii, and priest Alexander Glagolev (1872 – 1937) sounded the clearest on this issue.

Thus, D. Bogdashevskii, while not denying the applicability of the Bible word “to the state, society, science, art” at the same time warned against attempts to “secularize, or bring down to earth” the Gospel, “reduce it to simple sociology” and “transfer evangelical perfection to simple social formulas”. After all, the biblical preaching “does not offer a social theory”. The only true sign of adequate adoption of Bible knowledge, in the opinion of the Kiev academician, is the spiritual revival and transformation of the personality.³⁵

The most productive way, in the opinion of Kiev scholars, was the preaching of the Bible moral ideal, the biblical teachings aimed at achieving civil peace, collective and personal well-being. And the experience along this path was widely acquired by the

³² V. Pevnitskii, “Ob otnoshenii k Tserkvi nashego obrazovannogo obshchestva (Publichnoe chtenie),” [On our Educated Society attitude towards the Church (Public Reading)], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 2 (1902), 255–258.

³³ N. Drozdov, “Zaprosy sovremennoi zhizni v otnoshenii k bogoslovskoi nauke,” [The Demands of Modern Life in Relation to Theology], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 10 (1885), 212–215.

³⁴ D. Bogdashevskii, “Sovremennye vragi Kresta Khristova,” [The present enemies of the cross of Christ], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 10 (1908), 275.

³⁵ D. Bogdashevskii, “Evangelie kak osnova zhizni (po povodu sovremennykh social’no-ekonomicheskikh voprosov),” [The Gospel as a Fundament of Life (about current social and political issues)], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 4 (1906), 547–549, 556, 565–568.

Protestant world; this was especially pointed out by V. Rybinskii. Approved in Europe and North America, this way of using Bible knowledge to comprehend and resolve public issues of that time showed that the Bible is capable of being “the source of culture and the foundation of well-being”, and “all issues related to the Bible are considered to be the issues of the whole people and the country.” The perception of the Bible as a factor of creative, cultural and social development in Protestant countries became possible within various social forms: using the Bible in school education; using of Bible images and symbols in family and private domestic communication, public broadcasting and political rhetoric; creative interpretation of Bible stories, images and symbols in national literature and art.³⁶

This experience in its implementation could well resist the main “anti-Bible” and anti-religious tendencies that worried Kiev Orthodox thinkers of the time. According to professors V. Rybinskii and A. Glagolev such tendencies, in particular, included: religious indifferentism of the “educated class”; a false understanding of religiosity as an “undefined feeling”, which does not require any clarification; loss of confidence in the Bible because of its apparent discrepancy to the so-called “positive science”; anti-religious propaganda as an ideological feature of the socialist movements of that time. This experience would help to solve educational and enlightening tasks which were important for the whole Christian world. Among them, above all, is an adequate assessment of both the authenticity of the Bible religious and moral statements, and the specifics of scientific knowledge, its capabilities and boundaries. Only on the basis of this assessment it was possible to bring up “reasonable religiosity”, connected with “critical thinking”. And, finally, to reach the traditional goals of the Orthodox church apologetics: “learn in the Law of the Lord day and night”, providing “special guidance” of the Church as “the best interpreter of the meaning and spirit of the Bible”.³⁷

The Synodal Translation of the Bible: The Impact of the World Protestant Culture and Its Significance for the Evangelical Movement in the Russian Empire

The next episode in the intellectual history of the Kiev Orthodox theological and academic tradition is connected with the comprehension of a number of moments of the appearance and further existence of the Synodal translation of the Bible. Being, first of all, an Orthodox church endeavour, this event in a well-known manner was influenced by the world Protestant culture. In turn, the appearance of the publicly available Russian Bible

³⁶ V. Rybinskii, “O Biblii (Publichnoe Chtenie),” [*On the Bible (Public Readings)*], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 3 (1902), 366–367.

