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## Western Religious Propaganda in the Holy Land in the Correspondence of V.N. Khitrovo and K.P. Pobedonostsev in the 1880s

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**Abstract:** The author has examined the correspondence of socio-religious figure and founder of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) V.N. Khitrovo with Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod K.P. Pobedonostsev in the 1880s; the problem of propaganda of the Catholic and Protestant churches in the Holy Land is explored. It is shown that in his detailed reports, historical essays and letters V.N. Khitrovo informed K.P. Pobedonostsev about threats to Orthodoxy in the Holy Land. V.N. Khitrovo rightly supposed that the success of Western propaganda was due to the Western powers' implementation of their national interests. The religious policy of France and the Protestant powers (England and Germany) was a "tool" for promoting their national interests. "Propaganda" and religious penetration of Western faiths manifested themselves in religious and political forms, which was embodied in the creation of educational institutions, hospitals, the spread of semi-secular women's orders, and the education of the local population. V.N. Khitrovo associated the success of Catholicism with the activities of Latin Patriarch I. Valerga. A special way of penetration into the Holy Land was biblical research, one example of which was the activities of Victorian General Gordon. V.N. Khitrovo considered that the weakening of Orthodoxy in the Holy Land was due to not only modest funding, but also insufficient coordination of secular and church institutions of the Russian Empire in the implementation of state religious policy. The author comes to the conclusion that the correspondents had trust-based relations and similar views on major religious and political issues.

**Keywords:** Eastern Question, national interests, Russian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission, foreign church-state policy, Great Powers

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## Западная религиозная пропаганда в Святой Земле в переписке В.Н. Хитрово и К.П. Победоносцева в 1880-е гг.

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**Аннотация:** Рассматривается переписка общественного и религиозного деятеля и основателя Императорского православного палестинского общества В.Н. Хитрово с обер-прокурором Святейшего Синода К.П. Победоносцевым в 1880-е гг., исследуется проблема пропаганды католической и протестантской церковью на Святой Земле. Показано, что в своих обстоятельных отчетах, исторических очерках и письмах В.Н. Хитрово информировал К.П. Победоносцева об угрозах православия в Святой Земле. Успехи западной пропаганды В.Н. Хитрово небезосновательно связывал с реализацией западными державами своих национальных интересов. Конфессиональная политика Франции и протестантских держав (Англии и Германии) являлась «инструментом» продвижения их национальных интересов. «Пропаганда» и религиозное проникновение западных конфессий проявлялась в религиозной и политической формах, что воплощалось в создании учебных заведений, больниц, распространении полусветских женских орденов, просвещении местного населения. Успех католицизма В.Н. Хитрово связывал с деятельностью Латинского патриарха И. Валерги. Особым направлением проникновения на Святую Землю являлись библейские исследования, одним из примеров которых стала деятельность викторианского генерала Гордона. Причины ослабления православия на Святой Земле В.Н. Хитрово связывал не только со скромным финансированием, но и с недостаточной координацией светских и церковных институтов Российской империи в реализации государственной конфессиональной политики. Автор приходит к выводу, что корреспондентов связывали доверительные отношения и схожие взгляды по основным религиозным и политическим вопросам.

**Ключевые слова:** Восточный вопрос, национальные интересы, Русская духовная миссия, внешняя церковно-государственная политика, Великие державы

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### Introduction

In the second half of the XIX century the Middle East and Palestine were the focus of international contradictions, where the interests of such great powers as Great Britain, France and Russia intersected. The instrument of geopolitical confrontation was often “soft power,” when the establishment of political dominance occurred through religious penetration. In this regard, the study of the causes, forms and methods of Western religious propaganda, as well as the organization of opposition to the expansion of Western influence in Palestine is an extremely urgent task. Of particular interest is the correspondence of V.N. Khitrovo, the founder of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IPOS) with Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod K.P. Pobedonostsev in the 1880s, the period when the role of the Church in Russian foreign policy increased significantly.

The history of studying this issue is quite long. Even pre-revolutionary researchers showed interest in non-Orthodox propaganda, analyzing its forms and methods. However,

scientists were interested in the first half of the XIX century<sup>1</sup>. The only exception was the work of F. Grekov who examined the history of the IOPS in the 1880–1890s, where V.N. Khitrovo's correspondence with K.P. Pobedonostsev was touched upon only in passing<sup>2</sup>.

