

Uladzislau Zavalniuk

Parish of St. Simon and St. Helen in Minsk (Belarus)

Email: vlad_za@tut.by

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9989-1621>

Fasting Practice Studies in Russian Orthodox Church Historiography in the Pre-Revolutionary Period

Badania dotyczące praktyki postu w rosyjskiej historiografii kościelnej w okresie przedrewolucyjnym

Даследаванні практыкі посту ў рускай царкоўнай гісторыяграфіі ў дарэвалюцыйны перыяд

Abstract

For centuries, Christianity has defined the ideology of the social development of Europe. The Church significantly influenced the course of historical events, filled the worldview of the individual and society with content. Fasting in Christianity is an important component of spiritual rebirth, a means of restraining natural human instincts, a sign of obedience to the divine sacraments. The historiography of fasting has not been specifically studied, that is why it causes great interest in the history of its research and is a topical and urgent issue. The purpose of the study is to determine the directions of the research of fasting by Russian Church historians in the period of the origin and development of Russian Church historiography. The formation of an absolutist state in Russia provoked reformist activities that significantly influenced the development of historical science. In the article the author researches the origin and development of Russian Church historiography in the imperial period (1725–1917), focuses on the study of fasting by Russian Church historians. At the end of the 18th – first half of the 19th century, they did not set specific research tasks, so their work was conditioned by the Orthodox apologetics and was limited to demonstration of the heritage of the Russian Church hierarchy. This determined the simplicity of research approaches, which were based on providentialism as a method of research. During the bourgeois reforms of the 60's of the 19th century, the research activities became more active, and the works of Church historians became multifaceted.

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The reconstruction of fasting was carried out according to Greek, Latin and Slavic sources, which were subjected to detailed critical analysis. In historical researches concerning fasting there are considerable changes, tendencies to more narrow problems, the main directions of which are embodied in special monographs, prevail. The researchers of fasting, interwoven with the outlines of the general history of Christianity, Orthodoxy, proceeded to analyse the problem in the context of the study of moral theology, where they had to pay close attention to the history of fasting.

Keywords: religion, fasting, Russian Church historiography

Abstrakt

Chrześcijaństwo od wieków określało ideologię rozwoju społecznego Europy. Cerkiew znacząco wpływała na bieg wydarzeń historycznych, konstytuując światopogląd jednostki i społeczeństwa. Post chrześcijański jest ważnym składnikiem odrodzenia duchowego, sposobem opanowania naturalnych ludzkich instynktów, wyrazem posłuszeństwa wobec Boga. Choć historiografia postu nie została dotąd szczegółowo zbadana, wzbudza ona obecnie duże zainteresowanie badaczy jako kwestia aktualna i perspektywiczna. Celem pracy jest określenie kierunków badań nad postem, podjętych przez związanych z cerkwią historyków w okresie narodzin i rozwoju rosyjskiej historiografii cerkiewnej. Powstanie państwa absolutystycznego w Rosji wywołało działania reformatorskie, które znacząco wpłynęły na rozwój nauk historycznych. Autor artykułu analizuje genezę i rozwój rosyjskiej historiografii cerkiewnej w okresie cesarstwa (1725–1917), omawia stan badań nad postem w ujęciu związanych z cerkwią historyków rosyjskich. Pod koniec XVIII i w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku badacze nie stawiali konkretnych celów badawczych, więc wyniki ich ustaleń były obarczone prawosławną apologetyką i ograniczały się do opisu spuścizny rosyjskiej hierarchii cerkiewnej. To zadecydowało o uproszczeniu analiz, opierających się na prowidencjalizmie jako metodzie badawczej. Dopiero w okresie reform liberalnych w latach 60. XIX wieku intensyfikuje się działalność badawcza, a prace historyków stają się wieloaspektowe. Badania nad postem prowadzono przy wykorzystaniu źródeł greckich, łacińskich i słowiańskich. W badaniach historycznych dotyczących postu zaszły duże zmiany: obecnie dominują tendencje do wyboru i prezentacji w monografiach wąskiej problematyki. Post jest opisywany w powiązaniu z historią ogólną chrześcijaństwa i prawosławia, a także w kontekście teologii etyki, w której historia postu zajmuje znaczące miejsce.

Slowa kluczowe: religia, post, historiografia cerkwi rosyjskiej

Анататыя

На працягу стагоддзяў хрысціянства вызначала ідэалогію грамадскага развіцця Еўропы. Царква значна ўплывала на ход гістарычных падзеяў, напаўняла зместам светаўспрыманне індыўвіда і соцыуму. Посніцтва ў хрысціянстве з'яўляецца важным кампанентам духоўнага адраджэння, сродкам утаймавання прыродных чалавечых інтынктаў, знакам падпарадкавання боскім устанаўленням. Спэцыяльна гістарыграфія пасту не вывучалася, што выклікае павышаную цікавасць да гісторыі яго даследавання і з'яўляецца актуальнай і надзённай праблемай. Мэта даследавання – вызначэнне кірункаў

вывученню пасту расійськім царкоўним гісторикамі падчас зарадженння і розвіцця рускай царкоўнай гісториографії. Станаўленне абсалютысцкай дзяржавы ў Расіі выклікала рэфарматарскую дзейнасць, якая істотна паўплывала на розвіццё гісторычнай навукі. У артыкуле разглядаецца зараджэнне і розвіццё расійскай царкоўнай гісторыографії ў імперскі перыяд (1725–1917 гг.), засяроджваеца ўвага на вывученні пасту расійськім царкоўнымі гісторикамі. У канцы XVIII – першай палове XIX ст. яны не ставілі перад сабой канкрэтных даследчых задач, таму іх працы абумоўліваліся праваслаўнай апалағетыкай і абмяжоўваліся дэманстрацыйнай спадчыны расійскай царкоўнай іерархіі. Гэтым вызначалася прастата даследчых падыходаў, за аснову якіх быў узяты правідэнцыяналізм як даследчы метад. Падчас буржуазных рэформ 60-х гг. XIX ст. актыўнізуеца навукова-даследчая дзейнасць, працы гісторыкаў царквы набываюць шматпланавыя харектар. Рэканструкцыя пасту праводзілася паводле грэчаскіх, лацінскіх і славянскіх крыніц, якія прайшлі дэталёвыя крытычныя аналіз. У гісторычных даследаваннях адносна посніцтва адбываюцца значныя змены, пераважаюць тэндэнцыі да больш вузкай праблематыкі, асноўныя напрамкі якіх увасабляюцца ў спецыяльных манографіях. Даследчыкі пасту, уплененага ў канву агульнай гісторыі хрысціянства, праваслаўя, перайшлі да аналізу праблемы ў кантэксле вывучэння маральнай тэалогіі, дзе ім давялося звярнуць пільную ўвагу на гісторыю посніцтва.

