

R.M. Cleminson

Is a Critical Edition of the Slavonic Apostolos Possible?

Eleven MSS (excluding fragments) of the Slavonic Apostolos, and three larger MSS which include it, have been published. None of these is a critical edition. The nearest approach is Voskresenskij's four parallel texts of five Pauline epistles, with variants; but though this is of great text-critical value, it is not a critical edition as such.

It is clear that there can be no single, all embracing "text": Voskresenskij's four "redactions" (text-types), to which should be added two commentated and one printed redaction, cannot be unified, nor is it even apparent that each requires the same approach. Even in the 19th century it was clear that the 300-year interval between the presumed Cyrillo-Methodian translation and the earliest witnesses meant that the Apostolos was relatively unpromising ground for the Lachmannian quest for the archetype then in vogue, which explains the relatively little attention given to it. In the Soviet period (when religious texts were the object of official antagonism), the direction taken by textual scholarship, towards textual history rather than criticism, meant that a text which was not supposed to evolve lay in any case outside the main focus of attention.

Furthermore, the study of the Slavonic Apostolos has been dominated by linguists, so that publications have been directed primarily towards their needs – what for the textual critic is "Handschriftenfetischismus" is for the linguist no more than due attention to detail – and this is reflected in the choice of manuscripts published, few of which are of major textual importance, and some of which are severely contaminated or corrupted, so that they present a distorted picture of the textual tradition. It has also led to an undue concentration on lexical variation.

The recent revival in Slavonic Biblical criticism again raises the possibility of editing the Apostolos. Setting aside the printed redaction, which presents a completely different set of questions (its archetype, the 1564 edition, is extant!), the manuscript tradition presents considerable challenges. All the redactions are *recensionis aperte*, and so have no primary node, meaning that Lachmannian methods are inapplicable, and while there is very considerable variation, hardly any individual variants are of text-critical use, so that recourse must be had to quantitative methods. If for the Fourth Redaction the large number of relatively uniform manuscripts, produced over a relatively short period, still offers the temptation to reconstitute the original, elsewhere this is manifestly impossible. In the Second, the existence of one manuscript (PHB, Q.n.I.5) that is clearly superior to the rest both in extent and quality virtually imposes a Bédieriste solution. The First has no such outstanding manuscript, and we perceive the apparent emergence of a *textus receptus* (or of *textus*

recepti) out of an early history of uncontrolled development. The best approach for this might be termed neo-Voskresenskian.