
Russia's Scriptural "Reformation" in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries¹

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Abstract:

The Russian Orthodox Church never experienced a movement that placed the authority of Scriptures over that of the Church, as was characteristic of the Protestant reformations in Western Europe. Nevertheless, an increased emphasis on the Scriptures and a desire to translate the Bible into the vernacular arose in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Russia. Aside from the work of the Russian Bible Society, scholars have not shed much light on this trend as it occurred within clerical education. This article argues that the episode of the Bible Society was a critical chapter within a larger story of important theological and pedagogical shifts within Russian Orthodox education and values. The roots of the Russian biblical translation effort extend back to the eighteenth century, when ethnic Russian clerical scholars gained the linguistic abilities in Greek and Hebrew to translate based on the ancient texts, and when more attention began to be paid to both vernacular Russian instruction and Scriptural study in the ecclesiastical schools. These trends flourished more deeply in the first half of the nineteenth century, with the rise of romantic nationalism and the evangelical message of the Bible Society. Thus, although Russia did not undergo a Reformation in the Western sense of the word, the Orthodox Church went through an internal reassessment of its teachings and approach to the Word of God that brought the Scriptures into a more central role without undermining Church authority and tradition.

Keywords:

Russian Orthodox Church, Orthodox seminaries, seminary education, Bible Society, biblical translation, Scriptural studies, Filaret (Drozdov), Commission on Ecclesiastical Schools

Challenging the authority of the Church of Rome, Protestant Reformation movements in Europe dismissed the necessity of the established Church's hierarchy and traditions for the salvation of the people. By faith alone was man saved, and the sacred writings of the Holy Scriptures comprised the only source of authority for the Christian faith. The Bible gained in status as the key to the faith. All justifications of Protestant theological and ecclesiological views were found within the Scriptures.² Indeed, as Martin

¹I am grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a fellowship that provided me the time to research and write this article, and I am most grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

² For example, Martin Luther's justification of salvation by faith alone, *On Christian Liberty*, and John Calvin's theological treatise, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, construct their arguments strictly upon

Luther phrased it, *sola Scriptura* became a rallying cry. And every Protestant denomination promoted a Bible translated into the common tongue—assisted by humanist scholars trained in ancient Hebrew and Greek—so that all believers could understand the Word of God. The principle of lay access to a vernacular Bible underlay the doctrine of “the priesthood of all believers,” which made the institutional Church and its clergy incidental and not fundamental to the practice of the faith. The new accessibility of the Scriptures also changed the experience of the Bible in the West from one of public performance by the clergy to one that was “a book to be read like any other book,” ending the Church’s monopoly on interpreting the Scriptures.³

Russia never experienced a similar Reformation that challenged the teachings and authority of its Orthodox Church or proclaimed the independent authority of the Scriptures above and beyond that of the Church; for Russians, the Church remained the guardian of the faith and salvation.⁴ Nevertheless, an increased emphasis on the Scriptures and a desire to translate the Bible into the vernacular in the Russian Orthodox Church arose in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Aside from the work of the Russian Bible Society, scholars have not shed much light on this trend as it occurred within clerical education. By the early nineteenth century, ecclesiastical schools placed Scriptures at the center of their programs in theology. The convergence of religious and intellectual trends, foreign influence, and new linguistic abilities, as well as the emergence of Russian nationalist consciousness in the early nineteenth century, set the context for masterful efforts to translate the Holy Scriptures into a more understandable Russian version during the reign of Alexander I. One of the most highly regarded members of the Russian Orthodox hierarchy, Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) led these efforts in both ecclesiastical education and in biblical translation. Arguments for the usefulness of vernacular Russian Scriptures reflected those of the sixteenth-century Reformations, and the Bible Society with its English Protestant origins provided the structure within which modern Russian biblical translation began. Romantic nationalism in the era of the Napoleonic wars generated pride in Russia’s past and its defining ethnic characteristics, including language, providing the cultural atmosphere for this endeavor. When reactionary policies dominated at the end of Alexander’s reign, however, the Bible Society was suppressed by conservative Orthodox forces, and this first official effort in Russian biblical translation was snuffed out amidst warnings that an impending Reformation that would damage the Church and state. So the Russian Orthodox Church and society experienced a movement that echoed ideas of the Protestant Reformation,

biblical citations.

³ Quote from Diarmaid McCollough, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2009), 582.

⁴ Andrey Ivanov has recently argued that Russia experienced a form of Reformation when Orthodox theology and homiletics turned toward Protestant formulations in the early eighteenth century. See Andrey Vyacheslavovich Ivanov, “Reforming Orthodoxy: Russian Bishops and Their Church 1721-1801,” Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2012. And yet, these changes were manifested by members of the official Orthodox Church hierarchy, who never challenged the authority of the Orthodox tradition.

followed by a conservative reaction with Counter-Reformation overtones.

Russian Orthodox historians commonly treat the Bible Society translation effort as a manifestation of the influence of Protestant Pietist mysticism on Orthodox society in a bizarre prelude to the laudable translation work completed in the reform period of Alexander II. Certainly, the simultaneous rise of secular forms of national consciousness during the Napoleonic era brought new perspectives on the Russian language into discussion. And yet, as this paper will argue, the episode of the Bible Society was a critical chapter within a larger story of important theological and pedagogical shifts within Russian Orthodox education and values. The roots of the Russian biblical translation effort extend back to the eighteenth century, when ethnic Russian clerical scholars gained the linguistic abilities to translate based on the ancient texts, and when more attention began to be paid to both vernacular Russian and Scriptural study in the ecclesiastical schools. These are trends that would flourish more deeply in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although Russia did not experience a Reformation in the Western sense of the word, it underwent similar internal reforms that brought the Scriptures into a more central role in the church without undermining Church authority and tradition.

Three eighteenth-century developments stimulated both the desire and the ability to make a careful modern Russian translation of the Holy Scriptures during the reign of Alexander I. First, the Russian language had to become distinct enough from Church Slavonic for the latter to become difficult to understand. Arguably, this did not occur until the course of the 18th century, with the rise of modern secular Russian literature. When the West experienced its church reform trends that included debate over access to vernacular Scriptures, the Eastern Slavic world still viewed the Church Slavonic as its “vernacular” given by the Byzantine Church to its Slavic brethren. Only after Peter I’s cultural revolution led to a fundamentally different Russian language, expressed in poetry, theater, and prose, as well as in scientific and instructional works, with its own civil font and vocabulary, did an awareness arise of Church Slavonic as different and difficult, even inscrutable.⁵ The Russian Orthodox Church itself recognized the changing Russian language and published sermon collections in vernacular Russian for parish priests to use as guides in their preaching.⁶ Until this eighteenth-century transformation of the Russian language into its modern form, there had been no need to ponder further translation of the Slavonic Scriptures.

Secondly, as a vernacular Bible would be published for the benefit of the non-clerical public who did not study Church Slavonic, such an effort could not have arisen

⁵ For an excellent description of the transformation of Church Slavonic through hybrid and Slavenorossiiskii forms to the Russian literary language, see Victor Zhivov, *Language and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Russia*, transl. Marcus Levitt (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009). See also James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), esp. 256-300.

⁶ Most importantly, the collection that was to be provided to all parish churches, *Sobranie raznykh uchenii na vse voskresnye i prazdnichnye dni*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1775) provided clear, simple language for sermons (though still printed in the Slavonic font). Quotes from the Scriptures remained in the original Church Slavonic.

without a substantial reading public that might want to consult the Scriptures. Not until the late eighteenth century had such a reading public developed inside Russia. In particular, Catherine's educational reforms increased literacy, and, perhaps more importantly, reading finally became a valued past-time for those who had the ability and the means to procure published literature. The multiplication of printing presses and the proliferation of Russian-language publications under Catherine's reign contributed to the availability of the printed word and the appetite for reading in the empire.⁷ An important component of the publishing efforts comprised texts that were religious in nature, with a great number of translated works discussing the nature of faith and spirituality, as well as the application of religious moral concepts in daily life.⁸ Therefore, these trends of a lively publishing and reading life that came so belatedly to Russia compared to Western Europe provided critical context to the viability of offering the Scriptures in modern Russian for the reading public.

Finally, developments within Russian Orthodox seminary education in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also contributed to the broad context in which the translation of Scriptures could be viewed beneficially. First, in order to render the Scriptures into modern Russian in a way that was loyal to the humanist cry of *ad fontes* that governed sixteenth-century translations of the Scriptures, native Russian churchmen (rather than the previously dominant Ruthenians) had to possess the linguistic ability to consult the Greek and Hebrew original texts for their translation. These languages were not well taught in Russian Orthodox seminaries and academies until the late 18th century.⁹ Literally, then, the Russian Orthodox Church had few scholars of its own who could work authoritatively with the Biblical texts, particularly from the Hebrew Old Testament, until the reign of Alexander I, when the first generation of Russian biblical scholars came of age. Secondly, with the development of a literary modern Russian language, church leaders in the late eighteenth century began to debate the usefulness of a seminary course of study based on Latin. Seminaries started to offer limited instruction in Russian, particularly in pastoral theology and in Russian rhetoric for sermonizing. Thirdly, seminaries at long last began to incorporate Bible readings and study into their formal and informal curriculum. This coincided with a new inward-looking spirituality nurtured by the late eighteenth-century monastic revival in Russia. These three trends within ecclesiastical instruction over the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and their interaction with Bible Society efforts form the focus of this article.

⁷ See Gary Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); I.F. Martynov, *Knigoizdatel' Nikolai Novikov* (Moscow: "Kniga", 1981).

⁸ A quick scan of *Svodnyi katalog russkoi knigi grazhdanskoi pechati XVIII veka, 1725-1800*, vols. 1-5 (Moscow, 1962-65) confirms the number of religious titles published in the late 18th century. On this trend, see Barbara Skinner, "Guidelines to Faith: Instructional Literature for Russian Orthodox Clergy and Laity in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Russian Review* 74, no. 4 (October 2015): 599-623.

⁹ Before this, the brightest students were sent abroad to study, and they learned Greek in European universities, especially in Protestant Germany. See, for example, Ivanov, 162-3.

