

Issues of Chinese Culture and Religion in Periodicals of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking (1904—1917)

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Abstract: In the early 20th century Russian Ecclesiastical mission in Beijing has been actively engaged in preaching among the Chinese population. It was an incentive to pay attention to culture and religion of China. In 1904 was established the journal of the Mission in China under the title “Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae” (News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China), in 1907 it was renamed as “Kitajskij blagovestnik” (Chinese Good News). This periodical reflected the views of the Russian missionaries on cultural traditions, religious ceremonies and daily customs of the Chinese. On the basis of primary sources this article focuses on missionary’ evaluations of Chinese culture and religious life, different interpretations of the prospects for propagation of Christianity in China at the backdrop of modernization of society and revolutionary change in politics, attempts to adapt the Orthodox message and organization to the specifics of Chinese society. The period is limited by the year 1917 because after the revolution in Russia the Mission had to abandon preaching among the Chinese.

Key Words: Russia, China, Eastern Orthodoxy, tradition, modernization

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The first decade of the 20th century witnessed the blossoming of the Russian Mission in Peking. It was rather short period when the Russian Mission consciously and purposefully focused on propagation of the Orthodox Christianity among the Chinese. The Mission started to build new churches, schools and missionary stations in different parts of China beyond Peking^[1].

Since 1904 the Mission published its own journal. In was established in 1904 in Harbin under the title “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” (Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China). The Orthodox Brotherhood was established in North-East China to take care of spiritual needs of Russians during the Russo-Japanese war and to provide help to wounded soldiers. Later in 1907 the journal moved to Peking to the headquarters of the Mission and remained there till the middle of the century. Since autumn of 1907 it was published under the title

[1] Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume Two; 1800 to the Present. Edited by R. G. Tiedemann. Brill, 2010, 553-558.

“Китайский благовестник” (Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News).

The journal covered broad range of topics that included Orthodox faith, political events in China and in Russia, history of Russian Mission in Peking and of Western Missions in China. The period from the 1904 till 1917 is distinguished by vivid interest in problems of China and Chinese culture. Though this interest was sometime utilitarian and focused on the tasks of propagation of Christianity, the views and assessments of the Russian missionaries of that time provide a rare glimpse into the process of formation of cross-cultural perceptions between two neighboring countries.

1. Assessments of Chinese National Character

In the first half of the first decade of the 20th century missionary descriptions of Chinese life were filled with admiration of patriarchal way of village life. This can be seen from the diary entries of member of the Orthodox brotherhood A. M. Akhlebiniskij who recorded his impressions of the trip from Peking to Russia. Conversation in the roadside inn with a young Chinese man who offered the traveler some small apples impressed him by “simplicity, informality, and also moderation in the manners of that Chinese”^[2].

Communication with local population on the road from Peking to Kalgan made a deep impression because there were no drunks and brawlers in the villages. The traveler heard no noise and saw no angry faces. It made him to remember that in Russia every village has a tavern or state-owned wine shop with a crowd of drunken men. The comparison was made in favor of the Chinese: “. . . we, Russians, are no better than the people whom we see as pagans. Our man, with eyes clouded by vodka and violent, is not at all like a Christian, although he often visits the Church and hears the gospel truths about vastness of Christian love that extends not only to your neighbor but to all God’s creatures. The Chinese do not say that, they do not have societies that pursue humane truth, however, one must wonder at their care and love at least to domestic animals”^[3].

These assessments were obviously superficial because they lacked understanding of Chinese history, culture and traditional moral values. However, it was although naive but very positive perception of the Chinese and their everyday life. Russian traveler shared his sense of security-in his words, in China you can travel alone and the Chinese won’t offend anyone who did them no harm. He concluded that China is a great place for preaching Christianity: “How deep here the susceptibility to everything beautiful.”^[4]

The author reasoned that after the suppression of the “rebellion” of 1900 it was natural to expect growth of anger of the Chinese against the Europeans. However, being among the Chinese, he did not feel any slightest hostility and hatred, therefore he reasoned that it is wrong “to attribute the impulses of brutality to the character of the Chinese as its main feature.” It was concluded that China is standing on the threshold of new state of life: “It’s kind of quiet and sleepy, it is either a sleeping or awakening kingdom in the realm of

[2] “По Монголии (Из Пекина в Россию). Путевые заметки братчика” [Po Mongolii (Iz Pekina v Rossiju). Putevye zametki bratchika \ Across Mongolia (From Peking to Russia). Travel notes of a Brotherhood Member]. “ Известия братства православной церкви в Китае [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issues 12-13. 1904, Oct. 1st, 17.

[3] “По Монголии (Из Пекина в Россию). Путевые заметки братчика” [Po Mongolii (Iz Pekina v Rossiju). Putevye zametki bratchika \ Across Mongolia (From Peking to Russia). Travel notes of a Brotherhood Member]. “ Известия братства православной церкви в Китае [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issue 14. 1904, Oct. 15th, 10.

[4] Ibid., 12.

thought and action, a kingdom which enjoys this state of being half asleep, and if it is awake, if it wants, it can be no inferior to its neighbors—both to the yellow and the white. Let's see how quickly, if they want, the Chinese learn everything European: language, and crafts, and customs. If the desire to adopt European will progressively increase in masses and among individuals, then we can say with almost certainty that China is on the eve of its awakening"^[5].

Despite the persistent feeling of inevitable and imminent changes in China, the emphasis on stability of the daily life prevailed in missionary publications. “The whole life of the Asians is on the street. Here they drink, eat, amuse themselves with games. . . And with all this noise, the life of each individual courtyard is pretty quiet and monotonous. Same faces, same activities, what happened yesterday repeats today without any change. The Chinese know how to settle with comfort in their courtyards. . . .”^[6]

Everyday contacts led Russian missionaries to positive observations about the Chinese. Once during a travel the head of the Russian Mission was unable to find the road, then “naive and cute, sometimes annoying, but at all time very helpful Chinese” provided their assistance. Interest in Chinese character was sincere but shallow due to insufficient understanding of traditional culture. About the Chinese people missionaries said: “They have something purely simple, childish and pristine, he (a Chinese) is not a savage and not a citizen of a civilized country, it is a human plant that has grown freely on fertile soil far away from any alien influence”^[7].