³⁷ A. Glagolev, priest, “Neprekhodiashchee znachenie Vetkhogo Zaveta. Bibliologicheskaja zametka na: Die bleibende Bedeutung des Alten Testaments, von Emil Kautzsch, Tübingen und Leipzig,” [The Lasting Importance of the Old Testament. Bibliological Article on: Die bleibende Bedeutung des Alten Testaments, von Emil Kautzsch, Tübingen und Leipzig], *Trudy Kievskoy Dukhovnoy Akademii*, no. 11 (1902), 492–493; A. Glagolev, priest, “Vetkhii Zavet i yego neprekhodiashchee znachenie v khristianskoi Tserkvi,” [The Old Testament and Its Lasting Importance for the Christian Church], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 12 (1909), 550; V. Rybinskii, *O Biblii*, 373–376, 379, 382.

had a very peculiar impact on the development of the Protestant “Evangelical” movement within the Russian Empire itself (Ukrainian lands were much involved in this).³⁸

Having become a continuation of the interrupted efforts of the Russian Bible Society, the Synodal translation of the Bible, as the contemporary historian put it, was created as a “church monument” and at the same time “public” one. It had to compensate for the “darkness and uncertainty” of many parts in the Slavonic text, which, in turn, caused a mass turning of seculars to foreign translations, as to “muddy waters, to at least somehow slake their thirst”. However, it turned out that the Synodal translation itself eventually required explanations: “this system of translation ... is rather vague ... The confusion ... of two texts with a preference in one case Hebrew, in another Greek was and will forever remain a matter of arbitrariness of translators ... Some hermeneutic rules ... do not render help and do not limit arbitrariness in all the endless variety of discrepancies between the Hebrew and Greek texts.”³⁹

Such assessments, as we think, concerned the textual and translational preferences prevalent among the professors of the Russian theological academies, who were engaged in the translation. And they were largely borrowed from European biblical studies – primarily from the Protestant environment. However, apart from registering the fact of the influence of Protestant Bible translation rules on many Orthodox professors, it is important to emphasize the continuity of the tradition of taking into account the Masoretic text as the original text of the Bible. This tradition, as already mentioned, was born in the Kiev Academy in the XVIII century. This, in turn, determined the fairly intensive participation of the KTA Hebraists in preparing translation of many books of the Old Testament into Russian precisely from the Hebrew original. First of all, the Bible translation experiments of professors Ivan Maksimovich (1807 – 1861), Mikhail Gulyaev (1826 – 1866), Akim Olesnytsky (1842 – 1907) should be pointed out.⁴⁰

In such conditions, after the publication of the Synodal translation, the Holy Synod set before the Orthodox theological academies the task to be ready to compile “explanatory notes” for the new Russian text of the Bible. At the KTA, this task was performed by prof. Akim Olesnytsky.⁴¹ Referring readers to the earlier analysis of this document,⁴² we

³⁸ See: S. Golovashchenko, ed. *Istoria evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizhenia v Ukraine. Materialy I dokumenty* [The History of Evangelical-Baptist Movement in Ukraine. Materials and Documents] (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 1998).

³⁹ I. Chistovich, *Istoriya perevoda Biblii na russkii yazyk* [History of Translation of the Bible into Russian] (St. Petersburg, 1899), 334, 339–340.

⁴⁰ S. Golovashchenko, *Doslidzhennia ta vykladannia Biblii v Kyivs'kii dukhovnii Akademii XIX – pochatku XX st.: Monograph* [Research and Teaching of the Bible in Kiev Theological Academy 19 – early 20 ct.] (K.: Publishing House of Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 2012), 181–182.

⁴¹ “Pravila dlia rukovodstva pri predpolagaemom sostavlenii v Kievskoi dukhovnoi Akademii obiasnitel'nykh primechanii k russkomu tekstu Biblii (uchitel'nykh knig), sostavlennye, po porucheniiu Soveta Akademii, extraordinarnym professorom Ak. Olesnitskim,” [Guidelines for Proposed Composition of Explanatory Notes to Russian Bible Text, drawn up, on behalf of Academy Council by extraordinary professor Ak. Olesnitskii], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, vol. III (1877), Attachment, 231–237.