Language and Scriptures in Ecclesiastical Education

In the early eighteenth century, the study of Greek in Russian educational establishments declined dramatically. Even the Moscow Academy, founded in 1685 by the Greek Leichoudes brothers as the Slavo-Greko-Latin Academy, abandoned instruction in Greek in the first decade of the 18th century when the curriculum shifted to a standard Latin-based course of study.¹⁰ As more Orthodox seminaries opened in response to Peter I's church reforms, they taught the standard Jesuit-influenced course of study in Latin, moving through grammar/syntax, poetics, rhetoric, philosophy, and—in the relatively few schools with the appropriate instructors—theology. At that time, only the Kyiv Academy continued full-time Greek classes, though non-obligatory in the curriculum. It had some excellent Hellenists trained in Germany, such as Varlaam Liashchevskii, whose Greek grammar became a standard textbook for Russian seminaries. In 1738, when the Moscow Academy revived its Greek curriculum, it recruited instructors from Kyiv.¹¹ The year 1738 also marked the establishment of the Holy Trinity Lavra seminary, which was ordered by imperial ukaz to teach Greek.¹² From this time on, Russian seminaries began to concern themselves with teaching Greek, and in decrees for the Holy Trinity seminary and the Novgorod seminary (also founded by the Leichoudes brothers), Greek was to be equal with Latin. In practice, given the lack of teachers, such equality was not possible; instead, the language was most often taught as a supplementary course to the brightest students several times per week. In some seminaries, such as in Nizhnii Novgorod and Riazan, Greek was introduced much later, in 1757. The most successful Russian seminaries for teaching Greek in mid-century were the Kharkiv, Novgorod, Tver', St. Petersburg and Holy Trinity.¹³ Holy Trinity in the 1760s, for example, assigned their students exercises in Greek translation from the New Testament and John Chrysostom's letters and homilies, as well as speeches of Demosthenes, Libanius, and other ancient Greek statesmen.¹⁴

Simultaneously, the Holy Synod proclaimed Hebrew to be among the languages “most fitting to the clerical estate,” but the decrees to introduce this language into seminary courses of study were conditional, “if possible.”¹⁵ Due to the lack of instructors,

¹⁰ Sergei Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi Slaviano-Greko-Latinskoi akademii* (Moscow: tip. Got'e, 1855), 78-82. On the founding of the Moscow Slavo-Greko-Latin Academy and its curriculum, see Nikolaos A. Chrissidis, *An Academy at the Court of the Tsars: Greek Scholars and Jesuit Education in Early Modern Russia* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016).

¹¹ P.V. Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly v Rossii do reformy 1808 goda* (St. Petersburg: Letnii Sad, 200, reprint of Kazan', 1881 edition), 444-445; Ivanov, 162, credits Kyiv Academy rector Simon Todorskii for promoting Biblical languages “to counteract influences of the Vulgate in Russian Orthodox scriptural scholarship”; on Liashchevskii, see Ivanov, 163-4.

¹² *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, series I (hereafter, PSZ I), vol. 10, no. 7660 (21 Sept. 1738): “O sochinenii instruktsii dlia upravleniia Troitskago Sergieva monastyria.” Sergei Smirnov, *Istoriia Troitskoi lavrskoi seminarii* (Moscow, 1867), 4, 58.

¹³ Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly*, 445. The modern languages of French and German also began to be taught in seminaries in the 1750s.

¹⁴ Smirnov, *Istoriia Troitskoi*, 342.

¹⁵ The ukaz establishing the Holy Trinity Lavra seminary in 1738 uses this wording. PSZ I, vol. 10, no. 7660

only a few of the best seminaries offered it by the end of the century, most notably St. Petersburg, Nizhnii Novgorod, and the seminary at the Holy Trinity Lavra. At the Holy Trinity seminary, even the lower classes studied Hebrew, and as rector Platon (Levshin) hired a few converted Jews to teach the language in the 1760s. The course, however, was never required for all students, attracting only the most talented among them.¹⁶

In 1764, Catherine II assigned a special commission to assess the condition of clerical education and ways to improve it. While ultimately the findings of this commission could not compete with the Legislative Commission for Catherine's attention and failed to be formally implemented, the members of the commission—Platon (Levshin), Gavriil (Petrov), and Innokentii (Smirnov)—were influential enough that their stipulated plans had an impact on later reforms to religious education. Among their suggestions was to introduce beginning Greek in the schools that clerical sons attended before seminary, as well as to make the study of Greek standard in all seminaries. In the larger seminaries, aside from devoting one hour per day in the curriculum to Greek, Hebrew should also be offered "for better study of the Scriptures."¹⁷

When seminaries came under imperial scrutiny again in the 1780s, concurrent with the establishment of a Russian public school curriculum, the study of Greek gained more attention. (The foreign policy context of Catherine's Greek Project no doubt also had an influence.) In 1784, an imperial ukaz to the Synod on the funding and curriculum for seminaries included an emphasis on teaching Greek. "Of all languages, Greek is preferred above the others and should be taught, since... the books of the Holy Scriptures and the of the Fathers of Our Greek-Russian Orthodox Church are written in it, and also since knowledge of this language would be helpful for many other subjects." The Synod ordered that within three years, all open faculty positions in seminaries be filled by those who were fluent in Greek.¹⁸ In a separate ukaz, the Synod instructed bishops and heads of monasteries to ensure that seminarians be taught to read, write, speak, and translate Greek fluently; bishops (or others responsible for seminaries and religious schools) had to begin to issue regular reports to the Synod on the students studying Greek and their progress in it.¹⁹ Platon (Levshin) promoted the study of Greek at both the Holy Trinity seminary, where he was rector, and at the Moscow Academy in his capacity as Metropolitan of Moscow. Platon invited native Greeks to teach at the Lavra when possible in order to expose students to the spoken language, and from 1785 he sent several of the

(21 Sept. 1738).

¹⁶ Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly*, 446. Smirnov, *Istoriia Troitskoi*, 53 and 346, notes that the Trinity Lavra's course in Hebrew was already well developed in the 1750s. The 1788 ukaz establishing the seminary in St. Petersburg at the Aleksander Nevskii Lavra as the "Main Seminary" for the Novgorod and St. Petersburg dioceses and for any qualified students from other dioceses, however, did not mention Hebrew among its linguistic offerings. PSZ I, vol. 22, no. 16,659 (6 May 1788): "Ob uchrezhdenii Glavnoi Seminarii v Nevskom monastyre dlia Novgorodskoi i Sanktpeterburgskoi Eparkhii." The ukaz lists Greek, Latin, German, and French in that order.

¹⁷ Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly*, 460-62; quote 462.

¹⁸ PSZ I, vol. 22, no. 16047 (27 August 1784): "O prepodavanii Grecheskago iazyka v seminariiakh."

¹⁹ PSZ I, vol. 22, no. 16061 (5 Sept. 1784): "O prepodavanii Grecheskago iazyka vo vsekh seminariiakh."

most talented students at the Moscow Academy abroad to study in a Greek monastery to perfect their language skills.²⁰

Church historian B.V. Titlinov argues that this effort constituted worthless study for the vast majority of seminarians who in their future pastoral work had no need for Latin, let alone Greek. “It was difficult enough for them to learn Latin; now, in addition, the Greek language was raised almost to the same level as Latin. Religious school became ultra-classical. Moreover, the most basic subjects were in unsatisfactory shape and the schools did not teach more necessary knowledge.”²¹ This perspective from the post-reform era, however, does not give enough credence to the late eighteenth-century perspective on the necessity of Greek, linked to a growing frustration with the continued use of Latin as the primary language of theological study. Titlinov does agree that for Russians, it was right to prefer Greek to Latin and to consider it more useful, since it was more in line with the “interests of the national church” that derived from the Greek Byzantine Christian tradition; in this light, he concedes, the 1784 decrees constituted a positive development.²²

By the late 18th century, attempts to standardize seminary education across Russia, including language offerings, had not quite succeeded, resulting in a hodge-podge of variations on the program of study in different regions. In late 1798, the Holy Synod raised St. Petersburg and Kazan seminaries to the status of academies for higher theological education, joining the Moscow and Kyiv academies in this regard; the Holy Trinity Lavra seminary also gained special recognition for academy-level studies. The Synod issued a decree that established a standard program of study for the theological academies; it stipulated that all students at the academies would have to study Hebrew and Greek “as necessary for comprehending the Holy Scriptures.”²³ This decree also attempted to coordinate seminary and academy programs, though without great impact on seminaries that were limited by a lack of resources and available teachers.²⁴ Titlinov notes that by the early 19th century, Greek was taught “everywhere,” but Hebrew was still rare.²⁵ Records from the St. Petersburg academy at this time indicate that the students in the Hebrew classes were working with the Hebrew Bible for translation exercises into Russian, and the students of Greek were translating excerpts of the New Testament, as well as the sermons and liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.²⁶ Thus, the standardization of the ancient language programs in the academies at this time laid the groundwork for training native Russian scholars in Greek and Hebrew, giving them skills that would be

²⁰ Smirnov, *Istoriia Troitskoi*, 343-44; Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi*, 316.

²¹ B. V. Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov, Mitropolit novgorodskii i sanktpeterburgskii (rod. 1730, umer 1801g.) - ego zhizn' i deiatel'nost, v sviazi s tserkovnymi delami togo vremeni* (Petrograd, Tip. M. Merkusheva, 1916), 785.

²² Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov*, 787.

²³ PSZ I, vol. 25, no. 18726 (31 Oct. 1798): “O poriadke ucheniia v Dukhovnykh Akademiakh i Seminariakh.”

²⁴ B. V. Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX Stoletii, vypusk I (vremia Komissii Dukhovnykh Uchilishch)* (Vil'na: tipografiia “Russkii Pochin”, 1908), 7-8.

²⁵ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 12.

²⁶ Ilarion Alekseevich Chistovich, *Istoriia S. Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi Akademii* (St. Petersburg: tip. Iakova Treia, 1857), 114.

useful for the Bible translation efforts in the nineteenth century.

The leading cleric in advocating translation of the Scriptures into vernacular Russian, future Moscow Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) benefitted from the additional emphasis on ancient languages. By the late 18th century, the Moscow Academy and the Holy Trinity Lavra seminary had overtaken the Kyiv Academy as the best religious educational institutions in Russia, including for their instruction in Greek and Hebrew. At Holy Trinity seminary, Moscow Metropolitan Platon personally recognized the talent of young Vasilii Mikhailovich Drozdov, seminarian from the Kolomna district, who distinguished himself as an outstanding student in the ancient languages. The seminary, an early advocate of moving away from Latin scholasticism, became one of the first to teach its students successfully in the ancient languages of Hebrew and Greek, as well as the modern languages of French and German. With a system of selecting the best students to study the ancient languages in advanced classes, the faculty chose Drozdov for this course of study. He particularly took to Greek, and he became well versed in the works of the church fathers, especially Gregory the Theologian. When Drozdov took his vows in 1806, he became a teacher of Greek and Hebrew at the seminary, as well as a preacher in the Holy Trinity Lavra Cathedral.²⁷

Under Alexander I, public educational reform garnered immediate attention, and by 1808 the focus turned to ecclesiastical education. When the seminary curriculum was reformed, standardized, and placed under control of the Commission on Ecclesiastical Schools, Greek and Hebrew became staples of the course of study not only in seminaries, but also in many of the ecclesiastical high schools (*dukhovnye uchilishcha*) that fed students into the most important seminaries. The 1810 draft charter on seminaries stipulated that of the languages taught, Greek and Latin should be the most well-developed, while Hebrew was placed on the same level as German and French as additional languages in the curriculum.²⁸ The Holy Synod selected Archimandrite Filaret (Drozdov) to introduce the new curriculum into the St. Petersburg Spiritual Academy in 1809 as a test case of the new course of study before it would be adopted elsewhere, and this was when St. Petersburg moved to the forefront of religious studies. By the time the reformed program was introduced at all levels of ecclesiastical schools in 1814, instructions on the language program read: "Since it is assumed that in the lower schools, the students have already gained a firm knowledge of Greek and Latin, then at the academy level reading will continue with the most difficult authors in both languages." Further, "The Hebrew language will also be taught with all diligence."²⁹

In general, the rise of Greek in Russian religious education came at the same time that several representatives of the hierarchy began to voice doubts about the wisdom of teaching so much in Latin to seminarians who would need to teach the faith and practice pastoral guidance in their native Russian tongue. The Holy Trinity seminary and Moscow

²⁷ A.A. Smirnov (Protoierei), *Detstvo, Otrochestvo, Iunost', gody uchn'ia i uchitel'stva v Troitskoj Lavrskoj seminarii Mitropolita Filareta (1782-1808)* (Moscow, 1893), 32-34, 50-59.