It is noteworthy that a Chinese Orthodox catechist spoke of his countrymen with more criticism than Russian priests. In his notes on the visit to the Fujian province from where the Mission received a letter about the desire to adopt the Orthodox faith, Chinese catechist wrote: “In general the people there are industrious and hardworking. Trade goods are carried by people on shoulders. It is a pity that many smoke opium. The people living in villages are very rude, they do not understand the law and constantly commit murder, do mutual insults, and so on”.^[8]

The emphasis on similarities between Russian and Chinese villagers was popular among the missionaries as an indirect justification of possibility and desirability of Orthodox preaching. “By appearance a Chinese here resembles our village residents, so sometime I forget, is that a Chinese of a Russian I see in front of me? In these two ethnic groups, may be because by majority they are farmers or due to other reasons, there are so many similar spiritual features. Could that explain a strong inclination of the Chinese to Orthodoxy and their

[5] “По Монголии (Из Пекина в Россию). Путевые заметки братчика” [Po Mongolii (Iz Pekina v Rossiiu). Putevye zametki bratchika \ Across Mongolia (From Peking to Russia). Travel notes of a Brotherhood Member]. “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issue 1. 1905, April 15th, 12.

[6] “Происхождение Тяньцзиньского подворья Пекинской Духовной Миссии (окончание)”. [Proiskhozhdenie Tianjin metochi of the Peking Spiritual Mission (the end)]. “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issue 1. 1905, April 15th, 9.

[7] “Поездка Его Преосвященства Преосвященнейшего Иннокентия из Шанхая в Саньянчжэнь (Дневник) (продолжение)” [Poezdka Ego Preosvyashchenstva Preosvyashchenneishego Innokentii iz Shankhaya v Sanyanchzen' (Dnevnik) (prodolzhenie) \ The visit of His grace Bishop Innokentii from Shanghai to Sanyangzhen (Diary) (continued)] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issues 11--12. 1905, August 1st, 21.

[8] «Записки Павла Тан о поездке в город Сянь-ю-сянь провинции Фуцзянь» [Zapiski Pavla Tan o poezdke v gorod Syan'yu-syan' provintsii Futszyan' \ Notes of Pavel Tang on his visit to the city of Xianyouxian in Fujian Province] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 6. Issue 1. 1909. January 15th, 7.

good attitude to the Russian Mission?”^[9]

The Russian missionaries for a long time kept positive and sometime idealistic vision of Chinese way of life. They wrote about a Chinese peasant Orthodox family that “by the mood, peaceful nature, obedience to God, hard work and family unity they closely resemble a good patriarchal Russian family. . . . The Chinese are closest to the Russian Orthodox people. One can only wish that the Orthodox Church will be more spread among the Chinese people”^[10].

No doubt that the missionaries have encountered the problem of lies and deception in everyday life of the Chinese. Once in their trip they saw a device for infusion of water into the carcass of a bull in winter in order to increase the weight and sell the water along with carcass on the price of meat. One of Russian missionaries bitterly commented; “Everyone knows about it, but do not protest. This is the custom. People here don't live in truth”^[11].

Missionary understanding of psychology of the Chinese carried the sense of mystery. This can be understood from the description of how the Chinese perceived an Orthodox sermon. “The crowd watched and listened to “in Chinese style”, i. e. they were serious, thoughtful, reserved, but at the same time their faces did not reflect an impression of what they see and hear; spiritual life of the Chinese is not reflected on face, so one can not make out if they listen to or not listen to, think about something or do not think; do they feel anything or not, but at the same time there is no dullness on face, on the contrary, the wit is glowing in the eyes”^[12].

In the journal there were specific descriptions of some Chinese customs. In particular, there was an article on Chinese custom of “giving face”. The missionaries watched its manifestation at the Paotongsi railway station near Tongzhou. To the crowd waiting for the train approached people who brought a table and put some food on it—fruits, cookies, nuts. When everything was ready, they invited to the table of a man of sixty who was waiting for the train with the crowd. The table was served by local officials. They began to kowtow, handed business cards and offered food, but the old man did not eat anything. Russian missionaries found that the “venerable old man was an intendant official who came here from his homeland in Henan province to handle food supplies for the local troops, and now he returns home. All officials who came into contact with him on duty were moved by his justice, mercy and other virtues, and now thank him in this way publicly. This custom is called by the Chinese “to give face”. ”^[13]

Another story describes a Chinese customs in the context of interactions with the Russian Mission. The dwellers of Dongding’ an and surrounding villages presented honorary address to the Head of the Russian

[9] “Поездка Его Преосвященства Преосвященнейшего Иннокентия из Шанхая в Саньянчжэнь (Дневник) (продолжение)” [Poezdka Ego Preosvyashchenstva Preosvyashchenneishego Innokentiya iz Shankhaya v Sanyanchzhen' (Dnevnik) (prodolzhenie) \ The visit of His grace Bishop Innokentii from Shanghai to Sanyangzhen (Diary) (continued)] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issues 13—14. 1905, September 15th, 17.

[10] “Поездка в Юнпинфу, Лувэйшань и Пэйтиахо” [Poezdka v Yunpinfu, Luveishan' i Peitaikho \ Travel to Yongpingfu, Luweishan and Beidaihe] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 11. Issues 15-16. 1914, September 14th, 28.

[11] “На кирпичном заводе”. [Na kirpichnom zavode \ In a brick factory] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 8. Issue 13. 1911, December 1st, 5.

[12] “Поездка в Юнпинфу, Лувэйшань и Пэйтиахо” [Poezdka v Yunpinfu, Luveishan' i Peitaikho \ Travel to Yongpingfu, Luweishan and Beidaihe] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 11. Issues 17-18. 1914, October 15th, 27.

[13] 《Из китайских обычаев》 [Iz kitaiskikh obyчаev \ From Chinese customs] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Issues 18-19. 1908, June 1st, 2.

Mission to express gratitude for opening a church and a school there. It was a wooden tablet with Chinese characters 教泽无垠 “spreading the good teaching boundless as the ocean” (as it was translated into Russian in the journal). The article explained that such tablets with four characters are presented in China to the dignitaries to thank them for giving benefits to the people, to generals for the rescue of property from robbers, and to doctors for the cure of intractable diseases^[14].