Ключавыя слова: рэлігія, пост, расійская царкоўная гісторыографія

For centuries, Christianity designated the direction of social development in Europe. The standpoint of the Church significantly affected the course of historical events. The teachings of the Church filled the worldview of individual people and society in general with religious content. One of its most important elements was, for an extended period of time, fasting which today – along with a spiritual revival in the former Soviet republics – has started to gain significance once again.

The period between the 18th and the beginning of the 20th century was the time of many upheavals and reforms in the Russian Empire which affected all areas of life: political, economic, social, spiritual, and cultural. Technical progress and changes in the social structure stimulated the development of science. It is to be noted that for some time, the object of historical studies was political history (history of empires, dynasties, etc.). It was only at the time of feudalism and the emergence of capitalism that the object of studies was greatly extended. The scope of studies spanned issues such as the social and economic development of nations inhabiting the territory of the Russian Empire, as well as religious and cultural aspects.

Studies on the history of Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church began and transformed into a separate area of science in the middle of the 18th century. However, the period of their proper development and accomplishments was the 19th century. Scientific studies of historians referring to this subject matter intensified in the 1860s. Nevertheless, Church historiography remains a perfunctorily studied subject and is still interesting for researchers.

* fast (fasting): in some religions means refraining from the consumption of any food or its individual types for a specific period of time. It is one of the major

measures regulating the life of churchgoers, which is also conducive to enhancing piety (*Belaruskaâ èencykłapedyâ*, 2001; Zaval'nûk, 2012).

The purpose of this paper is to present studies on fasting carried out by the Russian Orthodox Church historians at the beginning as well as the peak moments of development of the Russian Orthodox Church historiography, as well as to analyse the tendencies in the development of these studies. In principle, the historiography of this subject matter has not been compiled. There are few historiographic works which describe the development of Church history. A. Lebedev takes priority in the Russian Orthodox Church historiography with respect to studies on the history of Christianity and the Church, in particular in the initial period (18th century – first half of the 19th century) (Lebedev, 2004).

Publications of A. Kartashev (Kartashev, 1991), R. Florovsky (Florovsky, 1983) and M. Glubokovsky (Glubokovsky, 1992) made a significant contribution to the description of the history of the Orthodox Church. Soviet historiography did not engage in this subject matter.

It was only at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century that the problem of development of the history of the Church was tackled, again the works of S. Pushkarev (Pushkarev, 1998), M. Solncev (Solncev, 2005) and A. Sidorenko (Sidorenko, 2004). However, attention should be drawn to the fragmentary nature of studies on the issue of fasting in Russian religious historiography.

The beginning of the 18th century was a time of great and important change, which affected practically all aspects of life in Russia. The huge reform impulse which affected the scope of humanities was related to the assumption of power by Peter I and his rule in the Russian state. Solidification of the absolute power of the state and active internal and external policy required their ideological justification. Changes in the country created new conditions for the development of historical knowledge; simultaneously, the Church's impact on culture significantly decreased and lay education emerged (Sakharov, 1978, p. 60).

In this period, secular schools appeared, an easier alphabet was introduced, lay books were printed, and the press flourished. All of this provided an impulse for the development of historical literature. This was the moment when Western European historiography became known and general history works were translated; among them, a central place was occupied by the work of a proponent of the natural law theory: Samuel Pufendorf's *An Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe*. Philosophical understanding of history was related to the theory of natural law and social contract. Proponents of the natural law theory and advocates of new ideas in science were F. Prokopovich, V. Tatishev, M. Lomonosov, M. Shcherbatov (Solncev, 2005, p. 96; Pushkarev, 1998, pp. 41–45).

The theological tradition of understanding the history of the 18th century developed hand in hand with secular education. Permeation of the European knowledge became a problem for Russian theology, due to the fact that the adoption of the majority of postulates of the West European religious culture without detriment to the Orthodox

Church was impossible. R. Florovsky believed that the ‘division in the conscience of the Church is the most tragic effect of Peter’s epoch’; furthermore, the invisible division was also present in the Church community. Florovsky distinguished between ‘reformers’ and ‘traditionalists’. The first group was active for the sake of theology and history, whereas the other saw no sense in it (Solncev, 2005, p. 101).

When analysing Russian church historiography, the church historian A. Kartashev noted that the history of the Church as a special discipline fully belonging to the 19th century. However, the foundation for the emergence of Russian history of the Church was prepared by the 18th century, which is when the development of history, in general, took place in Russia (Kartashev, 1991, p. 12).

An important factor for the emergence of Church historiography was the awareness of the necessity of introducing the teaching of history to the Russian theological schools. The *Spiritual Regulations* drafted by F. Prokopovich, a friend of Peter I, assumed promotion of theological schools in Russia, where the teaching of history of the Church and civil history would be mandatory.

The main text of the *Spiritual Regulations* comprised three parts. A detailed programme of setting up religious schools was described in the second part of the document. The problem of choosing teachers was the priority. According to the *Spiritual Regulations*, schools were meant to be closed institutions of a monastic type, managed by a rector and a prefect. They should be funded by episcopates and crops from the lands belonging to the Church and monasteries. Boarding houses (‘seminaries’) with Orthodox churches and libraries were opened in the schools. Teaching was divided into eight grades; subjects taught included Latin, Greek, Old Hebrew and Old Slavic, geography, history, arithmetic, geometry, logic, dialectic, rhetoric, politics, physics, metaphysics and theology (a two-year course) (Anisimov, 1998–2012, vol. 16, pp. 434–435).