²⁸ *Proekt ustava dukhovnykh seminarii* (St. Petersburg, 1810), 50.

²⁹ PSZ I, vol. 32, no. 25673 (30 Aug. 1814): 927 (for academies); no. 25674 (30 Aug. 1814): 967 (for seminaries).

Academy by the late eighteenth century had strengthened their teaching of Russian rhetoric as well as Latin by the late eighteenth century, and students demonstrated preaching abilities in Russian.³⁰ At the St. Petersburg academy, students practiced a formal, theatrical tone and presentation, as well as a conversational and more simple and frank style in sermonizing, looking to classical works of Russian literature for inspiration.³¹ Such distinctions reflected the contemporary debate in secular Russian literary circles over the merits of a Slavonicized formal Old Style Russian (advocated most passionately by Admiral A.A. Shiskov) or the New Style Russian that incorporated simpler conversational and sentimental emotional language (advocated by Nikolai Karamzin and Vasili Zhukovich, among others).³² The 1798 ukaz recalled that the ecclesiastical schools had been established with the “main intention” of “providing the church with good preachers of the Word of God, who without further preparation, could teach the people clearly, properly, convincingly and with kindness.” It instructed the academies to require their students to work on sermons to present at the academy and then in public, reading the “best authors” in both Latin and Russian to use for imitation.³³ These guidelines permeated into the diocesan seminaries, whose curriculum mirrored that of the academies, and an emphasis on Russian rhetoric and sermonizing gained traction by the turn of the century.³⁴

Metropolitan of Novgorod and St. Petersburg Gavriil (Petrov) was an early advocate of teaching more subjects in Russian in the religious schools. He did not advocate abolishing Latin lessons, but he understood that the current system of teaching the higher subjects of philosophy and theology in Latin was not useful for most Russian clergymen; in his view, the full Latin curriculum suited only the best students who would have a broader professional future and from whom more intellectual demands could be made. For the vast majority of seminarians who poorly comprehended the Latin lectures, Gavriil argued, Russian instruction was sufficient.³⁵ In 1786 correspondence to Archbishop Arsenii (Vereshchagin) of Rostov and Yaroslavl, Gavriil posited, “...it would be useful to explain the (Latin) textbooks in Russian, and then to select only the most talented students to hear the lectures in Latin.”³⁶ Not all church leaders agreed. Notably, one of

³⁰ Smirnov, *Istoriia Troitskoi*, 34-5; Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi*, 302-4.

³¹ Chistovich, 81, 114.

³² On the opposing views on the Russian language and their broader political ramifications, see Alexander Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 26-38; Iu.M. Lotman and B.A. Uspenskii, “Spory o iazyke v nachale XIX v. kak fakt russkoi kul’tury kul’tury (‘Proisshestvie v tsarstve tenei, ili sud’bina rossiiskogo iazyka’—neizvestnoe sochinenie Semena Bobrova),” in B.A. Uspenskii, *Izbrannye Trudy*, vol.2 (Moscow: Gnosis, 1994), 331-402.

³³ PSZ I, vol. 25, no. 18726: 427.

³⁴ See Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly*, 734-6.

³⁵ Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov*, 786.

³⁶ *Sbornik pisem dukhovnykh lits XVIIIv. k preosv. Arseniiu (Vereshchaginu), Arkhiepiskopu Rostovsko-Iaroslavskomu, byvshemu episkopu Tverskomu i Kashinskomu, izdan Savvaioiu, arkhiepiskopom Tverskim i Kashinskim* (Tver’: tip. Gubernskago pravleniia, 1893), 2.

the great composers of sermons in modern Russian, Moscow Metropolitan Platon (Levshin), remained a strong advocate of continuing the full Latin curriculum for all clergymen. In his view, respect for the clerical estate outside Russia was in jeopardy: "As for lecturing in our schools in Russian, I do not advise it. Our clergymen are already considered by foreigners to be unlearned, since they cannot speak in French or German. But we retain some dignity, in that we speak and correspond in Latin. If we begin to teach Latin as [poorly as] we do Greek, then we would lose this last shred of dignity."³⁷

And yet the educational world in Russia was changing. With Catherine II's decrees on the curriculum for public education in 1786, textbooks began to be published in Russian for secular subjects, such as mathematics, geometry, physics, natural history, and geography, and seminaries could purchase them at a reduced rate for their own programs.³⁸ Ecclesiastical schools at all levels expanded their offerings in secular subjects, and Russian thereby served as the language of instruction for those classes.³⁹ This became viable as more and more instructors in the Russian seminaries and spiritual academies were native-born Russians (rather than Ruthenians) by the final quarter of the eighteenth century. With this trend, moreover, the students' abilities in Russian rhetoric also strengthened.⁴⁰ In general, at the turn of the century, the Moscow and Kyiv academies adhered more strictly to the Latin curriculum, while Kazan and St. Petersburg broke with tradition and considered it sufficient to teach Latin only in the morning block of lessons.⁴¹

By the end of the eighteenth century, seminaries began using a Russian text to teach the more practical aspects of clerical training: *On the Duties of Parish Priests*, first published in 1776 and attributed to bishops Georgii Konisskii of Mogilev and Parfenii Sopkovskii of Smolensk. The 1798 ukaz establishing the four spiritual academies in Russia stipulated the standard use of this text for all students for instruction in pastoral theology.⁴² As seminaries began to follow suit, this text had staying power, republished in Slavonic script multiple times in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kyiv, and in civil script

³⁷ *Pis'ma Platona, Mitropolita Moskovskago, k preosviashchennym Amvrozii i Avgustinu* (Moscow, 1870), 50-51 (no. 62, no date).

³⁸ Chistovich, 77-78. Chistovich also notes that the Holy Synod ordered the *dukhovnye uchilishcha* to begin adopting the new pedagogical methods introduced during Catherine's religious reforms.

³⁹ Peter I's Spiritual Regulation had decreed teaching arithmetic, geometry, history, physics, and politics in seminaries, but little information exists on where and how these subjects were taught in the first half of the century. According to Znamenskii, politics was not taught in any seminary in the 18th century, and physics became part of the philosophy course rather than natural science. There were no substantial efforts in math, with a few exceptions, until later in the century, and geography and history courses date only from the 1750s in just a few seminaries. In general, these courses were not part of the main seminary curriculum before the 1780s, and were taught only if a professor with training was present. Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly*, 447-50.

⁴⁰ Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly*, 769.

⁴¹ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 18.

⁴² PSZ I, vol. 25, no. 18726. This work, *O dolzhnostiakh presviterov prikhodskikh*, was inserted into the curriculum of the philosophy course, which more seminarians successfully completed than theology. This ukaz also instructed the academies to use the standard public school textbooks (in Russian) for subjects such as natural history and physics.

editions throughout the nineteenth century.⁴³ A special committee at the St. Petersburg Spiritual Academy to review available textbooks for theology in 1838 criticized almost all available texts as needing revision or correction, except for this one, which they identified as useful.⁴⁴

In 1788, church history was added to the curriculum of the Petersburg “Main Seminary”, as it was then called, and this subject also generated textbooks in Russian.⁴⁵ In keeping with a growing interest in Russia’s past and unique characteristics in the age of romantic nationalism, Metropolitan Platon himself wrote the first textbook on the history of the Russian church, published in two volumes in 1805. In his preface to the work, Platon writes that he was inspired “at the end of my days” to create the first work on the Russian church not diluted by aspects of secular history unrelated to religious issues. Platon noted that the church history course taught in ecclesiastical schools followed general textbooks written by foreigners, “and up to now Russian church history has not been taught, the knowledge of which, especially in ecclesiastical schools and for those studying for the good of the Russian church with the hope of joining the clergy, would be not only proper, but absolutely necessary.”⁴⁶ The St. Petersburg and Moscow academies put this textbook into the curriculum as soon as it was published.⁴⁷ Platon’s work indicates a more nationalistic turn to the Russian Orthodox Church that would also support efforts to sustain religious education in the modern Russian language.

Moreover, a Russian-language guidebook to the Holy Scriptures also became a standard textbook for seminaries continuing into the nineteenth century. Originally written in 1779 by future Metropolitan of Novgorod Amvrosii (Podobedov) when he served as rector at the Moscow Academy, this work described every book in the Bible in two volumes, divided between Old and New Testaments, based on historical works by Carl Gottlieb Hofmann. Each volume contained an overview of the relevant Testament and an analysis of its basic content. The real value of this book was in its individual sections for each book of the Bible, describing in several pages the provenance of the text, the author, when it was written, and a guide to its contents, with a summary of the most important points, events, and conclusions, and, finally, “places worth special attention,” with full quotes (in Church Slavonic) of the most important verses (without, however, any explanation of the meaning).⁴⁸ The publication of this book, roughly at the same time as

⁴³ According to the Russian National Library catalogues.

⁴⁴ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 136.

⁴⁵ PSZ I, vol. 22, no. 16659.

⁴⁶ Platon (Levshin), *Kratkaia Tserkovaia Rossiiskaia istoriia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Sinodal’naia tip., 1805), i.

⁴⁷ Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi*, 296; Chistovich, 114. Additionally, Chistovich notes that excerpts of the histories of Tatishchev and Shcherbatov, as well as the standard textbook on world history used in the public schools were also adopted for use in the academy.

⁴⁸ Amvrosii (Podobedov), *Kratkoe rukovodstvo k chteniiu knig vetkhago i novago zaveta, kazhdoi knigi nadpisanie, pisatel’ia, vremia, mesto, sodержanie, namerenie, predkazaniia o Khriste Spasitele, mesta osoblivago primechaniia dostoiniia, takzhe razdelenie ne tokmo vsei knigi, no i samykh glav po materiiam v sebe sodержashchee*, third ed. (Moscow: Sinodal’naia tip., 1811). “Amvrosii (Podobedov),” *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’*, F.A. Brokgauz and I.A. Efron, eds, vol. 2, (St. Petersburg, 1890), p. 621, claims that this is a

On the Duties of Parish Priests, indicates an increasing recognition of the need to better understand the Scriptures, and a concerted effort to better familiarize seminarians with the Bible than had previously been the case earlier in the 18th century.