2. Religious Traditions of China and the West

Missionary criticism of folk beliefs of the Chinese was present in the travel notes about the Yellow River. “Superstitious Chinese revere the river, they bring propitiatory sacrifices to its spirit, and the river continues from year to year to wipe out inexorably millions of capital from the treasury and to cause innumerable damages to the population. There are many legends about the river, the names of best administrators and famous heroes of ancient China are associated with it. . . .”^[15]

Superstitious behavior was manifested when the people confronted forces of nature—it can be not only floods, but also drought. Orthodox missionaries reported that in time of drought “Chinese wore out their clothes and shoes visiting temples with ceremonial processions on pilgrimage”. Irony-filled story tells about complicated searches for causes of lack of rain and attempts to improve the situation. Taoist monks along with magicians and fortune-tellers besieged a local official with demands to rebuild his home. They argued that there is no rain because the official has narrow internal yard and the location of the entrance gate was wrong^[16].

Folk beliefs were criticized from moral standpoint. Description of summer temple festival was accompanied by disappointed comments. Here we see an image of prosperous life of rural Chinese, because donations of few days could provide the shrine with money for the whole year. On a hot day Chinese peasants went to the shrine on the hilltop. “Merciful Lord rewarded them hundredfold in this life for their hard persistent work, and they rush to the hill to thank the straw idol and blue clothes of the villagers, like a rain cloud, cover the top of the hill”^[17]

There was a problem of Chinese perceptions of relations and differences among the branches of Christianity. In the journal there was an account of speech at the dinner with the missionaries of a Chinese preparing for baptism in Orthodoxy. He stated that the Eastern Orthodox faith is true because its missionaries, “like the apostles are different from other missionaries by their accessibility, humility and communication, they are not hiding their teachings and rituals from us the non-baptized.” For comparison it was said that the French missionaries did not allow the Chinese to attend the worship and to enter the courtyard of the mission.

[14] 《Из китайских обычаев》 [Iz kitaiskikh obyчаev \ From Chinese customs] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Issue 20. 1908, June 15th, 2.

[15] “В среднем Китае. Путевые заметки”. [V srednem Kitae. Putevye zametki \ In Central China. Travel Notes] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Issues 36-37. 1906, September 30th, 6.

[16] Корреспонденция. (Из Вэй-хуй-фу). [Korrespondentsiya. (Iz Vei-khui-fu) \ Correspondence. (From Wei-hui-fu)]. “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 5. Issues 21-22. 1908, July 1st, 28.

[17] “Престольный праздник (из записок миссионера в Китае)” [Prestol'nyj prazdnik (iz zapisok missionera v Kitae) \ Feast Day (from missionary diaries in China)] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Issues 56-57, 1907, September 30th, 4.

Protestants are more accessible and more sociable, but “in every sermon they only know how to scold us, finding that we, the Chinese, are very spoiled—all we have is bad and only all European is well. That is why many find their sermons unpleasant”^[18].

It is noteworthy that in his response the Orthodox missionary refrained from criticizing other Christian churches and even tacitly supported them. He said that the Catholics can hardly ban the Chinese from divine service and mission yard without a reason. He also doubted that the Protestants revile the Chinese. He suggested that this may be the fault of the Chinese Christians. Instead of having to explain to pagans their faults, they use the name of missionary to treat their fellow Chinese with arrogance. “Almost everybody agreed with me and admitted that the Chinese Christians are not quite brotherly in their approach to pagans”^[19].

Journal publications presented rather objective picture of motivation for conversion to Christianity after the Europeans suppressed the Yihetuan rebellion. Chinese in the provinces established societies and send delegates to urban Christian mission in order to gather information and learn about ways to get rid of the tyranny of Chinese officials. Representatives from Fengkou, Hubei province came to the Orthodox mission in Hankou. These people wanted to baptize in Orthodoxy. They were also considering getting Russian citizenship in order to “tolerate no insults from the Chinese authorities and to use land and property rights justly belonging to them”^[20]

Chinese aspirations to become “rice Christians” in the Orthodox Church caused resentment among the priests. They called “childish” and “inconsistent” desires of the Christians to get from Mission’s permit to live as “state within a state” and even to obtain Russian citizenship. Some of the Orthodox Chinese did not want to pay for the support of local police force. To explain their position they said that recently to their village came a Dutch Catholic priest and told his Catholic flock that they should not pay any duties and that the he will cover their payments for the police. Orthodox missionaries did not support this approach. They said that if the Chinese Christians use the services of the Chinese police to find stolen items, than they should pay for this service. They should not pay only for Chinese theater and temple, and should not go there, “all other duties you have to pay, it is not for rebellion you took the faith of Christ”^[21]. Christians from the Xiyangzhuang village made a bad impression on Orthodox missionaries due to “stubbornness” and “pretensions to something high”: “they are busy with earthly things; all their aspirations are here, not in Heaven.”

In the autumn of 1907 the “Kitajskij blagovestnik” published a story that reflected the complexity of conflict between different cultural traditions. It was a missionary account of the story of deceased Orthodox Chinese Mina Lian. He was a lonely person who lived at the Mission quarters in Peking. Long ago he helped the Orthodox missionary hieromonk Isaiah, later he came to the Mission and baptized, but then he began to abuse alcohol and slipped to dire poverty. Mina Lian returned to the Orthodox Mission in 1901 in the

[18] “Корреспонденция. Письма из Вэй-хуй-фу” [Korrespondentsiya. Pis'ma iz Vei-khui-fu \ Correspondence. Letters from Weihufu] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Issues 42-43. 1907, February 28th, 25.

[19] Ibid.

[20] 《В провинциях Китая》. [V provintsiyakh Kitaya \ In provinces of China] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 4. Issues 5-6. 1907. November 30th, 2.

[21] “На кирпичном заводе”. [Na kirpichnom zavode \ In a brick factory] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 8. Issue 13. 1911, December 1st, 8.

atmosphere of hunger and fears that the Chinese will start killing the Europeans again. After the Yihetuan rebellion foreign troops occupied Peking and divided the city into eight quarters according to the number of invading powers. City dwellers “groaned under the burden of incompetent management and lost all faith in the culture of the Europeans. . . Pekingers were patient and in the eyes praised their Kultur-tragers, but behind their backs reviled them, harboring anger and discussing how to get rid of uninvited guests”^[22].