This issue was also covered in the press in the 1920s<sup>3</sup>. In Soviet works, religious issues in the foreign policy of European countries and Russia in the Middle East were not the focus of scientific discourse, and therefore V.N. Khitrovo's correspondence with K.P. Pobedonostsev remained in the periphery of scientific interest<sup>4</sup>.

The studies of the Russian presence in the Holy Land became extensive thanks to the contribution of N.N. Lisovoy, one of the outstanding Byzantine scholars in Russia, philosopher and historian. Although he emphasized the important role of K.P. Pobedonostsev in the establishment of the IOPS, he did not specifically consider V.N. Khitrovo's correspondence with K.P. Pobedonostsev in the context of understanding the non-Orthodox influence<sup>5</sup>.

V.N. Khitrovo's correspondence with K.P. Pobedonostsev was specifically considered by A.Yu. Polunov; however, it was not studied separately from the perspective we indicated<sup>6</sup>.

Modern Russian scientists have examined the problems of foreign policy of the European powers quite extensively concentrating their attention on the first half of the XIX century. Russian researcher I.Yu. Smirnova notes:

The study of the prerequisites for the Crimean War convinces us that an important factor in the diplomacy of the leading powers was their religious policy – the establishment of the church and missionary presence in the Mediterranean countries, proselytism among the Orthodox population of the Eastern Patriarchates, the weakening of the authority of the Orthodox Russian Empire in order to oust Russia from the Middle East region<sup>7</sup>.

The purpose of the study is to clarify the position of V.N. Khitrovo and K.P. Pobedonostsev towards Western religious propaganda in the Holy Land in the 1880s.

<sup>1</sup> See: V.N. Anichkova, “Francuzskaia katolicheskaia missiia na Vostoke [French Catholic Mission in the East],” *Soobshcheniia Imperatorskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo obshchestva* 17, no. 3 (1906): 352–362; P.V. Bezobrazov, “Inoslavnaia propaganda v Palestine i Sirii [Heterodox propaganda in Palestine and Syria],” *Soobshcheniia Imperatorskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo obshchestva* 20, no. 3 (1909): 405–420; A.A. Dmitrievskij, *Deiateli Russkoi Palestiny* [Figures of Russian Palestine] (St. Petersburg: Institute Olega Abyshko, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> See: F. Grekov, *Imperatorskoe Pravoslavnoe Palestinskoe Obshchestvo. Ocherk ego deiatel'nosti za 1882–1890-ye gg.* [Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Essay on his activities in 1882–1890s] (St. Petersburg: The P.P. Soikin's Publ., 1891).

<sup>3</sup> See: F.I. Uspenskii, “Konkurentsii narodov na Blizhnem Vostoke. Rossiia i Frantsiia [Competition between peoples in the Middle East. Russia and France],” in *Soobshcheniia Rossiiskogo Palestinskogo obshchestva* 29 (1926): 1–27.

<sup>4</sup> See: V.A. Georgiev, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii na Blizhnem Vostoke v kontse 30–40-kh gg. XIX veka* [Russian foreign policy in the East in the late 30–40s of the XIX century] (Moscow: Iz-vo Moskovskogo universiteta Publ.), 1975; V.A. Georgiev, N.S. Kinyapina, M.T. Panchenkova, and V.I. Sherest. *Vostochnyi vopros vo vneshnei politike Rossii: konets XVIII – nachalo XX veka* [The Eastern question in Russian foreign policy: the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the XX century] (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1978).

<sup>5</sup> See: N.N. Lisovoy, *Russkoe dukhovnoe i politicheskoe prisutstvie v Sviatoi Zemle i na Blizhnem Vostoke v XIX nachale XX v.* [Russian spiritual and political presence in the Holy Land and in the Middle East in the XIX and early XX centuries] (Moscow: Indrik Publ., 2006).