The turn toward serious study of the Scriptures in ecclesiastical schools constitutes the third trend in Russian religious education that would stimulate interest in pursuing a translation of the Bible into the vernacular. Prior to the late eighteenth century, religious schools were notable in how little they exposed students to the actual text of the Bible. Znamenskii claims that seminaries and even academies did not lead students in careful study of the Holy Scriptures through the mid-18th century. Given the impoverishment of most seminaries, their libraries often lacked a Slavonic Bible for consultation, even after the corrected 1751 edition was issued.⁴⁹ Courses on the Scriptures often had to use the more available Latin Vulgate Bible rather than the Slavonic – an irony not lost upon the more engaged members of the hierarchy who were beginning to feel a more nationalistic sentiment toward the Eastern Orthodox Church and to question the degree to which seminaries relied on Latin instruction.⁵⁰ Until the 1760s, few bishops concerned themselves with improving Scriptural studies in their seminaries. The conservative Archbishop of Rostov Arsenii Matseevich considered the decades-long effort to revise the Slavonic Bible by checking it with the Greek original and some Hebrew texts a waste of time since “the Bible is not very necessary for us... For the simple folk, the liturgical books contain enough from the Bible.”⁵¹

But by the time of Catherine II's reign, the hierarchy began to address this weakness in ecclesiastical schooling. The early 1760s commission on religious education proposed that “for better success in theological studies, the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures must invariably be added for set days and hours”; tied to this concern was their promotion of Hebrew instruction.⁵² While the seminaries still struggled to include more study of the Scriptures, the academies did better. The Moscow Academy, in particular, as the first to adopt Amvrosii's systematic instruction on the Bible, stressed Biblical interpretation in its lectures, and students were assigned readings from the Bible and reports on the readings for the days that classes did not meet. In the capacity of archbishop of Moscow from 1775, Platon (Levshin) encouraged a more rigorous effort to help students interpret and understand the Scriptures.⁵³ Seminaries began to teach more biblical history and archeology and to present the Scriptures as a historically

translation of a book by “Hofmann”. Florovsky, 236, calls it a paraphrase of works by Carl Gottlieb Hofmann (1703-1777); see note 200 on p. 371. This work continued to be used well into the 19th century, with a fifth edition at the Holy Synod Press in 1835.

⁴⁹ Peter I asked the Moscow Academy under the Leichoudes brothers to make corrections based on Septuagint to the existing Slavonic text, but the final edits to the text were not completed until the reign of Elizabeth I, with Varlaam Liashchevskii of the Kyiv Academy in charge. See Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi*, 127-29.

⁵⁰ Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly*, 455-6.

⁵¹ As cited in Ivanov, 167.

⁵² Znamenskii, *Dukhovnye shkoly*, 462.

⁵³ Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi*, 294.

chronological text with its own interior logic, rather than the source of the scattered biblical excerpts in the liturgy. The turning point seems to be the 1798 ukaz for academies and seminaries, decreeing that students in the philosophy course should “above all read the Holy Scriptures, with an explication of the most difficult places, ... [and] publicly interpret the Letters of the Apostles every Sunday before the liturgy.”⁵⁴

In 1798, while still overseeing the Moscow archdiocese, Platon issued instructions for interpreting the Scriptures that became the basis for the hermeneutics course at the Academy. He urged instructors to guide the students not only in seeing the literal meaning and working through the difficult places linguistically (looking to the original language), but also in interpreting “the spiritual and mystical meaning” of the Biblical text, looking for the inherent moral value. They should use comparative analysis for the difficult passages, study the books of the prophets with an eye on the fulfillment of the prophecies, carefully address seeming contradictions in the texts, and seek the true meaning behind the passages that had been wrongly interpreted by schismatics and heretics. By this time, then, students at the academy level became exposed to sophisticated exercises in Biblical analysis. Platon urged the instructors of the Holy Scriptures to read the best church fathers and to know church history well, and “above all to pray often and fervently to the Father to open your eyes to the understanding of the wonders of His law.”⁵⁵ Thus, Platon did not turn Biblical analysis into a strictly academic exercise, but infused it with a spiritual element.

The spiritual trends in the late 18th century and early 19th century included a growing awareness of the role of the Scriptures in guiding daily life. The monastic revival in the late eighteenth century under pietist influence embraced daily contemplation of the Word of God, and this movement’s spiritual leader, St. Tikhon Zadonskii, immersed himself in the Scriptures and even contemplated translating the New Testament from Greek “into the modern style.”⁵⁶ In 1788, the Holy Synod published Tikhon’s pastoral work that came to be known as *On the Duties of Every Christian* for general consultation for all parish priests; this work included a section on how to reflect on the Holy

⁵⁴ PSZ I, vol. 25, no. 18726: 427-8.

⁵⁵ Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi...*, 294-5. Platon’s approach to the Scriptures seems consistent with some staples of Masonic thought in Russia in the late eighteenth century, particularly of the more mystical Rosicrucian branch that Nikolai Novikov’s circle embraced. However, while other Orthodox clergymen of the Catherinian era were actively involved in Masonic societies, there is no evidence that Platon was. Nevertheless, the future metropolitan admired the piety, moral virtue, and philanthropy of the freemasons, and supported their religious publication efforts that included works of the church fathers and pietist literature. When Catherine II ordered Platon to review the religious books published by Novikov’s press in 1785, he found few books that could be labeled “dangerous,” and he praised Novikov’s personal Christian values. See **Error! Main Document Only.** Raffaella Faggionato, *A Rosicrucian Utopia in Eighteenth-Century Russia: The Masonic Circle of N.I. Novikov*, transl. Michael Boyd and Brunello Lotti (Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2005), esp. 84, 124, 193-197; I.F. Martynov, *Knigoizdatel’ Nikolai Novikov* (Moscow: “Kniga”, 1981), 117-121.

⁵⁶ Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology Part I*, Vol. 5 in the Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, translated by Robert L. Nichols (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Co., 1979), 158.

Scriptures.⁵⁷ The manual *On the Duties of Parish Priests* assigned to the seminary curriculum from the end of the 18th century was also replete with Scriptural references to guide future clergymen in their pastoral work. Moreover, turning to the Scriptures comprised a vital component of the Russian clerical assault on atheistic tendencies stemming from the French Revolution and making inroads across Europe.⁵⁸ These broader trends reinforced the more rigorous studies of the Scriptures in the Orthodox seminaries and academies.

The Bible Society and its Impact

The Alexandrine era ushered in an age of ecumenical and mystical sensibility that shaped domestic and foreign policy after 1812. Mystical and ascetic pietism became popular within the educated classes who read works by representatives of the German "awakening," such as Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling and Karl von Eckartshausen, and sought a more spiritual and emotional form of Christianity. Masonic lodges, which Alexander I had legalized again early in his reign, flourished, and charitable organizations multiplied. Particularly appealing to secular society was the concept of nourishing one's "inner church," which was free of the liturgy and trappings of the "outer church." This approach to religion erased confessional divisions, promoting an ecumenical outlook among members of all churches. As Raffaella Faggionato has revealed, these concepts overlapped with foundational principles of freemasonry, especially those of the more mystical Rosicrucian branch that found fertile ground in Russia from the late eighteenth century. Many leaders of the mystical turn in Russia were themselves practitioners of this form of freemasonry, providing continuity from the work of Nikolai Novikov and I.V. Lopukhin of the previous century to Aleksandr Labzin and his publications in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁹ Recognizing the religious diversity of his empire and all of Europe, Alexander I embraced an ideology of universal Christian values that based political values of the nation on Christian doctrine.⁶⁰ The victory over Napoleon gave way to the optimistic belief in a universal Christianity that would guide European nations within the new Holy Alliance.

This general atmosphere opened the Russian educated classes to the evangelical message of the Bible Society. As Stephen Batalden has noted in his recent book on

⁵⁷ *Nastavlenie o sobstvennykh vsiakago khristianina dolzhnostiakh* (Moscow, 1788), first published by the Imperial Infantry Cadet Corps in 1783 under the title *Nastavlenie khristianskoe s pribavleniem o vzaimnykh dolzhnostiakh khristianskikh*.

⁵⁸ Smirnov, *Istoriia Moskovskoi*, 319-320.

⁵⁹ Raffaella Faggionato, "From a Society of the Enlightened to the Enlightenment of Society: The Russian Bible Society and Rosicrucianism in the Age of Alexander I," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 79, no. 3 (July 2001): 461-4; Pypin, 136. On the eighteenth-century foundations of Rosicrucianism in Russia, see Faggionato's *A Rosicrucian Utopia*.

⁶⁰ See Elena Anatol'evna Vishlenkova, *Zabotias' o dushakh poddannyykh: Religioznaia politika v Rossii pervoi chetverti XIX veka* (Saratov: izd. Saratovskogo Universiteta, 2002), 134-136; also idem., *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii pervoi chetverti XIX veka* (Kazan: Isd. Kazanskogo universiteta, 1998), 24-26.

Russian Bible translation, the circumstances in Russia that led to the rise of the Russian Bible Society included the popularity of ascetic piety, or the “new religion of the heart” (partly from the reopened Masonic lodges), Russian Orthodox clerical support for the new piety, imperial patronage for the effort of the Bible Society, and timely visits from foreign representatives from the British and Foreign Bible Society.⁶¹ Formed in Great Britain in 1804 as an embodiment of the late eighteenth-century “religious exaltation” that opposed deism and dogmatism, the British and Foreign Bible Society’s primary goal was to make the Scriptures available in as many languages as possible through translation and publication efforts (without commentary so as not to privilege any one confession) in order to teach society the basics of faith and morality through Scripture reading. Stemming from this goal were educational efforts to teach children reading by using the Scriptures in the so-called Lancaster schools (schools of mutual learning), as well as missionary and philanthropic activities to instill Christian values. A deep awareness of the usefulness of the Scriptures to instill morality within society was growing among the Russian clergy and the educated classes by the early nineteenth century. Filaret (Drozdov) argued that the concept of promoting a wider ownership and readership of the Bible had already taken hold within Russia by 1803, when the Synod issued a decree to reduce the price of a copy of the (Slavonic) Bible in order “not to make difficult the means to procure this holy book for the people in the poorest condition...”⁶² Certainly, since the fourteenth-century efforts of Stephen of Perm to produce Scriptures in the language of the peoples under Muscovite rule, the concept of translating the Scriptures into the languages of the Russian Empire’s many peoples constituted an inherent part of the Russian Orthodox history and mission.

The Russian Bible Society, created in late 1812 with the assistance of the British and Foreign Bible Society (at a time when Britain and Russia were allied against Napoleon) was an ecumenical institution with members from the Orthodox, Armenian, Roman Catholic, Uniate, Anglican, Lutheran, and other Protestant churches. Prince Alexander Nikolaevich Golitsyn— childhood friend and lifelong confidante of Alexander I, Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod from 1802 (though not a practicing Orthodox), head of the Main Administration on Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Faiths from 1810, ardent follower of mystical pietism, and a frequenter of Masonic lodges— served as the president of the Society. Its membership would claim virtually all major government ministers and statesmen, as well as key clerics of all confessions, and it had the support of broader society, who became active subscribers toward its mission. Its 1812 charter limited its “main concern” to providing Bibles to the non-Russian peoples in the empire, especially the Asiatic groups, in their own languages. However, the first executive committee of the Russian Bible Society, presided over by Prince Golitsyn and other government ministers

⁶¹ Stephen K. Batalden, *Russian Bible Wars: Modern Scriptural Translation and Cultural Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 12-40.

⁶² I.N. Korsunskii, *Sviatitel’ Filaret, Mitropolit Moskovskii, ego Zhizn’ i deiatel’nost’ na Moskovskoi kafedre po ego propovediam, v sviazi s sobytiiami i obstoiatel’stvami togo vremeni (1821-1867)* (Khar’kov: Tipografiia Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1894), 37.