In this difficult situation MinaLian came to the Orthodox Mission and persuaded the priest to visit his house for prayer service. After some hesitation the priest agreed. At home Orthodox Chinese asked the priest to pray for his deceased father who passed away while preparing for baptism. In the eyes of the priest his father was a pagan and he refused to pray for him. The Chinese asked him what he should do. Does a Christian have to go to the shrine to the priest who bows to demons and ask him to pray for his father who aspired for the Kingdom of Heaven? “They worship the demons, the demons-why should I go there?” - said Orthodox Chinese, helplessly gesturing with his hands. This episode remained in the memory of the Orthodox priest: “It was a pity that there was nothing to help this man; he believed sincerely and surrendered to the will of God wholeheartedly, out of love to the father he asked for good for him, he asked earnestly and not received what he desired. And now he has already descended into the grave, but his question burdens my conscience and his small figure, as a living one, resurrects in front of me, helplessly gesturing and waiting for response”^[23]

The problem of compatibility of Christianity with the cult of Confucius and worship of ancestors for several centuries provoked fierce disputes among the Western missionaries. In the early twentieth century this topic became relevant also for the Orthodox missionaries. They condemned “meaningless worship of idols”, but tried to avoid attacking Confucius. While preaching in Henan province Hierodeacon Innokenty said about Confucius that “he was a man, but a smart one, and for his intelligence and useful guidance you can respect him and remember him but not worship, you can possess his image but should not bow to it to honor him as deity, because he was created by God, as we are.” This neutral restrained assessment was met positively by the audience. “Tonight two students specially came to us and thanked the preacher for good attitude to Confucius, saying that they know that he is not god and is not necessary pray to him, but they worship him for all good he did for the Chinese.” They also explained that long time ago they could have received Protestant or Catholic baptism, but those force you to forget Confucius, and therefore they were not baptized.^[24]

Missionaries formed their understanding of commitment of Chinese officials to traditional culture in process of personal communication. In particular, it was confirmed in conversation with a fellow traveler in the train. The missionaries commented to him that although there are many religions in China, but officials adhere to the religion of Confucius. “On this subject, our interlocutor spoke a lot and with enthusiasm. He noticed that we pleased him by talking on this matter; that the religion of Confucius by prescribing rules of respect for parents and elders serves as unshakable basis of family and public life of people and that if there are unhappy years of disorder in the lives of some nations, it happens due to neglect of the sacred laws of “Kong-zi”. We

[22] 《Мина Лянь. Рассказ пекинского миссионера》 [Mina Lyan: Rasskaz pekinskogo missionera \ Mina Lian. Story of Peking Missionary] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Issues 3-4. 1907, October 31st, 17.

[23] Ibid. 24.

[24] 《Миссионерский стан в Цисяне (провинция Хонань)》 [Missionerskii stan v Tsiyane (provintsiya Khonan) \ Missionary station in Qixian (Henan province)] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 6. Issue 1. 1909. January 15th, 24.

didn't dare to argue...”^[25]

There was also an impression of indifference of educated Chinese youth to the problems of faith in their demonstration of external respect to Christianity. Another fellow traveler of the Orthodox missionaries was a young (about 25 years old) police officer. He saw on the table the book “The Life and Behavior of Christian” in Chinese language and expressed politeness by saying some “flattering words about missionaries.” The officer started reading that book and chanted its headlines, “but soon put it back and said that all this is very good, he knows all that and he visited many times the Catholic Cathedral on legation street in Peking—than he turned to the other side and fell asleep. . .”^[26]

The journal had printed a story about the Full Moon Festival and related Chinese beliefs that on the Moon there are house, Yuegong deity, a tree and a huge hare with mortar and pestle producing magical drug. Description of the holiday was detailed and based upon first-hand impressions of a Russian Orthodox member of the Mission. “Many people say that the Chinese are now already ceasing to believe in their false gods and abandoning superstitions at all. But on the Moon Festival we didn't notice it; the sacrifices are offered in superstitious fear, they donate generously, donate with a hope of acquiring happiness. O, man!”^[27]

In 1910 the journal published a sermon that gave Christian assessments to traditional Chinese festivals. It has touched again the theme of the Moon Hare: “If men of science can't invent the way to the moon, and rise only into the clouds on balloons and come down again—than how the hare can get to the moon? There are no living creatures on the moon”^[28]

Criticism of worship of hare and other animals was often present in the missionary preaching. Orthodox missionaries warned their audience against the Chinese superstitions. They argued that God alone is the true spirit and all other spirits—shen are false, fictitious and non-existing. Their listeners argued and disagreed. One of the stories in the journal tells that an old hotel-keeper told the missionaries that he himself observed supernatural phenomena attributed to the spirits like spontaneous inflammation and noises in empty rooms, shrines and houses. This view was supported by other Chinese listeners. One said he saw a sorghum fence to get into flames by itself, others claimed that they heard the noise “khurul-khurul” in the shrine, and that, in their opinion, certainly was the deed of spirits, evil or good. To challenge these beliefs the missionaries appealed to common sense and used scientific knowledge about natural phenomena^[29].

3. Modernization of China and International Politics

After the defeat of the Yihetuan rebellion in the first two decades of the 20th century there were favorable conditions for propagation of Christianity in China. Foreign missionaries faced no opposition from the

[25] Внутрь страны [Vnutr' strany \ To the inland] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Issues 27-28. 1906, May 15th, 6.

[26] Ibid, 7.

[27] Корреспонденция. Праздник луны или полнолуния восьмого месяца (этуод с натуры). [Korrespondentsiya. Prazdnik luny ili polnoluniya vos'mogo mesyatsa (etyud s natyry) \ Correspondence. The Moon Festival or of the full moon of the eighth month (study from nature)] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 6. Issues 19-20. 1909. December 15th, 25.

[28] «Годовой круг жертвоприношений у китайцев» [Godovoi krug zhertvoprinoshenii u kitaitsev \ The annual round of sacrifices at the Chinese] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 7. Issue 7. 1910, August 1st, 25.

[29] «У яслей» [U yaslei \ By the crèche] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 8 Issue 12. 1911. November 1st, 24.

weakened imperial power, and there was no open hostility from the social forces. Many Chinese intellectuals sought for path modernization, these searches stimulated their interest not only to material but also to the spiritual side of Western civilization. After the fall of the Qing dynasty the Republic was established in China that guaranteed religious freedoms to all citizens.