⁴² S. Golovashchenko, “Predystoria russkoi Tolkovoi Biblii v Kievskoi Dukhovnoi akademii («Pravila dlia rukovodstva pri sostavlenii obiasnitel'nykh primechanii k russkomu tekstu Biblii» A. A. Olesnitskogo),” [Prehistory of Russian Commented Bible in Kiev Theological Academy (“Guidelines for Composition of Explanatory Notes to Russian Bible Text by A. Olesnitskii”), *Trudy Kyivs'koi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 12 (2010), 79–91.

only note here that Olesnytsky recommended, avoiding contradictions in the system of notes, “to consult with one of the existing commentaries specified by the Holy Synod for guidance in the study of Scripture, best of all to the classical commentary by Keil and Delitzsch.” Here, obviously, meant a multi-volume commentary on the Old Testament,⁴³ which, representing the Protestant conservative theological position, was approved by the Synod for teaching the Holy Scripture in Orthodox spiritual academies.

Finally, a rather unexpected problem for the official church, connected with the publication of the Synodal translation of the Bible, was that it actually became a state gift for the emerging empire of the Protestant “Evangelical” movement among the masses. Numerous groups of believers now appealed to a generally understandable Bible text with increasing enthusiasm. And it is not clear whether such a result was foreseen by the initiators and creators of the translation. But it was clear that after the publication of the popular Bible text, the problem of popularizing the Holy Scripture, including its use in Orthodox missionary work, requires a new level of reflection and practical implementation.

The Popularization of the Bible and the Bible Mission: the Protestant Experience through the Eyes of the Orthodox

The view of the professors of the KTA of the second half of the XIX – early XX century on the Bible, not only from the academic point of view, but also popular in no small measure was determined by the influence of the Protestant religious culture. The ideological opposition to “heterodox” (predominantly Protestant) influences (when polemics around the Bible became one of the cornerstones) prompted the professors to take into account the degree of readiness of their pupils to solve the practical tasks of the Orthodox church ministry, leadership and mission. And everyday efforts into ideological protection and popularization of Orthodox dogma, morals and liturgical life (including that based on the Holy Scripture) required perfect adaptation of theological knowledge received in the course of study and research to the peculiarities of the people’s worldview, to the mass, ordinary religiosity, to the level of education of an ordinary believer. This led to a constant search for ways of popular adaptation of Bible knowledge.

An important role in the dealing with the problem of popular presentation of knowledge about the Bible was played by prof. V. Rybinskii, who already summarized the relevant investigations in the European religious culture of the late XIX century. The examples of Protestant German land-states, where a strong tradition of people’s reverence of the Bible, combined with the exemplary development of biblical scholarship, as well as the experience of the predominantly Protestant USA, where the influence of the Bible was universal and had a general civil meaning, were indicative for Rybinskii.⁴⁴

Analysing the history of the issue of a popular “school” or “children’s” Bible in Germany, V. Rybinskii proceeded from the cultural and philosophical state of society, where Western Christianity, especially Protestantism, was spread both in conservative and liberal forms.⁴⁵

⁴³ C.F. Keil und F. Delitzsch *Biblischer Kommentar über das Alte Testament*. Theile I–V. Leipzig, 1861–75.

⁴⁴ Rybinskii, “O Biblii (Publichnoe Chtenie),” 367.

⁴⁵ Rybinskii, “Biblia dlia detei,” 3, 6, 8, 9–14.

Accordingly, Rybinskii raised the didactical issues of presentation of Bible knowledge, taking into account the characteristics of mass, including the child's perception. As it was noted by the Kiev researcher, any adaptation of the Bible text is carried out both from pedagogical considerations and under the influence of "general theological views of time".⁴⁶ As it is known, it was the wide freedom in reading and understanding the Bible, initiated by the Reformation and never disappearing in the Protestant part of the world, that determined many difficulties in this respect.