<sup>6</sup> See: A.Yu. Polunov, “K.P. Pobedonostsev i russkie uchrezhdeniia v Sviato Zemle [K.P. Pobedonostsev and Russian institutions in the Holy Land],” in *K.P. Pobedonostsev i russkaia dukhovnaia missiia v Ierusalime v tsarstvovanie imperatora Aleksandra III. K 170-letiiu osnovaniia*, 19–27 (Moscow; St. Petersburg: Indrik Publ., 2017).

<sup>7</sup> I.Yu. Smirnova, 1) “Konfessional'naia politika velikikh derzhav na khristianskom Vostoke v 50–60-e gg. XIX v. [Confessional policy of the great powers in the Christian East in the 50–60s. XIX century],” *Khristianstvo na Blizhnem Vostoke*, no. 1 (2017): 91–111; See also: 2) “Confessional vector of Russian foreign policy: on the history of interaction between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Holy Synod in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,” *Vestnik istoricheskogo obshchestva Sankt-Peterburgskoj dukhovnoi akademii*, no. 3 (2021): 351–360.

The source base for the article is V.N. Khitrovo's letters to K.P. Pobedonostsev, his detailed historical reviews of Western penetration into Palestine, which were obviously analytical in nature. Many of them were intended to solve specific problems and conflicts that arose between Russian consuls, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the one hand, and representatives of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, on the other hand. V.N. Khitrovo considered that his task was to convey objective information to K.P. Pobedonostsev, on whom the effectiveness of protecting Russian interests in the Holy Land depended directly.

A significant array of letters and notes of K.P. Pobedonostsev was published in extensive collections of documents about V.N. Khitrovo; they are of a truly encyclopedic nature<sup>8</sup>.

In addition, it is the works of K.P. Pobedonostsev<sup>9</sup> that are of conceptual significance for the study of the issue.

### International context

When characterizing Russia's foreign policy, it is important to take into account that it was dictated by the protection of not only its national interests, but also of Orthodoxy, since Russia considered itself the successor of Byzantium. This was especially vital in the Holy Land, which dictated the need for coordination in the activities of secular and church authorities<sup>10</sup>.

According to I.Yu. Smirnova, promoting the foreign activities of the Russian Orthodox Church was one of the main functions of the Russian diplomatic department. Above all, the religious orientation of Russian diplomacy manifested itself in such an ethno-religious region as the Christian East, where for historical and religious reasons Russia's religious policy could not but coincide with the state policy<sup>11</sup>.

In the 1880s, the importance of the ethno-religious aspect increased even more. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 further weakened Russia's position in the Middle East. To a large extent, this was due to the fact that many leaders of the Church, especially the Bulgarians, representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and Hellenists, were increasingly guided in their religious activities not by universal Christian principles, but by purely national motives and interests. The political expediency began to prevail in religious circles, behind which stood national governments. In Palestine there became active the Catholic and Protestant circles inspired by their national governments. Under these conditions, the Russian government began to make adjustments to its foreign policy. It was K.P. Pobedonostsev that became the embodiment of change.

Being a deeply religious person and a man of integrity, K.P. Pobedonostsev keenly assessed the challenges of modern Western secularism<sup>12</sup>. In the conditions when the idea of separating church and state was actively asserted in the political culture of European countries and among liberal circles in Russia, the Chief Procurator of the Synod emphasized the importance of the spiritual activity of the Church in society. K.P. Pobedonostsev wrote:

The more obvious spiritual representation in a state, the stronger and the more important it is...<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See: K.P. Pobedonostsev i Russkaia dukhovnaya missiia v Ierusalime v tsarstvovanie imperatora Aleksandra III. K 170-letiiu osnovaniia [K.P. Pobedonostsev and the Russian spiritual mission in Jerusalem during the reign of Emperor Alexander III. To the 170th anniversary of its founding] (Moscow: Indrik; St. Petersburg, 2017); *Rossia v Sviatoi zemle. Dokumenty i materialy* [Russia in the Holy Land. Documents and materials] (Moscow: Indrik: Sotsium-A Publ.), 2015; V.N. Khitrovo, "Pravoslavie v Sviatoi Zemle [Orthodoxy in the Holy Land]." *Sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, vol. 1 (Moscow: IOPS Publ.; St. Petersburg: Oleg Abyshko Publ., 2011).

<sup>9</sup> K.P. Pobedonostsev, *Gosudarstvo i Tserkov'* [State and Church] (Moscow: Institut Russkoi tsivilizatsii Publ., 2011).