Orthodox missionaries felt the accumulating tensions within the Chinese society before the Xinhai revolution. They noted growing hostility of the Chinese against the Manchus, explaining that the Japanese are fueling this hostility and call on the Chinese to come together, to prepare and to rebel against the Manchus. According to the missionaries, from Chinese youth they often heard rather unflattering words about the imperial dynasty and the Manchus in general. “The newspapers say about the appearance of the comet, about some thunder heard in the Hankou area for three days, and so on. Currently in southern China there is great famine which is killing hundreds of people every day. All these events the Chinese interpret in the most disturbing sense saying that Heaven itself notifies them of the onset of hard times for China. . . ”^[30]

Orthodox missionaries paid attention to changes in the Chinese society. In the last years of the Qing dynasty it was noticeable that China is entering new period of development. In particular, the journal observed that new buildings in European style were constructed in Tianjin. Among the signs of a new era were factory chimneys, bicycles on the streets, Chinese soldiers that looked “decent and self-confident”. “This is a resurgent China. Under the influence of the example of the Japanese, under vigorous leadership of vice-king (Yuan Shikai-A. L.), the Chinese began to improve their military and to introduce the external features of European civilization”^[31]

There was an attempt to draw a positive parallel between the reforms development in Imperial Russia and Imperial China. In October 1905 the Russian Tsar issued the Manifesto that imposed self-limits on autocratic power and promised the path of constitutional monarchy with extended civil liberties. The journal wrote that “Orthodox Chinese hope that the dawn of freedom in Russia will make beneficent impact on their small family, like a lightning shining in the West and visible at the same time in the East”^[32]

There were hopes that as far as China was also committed to reforms, it will gain greater confidence and enthusiasm in relations with the reformed tsarist Russia. Finally these reforms ended with revolutions and collapses of autocracies in China and in Russia.

During their travel en route to Peking Russian missionaries saw very old and dilapidated cities. They believed that these cities should not be rebuilt because “the revived China will create another life, another cities, and these will be buried under sand.” The missionaries paid attention to new uniforms of Chinese soldiers in Baodingfu and new barracks of the Zhili army, these convinced them that “governmental China stepped far and boldly.”

Together with Russian missionaries traveled on the train there were some young Chinese - children of the

[30] “Корреспонденция. Письма из Вэй-хуй-фу” [Korrespondentsiya. Pis'ma iz Vei-khui-fu \ Correspondence. Letters from Weihufu] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Issues 42-43. 1907, February 28th, 26.

[31] “Происхождение Тяньцзиньского подворья Пекинской Духовной Миссии (окончание)”. [Proiskhozhdenie Tyan'zins'kago podvor'ya Pekinskoj Dukhovnoj Missii (okonchanie) \ Origins of the Tianjin metoch of the Peking Spiritual Mission (the end)]. “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issue 1. 1905, April 15th, 11.

[32] 《Разсвет свободы》 [Razsvet svobody \ The dawn of freedom] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Issues 19-20. 1905. December 15th, 5.

officials and future officials. Some of them have visited Japan, they studied French and English languages; in conversations with foreigners they praised everything European. Missionaries noted their openness to new knowledge and ideas but doubted their spiritual character. “They attend Catholic schools, but, alas, not to get acquainted with the religion of Christianity, but only to learn languages and customs of the Europeans; they do not intend to be baptized. Under the influence of Western culture percolated through a filter of pagan Japan this new trend is equally indifferent both to ancient religions of China and to Christianity. Atheism and worship of man are credited to the younger generation; Christian preachers of different denominations are losing power in mutual hostility when ripe fruit escape from under their nose. China is looking for new foundations of life and it is reborn now under the influence of Japanese culture that is hostile to Christianity and the West. It can not be said that the Chinese are very sympathetic to the Japanese; they love only themselves and believe only in their talents and abilities, but circumstances forced them to give a hand to Japan and go where it leads”^[33].

The missionaries noted that the New Year in “pagan China” is celebrated with particular solemnity. Under “new progressive trends” the timing of the celebration is reduced, but still the traditions are alive and New Year celebrations represent an important event when consciousness of the entire nation and each individual are manifested.

“Progressive China, via establishing new forms of life, in recent years began to unite in various societies or unions that seeking one or another progressive goal. The Chinese, while starting to learn various improvements from the Europeans, want to continue to be themselves, want to preserve the original foundations of the nation. It is clear that they'll try to hold to paganism as to behest of the antiquity.” It was suggested that following the growth of numbers of Chinese Christians they should unite to repel the actions of the new paganism and to counteract the indifference of Chinese intellectuals and officials, acting for self protection and fulfilling evangelical commandments of the unity of the faithful.^[34]

The defeat of Russia in war with Japan became a new factor in the perception of China and prospects of relations between the Russians and the Chinese. The report on the state of the Russian ecclesiastical mission in China in 1904 has noted that the shock of the war with Japan forced most of the Russian flock to move out of Manchuria. “As for the Chinese population, despite battlefield failures of the Russian army and navy, it remained quite friendly to the Russians and has not changed its sympathy to the Orthodox Church, as evidenced by the opening of new mission station in the city of Yong-ping-fu that is the centre of the location of the North Chinese army, the journey of the Bishop to northern and southern China, and numerical increase of the Chinese Orthodox congregation”.^[35]

There were new fears of alliance between Japan and China for joint military invasion into Russia. The perception of Russia among the Chinese had also changed. In the city of Xingfengkou a Chinese official told to

[33] Внутрь страны [Vnutr' strany \ To the inland] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Issues 27-28. 1906, May 15th, 20.

[34] «Новый год у китайцев христиан в Пекине» [Novyi god u kitaitsev khristian v Pekine \ New year of Chinese Christians in Peking] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 5. Issue 13. 1908. March 13rd, 1-2.

[35] О состоянии русской духовной миссии в Китае в 1904 году (из годового отчета) [O sostoyanii russkoi dukhovnoi missii v Kitae v 1904 godu (iz godovogo otcheta) \ On the situation of the Russian ecclesiastical Mission in China in 1904 (from annual report)] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Year 3. Issues 25-26. 1906. April 30th, 29.

Orthodox priest: “In the past our city considered the Russians to be the only true believers and strong nation of the world, but when petty Japanese started to defeat the Russians, we have completely lost hope in true faith and might of the Russians.” Political disillusionment was aggravated by duty limitations. The journal reported that the Chinese interlocutor considered conversion into Orthodox Christianity, but he had no chance to do that as far as “Chinese officials cannot be baptized because they are obliged to make sacrifices and to worship idols on the 1st and 15th day of each month”^[36].