After Peter I’s death, the progress of reforms in the area of education and science and their implementation was greatly slowed down. Archbishop Georges Florovsky in his work *The Ways of Russian Theology* refers to the instruction of Catherine II to the Holy Synod, where the empress said: ‘Even after 40 years after the publication of the Regulations.... seminarians still do not know the history of the Church nor the civil history’ (Lebedev, 2004, p. 397), whereas the historian of the Russian Orthodox Church, A. Lebedev, whilst describing the establishment and development of scientific studies on the history of the Church, believed that such attempts met with little success. So, this was the case not only at the beginning but throughout the entire 18th century (Lebedev, 2004, p. 397).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that already in the middle of the century the first theology textbook was published, penned by the future Metropolitan Platon (Levshin) (Platon, 1765a), where providentialism is justified in detail (a historiosophic view where Providence is considered the force controlling the fate of people and the world). Belief about the existence of providence, which watches over the world and history as a research method. It should be remembered that Platon was also a successful Church

historian. He understood and justified providentialism. He adopted an axiom that a historical episode that went down in history should not be subject to criticism. As an episode, it should only be subject to interpretation based on a thorough awareness of theological tradition, which determines its nature or erroneous conclusions about it.

Evaluation of an episode may only take place after one becomes acquainted with the conclusions. The basis for the evaluation of systems of values is valuable guidelines of the Orthodox dogma where God is good, whereas abandoning God is evil. A positive (enlightening) episode testifies to the presence of God in a mythical creature, whereas a negative episode testifies about God's concession. At this moment, history is divided into a never-ending series of stories with a positive or negative outcome. Expansion of historical knowledge is not an analysis or a critique, but in principle, it relies on procuring new information about previously unknown historical subjects and their inclusion in the historical narrative.

Such historical concepts, in the light of which the historical process is understood as the implementation of divine oracles, excludes such innovations as natural law science and the social contract and fully corresponds to tasks set before Church historiography. In this period, a lot of historical sources were compiled and introduced for scientific use (Solncev, 2005, p. 104, 107).

Once again, attention was drawn to the incorrect place of Church historiography in theological schools during the reign (tsardom) of Paul. A decree of the Synod that required the introduction of a brief study on the history of the Church to seminars and theological academies appeared at the end of the 18th century. Authors of the decree (Church leaders) concluded that if the history of the Church was included in the group of sciences, textbooks with the use of which it would be possible to study it would have to come into existence. Until then, works about the history of the Church written in Latin, primarily by Protestant theologians, performed the role of such didactic aids in seminars and in monastic schools. A. Lebedev noted that learning with the use of such materials was hard: some had to be summarised, others supplemented and some corrected – a lot of work had to be done and the results were dubious. This gave rise to the necessity of having textbooks both about the history of the Church and the history of the Orthodox Church, written by Russian authors and Orthodox Church researchers (scientists, historians) (Lebedev, 2001, p. 400).

The first publications that mark, according to A. Kartashev, a systematic series of works about the history of the Russian Orthodox Church include *Brief History of the Russian Church* written by the aforementioned Metropolitan Platon (Platon, 1765b) and published in 1805, as well as works of Ambrose Ornatsky (Kartashev, 1991, p. 14; Platon, 1765a). Nevertheless, it must be noted that the subject of fasting in the works of the aforementioned authors appears only in minor guidelines about the practice of fasting in the Russian Orthodox Church. In Platon's work, which was highly evaluated by his peers as 'rare on account of its talent, abundance of facts, special remarks and serious criticism' (Kartashev, 1991, p. 16), fasting was simply not taken into account. In the text of the work, the concept of fasting appears several times with respect to the

accusations of the Greeks. For the first time, it refers to the charge of heresy brought against the Byzantine monk Martin, who taught heresy mixed with Armenian and Latin errors (Anisimov, 1998–2012, vol. 16, p. 89). The next one is the conviction of the Byzantines for treason of faith – a union with Rome signed by the heads of the Eastern Churches at the Council of Florence (Anisimov, 1998–2012, vol. 16, p. 298). The issue of fasting is not mentioned in six editions (volumes) of *The History of the Russian Hierarchy* by Ambrose Ornatsky, which was of huge significance in the Russian Orthodox Church science. The work contained detailed information about dioceses, metropolitans, and patriarchs. Private information about the life of Russian monasteries (active and existing at any point in time) was collected in five out of six volumes, in alphabetical order (Ornatsky, 1807–1815).

A new compulsion for studies on the history of the Church appeared during the reign of Alexander I of Russia, in the middle of the 19th century and was related to the introduction to seminars and academies of the statute prepared under the supervision of M. Speransky and approved in 1814. Since that moment, the history of the Church as a separate science became independent and took a strong position among other theological disciplines. A recommendation was made that the history of the Church was taught for the last two years of an academic course (such courses lasted four years).

A. Lebedev appreciated the statute and underscored its flexibility. Relying on a foundation, the statute could be diverse and subject to changes, which had a beneficial impact on the development of the Church historiography. Initially, in relation to the statute, only one chair of Church historiography was set up in academies. However, between the 1840s and 1860s, it was divided into four independent divisions: ancient history of the Church, biblical history, history of the Russian Church, and the modern history of the Western Church (Lebedev, 2004, pp. 407–408).

A major part of studies in the area of the history of Christianity and the Orthodox Church in Russia in the first half of the 19th century was carried out by Metropolitan E. Bolkhovitinov (Bolkhovitinov, 1995), Bishop Penzey Innocentius (Smirnov) (Innocentius, 1817), A. Muravyev (Muravyev, 1838), Archbishop Filaret (Filaret, 1848–1849) and Moscow Metropolitan Macarius (Macarius, 1995a). In the works of Bolkhovitinov and A. Muravyev, as well as Ambrose Ornatsky, the history of the Church is limited to detailed information about its special directions. Bolkhovitinov's history of St. Sophia's Cathedral is preceded by two sketches on early Christianity in Kievan Rus, and they are followed by a description of individual biographies of all metropolitans of Kiev with an extended breakdown of the contemporary history of the Church. The result of the work is a historical sketch on the life of the Church in ancient times and in the West Russian period (Glubokovsky, p. 18). A. Muravyev's *History* is also limited to the biographies of metropolitans and patriarchs.