<sup>10</sup> I.Yu. Smirnova, "Confessional vector," 353.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> A.Yu. Polunov, "K.P. Pobedonostsev i russkie uchrezhdeniia," 20.

<sup>13</sup> K.P. Pobedonostsev, vol. 2 of *Gosudarstvo i Tserkov'*, 312.

This attitude encouraged Pobedonostsev to actively intervene in the “secular” foreign policy and influence Russian diplomacy.

The appointment of K.P. Pobedonostsev as Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod was of fundamental importance for the Russian cause in Palestine. The support of the grand dukes in this matter testified to the state priorities of the Russian government<sup>14</sup>.

According to the fair remark of L. Gerd, under K.P. Pobedonostsev, “in Russian foreign policy Pan-Slavism was replaced by Russian national policy.”<sup>15</sup>

V.N. Khitrovo became an indispensable correspondent and expert for Pobedonostsev; he discussed with Pobedonostsev the key issues of foreign church-state policy. The acquaintance with V.N. Khitrovo’s journalism, his letters and detailed essays shows how deep and insightful Khitrovo’s judgments were about the problems of the Russian presence in the Holy Land.

When characterizing the relationship between these two outstanding figures of Russian religious life, one cannot fail to take into account the factor of their personal friendship and like-mindedness. V.N. Khitrovo initiated the creation of the IOPS, and K.P. Pobedonostsev provided the society with serious material and organizational support. It is known that in the first years of the IOPS activities, the meetings of the society were held in Pobedonostsev’s house<sup>16</sup>. V.N. Khitrovo sent the project for creating the IOPS to K.P. Pobedonostsev for consideration. In his letter to K.P. Pobedonostsev dated January 2, 1882, he wrote:

In our personal conversations, as well as in writing, I expressed to you my strong belief in the necessity and benefit of establishing such a Society<sup>17</sup>.

Thus, it was also about personal contacts and conversations.

Also impressive is K.P. Pobedonostsev’s high assessment of V.N. Khitrovo’s knowledge in the field of church life. In a letter dated February 4, 1883, Pobedonostsev asked Khitrovo to evaluate the works of priest Kashmensky in order to recommend them for publication on behalf of the Palestine Society:

Honorable Vasily Nikolaevich! Let me ask you to consider the attached manuscripts: Priest Kashmensky, a respectable man and a remarkable figure in our Church. Another manuscript was handed to me long ago by Mr. Sumarokov. I would like to know whether you consider it appropriate to publish any of these manuscripts on behalf of the Palestine Society. Sincerely yours, K. Pobedonostsev<sup>18</sup>.

The first thing that is especially important to consider when studying V.N. Khitrovo’s legacy is the connection between his religious observations and the awareness of the foreign policy changes taking place in Europe. After publishing his essay “Orthodoxy

<sup>14</sup> N.N. Lisovoy, “K istorii russkogo dukhovnogo prisutstviia v Svyatoi Zemle i na Blizhnem Vostoke [On the history of the Russian spiritual presence in the Holy Land and the Middle East],” in *Trudy Instituta rossiiskoi istorii RAN. 1997–1998 gg.* Issue 2, 56–89 (Moscow: IRI RAN Publ., 2000), 67.

<sup>15</sup> Lora Gerd, “Konstantinopol’skaia patriarkhiia i Russkaia tserkov’ pered revolyutsiei [Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Russian Church before the revolution],” *Gosudarstvo, religiia, Tserkov’ v Rossii i za rubezhom*, no. 1 (2016): 290.

<sup>16</sup> N.N. Lisovoy, and M.A. Mikileva, “K istorii russkogo dukhovnogo i politicheskogo prisutstviia v Svyatoi Zemle i na Blizhnem Vostoke [On the History of the Russian spiritual and political presence in the Holy Land and the Middle East],” in *Rossia v Sviatoi zemle. Dokumenty i materialy*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Indrik Publ., 2015), 38.

<sup>17</sup> “Pis'mo V.N. Khitrovo k Ober-prokuroru Svyateyshego Sinoda K.P. Pobedonostsevu ot 2 yanvarya 1882 [Letter from V.N. Khitrovo to the Chief Prosecutor of the Holy Synod K.P. Pobedonostsev dated January 2, 1882],” in vol. 3 of *Rossia v Sviatoi zemle*, 98.