The journal published different descriptions of Chinese attitudes to the Russians after the Russo-Japanese war. In autumn of 1910 a letter from Mukden informed that the Chinese turned away from the Japanese and became more sympathetic to Russians. However, the rapid intellectual progress of the Chinese society created new standards for missionary activities. “The preacher here must be highly educated, because the population is very advanced, everyone reads, everyone is trying to accept consciously the fruits of progress, they have a keen interest and experience in religion. (The population) require a clear and explanatory presentation of the essence of faith”^[37].

The missionaries observed the rise of nationalist consciousness after the Xinhai revolution. “Concerning the preaching, it should be noted that the modern movement in China cannot be considered as favorable condition for the preaching. National feeling, the desire to free themselves from foreign tutelage, and therefore imitation of all things European with selfish goal, is not a convenient ground for sowing the gospel word”^[38].

Publications of the Russian Orthodox journal in China explicitly proclaimed that the awakening nation needs spiritual guidance and the European nations can not cope with this task. “China wakes up and begins to discover its hidden power. China is looking for the light, looking for new forms of life, knocking at the doors of European progress. And if it will not find among the European nations the bearer of divine truth and will not accept it, it will try to establish its own truth that is alien to Christianity”^[39]. The article stressed that for this reason it is necessary to support Orthodox missionaries in China “according to the Greatness and Power of Orthodox Russia.”

The missionaries discussed the impact of the Xinhai revolution upon the religious and moral condition of the Chinese people. They identified new areas of cultural conflict: “In the last decade in China’s life growing importance acquire the collision of Chinese culture with European one and of Chinese paganism with Christianity.”^[40]

The article noted that China is experiencing a period of Europeanization and Christianization. The Europeanization of China accelerated after the revolution, the dynamics of Christianization remained unclear

[36] «Опять война» [Opyat’ voina \ The war again] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Year 3. Issues 21-22. 1906. February 15th, 22.

[37] «Корреспонденция. (Из Мукдена от 25-го ноября 1910 г)» [Korrespondentsiya. (Iz Mukdena ot 25-go noyabrya 1910 g) \ Correspondence. From Mukden of November 25, 1910] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 8. Issue 1. 1911, January 1911, 17.

[38] «Праздник всех святых мучеников и юбилей Миссии» [Prazdnik vseh svyatykh muchenikov i yubilei Missii \ Celebration of All Holy Martyrs and the Jubilee of the Mission] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 9. Issue 4. 1912. June 10th, 13.

[39] «О подворьях миссии» [O podvor’ yakh missii \ About metoches of the Mission] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Issue 20. 1908. June 20th, 6.

[40] «Религиозный вопрос в Китае» [Religiozniy vopros v Kitae \ Religious question in China] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 11. Issues 1-2. 1914. January 15th, 29.

and for its evaluation it was proposed to wait when the excitement caused by the revolution will calm down. After the establishment in China of the new Republican form of government there was an initial tide of hostility to old pagan beliefs and sympathy for Christianity. But then there was a turn to the “old cult”. Western missionaries reported that Chinese peasants rebuild and repaint their pagodas, in 1913 the Confucian society was established and the question of recognition of Confucianism as the state religion was raised.

The prediction was made that the struggle between paganism and Christianity in China will become more intense. In case of acceptance by the Chinese people of Christian faith “Confucianism as moral teaching that has elements of universal morality and that served as a school for educating the people to adopt Christianity will find its place in Christian morality”. At the same time it was also considered possible that China can remain non-religious^[41].

Orthodox priests admitted that the East is awakening and coming out of prolonged stagnation, and China is no exception. “China will borrow from the West what is useful and adapt it to its needs, but until common culture of China rests upon the old foundations no radical renewal will emerge.”^[42]

From this point of view only the adoption of Christianity could herald the real renaissance of China. However, there was growing understanding that the Chinese culture will not be destroyed and it will keep its unique identity while embracing the spirit of Christianity. There is no need to reject Confucianism completely for the sake of Christianity because these teachings belong to two different spheres of being. Confucianism represents the fundamentals of natural life and Christianity rests on the laws of spiritual life.

“Confucianism can be reconciled with the moral principles of natural life of the West and can serve as universal foundation on which will be erected the temple of God-the Kingdom of Heaven. If China will seek merely the external wealth and borrow from the West only useful inventions and knowledge, it will always lag behind the West and will be dependent on it”. Christianity is needed for spiritual revival of China, and this revival will stimulate creativity within the Chinese culture. “In the past China demonstrated ability to creative work. It created such forms of state, social and family life, which allowed it to survive for four millennia. It lacks spirituality, inner ascent to a higher sphere of being. If China will reborn spiritually, it can create a kind of original spiritual culture, then maybe the West will have something to learn from it”^[43]

The idea of Confucian-Christian synthesis was counterbalanced by missionary arguments on the necessity to prevent the spread of Chinese culture in Russia. Archimandrite Avraamy spoke about that in the first half of 1914 when he went to Moscow and St Petersburg to collect donations for the construction of the new majestic Orthodox Cathedral in Peking.

He emphasized that the famine forces the Chinese to go West to seek earnings. They bring with them their culture, and they stick to it firmly. “The unity of the Chinese is not due to religious fanaticism, or patriotic feelings, or language, but due to the system of education based on Confucian principles. We must fight, therefore, not with the people, but with the books, for this task it is necessary to disseminate Russian books in Chinese language. It is necessary to study China and to work actively spreading Russian influence

[41] Ibid., 30.

[42] 《Возрождение Азии》 [Vozrozhdenie Azii \ The Renaissance of Asia] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 11. Issues 7-8. 1914. April 15th, 18.

[43] Ibid., 19.

and Orthodox faith in China”^[44]

The perception of Chinese culture as obstacle to propagation of Christianity led this Orthodox Archimandrite to the expression of position that followed closely the strategy of Western Catholic missionaries of that time. They have abandoned a long-standing aspiration to convert the Chinese elite and turned to preaching among the common people. Archimandrite Avraamy claimed: “Due to pagan pride of educated Chinese it is difficult to influence them by Christian sermon. Those turning to the Christian faith are mainly the people who do not belong to the so-called literati, they are believers by simplicity of souls.”

This approach led to emphasis on the need to oppose the Chinese customs. Avraamy said that from the beginning an Orthodox missionary has to face with the cult of ancestors that is their deification. “(You) tell the Chinese that it is not good to worship ancestors, and they say that Russian do not respect their elders and are willing to turn away. . . you have to be persistent, clever and not afraid of those two hundred volumes, which set out the rules of honoring the ancestors.” According to him, the Russian Orthodox Mission “overcomes the two hundred volumes of Chinese ceremonies in relation to the ancestors and all the tricks and clarifications by the special Chinese Ministry—the Ministry of Ceremonies that supports the cult of the ancestors”^[45].