The work *Outline of the History of the Church from Biblical Times to the 18th Century* by I. Smirnov was, according to Kartashev, a result of lectures for the first-year students of the Petersburg Theological Academy, where the Russian history of the Church was taught in combination with general history. The researcher drew attention

to the significant drawbacks of the *Outline*: the absence of an internal history of the Church, lack of clarity, abbreviations, and incomprehensible passages. The *Outline* had no material impact on the development of science, but it continued to function in theological schools for a long time. Until the 1960s, the work was required reading in seminars and it limited academic teachers for an extended period of time (Kartashev, 1991, p. 21).

The works of the above-listed Church historians were fully compliant with the provisions by which academic teachers should be guided. During lectures, they were not allowed to criticise sharply, systematise in an arbitrary manner, or show careless political inclination. They were also required to present specific events briefly, clearly and based on original information sources. In this context, the authors taught the history of hierarchy which was intertwined in the structure of political history. As far as the issue of fasting and refraining from food is concerned, references to these were sporadic in nature in the aforementioned works. They usually occurred when heresies were mentioned, e.g.: 'Nestor was falsely accused of breaking the regulations of fasting and that he allegedly prohibited fasting during Christmas' (Muravyev, 1838, p. 49) or as information used to determine chronology, e.g. 'Boretsky died on Wednesday 2 March of 1631 in the second week of Lent' (Kartashev, 1991, p. 21; Bolkhovitinov, 1995, p. 154, 176).

According to A. Kartashev, society received the 'true scientific history of the Russian Orthodox Church' after the publication of the five volumes of the *The History of the Russian Orthodox Church* penned by the contemporary Bishop of Riga, Filaret Gumilevsky, where an ordered periodisation of the history of the Church was proposed. A new principle of arranging the material was put forward (at the end, every volume featured an alphabetical index of persons and items). With respect to every period, attention was drawn to the expansion of Christianity, the doctrine of the Church, the worship, administration of the Church and life of the Christian community.

Publication of five volumes of *The History of the Russian Church* written by Filaret coincided with the publication of Metropolitan Macarius Bulgakov's, *History of the Russian Church*. It is to be noted that Filaret's work is a complete study, where the author showed the unity and the relation of events, disclosed the historical process from the inside, and tried to present an analytical review of the history of the Church. At the same time, the multi-volume work of Macarius appeared gradually, as part of a preparation of the next historical chapter. According to experts, during the preparation of the history of the Church, Macarius made an attempt at analysing all historical documents referring to this subject matter. His work is still appreciated and considered unique on account of its completeness. Nevertheless, critical opinion of the majority of researchers of Macarius' work should also be mentioned, who noted that the author was limited to narrative pragmatism and to chronological references to events (Sakharov, 1998, pp. 50–53, 60).

The issue of fasting in Filaret's *The History...* is contained in § 31 Part I of *Controversy About Fasting on Wednesday and Friday* (Filaret, 1848–1849,

pp. 153–157). After a thorough compilation and comparison of the Kievan and Laurentian Codex, the author sheds light on the history of a cruel confrontation of high officials of the Russian Orthodox Church in the middle of the 12th century. The conflict resulted from divergences in the statute and documents that contained principles and guidelines, determined the order of the liturgy and the principles of using major liturgical books in the Byzantine liturgical tradition.

Advocates of the ancient times in Church practice applied the Jerusalem Statute (6th–8th centuries), yet in the 12th century, the majority of Orthodox Churches primarily used the Studite Statute (9th century) and were guided by new principles, adopted by the Church councils in the 10th and the 12th century. Such documents introduced new provisions on the practice of fasting. Divergences caused ardent opposition in the Church which engulfed the southern part of Kievan lands. Bulgarian and Greek bishops, as well as lay authorities also participated in the opposition.

After a thorough examination of debates about fasting, Filaret concluded that ‘not every ancient idea can gain an appreciation of the entire Church and its dogged defence may harm the soul’ (Filaret, 1848–1849, p. 156). He noted dangerous tendencies of secular authorities joining the discussion and use of the administrative resources in internal disputes of the Church.

Filaret also examined in detail the fasting practice adopted by Anthony the Hermit, Theodosius, and his pupils: Damian, Mark, Spiridon, and Nicolaus and considered them a model to be followed. Fasting in Christianity, listed in statutes, was meant to encourage the spiritual and moral desires to dominate over the sensual ones. Being a fixed rule in the 19th century, it did not require justification. However, Filaret points to the practice of Anthony and Theodosius, analysed in detail and described in Par. 43–49 of Chapter V of *The Christian Life* ‘as the model for emulation’. He stressed that ‘they shone like stars in the Russian soil. They were steadfast in fasting, faithful in waking or on their knees; some fasted for a day or for two; others ate bread and water, and some ate cooked or raw vegetables. All of them were filled with love’ (Filaret, 1848–1849, p. 250).

In Macarius’ multi-volume work, the issue of fasting was presented in fragments. The author defined fasting as a proposal of the Church, the purpose of which was spiritual flourishing. Macarius, confirming close relations with Byzantium and Russia, concluded that ‘the Russian Church was always in agreement with the Greek Church, which can be easily observed based on the preserved Russian calendars from the 12th–13th centuries’ (Macarius, 1995a, p. 334). The author stressed the continuity and uniformity of the Russian and Greek Orthodox religion, which was reflected in ceremonies that derived from Byzantium: Easter, Pentecost, Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Annunciation, Birth of John the Baptist, Saint Apostles Peter and Paul, and Elevation of the Holy Cross; in weeks of strict fasting, in the week of ‘worshipping the Cross, Palm Sunday, Lent and Nativity Fasting’, the evidence of which was the *Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles* and *The Book of Steps* (Macarius, 1995a, p. 334).

Macarius' studies showed that the disputes about fasting on Wednesday and Friday ended in the 11th–12th centuries. The author, referring to the systematic principle, distributed by Metropolitan Maxim to all churches and applicable to all members, said that during the course of the century, there were no disagreements and gossip pertaining to fasting, which would require the decisions of top Church authorities (Macarius, 1995b, p. 164).