V. Rybinskii particularly pointed out the influence of the naturalistic and anthropocentric idea of the "non-confessional religion",⁴⁷ originated from the depths of liberal Protestant theology, when the human mind was considered to be the main criterion in its striving for self-enrichment with natural scientific information. This ideological dominant led to "too loose", and sometimes "frivolous" treatment of the Bible and, in the end, to the appearance of "such changes and withdrawals ... when you cannot learn the Bible accepted by the church anymore."⁴⁸ Supporting the need for "the development of clear and definite principles for the reduction and processing of the text," V. Rybinskii recognizes as constructive only those motives, the purpose of which is to educate readers to "awe and love for the complete Bible". At the same time, he acknowledged the importance "to take into account the mental and moral maturity of those who start learning."⁴⁹

In addition to searching for the most optimal form of presenting a Bible text for popular, especially children's learning, Rybinskii positively notes the latest European trends in the introduction of the so-called "auxiliary tools" for the Bible study: brief introductions to each Bible book or group of books; chronological tables of Bible events; general historical essays on ancient history in connection with the Bible history; maps of the territories where Bible events took place; glossaries and lexicon with explanations of little-known objects, words and expressions from the Bible text. Analysing standard contemporary examples of foreign school or popular Bibles (for example, the Swiss Glarus of 1887 and the Bremen "school" of 1894), V. Rybinskii noted the use of such auxiliaries, submitted in the form of attachments to the adapted Bible text (primarily, chronologies of Bible events, drawings of the items mentioned in the Bible with explanations, maps of the Holy Land).⁵⁰

At the same time, Rybinskii distanced himself from those Western results of popularization of the Bible on a liberal theological basis, which could open the way to a mass reader for the conclusions of rationalistic "negative" criticism.⁵¹ This becomes more understandable due to the reaction of Rybinskii to native spiritual and intellectual circumstances in which at the late XIX – early XX century the Bible was perceived – by the mass consciousness, as well as by educated circles. Rybinskii regretted that in comparison with the Protestant world (Europe or America), "the Bible has not yet found such a wide distribution in use – neither in the family, nor at school." Obviously, it was

⁴⁶ Ibid., 7–8, 9–10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13–14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 21, 28, 30–31.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 18–20.

⁵¹ Ibid., 32.

the experience of the Protestant tradition of mass mastering of the Bible that was most relevant for solving this problem.

The contradictory perception of this experience in the Orthodox country was aggravated by ideological confrontation with “home” Protestant movements which were gaining strength and included using the most powerful means – the new Russian translation of the Bible. For in general, the sympathetic attitude of V. Rybinskii and many of his colleagues to the world and European experience of Protestant mastering of the Bible with reference to home affairs was significantly corrected by the apologetic position of Kiev academicians, dictated by the goals and objectives of the KTA as the voice of the official religious ideology.⁵² The sympathies were rather theoretical and manifested themselves above all in the search for ideological allies in the West to struggle against the “negative” rationalistic criticism of the Bible (which will be discussed further on). However, this was quite consistent with the official position in relation to the “schismatics” and “sectarians” of national origin, with no doubt about the need to counter their spread.

Therefore, the never-ending discussion of the approaches, principles and methods of applying the Bible to interconfessional polemics and “anti-sectarian” missionary activity was a very peculiar result of the contact between Orthodox and Protestant practices of handling the Holy Scriptures. One of the episodes of this discussion was also connected with the name of prof. V. Rybinskii.⁵³ This episode is important for understanding the principles of applying the Bible material to missionary work precisely in the conditions of the religious situation of the period and the corresponding position of the KTA.