In another lecture in Russia Archimandrite Avraamy talked about the influence of the classic “Book of ceremonies” (Li Ji) on the formation of “peaceful character of the Chinese”. On the prospects of revival of the Confucian religion and future propagation of Christianity he noted that “coup d’état in China” (that is the Xinhai revolution) “has the good side that it had shaken the foundations of the Confucian cult”. In particular, after the abdication of the Qing dynasty “those particularly revered by the Chinese New Year sacrifices in the Temple of Heaven. . . have lost their value”. Reference was made to the rumors that Yuan Shikai secretly professes Protestantism. “All this shows that the return to the old cult has become impossible and in the end Christianity will prevail in China. What religion will be dominant, it’s hard to say”^[46].

The head of the Mission Bishop Innokenty warned that the Russians paid not enough attention to China and to serious danger coming from China. “The Chinese have a completely unique ability of cultural conquest. I’ve seen than on many examples over the 17 years of my stay in Peking. I remember the Englishman Robert Hart who was much more Chinese than English. I could give many such examples. I would like to draw attention to this absolutely exceptional Chinese ability of cultural conquest”^[47]. However, in his speeches the Bishop emphasized good attitude of the Chinese towards the Russian, because of not wanting to create psychological barriers when Orthodox priests and monks were deciding if they should move to serve in China.

[44] 《Чтения о. Архимандрита Авраамия о Китае》 [Chteniya o. Arkhimandrita Avraamiya o Kitae \ Lectures of f. Archimandrite Avraamy about China] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 11. Issues 15-16. 1914. September 15th, 21.

[45] Ibid. ,22.

[46] Ibid. ,23.

[47] 《В китайской междоусобной войне》 [V kitaiskoi mezhdousobnoi voine \ In the Chinese civil war] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News] Issue 10. 1913, October 1st, 27.

4. Russian Orthodoxy in China: Adaptation and Aspirations

There was a strengthening conviction that China's population abandoned the old beliefs and it is now ready to accept Christianity. "Long time ago these people in their concepts and feelings became so ripe that without being forced by anyone they themselves removed idols from their homes and abandoned pagan rituals and customs; simpletons, though holding to pagan antiquity, but in his heart they lost faith in their gods and wait for renewal. These are really sheep without a shepherd and the ripe harvest in the field"^[48]

The missionaries admitted that they were met with rejection by the part of Chinese population, but attributed this phenomenon to the negative impact on the minds of the Chinese by the Western Christians. "In remote areas of China the widespread opinion of Russians is very unflattering. In their imagination a Russian is cruel barbarian bowing to rude idols; the latter view we ascribe to the dissemination of sermons by the Protestant missionaries who want be different from other Christian religions and resort to this method in describing our honoring of icons." It was suggested that with all contempt for the European things the Chinese have great respect to Christianity and aspire to baptism. However they are confused by the differences and the apparent hostility between different parts of Christianity. "Orthodoxy, about which the Chinese knew for the first time, is attracting them by its Eastern rites and indifference within the party structure of existing Christian communities in China"^[49].

In the period of intensified missionary work there was an interest in adapting methods of Orthodox Christian charity to the Chinese conditions. Publication of 1905 examined the history of emergence and activities of the "Triangle" shelter opened by the Russian Orthodox Mission outside the Andingmen gate in Peking. It was emphasized that in China it is very difficult to provide charity and it is especially hard for the foreigners. For the Western missions it was not easy to discern the true needs of applicants and often the wealthy people become the recipients, mostly the relatives of those Chinese who were entrusted to distribute the aid. When the Europeans were personally handing out alms it led to a big mess, sometime even it was necessary to call the police and troops to restore calm. After receiving in one day, beggars demanded more alms on another day, even if the sum was already disbursed.

The article provided background information on classification of the poor people in Peking into four categories.

The first is the families of poor peasants, ruined by debts or by poor grain harvest. To save them from death the Emperor opens at the main city gates on the four sides of the city free distribution of boiled rice, and in the winter also of warm clothing. The number of these poor is huge, but after the hard time is passed, they're back to their work and do not bother urban dwellers with demands of handout.

To the second category belong the people rejected by families due to physical disability and inability to

[48] Поездка Его Преосвященства Преосвященнейшего Иннокентия из Шанхая в Саньянчжэнь (Дневник) (продолжение) " [Poezdka Ego Preosvyashchenstva Preosvyashchenneishego Innokentiya iz Shankhaya v San 'yanchzhen' (Dnevnik) (prodolzhenie) \ The visit of His grace Bishop Innokentii from Shanghai to Sanyangzhen (Diary) (continued)] " Известия братства православной церкви в Китае [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issues 13-14. 1905, September 15th, 16.

[49] «Отчет о состоянии Пекинской Духовной Миссии за 1902 г. и 1903 г.» [Otchet o sostoyanii Pekinskoj Dukhovnoi Missii za 1902 g. i 1903 g. \ Report on the situation of the Peking Ecclesiastical Mission in 1902 and 1903] " Известия братства православной церкви в Китае" [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Issues 11-12. 1905, August 1st, 6-7.

work; these are also orphans and children who do not know their parents. They can be brought back to life in human society and they want to get out of their difficult situation, but can't find good people who would have accepted them by reconciling with their physical disability or take care of them if they are children.

For the third category poverty was the result of failures in life or some shock. They are bitterly against other people and mentally insane, they are anchorites who voluntarily chose poverty, and also children who remained in the second category for time too long. These people can't go back to old life because they do not want this.

The fourth group consists of professional beggars who earn more than workers. Upon mutual agreement they divide the city into sections, these people have mastered the ways to beg for money. The article pointed out that a poor person dressed in ordinary clothes will not get a single penny. In China it is necessary to "show" poverty. To do that professional beggars artificially disfigure themselves, they wear sacks with patches, stain faces and hands with soot and dirt; they are not supposed to have shoes and hats. They are sitting on ground and pretend to eat from the slop tubs; they chew and spit out the dirt to show passers-by that they do not have any better food. "It is difficult to list all ways of humiliation practiced by beggars to ask for a handout".

Orthodox missionaries concluded that "hand alms" never lead to the goal and give no hope for a man to come out of bitter situation. Russian Mission established charity shelter "Sanjiede" for 60 persons to help the poor of the "second category" who were thrown out of their families but want to return to normal life^[50].