In 1861, serfdom was abolished in the Russian Empire. The reforms in courts, education, press, and military were called 'great reforms'. The effect of their practical application was a quality change in socio-political relations, acceleration of the rate of economic development, and the emergence of new social structures. The Orthodox Church was forced to join the social changes initiated by the government and take some steps with respect to the introduction of reforms in the spiritual aspect.

An important event in the history of the Church in general and in Church historiography, in particular, was the publication of new provisions pertaining to monastic schools and seminars in 1867 and the publication of a statute for theological schools in 1869.

The new statute for theological academies (the so-called *Macarius' Statute*) was published and entered into force on 30 May 1869; its initiator and chief editor was His Eminence Macarius (later Moscow Metropolitan). He divided theological academies into three faculties: theology, history of the Church, and Church practice, which positively affected the position of Church historiography. The Church historian A. Lebedev described the second half of the 19th century as 'an undoubtedly important period in the development of Church historiography in Russia'.

Students who were admitted to the history of the Church faculty were exclusively studying historical sciences for four years. Soon, such faculties at some universities (in Moscow) became the most popular and the most frequented by students. However, the most important event was the introduction of the requirement in the statute that in order to receive the title of master of theology, one had to submit a printed essay and subsequently publicly defend it in line with the applicable procedure. Granting the degree of Doctor of Theology took place on the same principles that were applicable at Russian universities (Lebedev, 2004, p. 412). It is to be noted that thanks to the reform, laypersons who did not take religious vows could also teach at clerical academies. The new generation professors reacted to the changes in the social life of that period and were the forerunners of the new ideological principles at academies (Kartashev, 1991 p. 74).

During the 'era of liberation', a question about the participation of the clergy in public life emerged, along with the attitude of the Church to the secular culture and the attitude of faith to present-day problems. The 1860s were the beginning of the Russian Church press. The revival of the Church was conducive to the publication of *Diocese News* devoted to the events in dioceses. In its publications, the Church tried to shed light on the political, social, and cultural issues from the Christian perspective. Thanks to these publications, a Church community came into being.

Bishops, priests, monks and laypeople declared that the Church was ready to support the reforms, but ‘it did not want to reform the world, yet it advocated the reforms that were beneficial for the people’.

All of this stimulated the development of Church historiography. The number of master and doctoral theses in the area of theological studies grew. It is to be noted that prior to the issue of the Statute of Theological Academies, the statute of Russian universities was approved in 1863. This was vital for the development of the history of the Church due to the fact that as a science it was included in the curricula at history and philology faculties for the very first time.

According to A. Lebedev, Church historical literature quickly started to fill in the gaps in this area. Numerous papers on Church history, sometimes very valuable ones, were featured in religious magazines. The researchers could independently, irrespective of the subject matter, devise how to describe it, how to present the subject matter and what to rely their likes and dislikes on. A direction of studies had emerged. Obviously, the so-called scientific schools, comparable to Catholic and Protestant ones, did not come into being. Nevertheless, one can concede from the point of view of historians that the day of adoption of the statute may be considered to be the date of birth of literature on Church history in Russia. Church history went beyond the borders of education and became a phenomenon of public significance (Lebedev, 2004, p. 413).

Owing to the positive impact of academic (spiritual) and university statutes, scientific searches influenced the emergence of several dozen seminal works about the history of Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church. Many acknowledged scientists of the second half of the 19th century who examined the general history of the Church were well-known professors of the Petersburg Theological Academy, namely: I. Troitsky (1877), V. Bolotov (1994), F. Kurganov (1874), the Moscow Theological Academy: A. Gorsky (1902), A. Lebedev (2004), the Moscow University: A. Ivancov-Platonov (1890, 1869–1870), A. Lopukhin (*Tolkovay Bible*, 1997); the history of the Russian Orthodox Church – Y. Golubinsky (1997), P. Znamensky (2001), and A. Dobroklonsky (2001).

It is obvious that the concept of fasting in the works of the above-listed historians was analysed in the context of the general history of the Orthodox Church. The most important aspect of Church historiography was the fact that it took the stance of providentialism, whereas its development was reflected in the historiosophy of Alexander Gorsky and contained in a certain type of Church historicism. The scientist worked for over forty years at the Theological Academy in Moscow and was known in Church historiography as the Church historian from a group of scientists/ founders of a critical method of examining the early-Christian and Old Russian dogma. This famous theologian set the basis for the development of the historical principles of the teaching of Christian dogma. He was a teacher who brought up several generations of educated priests (Melkov, 2006, p. 3). A. Gorsky believed that ‘dogmatic theology and historical providentialism are united in the dogmatic concept of historical knowledge,

where the dogma and the history for the scientist are a part of the divine plan intended for humanity'. In relation to this, familiarity with history becomes a never-ending approach to get to know God's will, which is manifested in the historical process, whereas in history, it is to deepen the historical knowledge in line with the principle of maximum mastery of the factual material (Solncev, 2005, p. 187).

A telling example is the collection of academic lectures of A. Gorsky entitled *History of the Gospels and the Apostolic Church*. The author, based on a critical analysis of multiple sources from the 1st and 3rd centuries, claims that the emergence and development of fasting as a practice is aimed at making sure that the Christian spiritual and moral aspirations that dominate over the senses, remain valid for the Church as such. In the chapter entitled *Status of Teaching in the Apostolic Church*, the author combines the emergence of the fasting practice with the development of 'one of the most important principles of exercises and actions', namely asceticism (Gorsky, 1902, p. 448). Asceticism was meant to develop based on the example of Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:2) and the Apostles (Acts 13:14). Having thoroughly analysed the works of the earliest Church writers (Ambrosius, Hippolytus, Tertullianus, Eusebius, Epiphanius), A. Gorsky pinpoints the unity of ceremonies and practice of Jews and Christians in the apostolic period:

in worship, one can only conclude that they (Christians) have not completely left their former practice and regulations of the Jewish elders; as to the food for the time of fasting, we have certain rules (...) (Book V, Chapter 18): observe fasting (during six days before Easter) and do not eat anything apart from bread, water and vegetables and do not drink anything but water (Gorsky, 1902, p. 454).