<sup>18</sup> “Pis'mo Ober-prokurora Sv. Sinoda K.P. Pobedonostseva k pomoshchniku predsedatelya pravoslavnogo palestinskogo obshchestva V.N. Khitrovo ot 4 fevralya 1883 g. [Letter from the Chief Prosecutor of the Holy Synod K.P. Pobedonostsev to the assistant to the chairman of the Orthodox Palestinian Society V.N. Khitrovo dated February 4, 1883],” in *Rossia v Sviatoi zemle*, 123.

in the Holy Land” in 1881, that is, during the period when Pobedonostsev became the political support of new Emperor Alexander III, Khitrovo noted:

From this year the so-called “Eastern Question” is acquiring acute character, and the political goals of the European powers are often hidden behind a religious banner. This latter circumstance in particular should not be overlooked for a correct assessment of the position of Orthodoxy and the religious movement in the Holy Land over the past 40 years<sup>19</sup>.

### “Valerga’s cause will not be lost...”

The work “Orthodoxy in the Holy Land” was preceded by an essay addressed by V.N. Khitrovo to outstanding statesman and Orientalist scholar Admiral E.V. Putyatin entitled “Jerusalem Question. Note to Count E.V. Putyatin” (1878) which outlined the threats to Russian religious and political influence in Palestine. First of all, this is the spread of Catholic propaganda. The key idea of the letter is to state the fact that the sponsor of Catholic influence and propaganda was the French government. In this regard, Khitrovo considered the appointment of Joseph Valerga, the protégé of France, as Patriarch of Jerusalem:

Thanks to the war (Crimean War – author’s note) and the influence of France, the Catholic propaganda became especially significant in the Holy Land <...> Valerga was undoubtedly a man of remarkable capabilities. Appointed as Patriarch of Jerusalem, first of all, he faced strong resistance of the Franciscans of the Holy Land, not only his co-religionists, but also those hierarchically subordinate to him<sup>20</sup>.

The author writes that in order to break the resistance of the order, Valerga enlisted the support of Napoleon III<sup>21</sup>. At the same time, Khitrovo notes:

Valerga let them (the Franciscans – author’s note) carry out their previous activities and drew attention to those aspects that they were not involved in – increasing Catholic influence and the spread of Catholic propaganda<sup>22</sup>.

It was the increasing political influence of France and the spread of political propaganda attractive among the local population when Latinism was a tool of France that Khitrovo considered very dangerous:

But apart from this religious propaganda, one cannot help but pay attention to political propaganda, mainly of France <...> I will allow myself to point out a special type of political propaganda, which was especially practiced by imperial France. This is government scientific expeditions. They were well thought-out, had abundant funds and all kinds of advertisements. Whereas in scientific terms they did not always achieve the desired success, then in political terms they contributed a lot to the charm of Catholic France. To confirm what has been said, I will mention the names of Guerin, Rey, Renan and especially Senator Saucy<sup>23</sup>.

According to V.N. Khitrovo, “the scientific expeditions achieved their goal.” Even with other figures and the death of Valerga, the influence of France became strong, and “his (Valerga’s – author’s note) cause” will not be lost<sup>24</sup>.

Two years later, on April 12, 1880, Khitrovo wrote a letter to K.P. Pobedonostsev named “Essay on the situation of Orthodoxy in Palestine.” In it, he again emphasized that

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<sup>19</sup> V.N. Khitrovo, “Pravoslavie v Sviatoi zemle [Orthodoxy in the Holy Land],” in *Sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, vol. 1 (Moscow: IOPS Publ.; St. Petersburg: Oleg Abyshko Publ., 2011), 130.

<sup>20</sup> V.N. Khitrovo, “Ierusalimskii vopros. Zapiska, podannaia Grafu E.V. Putiatinu 19 Oktiabria 1879 goda [Jerusalem question. A note submitted to Count E.V. Putiatin October 19, 1879],” in *Sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

Joseph Valerga expressed the national interests of France. Unable to crush the influential Franciscans, Valerga turned to the imperial government of France for help:

Then he decided to turn to the newly formed Imperial France which was beginning to interfere in Eastern affairs, and it became Valerga's strong ally <...> Thanks to the then all-powerful French government <...> he returned to Jerusalem as an absolute master<sup>25</sup>.