(with a notable lack of Orthodox clerical members at this stage) set the first goal of the Society as providing the broader public with more available Holy Scriptures in Church Slavonic, published by the Holy Synod. The second goal was to increase the number of Scriptures in other languages available "for Christians of other confessions: Germans, Poles, Finns, Swedes, Latvians, Armenians, Greeks, etc." Thirdly, they aimed to be able to provide the Bible "to the poor and unfortunate, ...who have a greater need of it," such as those who suffered in the 1812 war and prisoners of war, who were "...now in a country that does not just name the rules of true Christianity and citizenship, but that fulfills them in deed...", as well as to prisoners, exiles, those in hospitals, and the poor. Fourthly, the Society wanted to distribute the Holy Scriptures to the Muslim and pagan peoples of Russia.⁶³ Early in its development, the Russian Bible Society press introduced stereotype printing and western organizational management, developing the largest and most technologically advanced publishing operation in Eurasia.⁶⁴ Before it was shut down in 1826, the Russian Bible Society produced 876,000 copies of the Holy Scriptures in forty languages, with funding from the significant voluntary contributions of its subscribers and members, including from Alexander I himself.⁶⁵

When the executive committee gained more clerical members in 1814, including many Orthodox prelates, archimandrite and rector of the reformed St. Petersburg Theological Academy Filaret (Drozdov) served as a Vice President in the Society and became the leading Orthodox voice promoting modern Russian biblical translation. Georges Florovsky notes the Protestant influence on Filaret from his earliest training at the Holy Trinity seminary, studying the formal "old Protestant" theological approach embodied in Feofan Prokopovich's system of theology used into the early 19th century while reading works of the new pietism from Germany. Filaret's reverence for the Holy Scriptures as "the sole pure and sufficient source of teaching about faith" led him to share the Protestant concept of the "self-sufficiency" of the Scriptures, and he put less emphasis on the role of man-made Tradition in the Church. Instead, he saw the Bible as written Tradition and living Tradition both; for Filaret, the Word of God "lives in the Church, and awakens in each living soul that which the Church acknowledges and teaches."⁶⁶

⁶³ Aleksandr Nikolaevich Pypin, "Rossiiskoe Bibleiskoe Obshchestvo," *Izsledovaniia i stat'i po epokhe Aleksandra I. Tom I: Religioznyiia dvizheniia pri Aleksandre I*, introduction and notes by N.K. Pksanov (Petrograd: "Ogni", 1916, based on 1868 serial publication), 26, 28-29.

⁶⁴ Batalden, 42-54, 87.

⁶⁵ P. Znamenskii, *Chteniia iz istorii Russkoi tserkvi za vremia tsarstvovaniia imperatora Aleksandra I* (Kazan': Tip. Imp. Universiteta, 1885), 37-38. Reflecting the tsar's dedication to the society, he gave an initial contribution of 25,000 rubles and an annual contribution of 10,000 rubles every year after that (p. 37). For a solid overview of the history of the Russian Bible Society, see Judith Cohen Zacek, "The Russian Bible Society and the Russian Orthodox Church," *Church History* 35, no. 4 (Dec., 1966): 411-437.

⁶⁶ Florovsky, 213-14. Filaret's interest in pietism drew him into friendly relations with Prince Golitsyn, Aleksandr Labzin, and other mystics prominent in the Bible Society. However, he was an open critic of works that he considered to contradict Christian teachings, including issues of Labzin's *Sionskii vestnik*. See N.V. Sushkov, *Zapiski o zhizni i vremeni sviatitelia Filareta, mitropolita Moskovskago* (Moscow: Tip. A.I. Mamontova, 1868), 258; Zacek, 423.

According to Florovsky, “as a theologian and teacher he [Filaret] was above all a Biblicist,” forming his sermons based on the Word of God rather than using the Scriptures only for proofs.⁶⁷ Church historian Nikolai Troitskii claims that Filaret was the most outstanding interpreter of the Holy Scriptures in this era of Russian Orthodoxy, based on his deep knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, his familiarity with the ancient translations of the Scriptures, his understanding of the works of the Fathers of the Church, and his ability to employ parallelisms of words, expressions, and concepts.⁶⁸ Moreover, Filaret’s work on redesigning seminary education for the Commission of Ecclesiastical Schools from 1809 had angled toward more Russian-language instruction, and his support for a modern Russian translation of the Holy Scriptures was driven by his desire for future parish priests to be able to understand and explain to their flock the Word of God.⁶⁹ Filaret viewed the translation of the Bible into modern Russian “as the best and most intimate means of understanding” the Holy Scriptures.⁷⁰ Against those who argued this was a dangerous “innovation”, Filaret insisted on the authenticity of the text and stated that the Society “...places into the hands of those who desire it, a book from which the truths of the Church always have been drawn, and from which Orthodox dogmas and also the pure precepts for living continue to be derived.”⁷¹

The most educated Russian clergymen had been trained in the academies using modern Russian as the language of translation for studies in Greek and Hebrew, and those in the Bible Society certainly understood the clarity that came from that exercise. The reforms to the seminaries in 1814 included advice to seminarians to read the Scriptures on their own, and yet, there was little effort to ensure that they could understand what they were reading in Slavonic without Amvrosii’s guidebook to the Bible; in the end, they likely gained at best a passing familiarity with the text of the Word of God.⁷² This problem coincided with the growing interest in the theological importance of close study of the Scriptures. There is no doubt that as clerical members in the Russian Bible Society discussed producing Bibles for the peoples of the Russian Empire “in their own language”, their thoughts strayed to the obvious lack of a Bible in modern Russian.⁷³ For Filaret, aside from aiding the seminarians, such a translation constituted a matter of saving souls. In tune with Protestant arguments to spread the Word of God among the people, he argued even during the Society’s demise in the 1820s that “the goal of the Bible Society is to provide the soul-saving book of the Holy Scriptures to each person desiring it in the language and dialect that is most understandable to them.”⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Florovsky, 212.

⁶⁸ Nikolai Troitskii, “Mit. Filaret, kak istolkovatel’ Sviashch. Pisaniia,” in *Sbornik, izdannyi Obshchestvom Liubitelei dukhovnago prosveshcheniia, po sluchaiu prazdnovaia stoletniago iubileia so dnia rozhdeniia (1782-1882) Filareta, Mitropolita Moskovskago*, Vol. II. Moscow: Tip. L.F. Snegireva, Ostozhenka, 1883, 177-201.

⁶⁹ See Batalden, 60-61.

⁷⁰ Korsunskii, *Sviatitel’ Filaret*, 35.

⁷¹ As quoted in Florovsky, 206.

⁷² Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia Shkola*, 126-7.

⁷³ Pypin, 39, suggests this.

⁷⁴ Korsunskii, *Sviatitel’ Filaret*, 35, from his speech to the Moscow Committee of the Bible Society in early

The initiative for a modern Russian translation came from the Emperor himself, who, seeing the publications of the Society in so many other languages besides Russian, proposed to the Synod, in words echoing Filaret's, his own desire "to provide to Russians the means to read the Word of God in their own Russian language, as the most comprehensible Slavic language for them."⁷⁵ Alexander I had what can be described as a "born again" experience in the stressful year of 1812, when Prince Golitsyn—himself recently having experienced a spiritual awakening that attracted him mystical pietism—advised the Emperor to consult the Scriptures. Alexander I later related to Quaker visitors his experience of reading the Bible in French translation: "I hungrily read the Bible, finding that its words instilled in me a new, previously never felt, peace in my heart and satisfied the thirst of my soul. The Lord, in his goodness, gave me with his Spirit the gift of understanding what I was reading; to this internal instruction and illumination I owe all my spiritual gifts, gained through reading God's Word – and this is why I view the internal light and instruction from the Holy Spirit as the most firm support for salvation in the knowledge of God."⁷⁶ The tsar's words reflected the mystical inner faith of the era, but his reliance on the Scriptures also fit with the new theological trends embodied by Filaret's work to base faith on the teachings of the Word of God and to make the Scriptures understandable to the people. Ober-Procurator Golitsyn brought the matter before the Holy Synod on Feb. 28, 1816 with these words, "with sorrow we see that many Russians, given their upbringing, are distanced from knowledge of the ancient Slavonic tongue, and not without extreme difficulty can they use the publications for them in this language of the holy books, so that some in this situation resort to foreign translations, and most of them cannot even do this." Furthermore, since the Greek patriarch had allowed the reading of the New Testament in modern Greek rather than ancient Greek, there was a correlation in circumstances that should allow Orthodox Russia to do the same.⁷⁷

Thus, the Synod decided that the New Testament would be translated into modern Russian under clerical oversight to be published by the Russian Bible Society. The emperor agreed with the Synod's proposal to place the work in the hands of the Commission on Ecclesiastical Schools, which selected scholars from the St. Petersburg Academy capable of this important work, to be directed by rector Filaret (Drozdov).⁷⁸ Filaret himself translated the Gospel of St. John, while other clerical scholars took up the other Gospels, and in 1818 the first *Evangelia* in modern Russian was published as a diglot version with parallel text in Slavonic. In Batalden's analysis, by consulting the Greek together with the authoritative 1751 Slavonic edition of the Bible, the translators achieved

1822.

⁷⁵ Pypin, 40.

⁷⁶ N.K. Shil'der, *Imperator Aleksandr Pervyi, ego zhizn' i tsarstvovanie*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg: A.S. Suvorin, 1898), 138.

⁷⁷ Pypin, 40. Russian Bible Society members knew about the Greek situation from an 1814 report on it.

⁷⁸ Pypin, 40-41; Batalden, 59.

“a genuinely new translation,” that was “true to the Greek original.”⁷⁹ By 1821, the complete modern Russian New Testament (in diglot with Slavonic) was published, and it went through at least six printings with some 100,000 total copies. In 1823 a cheaper Russian-only text was published, bringing the total copies of the New Testament in Russian published from 1821-23 to more than 150,000, which was more than the total circulation of the Slavonic Bible from 1672 through 1825.⁸⁰

Translating the Old Testament comprised more of a departure, since the Slavonic version had been based exclusively on the Greek Septuagint and the modern Russian translation also closely consulted the Hebrew Masoretic text. The first text to appear in this new translation was the Psalter, published in 1822 without a parallel Slavonic text; this book became the single most popular volume issued by the Russian Bible Society, with more than 150,000 copies circulated. This publication went beyond the 1816 decree that called for the New Testament translation into Russian, but the popularity of the Russian Bible Society and the support of Prince Golitsyn carried the enthusiasm toward the Old Testament as well. Then the Society proceeded with a chronological Old Testament translation beginning with Genesis, again seeking fidelity to the Hebrew text while also consulting the Greek Septuagint. Filaret worked diligently on the translation of the book of Genesis, but the lead translator of the Old Testament was Father Gerasim Petrovich Pavskii, a brilliant student of Filaret’s and professor of Hebrew at the St. Petersburg Academy. The Old Testament work was spread between scholars at the St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kyiv academies.⁸¹ In the end, the books of the Old Testament through Ruth (the Octateuch) were completed and printed in 1824-25 in 10,000 copies, but never bound and distributed, given the demise of the Russian Bible Society by this time. Many of the copies were burned in 1826, though many also remained in storage “to moulder and rot in darkness,” as Robert Pinkerton, member of the British Bible Society active inside Russia, bemoaned.⁸²

The enthusiastic public reception of the Russian translations of the Scriptures was equaled by that of many clergymen. When British Bible Society member Ebenezer Henderson traveled to Belgorod to present Bishop Evgenii of Kursk and Belgorod with the Gospel, Acts and ten Epistles in modern Russian (diglot with Slavonic), “[the bishop’s] joy was so great, he couldn’t restrain himself and immediately asked for God’s blessing on this work”; Evgenii said he had prayed fervently for thirty years “that such a translation would be made.”⁸³ Bishop Evgenii proclaimed that the Russians had finally reached that “glorious and bright day, when everyone will read and understand the Word of God, even the simple folk and the children... for whom to this day the sacred text was obscured by

⁷⁹ Batalden, 62-65; quotes 65.