After all, the diverse “sectarianism” that arose in the Russian Empire on the Eastern Christian spiritual and Eastern Slavic ethno-cultural ground, was nourished most often by the “new wave” European Protestant influences of the XVIII – XIX centuries. The desire for personalized, cordial, informal religiosity, exalted and propagated by pietism and realized in the practice of various religious “dissidents” of Lutheran and Reformed origin, Mennonites, Baptists, Evangelical Christians, as well as at the time of the classical Reformation, was based on *Sola Scriptura*. But turning to the Scripture took place not only in a rational theological form. Often there was a spontaneous but sincere perception of the personally read (or heard in retelling) and inspirationally interpreted Bible text – as an unquestioning source of truth and authority.

At the beginning of the XX century the legalization of a number of non-Orthodox confessions, which became one of the few liberal consequences of the revolutionary events of 1905-1907, intensified their activities and became a powerful challenge for official Orthodoxy. “Anti-sectarian” missionary activity, conducted through a specially created

⁵² See: S. Golovashchenko, “Bibliia iak predmet populiarnoho vyvchennia: kyivs'ka viziia kintsia XIX – pochatku XX st.,” [The Bible as a Subject of Popular Study: Kyiv Vision of the late 19th – early 20th ct.], *Kyivs'ka Akademiia*, no. 8 (2010), 49.

⁵³ “Osoboye mnenie ordinarnogo professora Vladimira Rybinskogo o pechatnom sochinenii Khersono-Odesskogo missionera, kandidata bogoslovoviya, Mikhaila kal'neva, pod zaglaviiem “Oblichenie lzheuchenia russkikh sektantov-racionalistov” (Odessa, 1913), predstavlennoho na soiskanie stepeni magistra bogoslovii,” [The special opinion of an ordinary professor Vladimir Rybinskii on a printed work by Kherson and Odessa missionary, kandidat of theology, Mikhail Kal'nev, under the headline “Exposing the false teachings of the Russian sectarians-racionalists”, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Theology], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoi Akademii*, no. 12 (1914), Attachment, 279–288; no. 1 (1915), Attachment, 289–303.

institution of Orthodox “diocesan missionaries” and other church structures, became an important ideological component of religious life in the state. And theological academies (the KTA was key in the “anti-sectarian” sense) had to provide the proper theological level of its cadres.

In the course of discussion of one of the “anti-sectarian” monographs, prof. Rybinskii formulated the main bibliological task of missionary work and related to it polemics. It was to ensure “proper attitude to the Bible” and the elevation of opponents to the level of “correct interpretation of the Bible text”, the obligation to give the “absolutely accurate information about the Bible” and show the opponents an example of “correct exegesis”.⁵⁴ Objective difficulties on the way, revealed during the discussion, and especially noted by another reviewer of the monograph, the associate prof., priest Nikolai Fetisov (1884-1938), concerned the adaptation of the scientific data to the peculiarities of popular religiosity and the needs of the audience. The need to follow the rationalized theological rules of biblical exegesis and scientific research procedures was compelled to conform to the objective need for simplification and unification of biblical interpretations in order to establish church dogmas and practices at the level of mass religious consciousness.⁵⁵

Western Protestant Biblical Studies: its Criticism and the Search for Apologetic Allies

The exceptional status of the Bible in Protestant intellectual culture determined the global trends in the development of scholarly biblical studies. Evaluation of these trends was also given by the professors of the KTA. Prof. S. Solskii highlighted, first of all, a large-scale liberal theological rationalistic transformation, because of which, since the middle of XVIII century, “The sacred code of Bible books turned into a collection of works of religious writing,” “ancient literary monuments,” which “are treated as ordinary works, differing from the rest only by religious character and content.” In the second half of XIX century there emerged a “documentary theory,” in which the criticism of the “general historical presuppositions” for the origin of the Bible text continued on the principles of the historical stadiality of religious forms and application of dialectics to the reconstruction of historical processes. The problems of this theory for a long time determined the direction of polemic in European biblical studies. On the other hand, in response to the noted “rationalistic-critical turn” in Protestant theology, the “orthodox”, “moderate”, “apologetic” trends became more active, which, paying tribute to scientific

⁵⁴ “Osoboye mnenie ordinarnogo professora Vladimira Rybinskogo,” [The special opinion of an ordinary professor Vladimir Rybinskii], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 12 (1914), *Attachment*, 286–287; no. 1 (1915), *Attachment*, 290.