From the moment of enhancing his standing, J. Valerga launched Catholic propaganda through “semi-secular, semi-monastic women's orders.” One of the most famous and influential in its 24 years of presence in the Holy Land was the “Sisters of Zion” community, a part of whose funding came from one of the sisters who was married to one of Rothschild's nephews<sup>26</sup>.

In his Essay V.N. Khitrovo points to two types of Latin propaganda: religious and political. The religious propaganda was carried out through “free distribution of medicines,” free medical care, and “arrangement of foster homes for pupils.” The whole of Jerusalem was surrounded by a network of “Latin monasteries, schools and hospitals,” like “advanced forts,” which contributed to the conversion of the population in a number of Jerusalem suburbs to “total Latinism.”<sup>27</sup>

The second method of propaganda is political. Khitrovo subtly noticed the strengths of French influence – “sending government scientific expeditions.” France conducted serious biblical research. In this regard, it is necessary to note Charles Gaillardot, a “follower of Renan,” physician, archaeologist, geographer, who spent most of his time in Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine. Moreover, scientific research often went hand in hand with reconnaissance missions<sup>28</sup>. V.N. Khitrovo wrote to Pobedonostsev:

I can't help but notice that in most of these expeditions carried out mainly at the expense of the French government, it was political factors that played an important role, as in the English and German expeditions<sup>29</sup>.

According to Khitrovo, the main negative result of Latin propaganda was the reduction in the number of Orthodox believers in the Holy Land. He noted:

In 1880, the number of Protestants reached 2 thousand, and the number of Roman Catholics – 12 thousand. According to the information I have, both of them have 165 different institutions, such as monasteries, schools, shelters, hospitals, hospices, etc. Of the 14 thousand people who make up the Protestant and Roman Catholics communities in the Holy Land, 8 thousand represent the Orthodox Christians whom the non-Orthodox missionaries managed to detach from Orthodoxy, for the most part, over the last ten years<sup>30</sup>.

Khitrovo considered that an even greater danger was posed by the conversion to Catholicism of children who were mostly poor and politically oppressed. In addition, children were strongly influenced by the “first impressions” of upbringing. According to Khitrovo, the persistence of the existing trends would lead to the fact that “Orthodoxy will cease to exist in its cradle”<sup>31</sup>.

### **Protestants in the Holy Land**

The protestant propaganda which sought to establish itself from the 1840s also became successful very quickly. The Protestantism gained a firm position in schools, hospitals, and agricultural colonies. One of the tools for establishing its influence in Palestine

<sup>25</sup> K.P. Pobedonostsev *i Russkaia dukhovnaia missiia*, 63.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> L.N. Mancevich, “French Jerusalem,” *Khristianstvo na Blizhnem Vostoke*, no. 3 (2020): 49.

<sup>29</sup> K.P. Pobedonostsev *i Russkaia dukhovnaia missiia*, 67.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

became scientific biblical research. In this regard, indicative is the role of British missionary, General Charles George Gordon who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1883. Interest in the Holy Land was steadily increasing in Britain from the middle of the XIX century, when the Palestine Exploration Fund was founded (1865) which attracted numerous science enthusiasts.

Gordon was an absolute representative of the Victorian era; he was striving to establish the influence of the British Empire everywhere. At the same time, he defended the ideas of biblical archeology which represented the implementation of the Protestant struggle against the power of the Catholic Church, symbolizing the depth of penetration of evangelicalism into English society, reviving interest not only in the New Testament, but also in the desire to bring the spiritual Bible into line with the historical one. From this point of view, the search for the site of the Holy Sepulcher, which was carried out by Gordon, then became the final challenge to the Catholic Church<sup>32</sup>.

Gordon was inspired by the intellectual atmosphere of his time. The historical, religious and scientific context following the Napoleonic Wars, the progress of science including Darwin's theory of evolution, and the revival of religious belief and Bible study in Britain led directly to Gordon's views on the Holy Land<sup>33</sup>.