⁸⁰ Batalden 66-67.

⁸¹ Batalden, 68-74, describes the translation method underlying this reliance on the Hebrew text; Pypin, 61, notes the participation of the other academies.

⁸² Robert Pinkerton, *Russia Observed* (New York: Arno Press, 1970, reprint of *Russia: on, Miscellaneous Observations on the Past and Present State of that Country and its Inhabitants*, London, 1833), 392.

⁸³ As quoted in Pypin, 170.

the antiquity of the language."⁸⁴

Aside from biblical translations, the Society in Russia stimulated numerous philanthropical societies, the spread of Lancaster schools, and missionary work into prisons and among the tribes of Siberia. Concerning foreign policy, an increased evangelical awareness stemming from the emphasis on reading the Scriptures supported the Holy Alliance and its goals for the promotion and preservation of Christian values in Europe. In domestic policy, the spiritual awakening that embraced the work of the Bible Society was also manifest within the Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and Public Enlightenment, established in 1817 to combine educational and religious oversight within one enterprise and promote Christian values in public instruction. Prince Golitsyn stepped down as Synod Ober-Procurator to become the minister of this new institution (while retaining the presidency of the Russian Bible Society), promoting his supporters in the Bible Society to prominent positions. Indeed, the members of the Bible Society and the officials connected to the Dual Ministry overlapped to the extent that the one institution was identified with the other. Moreover, leaders in both were also associated with Freemasonry, particularly the mystical Rosicrucian branch, which also raised the concern of Orthodox clergymen and conservative statesmen for the future of the traditional church; indeed, the goals of the ministry reflected the Rosicrucian program in the sphere of culture and education. Most alarming to traditionalists, this Dual Ministry reduced the ruling status of the Orthodox Church and administered it as an equal to all the other confessions of the empire. This situation provoked deep resentments among conservative Orthodox clergy and secular officials, who began to protest more vocally against Golitsyn's policies.⁸⁵

After its great success, the downfall of the Russian Bible Society comprises a nearly surreal episode of increased fanaticism on the part of both the secular advocates of mysticism led by Prince Golitsyn and the conservative cultural forces within the church and state. The latter became more and more uncomfortable with the Bible Society's interconfessional membership, its work to translate the Holy Scriptures into modern Russian and other vernaculars outside of Holy Synod control, its tolerance of Old Belief and sectarianism, and its publication of streams of "heretical" Protestant pietist and

⁸⁴ Ivan Korsunskii, *Filaret Mitropolit Moskovskii v ego otnosheniakh i deiatel'nosti po voprosu o perevode Biblii na russkii iazyk* (Moscow, 1886), 24.

⁸⁵ Pypin, 99, 136, 137, 145; Faggionato, "From a Society of the Enlightened," 462-64, 478; Znameskii, *Chteniia*, 39, 46, 49-50. This opposition drew on a multifaceted conservative movement that opposed Alexander's reform efforts and defended varying concepts of Russian traditional culture and state policy. Defense of Orthodoxy comprised a major argument for many. For an overview of the varied forms of conservative thought in the Alexandrine era, see Alexander Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997). On the Orthodox opposition in particular, see Iu.E. Kondakov, *Dukhovho-religioznaia politika Aleksandra I i russkaia pravoslavnaia oppozitsiia (1801-1825)* (St. Petersburg: Nestor, 1996). For a major contemporary voice from this perspective, see A.S. Sturdza, "O sud'be Pravoslanoi tserkvi Russkoi v tsartvovanie imperatora Aleksandra I-go (Iz zapisok A.S. Strudzy)," *Russkaia Starina*, t. XV (1876), Feb.: 266-288.

mystical literature that bypassed the religious censors and became increasingly provocative.⁸⁶ This Orthodox opposition was led by state ministers Admiral Aleksandr Semenovich Shishkov and Count Aleksei Andreevich Arakcheev and by high-profile Orthodox clerics, most notably the psychologically unstable Archimandrite Fotii.⁸⁷ Their complaints against the mystics met with virulent defiance from Golitsyn and his circle, who became increasingly intolerant of any criticism or opposition, in fact prohibiting any open objection to the mystical content of the publications or to the Ministry's policies and using censorship powers to suppress any literature that was suspected of doing so in any way.⁸⁸ In the stand-off, both sides accused the other of obscurantism—Golitsyn's group of drawing so deeply on foreign mystical literature to experience an "inner church" separated from the "external church" and the cultural conservatives of defending the tradition of Church Slavonic and institutional church authority above all spiritual needs—to the extent that each side felt the other had lost touch with Christian truth. As Pypin puts it, the mystics saw the main aspect of the new religious thinking to be brotherly love and tolerance to all Christian sects, seeing this as a necessary condition of Christianity, and the conservatives saw within the Bible Society a blatant offence to and undermining of Orthodoxy.⁸⁹ The conservative outcry gained validity in the changed atmosphere of Alexander's reign after 1820 from the liberal tolerance of the early Bible Society years to increasing fears that political revolts in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Greece would spread to Russia. In 1822, Alexander I outlawed all secret societies and closed all Masonic lodges as sources of possible anti-regime activity, thus casting a shadow over many members of the Bible Society and the Dual Ministry. In this new context of heightened suspicion against foreign influences, the vortex of vindictive assertions from the conservatives in the end won the day with accusations that the members of the Bible Society—associated with "Frank-Masons, Illuminati, Carbornari," various sects, and fringe

⁸⁶ Znamenskii, *Chteniia*, 40-45; Kondakov, 54-60, 91-95. Regarding the translation effort into modern Russian, a particular point of concern was that several secular persons, including prominent Rosicrucian mystic, Aleksandr Labzin, sat on the oversight committee for the Russian biblical translation (Pypin, 179). By 1818, however, when Labzin was pressured to close his journal, *Sionskii vestnik*, (or submit it to ecclesiastical censors), Labzin lost influence; Filaret, who had supported some of Labzin's publications, by then criticized Labzin for going too far in his mysticism (Zacek, 423). On the rise of sects and the fate of Old Believers at this time, see Kondakov, 54-59 and Znamenskii, *Chteniia*, 214-220.

⁸⁷ Pypin, 171-172, 176-177; Kondakov, 95-103, 189-196. Florovsky's portrait of Archimandrite Fotii, 194, provides a vivid look at his deranged personality. Pypin, 193, refers to him as a "half-wild frenzied fanatic." For a solid study of Fotii's brief but powerful influence at this time, see Joseph L. Wiczynski, "Apostle of Obscurantism: The Archimandrite Photius of Russia (1792-1838)." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22, no. 4 (Oct. 1971): 319-331.

⁸⁸ In what Kondakov terms the "first stage" of organized Orthodox opposition, conservatives were outraged in 1818-1819 when Golitsyn condemned the publication of E. I. Stanevich's "Conversation on the Grave of a Child about the Immortal Soul" that attacked the mystics for their reliance on the "inner church" and insisted on the vital importance of the "external church." See Kondakov, 105-112; Pypin, 183-191. On Golitsyn's and the mystics' intolerance, see Pypin, 183, 191; he argues that if the opponents had been allowed to voice their opposition and be heard out, little would have come of this altercation.

⁸⁹ Pypin, 181.

religious movements—were promoting heterodoxy and carrying out diabolical schemes to undermine the Orthodox church and state.⁹⁰

Notably, accusations of the conservative faction included fears of a Reformation movement inside Russia. The new Metropolitan Serafim (Glagolevskii) of Novgorod and St. Petersburg (from 1821), once an advocate of the Bible Society, now warned that the Bible Society was “extremely dangerous, since the sale of Bibles is the most reliable means of introducing a Reformation”; in late 1824, he asked Alexander I to take swift measures to the work of the Society “to heal the wounds suffered by our sacred Faith,” injured in his view by foreign-influenced mysticism and home-grown sects.⁹¹ Aiding the conservative clergymen who argued against the translation, the creation of the dual ministry provoked the general indignation of Orthodox clergy, particularly since its department of spiritual affairs placed Orthodoxy on equal footing with every other faith, viewed by many as a humiliation of the state church.⁹² This in turn set many against the head of this ministry Golitsyn, also President of the Bible Society, helping to lead to his downfall, the abolition of the combined ministry, and the effective end of Bible Society activities in 1824. Admiral Shishkov, Minister of Education from 1824, tried various arguments to convince the Emperor to shut down the Russian Bible Society, some based on the harmful effect of its other mystical publications, but most of his wildest assertions concerning the Russian-language Bible itself. The Admiral had long championed Church Slavonic as the native tongue for Russians, leading the literary circle that promoted the archaic Old Style over the more foreign influenced New Style Russian since the late eighteenth century. He denigrated the modern Russian tongue as “peasant language” (*prostonarodnoe narechie*) or the “language of theater,” compared to the dignified Slavonic “language of the church,” and he fumed that upon hearing the Bible in its modern translation, most pious people would collapse into laughter.⁹³ Shishkov bemoaned the vast number of Scriptures printed and available in homes, which, he claimed, demeaned the value of the Gospels, possibly subjecting them to “be sullied, ripped apart, thrown under benches, or serve as wrapping paper for household goods.” He argued that rushed biblical translation into so many languages would inevitably lead to erroneous interpretations of the Bible, and that the

⁹⁰ The best account (if rather long-winded) of the many sub-plots in this dramatic opposition between Golitsyn’s mystical camp and the conservative opposition in the 1820s is in Pypin, 140-258; see also Kondakov, 100-211 and Zacek, 425-437. Pypin’s most consequential argument, echoed by later historians, is that the Russian Bible Society in authoritarian Russia thrived because the emperor himself encouraged society at large to be involved; therefore, criticism of it would comprise criticism of the regime. When the emperor ended his support, the Society withered. This Russian Society could not be sustained without distortions the way the British Society, based on true voluntary will and freedom, could. In the end, Russia’s underlying piety, without the brakes of education and intellectualism, became fanatical and unstable. (Pypin, 81-86, 96, 117).

⁹¹ Pypin, 237, 246-49. For the latter comment, Serafim bore in mind the new sect of “*dukhonoststev*” in the Don region, for the rise of which the Metropolitan blamed the Bible Society’s translation work.

⁹² Pypin, 173.

⁹³ Florovsky, 196-197; Pypin, 235-6. For a discussion of the mentality behind Shishkov’s linguistic stance, see Lotman and Uspenskii, “*Spory o iazyke*.”