⁵⁵ “Otzyv i.d. docent sviashch. Nikolaya Fetisova o pechatnom sochinenii Khersono-Odesskogo missionera, kandidata bogoslovoviya, Mikhaila kal’neva, pod zaglaviem “Oblichenie lzheuchenia russkikh sektantov-racionalistov” (Odessa, 1913), predstavlenno na soiskanie stepeni magistra bogoslovii,” [The review of docent priest Nikolai Fetisov on a printed work by Kherson and Odessa missionary, kandidat of theology, Mikhail Kal’nev, under the headline “Exposing the false teachings of the Russian sectarians-rationalists”, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Theology], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 12 (1914), *Attachment*, 252–259.

data, “softened rationalist arbitrariness in biblical exegesis”, developed a historically critical method that avoided “extreme conclusions”.⁵⁶

In Kiev, they were constantly interested in the aspiration of Western colleagues-apologists to resist both “spiritualistic” and “naturalistic-critical” views on the Bible, generally “fashionable” rationalistic theories. This is evidenced by fairly regular annual critical-bibliographic reviews of Western bibliological literature.⁵⁷ Therefore, it is important to trace how Protestantism was perceived by Orthodox biblical scholars not only as an object of criticism, but also as an apologetic ally.

Fedor Pokrovskii, a Kiev prof. of Bible history (1849-1919), expressed his basic idea with respect to the criteria applicable to further searches of this kind. Special questions about the origin and authorship of Bible books, the history of the Bible text, its authenticity as a historical source, in his opinion, reflected the collision of the so-called “supra-naturalistic” explanation of historical processes with a negative-rationalistic approach, destructive in the spiritual sense.⁵⁸ In this idea Pokrovskii was accompanied by prof. V. Rybinskii. In his fundamental essay on the history of Old Testament biblical criticism, Rybinskii noted that rationalism in biblical studies since the end of XVIII century based on the transfer of experience in the study of secular literature on sacred literature. The denial of the mystical, “supra-natural” factor of the origin of Bible texts, was fuelled by philosophical influences: English deism, German rationalism and romanticism. Rybinskii also singled out the systemic features of the “negative” biblical criticism carried out on the Old Testament material by the biblical scholars of the “Graf-Wellhausen school”.⁵⁹

The heuristic value of the works of both Kiev researchers consists in the analysis of really weak places in the arguments of the rationalist critics. In particular, it was the criticism by F. Pokrovskii of Hegelian origin of logical schematics and disregard of empirical facts, drawn on examples from the history of ancient Israel and the text of the Bible itself.⁶⁰ Rybinskii, in turn, discovered yet another weak point in the theoretical compositions and arguments of Western opponents. This was the commonly held opinion of rationalist critics that the close resemblance of the beliefs depicted in the Bible, moral

⁵⁶ S. Solskii, “Iz lektsiï po Novomu Zavetu,” [From Lectures on New Testament], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoï Akademii*, no. 8 (1877), 249, 271–275, 280–284; Solskii S. M. “Kakov mozhët byt’ sostav nauchnikh vvvedeniï v knigi Sviashchennogo Pisaniya v nastoyashchee vremia?” [What can be the Composition of Scientific Introduction to the books of the Holy Scriptures at the Present Time?], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoï Akademii*, no. 3 (1887), 363–366.