Whilst analysing works devoted to the history of Christianity from the second half of the 19th century, Lebedev noted:

A. Gorsky was convinced that the history of the Church as a science is subject to the general principles of historical truth. The truth in Church history is a historical truth without references. A Church historian learns it by applying the same methods that are used to acquire any other type of historical truth (Lebedev, 2004, p. 454).

The subject of fasting was also reflected in the works of Alexey Lebedev who headed the faculty of ancient Church history at the Theological Academy in Moscow for almost two decades. Alexey was known as the author of works on the history of Byzantine Church and Church historiography.

When assessing Christian historians, Lebedev relied on the criteria which came to be his research principles: an author's objectivity (impartiality), maximum attention during work with sources, a comprehensive analysis of facts, specification of conclusions, the ability to perceive – apart from ordinary facts – of deep ties and outlines, as well as the ability to identify the most diverse factors affecting the course of events.

The issue of fasting in the studies of A. Lebedev is examined in the context of analysis of the ancient Church. The scientist draws attention to the fact that in the history of humanity, fasting does not only refer to Christianity. It was the most important part of every type of initiation, e.g. in the Assyrian, Egyptian and Greek cultures. In the history of Judaism, there was one national fasting established by the law in the times of the Old Testament – Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which spanned several days. On the other hand, the Jewish Talmud created an entire system of fasting.

Fasting in ancient Christianity differed by severity (there were between 180 and 196 days of fasting). Observance of public fasting was listed and closely regulated by Church provisions. Referring to early Christian sources, A. Lebedev draws special attention to the requirements pertaining to fasting imposed by the Church in special cases: to punish or to heal the soul (Lebedev, 2001, pp. 189–195).

It is to be noted that a character trait of A. Lebedev's works was language – comprehensible for diverse readers. His books are easy to read even today, and simultaneously they correspond to the level of contemporary science. The works of V. Bolotov, professor of ancient history of the Church at the Petersburg Theological Academy, were evaluated completely differently by contemporary scientists: 'Only a scientist who feels he is a true expert in his respective field is capable of summarising the entire theological direction so briefly and simultaneously so significantly and thoroughly. He presented the core and the shades of opinions of the Fathers of the Church accurately and comprehensively'. Nevertheless, the scientific works of V. Bolotov were difficult to stomach for readers with a standard education (Bolotov, 1994, p. VII). The scientist's interest focused primarily on the ancient history of the Churches: Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian and Persian. Bolotov refers to the issue of fasting in the second edition of his work *Lectures on the History of the Ancient Church* where, in the chapter entitled *Inner Life of the Church: Clarification of Dogmas and Beginnings of Church Teachings and Ceremonies*, he examines controversies related to the time of celebrating Easter.

The difference between Asian and all other churches resulted in a dispute that referred to the correct date of celebrating Easter. The above-mentioned Christian communities ended fasting and celebrated Easter on the 14th day (first full moon in spring) of the month of Nisan (in line with the Old Testament), irrespective of the day on which the 14th day fell. All other churches ended the fasting exclusively on Sunday 'according to the Apostolic tradition'. Subsequently, referring to St. Irenaeus, V. Bolotov concluded that Lent in various churches lasted for a specific amount of time (42 hours, one day, two days or more). This also entailed differences in the form of celebration. Western Christians (and also other non-Asian Christians) observed strict fasting before Easter (on Friday and Saturday) and subsequently, there was a wake (from Saturday to Sunday), which was related to waiting for the second coming of Christ. According to *Czterodziesiątnik* (later but doggedly conservative representatives of the Persian ritual), Persian Christians observed strict fasting on the 14th day of the

month of Nisan, and on the evening of the same day, they celebrated Paskha and Eucharist with celebrations ending afterwards (Bolotov, 1994, p. 430).

Professors of Russian theological academies, I. Troyetsky, F. Kurganov, A. Ivancov-Platonov and A. Lopukhin who worked on Church historiography, examined the problem of fasting, relying on studies contained in the work *Beginning and Development of Ancient Christianity*. It is usually a 'reconstruction' of the meaning of fasting with the use of rare Greek and Latin sources from the first centuries of our era subjected to a detailed analysis. A. Ivancov-Platonov, studying the history of the emergence of week-long Christian fasting and referring to the *Apostolic Decree*, attracts attention to the fact that already in the first century Wednesday and Friday were singled out as days of atonement, sadness and fasting. These very days are related to the memory of Jesus Christ being turned in (Wednesday) and crucified (Friday) (Ivancov-Platonov, 1890, p. 211–212).

Historians specialising in studies of the Russian Orthodox Church (Y. Golubinsky, P. Znamensky, A. Dobroklonsky) tackled the issue of fasting also in the context of the history of the Russian Orthodox Church. *History of the Russian Church* written by Y. Golubinsky is still believed to be the most reliable publication in this field. The scientist was one of the best students of Professor A. Gorsky, whereas relations with him became a milestone in his spiritual and professional formation. The primary scientific and historical postulate of Y. Golubinsky was systematic criticism. The Russian Church historiography is dominated by the idea that the history by Y. Golubinsky is a solid and original critique that combines everything into a single whole. Y. Golubinsky critically assessed the entire volume of material data and scientific theories from beginning to end. He analysed and assessed every detail with precision and care; he ruthlessly checked and documented every view and all conclusions (Glubokovsky).

In Y. Golubinsky's works, the motive of fasting is discussed in the *Supplement to Chapters* in the first part of the work entitled *Fasting and Our Disputes About It. Eating Throughout the Year and Principles Regulating It*, where he subjects it to a thorough critical analysis, referring to the original sources (Golubinsky, 1997, pp. 463–476).

An example of the new mode of teaching the history of the Russian Church is the *Guidebook on the History of the Russian Church* by Professor P. Znamensky published in 1871. Taking into account the possibility of the development of society via education, the scientist takes into account the possibility of self-advancement of society which is not related to divine intervention. In his searches in the area of the history of the Church, P. Znamensky was guided by the principle of evolution in the cultural and socio-economic life of all layers of Russian society, based on the numerical advantage of the peasantry (Znamensky, 2001, p. 8).