Bible Society, introduced by foreigners, was promoting these translations in order “to destroy the true faith (*pravoverie*), disrupt the fatherland, and produce strife and rebellion.”⁹⁴ Archimandrite Fotii claimed that the greater scheme of the Bible Society across Europe was no less than to create a unified kingdom of Christ, so that “all kingdoms, churches, religions, civil laws, and all structures would be destroyed” to make way for the new faith.⁹⁵ At stake, it seemed, was the very survival of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Empire.⁹⁶ Eventually, the arguments took their toll, and the government shut down the translation and publication work of the Russian Society. The Society itself was formally closed in 1826 after the Decembrist Uprising, when Serfim, Fotii, and Shishkov convinced Nicholas I that it was in Russia’s interests to do so.⁹⁷

While the successful emergence of a complete modern Russian Bible would have to wait until the reform era of Alexander II, the underlying theological currents that led Metropolitan Filaret and other clergymen to support the Bible Society continued to influence the changing structure and content of clerical and religious education. Three important changes came about as a result of the work of the Bible Society and the thinking on Scriptures that it engendered. First, the Commission on Ecclesiastical Schools mandated more lessons devoted to reading and understanding the Word of God at all levels beginning with the lowest ecclesiastical schools. Secondly, seminaries began to use modern Russian to teach a range of theological subjects. Even after the retreat from biblical translation into modern Russian, the modern pedagogical shift from rote learning to promoting comprehension among students, as well as the increasing interest in strengthening Russian national identity under Nicholas I, meant that instruction in Russian in ecclesiastical schools continued to increase. Thirdly, Filaret produced a new catechism, more centered on the lessons from the Scriptures, which became the standard for all schools and all religious training for society.

First, the general *ukazy* of 1814 establishing the charters for reformed clerical education under the supervision of the Commission on Ecclesiastical Schools moved the focus of this education toward the Scriptures. The introduction to this lengthy piece of legislation states that the goal of ecclesiastical education is to “form devout and

⁹⁴ Florovsky, 198; Pypin, 239-240.

⁹⁵ Pypin, 199-200. Also, 202, Fotii claimed that “God vanquished the visible Napoleon who invaded Russia: and he will vanquish the spiritual Napoleon as well...”

⁹⁶ More recent arguments have pointed to the political challenge the Society posed to the authority of the Russian state. Batalden, *Russian Bible Wars*, 87-88, argues that the technologically advanced Bible Society press comprised “a powerful threat to the very institutions, such as the Holy Synod, whose support was needed” for continued biblical translation. He argued earlier that the broad impact of its publications, which circumvented traditional controls on publishing activity, comprised a threat to spiritual and political authority; see his “Printing the Bible in the Reign of Alexander I: Toward a Reinterpretation of the Imperial Russian Bible Society,” in Geoffrey A. Hosking, ed., *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 65-78. Additionally, Raffaella Faggionato in “From a Society of the Enlightened” argues convincingly that the inherent Rosicrucian spirit and organization of the Bible Society that aimed for independence from authority threatened the stability of the Russian state and led to the decision to shut down the Society’s activities.

⁹⁷ Pypin, 256-7.

enlightened servants of the Word of God."⁹⁸ In keeping with the more modern pedagogy that accompanied public education reforms under Alexander I, the method of teaching moved from exhibiting the knowledge of the professors to "enabling the students' discovery of their own strengths and intellectual activity."⁹⁹ Notably, for courses on spiritual rhetoric, "the reading of the Holy Scriptures occupies the first place among all other models," followed by the writings of the Church Fathers, and then the new sermons of noted pastors of the Russian Church.¹⁰⁰ Further, "the best method of theological study without a doubt must comprise the reading of the Holy Scriptures and the assessment of the true meaning according to the original text and the best explanations of the Holy Fathers."¹⁰¹ Obviously, the drafters of this new system of ecclesiastical education had taken to heart the Bible Society's promotion of Scriptures as the basis of religious study and the Protestant-influenced mentality of the era. Moreover, hinting at Masonic influences as well, this focus on the Scriptures reflected what Florovsky calls "the new 'theology of the heart'"; likewise, the new methods of teaching aimed for "the education of the inner man," by imparting a living and well-founded personal conviction in the saving truths of faith."¹⁰²

At the more advanced level of the academies, the first cohort completed the reformed curriculum at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy under Filaret's direction in 1814. Filaret then published a curriculum outline (*Obozrenie*) that placed the Holy Scriptures front and center in the entire course in theology, soon applied in the Moscow and Kyiv academies with influence on seminary courses.¹⁰³ Critically, this outline broke with the previous theological structure that began with natural theology and then proceeded to revelational theology, as the two ways that God reveals Himself to man, through nature and through revelation (*priroda* and *otkrovennoe*). Filaret argues that since all in the end is revelation, in order to understand nature, it is sufficient to understand revelation as presented in the Holy Scriptures, "which constitute the root on which all is confirmed and from which all branches of theological understanding receive life and strength."¹⁰⁴ Consequently, Filaret began the sequence of theological subjects with targeted Scripture reading before addressing any other aspect of theology. "The Word of God must be constantly on the tongue of every Christian, all the more so for

⁹⁸ PSZ I, vol. 32, no. 25673 (30 Aug. 1814), "Vysochaishe utverzhdennyi proekt Ustava Dukhovnykh Akademii": 911. Four decrees were published on the same day; in addition to this one, no. 25674 on seminaries, no. 25675 on district schools (*uezdnye uchilishcha*), and no. 25676 on parish schools (*prikhodnye uchilishcha*). The entire package of decrees occupies 91 pages in the PSZ.

⁹⁹ PSZ I, vol. 32, no. 25673: 923.

¹⁰⁰ PSZ I, vol. 32, no. 25673: 924; also repeated in the *ukaz* on seminaries, no. 25674: 965.

¹⁰¹ PSZ I, vol. 32, no. 25673: 927; also repeated in no. 25674: 967.

¹⁰² Florovsky, 220.

¹⁰³ Filaret, *Obozrenie Bogoslovskikh Nauk v otnoshenii k prepodavaniuu ikh v vysshikh dukhovnykh uchilishchakh. Napechatano po opredeleniiu Kommissii Dukhovnykh Uchilishch.* (St. Petersburg: Tip. I. Ioannesov, 1814).

¹⁰⁴ Filaret, *Obozrenie*, 4-5. He explicitly presents Platon Levshin's theology as one which starts with natural theology.

anyone consecrating himself to serve the Faith and the Church. All of human learning must focus on it.” While Filaret recommended that the lower schools also incorporate more Scripture reading, he argued that the academies, regardless of the systematic order of theological learning, teach the Scriptures throughout all four years of study.¹⁰⁵ The *Obozrenie* outlined the order of studying the books in the Bible that would give students the most benefit, with more attention given to the historical books of the Old Testament and the moral teachings in the epistles of Paul in the New Testament.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the seminaries and academies suffered from a lack of updated theology textbooks, and often instructors had to rely on their own notes to supplement inadequate or overly detailed manuals (still in Latin), which resulted in a variety of differences in the curriculum between schools.¹⁰⁷ Filaret could only fill a part of the necessary textbook gap, and in 1816 he compiled a textbook that covered church history from Biblical times to the eighteenth century. True to his theological stance centered on the Scriptures, he explained in the introduction that he viewed the Scriptures as “the first and most pure (*chisteishii*) source of information on church history”; he added, “the authority of the Scriptures can never be in doubt for whomever believes that it comes from the inspiration of God.”¹⁰⁸

In late 1818, the Commission on Ecclesiastical Schools received an anonymous memorandum “on the use and necessity” of creating classes devoted to reading the Holy Scriptures in all of their subordinate schools. In response, the Commission issued in 1819 instructions to all religious schools, “daily before the start of the lessons, to read to the pupils... a prescribed section of the New Testament; and in the seminaries to assign two hours [per week] each Saturday for this task separate from other classes and as its own lesson for the students of all three divisions of the Seminary.”¹⁰⁹ Over time, the seminaries began to separate the Saturday lessons into the three divisions of students, especially in the larger seminaries.¹¹⁰ In 1820, the Commission requested that the Bible Society supply Bibles and New Testaments to the religious schools in the number and the language desired.¹¹¹ Filaret (Drozdov) recommended in 1822 to the Commission that every Sunday

¹⁰⁵ *Obozrenie*, 12-13, quote 12. Breaking from standard dogmatic, moral, and pastoral theological courses, Filaret proposed courses on interpretive, contemplative, practical, polemical, homiletical, and canon law theology.

¹⁰⁶ Of the seven sections in the *Obozrenie*, Filaret devoted the most space to the section on Scripture reading (*Chitienie Sv. Pisaniia*), which occupies pages 12-25 in this 55-page publication.

¹⁰⁷ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 134-139.

¹⁰⁸ *Nachertanie Tserkovno-Bibleiskoi istorii, v pol'zu dukhovnago Iunoshestva*

(St. Petersburg: Holy Synod, 1816), quote vii. The Commission on Ecclesiastical Schools supported this publication. Florovsky, 204, notes that Filaret based this work on the historical writings of Johann Franz Buddeus.

¹⁰⁹ RGIA, f. 802, op. 1, d. 2409, ll. 3-4; Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 127, posits the anonymous memo came from none other than Prince Golitsyn.

¹¹⁰ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 128.

¹¹¹ RGIA, f. 802, op. 1, d. 2409, ll.11-12. Actual requests follow; the number of Scriptures requested in Slavonic remained higher than in Russian, although the Gospels and Acts were often requested in Russian/Slavonic diglot.

before the liturgy the rectors and professors of the seminaries and academies lead the students in an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures in the form of a conversation, "with simple and understandable language, in the manner of teaching the people"; similar exercises should be conducted for the district and parish schools as well.¹¹² In the wake of the enthusiasm over the appearance of a Russian translation, the Arkhangel'sk seminary administration, with permission from their bishop, decided to "read the New Testament in Russian at the dinner table of the students, so that they will be consuming food for both their bodies and souls."¹¹³ Once the Russian text was no longer authorized by the Holy Synod, theoretically the seminaries and schools would have had to switch back to the Slavonic versions of the Scriptures. It is difficult to know how this change by 1826 altered the volume of or enthusiasm for Scripture reading in ecclesiastical schools, but the recommendations for the separate classes on the Scriptures remained. By 1838, these classes had been further refined, with the Commission's directive that every seminary conduct their class on Scriptures by arranging to read every year several of the historical books and one or several prophetic books of the Old Testament, as well as one of the Gospels and one or several of the epistles or the Acts of the Apostles.¹¹⁴ Seminary inspections over the 1820s and 1830s found a number of seminaries slow to implement these directives, or improperly carrying them out, or pedagogically poorly doing so, with as many variations as there were seminaries.¹¹⁵ However well or poorly executed, this stipulated expansion of the Scriptural content within religious schools constituted a major shift in emphasis from the previous century and continued to shape curriculum even after the modern Russian biblical translations were pulled from circulation.

The setback in the Russian vernacular for the Holy Scriptures, however, did not hold for theological studies, as academies and seminaries continued to expand the use of modern Russian to teach theology. Filaret was a lifelong advocate for teaching theology in the students' native language for better comprehension of the faith; he himself lectured in Russian at the St. Petersburg Academy, and his successor (and former student) Grigorii Postnikov continued to do the same. The 1814 charter did not explicitly allow this, but nor did it specify the use of Latin in the section on teaching theology in the academies and seminaries.¹¹⁶ When the Commission on Ecclesiastical Schools considered an 1818 report by Filaret that pointed this out, they issued a statement that theology could be taught in Russian as well as in Latin at the academies, at the discretion of the rector.¹¹⁷ As a result, academy professors started to lecture on theology in Russian, for example, rector Arkhimandrite Kirill (Bogoslovskii-Platonov) at the Moscow Academy, and various

¹¹² *Sobranie mnenii i otzyvov Filareta, Mitropolita Moskovskago i Kolomenskago po uchebnym i tserkovno-gosudarstvennym voprosam*, ed. Savva, Archbishop of Tver and Kashinskii, vol. II (St. Petersburg: Synod tip., 1855), 77-79, quote 78.