⁵⁷ V. Rybinskii, “Zametki o literature po Sv. Pisaniu Vetkhogo Zaveta za istekshii 1897 god,” [The Notes on Literature on the Sacred Scripture of Old Testament for the past 1897], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoï Akademii*, no. 3 (1898), 430, 437–438, 441; V. Rybinskii, “Zametki o literature po Sv. Pisaniu Vetkhogo Zaveta za Zametki o literature po Sv. Pisaniu Vetkhogo Zaveta za 1904 god,” [The Notes on Literature on the Sacred Scripture of Old Testament for the 1904], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoï Akademii*, no. 11 (1905), 414, 418–420, 423–425.

⁵⁸ F. Pokrovskii, “Po povodu vozrazhenii sovremennoi kritiki protiv sushchestvovaniya Moisseeva zakona ranee drevneyshikh prorokov-pisatelei,” [About Objections of Modern Critic against the existence of Mosaic Law earlier the most ancient Prophets-Writers], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoï Akademii*, no. 1 (1890), 61–62; F. Pokrovskii, “Uchebnik bibleiskoi istorii Vetkhogo Zaveta, doktora Avgusta Kelera, ordinarnogo professora Bogosloviya v Erlangene,” [Textbook of Biblical History by Dr. August Keler, ord. Prof. of Theology in Erlangen], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoï Akademii*, no. 8 (1894), 630–631.

⁵⁹ V. Rybinskii, “Bibleyskaya vetkhovetnaya kritika,” [Biblical Old Testament Criticism], *Trudy Kievskoi Dухovnoï Akademii*, no. 12 (1908), 598–611.

⁶⁰ Pokrovskii, “Po povodu vozrazhenii sovremennoi kritiki,” 67–70.

concepts and religious practices closely resemble extra-biblical cultural elements, such as Babylonian is “a fatal blow to a usual understanding of the inspiration of the Old Testament.” Kiev biblical scholar in response to the arguments of a famous German propagandist of “pan-Babylonism” F. Delitzsch notes the weakness of such a supposition: such claims are dangerous only for an ordinary, flat understanding of inspiration. With the correct formulation of this “the issue is not so much dogmatic as historical”. V. Rybinskii admits the historical genesis of the religious beliefs of different nations, but only under condition of recognition of the primacy of supra-natural origin of the religious history of mankind, depicted in the Bible narrative. In this case, the main is to keep the teleological, providential positions: confirmation of special significance of the Old Testament religion as “a divinely revealed religion”, free from “pagan impurity and consonant with the goal of our salvation”, “an extraordinary phenomenon, understandable only under the assumption of Divine intervention”.⁶¹

So it seems quite natural for the Kiev biblical scholars to aspire to such a reception of Western European history, archaeology, philology, literature and other disciplines, which would strengthen the apology of the Bible. This is the perception of Western biblical scholarship, which, taking into consideration historical and literary criticism of Bible books, preserves agreement with the church tradition on the main points: the protection of the historical authenticity of Bible narratives; recognition of the “supra-natural” factor of Bible history; the presentation of this story in accordance with the church order.⁶²

Therefore, Pokrovskii’s solidarity with foreign experience in creating apologetically oriented textbooks is understandable. Analysing one of them, the Kiev biblical scholar notes the presentation of the Bible story, “true to its sources and at the same time protected from the objections of modern biblical criticism, illuminated and confirmed by the latest discoveries, where possible”.⁶³ The ideal textbook should teach the teleological, providential interpretation of the driving factors of history; proclaim in it the synergy of the supernatural and human.⁶⁴ Relying on a wide range of scientific and theological literature, actively using the auxiliary tools of the Bible study, it must cultivate a critical attitude to rationalistic interpretations.⁶⁵

Comparable with the efforts of F. Pokrovskii and V. Rybinskii noted above, were the aspirations of the professors Dimitry Bogdashevskii and priest Alexander Glagolev. Thus, D. Bogdashevskii, criticizing the Hegelian historiosophic schematization of F. Baur and the New Tübingen school, at the same time allowed the use of arguments by Western authors – when they met the requirements of church apologetics: he quoted A. Harnack, who recognized the historical character of the Book of Acts,

⁶¹ V. Rybinskii, “Vavilon i Bibliya (po povodu rechi Delitscha “Babel und Bibel”),” [Babylon and Bible (about the Delitzsch’s speech “Babel und Bibel”), *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 5 (1903), 126–129.