A. Dobroklonsky, a former student of Y. Golubinsky, V. Kluchevsky and A. Lebedev at the Moscow Theological Academy fulfilled the task of mastering and updating the general course on the history of the Russian Church. Kartashev noted that in the period between 1884 and 1893, he managed to write and publish a useful *Guidebook* for students, teachers, theologians, and laypeople. The work of A. Dobroklonsky

contained materials available at the contemporary level of science where emergence and development of the practice of fasting in Russian society were examined in detail; it also introduced extensive reference material to the literature on the subject. After this publication, no researcher of the history of religion and no other Russian scientist took up the task of writing a new general history of the Russian Orthodox Church (Kartashev, 1991, p. 704).

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the chronological and narrative mode of presenting historical events started to be a thing of the past, making place for / giving way to a problem-focused style. The periodisation of history during the reign of great princes and kings was substituted by the perception of history through a prism of political, cultural, historical, and socio-economic processes.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the methodology of historical science underwent significant changes. The value of sources based on scientific works rapidly grew. Numerous archival documents were introduced for use and published for the first time, along with ethnographic and archaeological sources. Whilst characterising this period, the historian M. Rubinstein noted that in the general development of historical science, the significance of this period depends not so much on the development of historical thought, which pushes the science forward, but on the advancement of historical knowledge. Development of historical science acquires special character: it goes not so much inside, but across, and is related to the breaking apart into neighbouring and supplementary disciplines which acquire separate meanings. Separation of certain areas of historical knowledge contributes to the improvement of methodology of historical studies, a compilation of specialist historical knowledge and expands the scope of historical materials.

These were the features of new scientific studies. The rejection of philosophical and historical generalisations was accompanied by the development of a particular type of studies: special monographs. They are of great importance in the formation of scientific bases for further development of historical science (Rubinstein, 1941, p. 355). This distinguishes the studies on fasting and asceticism in the Russian Church historiography at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The Church historians P. Solarsky (1901), I. Yanyshhev (1906), M. Olesnitzky (1900), M. Stelletzky (1914), M. Tareyev (1908, 1910), P. Ponomarev (1899), S. Zarin (1907), and S. Smirnov (1901, 1912) (in contrast to their predecessors, who viewed the issue of fasting by incorporating it into the general history of Christianity and the Orthodox Church) went on to examine the problem in the context of studies on moral theology, which required special attention paid to the history of asceticism and fasting. All the above-listed authors, excluding S. Smirnov, relied on such source materials as the Bible and tradition in their studies. The concept of moral theology as science was understood by Church historians as a systematic teaching of the Church about the divine moral law and Christian obligations of building and improving human life in the Christian spirit and in alliance with Christ.

Important studies in this sphere also include the modern works of Archpriest P. Solarsky. At that time, he was a full professor and taught theology, logic, and psychology. He also knew Hebrew well. The result of many years of his work was the *Glossary of Biblical Names* and six editions of the *Orthodox Moral Theology* (Men', 2002).

The author wished to write his work in a manner to make it most useful for everybody. Simultaneously, as noted by M. Glubokovsky, extensive materials were compiled during his studies, in particular Biblical and patristic, still valuable, though not subjected to an adequate analysis (Glubokovsky, p. 12). When discussing fasting, P. Solarsky used and adjusted scientific terminology in a form most accessible for the general public, based on the quotations from the New and the Old Testament. He claimed that the concept of 'fasting' does not entail ordinary refraining from food. Refraining is used as a means for keeping physical health, whereas fasting is used for the mortification of the body and for the love of Christian humility, atonement, prayer, etc. (2 Sam 12–16 Nm 9:1–2, Cf. 3). Refraining should be exercised regularly; meanwhile, fasting is temporary, whereas refraining is a principle of nature and a physician. Fasting is the law (principle) and a commandment of the Holy Church. Whilst justifying the importance of fasting, P. Solarsky claimed that the most important meaning of fasting is given by God in the Covenant as a salvation for the body and the soul (Gen 2:17). In the future, fasting will be approved anew by Moses and other prophets (Leviticus 16:29–31, 23: 27–32, Joel 1:14. 2, 12–17). In the New Testament, the Lord teaches us how to fast (Mt 4, 2, 6, 16–18, 17–21) (Solncev, 2005, pp. 155–156).

Russian theology was greatly successful, in particular, due to the experiment of Protopresbyter I. Yanyshev. For the first time in the history of Russian literature, an attempt was made at clarifying the concept of 'morality'. All the elements that are included in this universal concept still have more or less clear and precise definitions. The researcher disclosed their mutual psychological ties. Justifying the moral dignity and the purpose (destiny) of the human nature, he made an attempt at determining the highest good and how it is conducive to the salvation in Christ (Yanyshev, 1906). He provided the moral system with a theoretical structure with the use of an in-depth analysis of the idea of morality. In asceticism, he discerned 'the sense of deeds of Christian self-perfection in all aspects of religious and moral life'. Through this, Christians are summoned to independently discover the Divine Kingdom and to make it a permanent part of themselves. It should be the Divine Kingdom which they experience at the moment of conversion and which becomes hidden from them. Christ teaches us that 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. The violent take it by force'. (Mt 11:12) (Yanyshev, 1906, p. 433).

This category also includes the work of Professor M. Olesnitzky, who extended the studies of I. Yanyshev and enriched them by introducing psychological elements and numerous parallels. M. Olesnitzky's work is theoretical in nature. Its positive features are multiple detailed searches, which greatly assisted Church historians in transforming the provisions referring to Christian ethics. When examining the issue of

fasting, the author focused on its symbolic content that shows sadness. Sadness, in the author's opinion, has two causes: on the one hand, it is compassion for the suffering Saviour, and on the other one, sorrow for sins. This is what the Saviour talked about: 'But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast' (Mt 9:15). M. Olesnitzky claims that fasting has no significance as such, irrespective of what further acts of the spirit are going to be. Therefore, the Saviour said that 'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man' (Mt 15:11). Fasting is important and has great significance for the spiritual growth and overcoming of desires. Calling people to fasting through Prophet Joel, God simultaneously summons him to 'crying and lamenting, breaking of the heart and turning to God' (Jl 02:12, etc.). The Holy Church praises the first day of the forty-day fast with these words: 'The true fasting is the rejection of evil, moderation of the tongue, judging anger, rejecting desire, gossip, lies, and perjury' (Olesnitzky, 1900).