As a result of archaeological research, the assessment of which is not considered in the article, Gordon came to a very bold conclusion that Christ was crucified in another place, outside the old city, and his grave outwardly resembled a human head. This point of view called into question the opinion of both Catholics and Orthodox Christians. This “revolutionary idea” of Gordon became a kind of challenge to the traditional ideas of the place of Golgotha.

Gordon came to these ideas based on the ones of John Nelson Darby, who died shortly before Gordon arrived in Palestine. Darby was the founder of what is known as dispensationalism, which in turn influenced his group of followers known as the Plymouth Brethren. In his works, Darby identified the real, historical Jerusalem with the spiritual one, which opened up enormous possibilities for subjective interpretations of gospel history<sup>34</sup>.

In this regard, of interest is V.N. Khitrovo's assessment given in his “Letters about the Holy Land”:

Gordon's assumptions remain assumptions even among his compatriots; it's not even possible to have a serious scientific debate about it, since he didn't provide any indisputable evidence other than his own guesses. There are many such assumptions regarding Jerusalem, precisely because it is Jerusalem and not another city<sup>35</sup>.

Having rejected the “scientific arguments” of General Gordon, Khitrovo came to a political conclusion, which consisted in the “conceit” of Protestants, especially the German ones. He noted that the Protestants, “not having their share in the Temple of the Resurrection,” squeezed into those places where they had not been allowed before<sup>36</sup>.

V.N. Khitrovo's correspondence with K.P. Pobedonostsev, detailed reports and historical reviews of Protestant and Catholic propaganda were supposed to convince of the danger of this phenomenon and attract the attention of government officials in order to intensify Russia's foreign policy efforts in Palestine.

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<sup>32</sup> Seth J. Frantzman, and Ruth Kark. “General Gordon, Palestine Research Foundation and the Origins of 'Gordon's Calvary' in the Holy Land.” *Palestine Research Quarterly*, no. 2 (2008): 120.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>35</sup> V.N. Khitrovo, “Pis'ma o Sviatoi Zemle [Letters on the Holy Land],” in vol. 2 of *Sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



The response to the non-Orthodox propaganda was the establishment of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, which was given the highest state authorization. V.N. Khitrovo convincingly raised the question of the effectiveness of the Russian presence in the Holy Land. For him, the inconsistency of spiritual and secular authorities in promoting Russian interests in Palestine was obvious<sup>37</sup>. In this regard, he wrote to Pobedonostsev that for more than a quarter of a century, with short interruptions, there had been going on “a silent struggle between the Patriarchate, the consul and the head of the spiritual mission.”<sup>38</sup>

At the same time, V.N. Khitrovo understood that the fate of the Russian cause in the Holy Land depended not only and not so much on material factors, or “the annual generosity of the Empress,” but on the raising of the issue of our policy in Palestine, on the significance of national-religious priorities. He concluded:

We should not forget the covenant given to us – the defense of Orthodoxy and remember the words of Robinson: whereas a Catholic is a natural ally of France, a Protestant – of England and Germany, then an Orthodox Christian is an ally of Russia<sup>39</sup>.

### Conclusions

V.N. Khitrovo’s correspondence with K.P. Pobedonostsev shows that their relationship was of a confidential personal nature, and Pobedonostsev highly appreciated V.N. Khitrovo’s expert assessments of the religious and political situation around the Holy Land. V.N. Khitrovo’s long cooperation with the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod was determined by the unity of their religious and political views. The leitmotif of V.N. Khitrovo’s correspondence is the conviction that the success of Western propaganda depended on the political interests of European countries. V.N. Khitrovo regularly and persistently reported to K.P. Pobedonostsev about the need to coordinate secular (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, consuls in Palestine) and religious (Russian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission) institutions in the implementation of religious policy in the Holy Land, which corresponded to K.P. Pobedonostsev’s ideological views of the moral and educational role of the Church in the state life of Russia.

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<sup>37</sup> A.A. Dmitrievskij, *Deiateli Russkoi Palestiny* [Figures of Russian Palestine] (St. Petersburg: Institute Olega Abyshko, 2010), 63.

<sup>38</sup> K.P. Pobedonostsev i Russkaia dukhovnaia missiia, 82.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 83.

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