⁶² Rybinskii, “Bibleyskaya vetkhovetnaya kritika,” 612–613.

⁶³ Pokrovskii, “Uchebnik bibleiskoi istorii Vetkhogo Zaveta,” no. 8 (1894), 632.

⁶⁴ Pokrovskii, “Uchebnik bibleiskoi istorii Vetkhogo Zaveta,” no. 9 (1894), 161.

⁶⁵ Pokrovskii, “Uchebnik bibleiskoi istorii Vetkhogo Zaveta,” no. 8 (1894), 632–663; no. 9 (1864), 161, 163–169.

or G. Ewald, who criticized the New Tübingen school.⁶⁶ Glagolev, even based on the critical exposition of the ideas of the Protestant Hebraist, the translator of the Bible and the exegete E. Cauch, a representative of the “moderate” wing in the European biblical studies (which widely used the historical-critical method), aspired to make maximum use of the apologetic potential of the Western researcher.⁶⁷

The significance of Glagolev’s assimilation of this potential is seen in emphasising the fact that reading of the Bible text as the revelation of God “always happens” in the positive understanding of its significance not only as a historical source but primarily as a source of faith and morality. The main thing is the recognition of the critical role of the Christian revelation for a correct evaluation of the meaning of the Old Testament narrative: namely “The Lord Jesus Christ initiates such evaluation”.⁶⁸ And it is in this absolute, sacred scale that any criticism of tradition is possible. Any “freedom of judgment”, the recognition of presence of any “inaccurate, imperfect opinions”, “preliminary character” and “imperfection of the religious understanding of different issues in the Old Testament” cease to be a problem because of the sincere assimilation of the fact that all contradictions are removed by the action of “the Spirit of God, The Word of God, eternal and imperishable”. And the perception of the “living God” comprehends the reading of the Old Testament and must be embodied in “preaching free from scholasticism, understandable to the heart and conscience”.⁶⁹

* * *

Without claiming to exhaust the stated above topic, the article tried to register and highlight only some moments of the centuries-old interaction of the Kiev Orthodox tradition of reading, researching and applying the Bible with the European and world experience born by the Reformation and Post-Reform Protestant culture. The comprehension of this experience became at one time a significant aspect of historical-ecclesiastical and biblical-theological studies of the outstanding representatives of the KTA of XIX – early XX century. Undoubtedly, such comprehension can be relevant and useful in present days as well – especially in the process of further systematic studies of the spiritual and intellectual heritage not only of the KTA, but also of other Orthodox spiritual schools.

⁶⁶ See: D. Bogdashevskii, “O Evangeliiakh i evangel’skoy istorii (protiv sovremennogo racionalizma),” [On Gospels and Gospel History (against modern racionalizm)], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 2 (1902), 287–288, 292, 300–301; D. Bogdashevskii, “Istoricheskiĭ kharakter knigi Deyaniiĭ Apostol’skikh,” [Historical Character of the Book of Acts], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 11 (1909), 384–389, 391–392, 396–399.

⁶⁷ A. Glagolev, priest, “Neprekhodiashchee znachenie Vetkhogo Zaveta. Bibliologicheskaya zametka na: Die bleibende Bedeutung des Alten Testaments, von Emil Kautzsch, Tübingen und Leipzig,” [The Lasting Importance of the Old Testament. Bibliological Article on: Die bleibende Bedeutung des Alten Testaments, von Emil Kautzsch, Tübingen und Leipzig], *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, no. 11 (1902), 491–504.

⁶⁸ Glagolev, “Neprekhodiashchee znachenie Vetkhogo Zaveta,” 494.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 495, 501.

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