The scientific systematisation of all of the accomplishments of theological ethics is included in the great work of Professor M. Scielecki, where the Christian moral doctrine is developed and shown from the perspective of Divine Law and moral obligations. The author shows that the man in the Bible is an object of ethical considerations as a creature of the Divine Kingdom and a divine being, redeemed by the Saviour and enjoying divine grace needing to accomplish proper excellence. In their revival, all Christians are given the name of Divine Children, so that they are able to live ethically or morally on the condition that they always observe Christian values by their development and by solidifying themselves in Christ's Church on the path to the Kingdom of the Holy Father. M. Glubokovsky expressed a view that such a concept was aimed at the inner transformation of the whole structure of Christian ethics (Glubokovsky, p. 14).

A lot of attention was devoted to the issue of asceticism and fasting in the work of Professor M. Tareyev titled *The Foundations of Christianity*. In several chapters, the author expanded on the concept of fasting. Tareyev claims that Christian fasting is not a virtue which leads to perfection and is not merit before God, but it has different purposes. We have been called unto liberty; however, 'only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh' (Ga 5:13). 'All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any' (1 Cor 6:12). Christians need fasting because it protects their spiritual life from the fascination with the body. The author concluded that Christian fasting did not have specific limits. The order of moderation and refraining from eating or fasting cannot be applied to everybody in the same way. Not everybody is physically strong, so the extent of fasting should be determined by the conscience of every person (Tareev, 1908, 1910, p. 99).

According to M. Glubokovsky, the moral teaching in Christianity in the 19th century was presented in the form of a special science. As a science about Christian life, it acquires the shape of Christian philosophy – the highest form of moral teaching about

Christianity. In the works of professors P. Ponomarev and S. Zarin, a lot of attention is devoted to the subject of moral teaching in the context of fasting and asceticism.

P. Ponomarev, a graduate of the Kazan Theological Academy, who knew ancient languages, analysed the patristic ascetic literature in detail and presented the nature of asceticism, indicating the soteriological basis of asceticism as its fundamental possibility in his work *Dogmatic Bases of Christian Asceticism in the Works of Eastern Writers/ Ascetics of the 4th century* (Ponomarev, 1899, p. 82–100).

The above-mentioned Arch presbyter I. Yanyshew was the first to create a theoretical construct of the moral system with the use of a detailed analysis of the idea of morality. The first basic requirement of the moral law was asceticism, but not a monastic one, comprising exercises in waking, fasting, prayer and similar deeds, but asceticism in the broadest meaning, i.e. domination over the natural instincts of the body, which requires and promotes the development of such moral features as wisdom, courage, patience, moderation, and diligence.

Professor S. Zarin continued and greatly expanded studies on asceticism and fasting. Relying on the Bible, he described the fasting practice in detail. He claimed that the beginning of the Christian fasting practice was the example of Christ and the Apostles (Zarin, 1907, p. 632). S. Zarin devoted a whole chapter of his ethical and theological work to fasting, where he analysed and proved that fasting could not be deemed an independent and self-sufficient moral good or basic good. S. Zarin classified fasting as a good deed of average quality (easy), the distinguishing mark of which was that if it were performed correctly, it could be helpful in sanctification. These types of good deeds in the Christian tradition includes taking of holy vows, solitude, walking, reading of the holy books and fasting. Therefore, as noted by S. Zarin, the fathers encouraged people to engage in them, depending on the circumstances of place and time, because they were useful if they met these requirements and in contrast – they became detrimental if they do not meet them (Zarin, 1907 p. 638).

S. Smirnov (Church history doctor and full professor at the faculty of the Russian Church history) presented the issue of asceticism and the practice of fasting from a different perspective. He adopted the penitential discipline in former Russia as the basis. A series of articles penned by S. Smirnov entitled *How Did People Fast in Russia in the Past?* was published in the *Supplement to Church News*. The author thoroughly studied Church chronicles, notes from lectures and statutes. He described the tradition of fasting during the preparation for confession and acceptance of the Holy Sacrament in detail. S. Smirnov concluded that the tradition of the contemporary Church was one of the most powerful tools and means of good influence on people (Smirnov, 1901).

Thus, emergence and development of Russian Church historiography, studies on the practice of fasting carried out by Russian Church historians took place in the second half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. Adoption of the system of absolute power in Russia and its active internal and foreign policy resulted in a huge reform movement, which greatly affected the development of historical science. However,

the historical thought of the 18th century did not go beyond the borders of the ordinary perception of reality. History for the Church historians was included in the Orthodox Church apologetics. At the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century, Church historians did not set thorough research tasks for themselves; they limited themselves to showing continuity of the Russian Church hierarchy. This shows a simplification of the research approach where providentialism was adopted as the basis of the research method.

Starting in the middle of the 19th century, the Russian Church historiography greatly extended the scope of studies. The 1860s were marked by a revival of research activities. Under the impact of the academic statute (1869) and the university statute (1863), scientific searches were reflected in dozens of seminal works about the history of Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church. The studies and papers were of a diverse nature. The characteristic directions of searching for answers to the questions from Church historiography appeared. The issue of fasting in the studies of Russian historians is usually examined in the context of studies on joint problems, related to the creation and development of Christianity and the Church. 'Reconstruction' of the practice of fasting was made with the use of Latin, Greek and Slavic sources, which were subjected to a detailed analysis.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, studies on the practice of fasting and asceticism underwent thorough changes. A tendency to reject historical and philosophical generalisations adopted by the 19th century historians became clear. It was also accompanied by the development of special scientific studies: scientific monographs. Studies on the issue of fasting were intertwined with the structure of the general history of Christianity and Orthodox religion. These studies form a part of the issues tackled by moral theology, thanks to which it was possible to draw attention to the history of asceticism and the practice of fasting.

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