¹¹³ Korsunskii, *Filaret Mitropolit...o perevode Biblii*, 25.

¹¹⁴ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 128.

¹¹⁵ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 130-33.

¹¹⁶ On academies, PSZ I, vol. 32, no. 25673: 927; on seminaries, PSZ I, vol. 32, no. 25674.

¹¹⁷ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 65 (note 1).

professors at the Kyiv Academy from 1823. With the downfall of the Bible Society, the Commission tightened the language restrictions to Latin again, but the genie was, so to speak, out of the bottle, and professors disregarded the decree. In 1826, the Moscow Academy was still teaching its dogmatic theology course in Russian, with exams given in Russian first, and then in Latin. In the 1830s the Kyiv Academy's theological faculty made a general shift from Latin to Russian. And in the seminaries, in the late 1820s and 1830s, Russian began to be more prevalent than Latin, sometimes for the entire theology course.¹¹⁸ Trends in public schools no doubt gave support to the language policy in seminaries, as Admiral Shishkov in his new role as Minister of Education from 1824 promoted more emphasis on instilling good skills in Russian language in public schools throughout the empire in order to promote Russian national values.¹¹⁹ This concept became even more entrenched when Sergei Uvarov's ideological construct of Official Nationality made Russian-language instruction a patriotic duty.¹²⁰ As Florovsky concludes, "gradually Latin fell by the wayside in the seminaries, so that by the 1840s scarcely any school still taught theology in Latin."¹²¹ Titlinov's careful study of seminary inspections as reported to the Commission of Ecclesiastical Schools found that by the late 1830s many or all theology subjects were taught in Russian in the seminaries in Astrakhan, St. Petersburg, Kaluga, Vologda, Riazan, Tambov, Penza, Perm, Yaroslavl, and Viatka, despite any prescriptions from the Commission to the contrary. More and more members of the hierarchy lined up behind Filaret to support this linguistic shift by the late 1830s.¹²²

In addition to promoting trends of Scriptural studies and the use of modern Russian in ecclesiastical schools, Filaret promoted Scripture reading for general education in regular public schools as well, as well as better instruction in the fundamentals of the faith. First, in 1822, Filaret, now Archbishop of Moscow (since 1821), wrote a guide to the Scriptures for use in public schools published by the Department of Public Education, entitled *Readings from the books of the sacred writings of the Old and New Testaments...For use in schools*. Focusing on the historical trajectory of the divine events related in the Bible, this is a highly readable, thoughtfully organized textbook for lower schools, presenting a solid overview of the parts of the Bible critical for understanding Biblical history. Written prior to the time of the condemnation of the Russian-language Bible, the included Bible verses were in Russian.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 140-41.

¹¹⁹ G. K. Schmid, *Istoriia srednikh uchebnykh zavedenii v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1878), 167, 172.

¹²⁰ And yet, complicating this obvious trend, Uvarov began as curator of the St. Petersburg educational district to promote Greek and Latin studies in the new reformed schools of Alexander's reign for a sound intellectual foundation for the students. Ironically, then, when Orthodox seminaries were promoting Russian over Latin, Uvarov was working to create solid studies in the classics, at least in secondary schools. See Cynthia H. Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786-1855* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 64-65, 145-146.

¹²¹ Florovsky, 211.

¹²² Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 141-142.

¹²³ *Chteniia iz knig sviashchennago pisaniia Vetkhago i Novago zaveta, zakliuchaiushchiia v sebe*

Most importantly, however, Filaret wrote a new catechism that became the standard text not just for religious schools, but also for teaching the catechism (*Zakon Bozhii*) in all public schools. Given its multiple editions through 1916 and general use by the Russian Orthodox faithful into the twentieth century, this could be considered Filaret's greatest contribution to the Russian Orthodox Church.¹²⁴ The prelate reconceived the catechism to bring its foundational arguments back to the Scriptures, with selected Bible verses grounding his explanations in every section. While theologically very close to Platon (Levshin)'s catechism that dominated in the late eighteenth century, the catechism's structure returns to that first outlined by Peter Mohyla (in his *Orthodox Confession*, modeled on the Tridentine Roman Catholic catechism), with sections on faith (presenting the creed and the seven sacraments), hope (the Lord's prayer), and love (the ten commandments). Filaret points out in his catechism that the Apostle Paul conceived these divisions of Christian faith, as explained in the Scriptures (I Corinthians 13:13).¹²⁵ In a substantive preface, Filaret explains the Greek word "catechism," the meaning of piety (*blagochestie*), of knowing God, and of Christianity, and then he devotes five pages to explaining "the revelation of God" in the Old and New Testaments.¹²⁶ Rewriting the catechism on a Scriptural foundation breathed new life into this instructional text. Florovsky describes Filaret's "powerful" writing style: "he writes with the living word, a word which seems to be thinking, an inspired and vocal pondering. Filaret always preached the Gospel and never tried to achieve mere rhetorical effect."¹²⁷ Having approved Filaret's original expanded catechism, the Synod asked Filaret to compose a shortened version that would be used as a guide for younger children and those in elementary schools; the original version, thus, became known as the *Prostrannyi katekhizis*, and the shorter version, the *Kratkii*.¹²⁸

This catechism's history became intertwined with that of the Bible Society and its

sviashchennuiu istoriiu i Evangel'skoi uchenie. Dlia upotrebleniia v uchilishchakh. (St. Petersburg: Tip. Departamenta narodnago prosveshcheniia, 1822). In the section on the New Testament, pp. 3-4, Filaret notes that he wrote this work initially for the schools of "mutual learning" —the Lancaster schools created under Bible Society auspices—but that "those concerned with the Christian instruction of children and of the people recognized the benefit of publishing these readings in a book, mostly for the use of children studying in the public schools..." (I have no information on whether this book was republished with Slavonic verses after the Russian translation was outlawed.)

¹²⁴ After the revival of the Orthodox Church in the late Soviet period, this catechism has been republished again. I have a copy of the *Prostrannyi khristianskii katekhizis* published in Moscow (Obraz press) in 2005.

¹²⁵ Ivan Korsunskii, "Filaret, mitropolit Moskovskii, v svoikh katikhizisakh," in *Sbornik, izdannyi Obshchestvom Liubitelei dukhovnago prosveshcheniia, po sluchaiu prazdnovaniia stoletniago iubileia so dnia rozhdeniia (1782-1882) Filareta, Mitropolita Moskovskago*, Vol. II (Moscow: Tip. L.F. Snegireva, Ostozhenka, 1883), 671-4, 681-2. I consulted the second edition (Korsunskii, 696, notes only a few technical corrections here compared to the first 1823 edition): *Khristianskii Katikhizis Pravoslavnyiia kafolicheskiiia vostochniia Greko-Rossiiskiiia Tserkvi. Razsmatrivannyi i odobrennyi Sviateishim Pravitel'stvuiushchim Sinodom po Vysochaishemu ego Imperatorskago Velichestva poveliiu* (Moscow, 1824).

¹²⁶ *Khristianskii Katikhizis*, 1-14, on Scriptures, 9-14, quotation, 9.

¹²⁷ Florovskii, 204.

¹²⁸ Korsunskii, "Filaret...v svoikh katekhizisakh," 697-98.

downfall. The first edition of the Catechism appeared in 1823 with not only Scriptures quoted in modern Russian, but also the creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the ten commandments, in order to present the tenets of the faith as clearly as possible, and in keeping with the movement toward the vernacular promoted by the Russian Bible Society. The Holy Synod had enthusiastically approved the 1823 catechism as instruction given "in the spirit of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the reasoning of evangelical truth," and immediately recommended Filaret to be awarded the order of Alexander Nevskii for his work on this instructional text.¹²⁹ His use of modern Russian, however, at a time when the opponents of the Bible Society's mystical "fanaticism" began to be more strident, set off a firestorm in 1824 led by Admiral Shishkov, who demanded that all printing and distribution of the catechism be stopped. In the end, the publication was pulled from the seminary and school shelves, and Filaret had to rewrite the catechism (both long and short versions) with Slavonic quotes replacing the modern Russian Scripture verses, creed, commandments, and prayers. Filaret retreated to his archdiocesan seat in Moscow in the heat of the abuse poured on him and did not return to St. Petersburg until the new version of his catechism was accepted in 1827 (and after his elevation to Moscow Metropolitan in 1825).¹³⁰ Regardless of its stormy beginnings, this catechism in its brief and long forms became the standard texts for all schools, religious and otherwise, in the Russian Empire and remained the staple Russian Orthodox catechism into the twentieth century.

Moving the study of the Scriptures to the center of Russian Orthodox instruction, as evident in the religious publications and ecclesiastical school curriculums spanning the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, reinvigorated Orthodox thought and brought new life to the church's teachings. Critical to this trend was the clergy's newfound ability to study the original Greek and Hebrew texts that—as was true for the humanists in sixteenth-century Europe—helped Russian Orthodox scholars to view the Scriptures with a fresh eye. In the early nineteenth century, Masonic and mystical Pietist writings on nurturing the "inner church" brought Scripture reading into vogue, and the rise of romantic nationalism had raised vernacular Russian as a national value for many. The triumphant translations of the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament during the Russian Bible Society years demonstrated a new enthusiasm for teaching the Word of God to the people that remained a critical impetus toward the final Synodal translation published under Alexander II. Despite the conservative reaction against the Bible Society and its modern Russian biblical translations, the increasing use of the Russian vernacular in theological instruction became unstoppable, as the native tongue lent an immediate comprehension of theological constructs previously unobtainable in

¹²⁹ Sushkov, 102.

¹³⁰ The most detailed description of these events is in Korsunskii, "Filaret... o svoikh katekhizisakh," 699-741; this revision to the catechism came after Nicholas I asked the Synod to produce a catechism for military schools, 732-33. See 741-751 for a description of the changes made to the text into its final accepted version in 1727; notably, Filaret also changed certain words in the non-Scriptural text to make it seem more in keeping with Church Slavonic.

Latin, and as Filaret's catechism and guidance in religious education led to a more Scripture-centered focus for both the laity and the clergy. While these trends did not create a Reformation in terms of a challenge to the institutional Church authority, they comprised a vital reform in the use and role of Scriptures within the Russian Orthodox Church. Orthodox clergy and laity would continue to see the Bible as an object of reverence in the liturgy, an icon of the Word of God. But now there was a more intimate understanding of the content of this holy book and its meaning; the Scriptures held the fullness of the Christian faith and were to be valued above all else in teaching the faith. Orthodox prelates under the leadership of Moscow Metropolitan Filaret seemed to embrace what Jaroslav Pelikan has described as "the heart" of Martin Luther's doctrine, his 1517 axiom that "[t]he true treasure of the church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God."¹³¹

¹³¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A history of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 4, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 128.