Another remarkable topic on adapting the Church order to the Chinese reality was connected with the discussion in Russia of the theme of restoration of the institution of deaconesses. In the days of the Apostolic Church they prepared women for baptism and helped at the ceremony. Later their ordination was cancelled, but deaconesses could be particularly demanded in the Chinese Orthodox Church

"Here the Orthodox Church is exactly in the same conditions as it was in the first centuries of Christianity in the Roman Empire. In the pagan state the deaconesses are active helpers of the missionary evangelists in the work of preaching among women and guiding them in Christian life. Isolation of Chinese family makes it impenetrable to the words of evangelist, but lady deaconess can stand close to a pagan family that wants to adopt Christianity. Charities, care of orphans, educating them in the spirit of Christianity-it is most natural to entrust these to deaconesses"^[51].

One can note the presence in the journal of the theme of frustration of the Chinese with their own religious traditions as precondition to fill the spiritual void. "Now is the most favorable time for the preaching, as people everywhere realize the inanity of their religions. In Christianity they like the idea of love, mercy and compassion to the poor and to neighbor in general. Mass conversion of Chinese to Christianity is in most cases hindered by immoral and debauched life and to the highest degree rude and inhumane treatment of the Chinese by the Europeans, and also by not infallible and improper interventions of missionaries into Chinese life. If there are few or no Europeans at all, there the Chinese are different: kind, conscientious and not aspiring to get someone else's property, there is good ground for preaching the word

[50] 《Треугольник》 [Treugol'nik \ The Triangle] "Известия братства православной церкви в Китае" [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China]. Year 2. Issues 4-5. 1905, June 1st, 3-4.

[51] 《Диаконисы в канонической Церкви》 [Diakonisy v kanonicheskoi Tserkvi \ Diaconesses in Canonic Church] "Известия братства православной церкви в Китае" [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issues 19-20. 1905, December 15th, 7.

of God.”

To succeed the Orthodox should focus wholeheartedly on the great Apostolic cause. They cannot look at the Chinese as inferior race but as humans created in the image and likeness of God. On the other hand, it is impossible to idealize and embellish the Chinese culture. “Many Russians say; why convert the Chinese to Christianity? They have their own very humane teaching. One who knows that humane teaching only from the books should look here in the wilderness on what the Chinese worship to; not only different idols but even trees, badgers that made holes in the hills, hares and other animals and stones”^[52].

In 1909 “Kitajskij blagovestnik” published two articles by well-known conservative Orthodox preacher Ioann Vostorgov who paid great attention to the promotion of Christianity in Asia^[53]. His sermons were emotional and uncompromisingly critical of Chinese traditional culture. He was neither China scholar nor a member of the Russian Mission in China. In 1909 Vostorgov visited Peking, North Manchuria, Japan and Korea to explore the situation of the Orthodox missionary work.

Vostorgov’s impression of the trip was very disturbing. “When one travels across a significant part of China from North to South and inland; when one sees, at least superficially, but personally, this populous nation living in the richest country in the world; when one visiting and watching these innumerable shrines, those temples in the cities and in solitude on mountain tops; when one remembers that in some mysterious and unfathomable attraction China have chosen the Dragon as its patron-protector and banner-then one wonders; is it not here the ancient tempter-serpent has prepared for himself a Kingdom, is it not here he wished and wishes to strengthen and to give the most brutal battle and resistance to the Kingdom of God, Church of Christ, Christian peoples hated by him?”^[54]

The priest concluded that the devil in the guise of dragon was already defeated. Now the Orthodox should save China from the absorption of European culture that is capable of destroying positive moral qualities of the Chinese people such as filial piety, loyalty, courtesy, willingness to help others, diligence, persistence. Worthy of attention is his criticism of idea supported by some Western Christian missions that due to the influence of national traditions the Chinese have no attraction to religion and are not capable to be religious. In particular, this thesis was present at the religion conference in Shanghai in 1863. Vostorgov pointed to the unity of human nature in which China is no exception.

Although Chinese manifestations of religiosity are rude and Chinese idols “provoke a sense of disgust,” it only confirms inborn and active nature of human religious needs. The Chinese have religiosity and can be taught to it, as evidenced by the courageous deaths of faithful Christian Chinese.

“And the facts that temples are crumbling, that paganism here has apparently decayed, that the former zeal for idols is not there, that the influx and influence of new concepts, attitudes, and needs of life under the influence of Europe penetrate more and more into the inland and in into the deepest pockets of people’s life-

[52] Корреспонденции. От С. С. из Вэй-хуй-фу. 30-го сентября 1906 г. [Korrespondentsii. Ot S. S. iz Vei-khui-fu. 30-go sentyabrya 1906 g. \ Correspondence. From S. S. from Weihui fu of September 30th, 1906] “Известия братства православной церкви в Китае” [Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae \ News of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church in China] Issues 38-39. 1906, November 1st, 13.

[53] Friesen A. “Building an Orthodox empire; Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov and Russian missionary aspirations in Asia”, Canadian Slavonic Papers, vol. 57 No. 1-2 (2015). Pp 56-75. DOI:10.1080/00085006.2015.1028179

[54] Восторгов И. \ Vostorgov I. «Царство дракона и Богоявление Христово» [Tsarstvo drakona i Bogoyavlenie Khristovo \ The Kingdom of Dragon and Epiphany of Christ] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News] Year 6. Issues 13-14. 1909. August 15th, 2.

all that make mysterious and old gray-haired Chinese nation similar to a “thirty-eight year old invalid” seeking revival and salvation in the Pool of Siloam”^[55]

In the next publication, which was written during his stay in Hankou, Vostorgov noted that the word “Orient” is very attractive for the Europeans—the word is mysterious, majestic, human mind cannot accommodate it, it is infinitely important and prophetic. However, for many the appeal to the East becomes a mere excuse to invade another country for selfish calculations. European education masks predatory intentions and therefore unpopular in China. The weakening of the West led to the fact that the West himself appealed to the wisdom of the pagan East.

Vostorgov complained that “count Tolstoy in Russia all time refers to the Chinese sages Confucius and Lao Tzu, he sees many things worthy of attention and superior to Christianity in the religion of Fo, that is in Chinese Buddhism”. In this case, “whole quasi-scientific books are trying to prove that Christ, if not inferior, is not superior to pagan wise men”. In Europe there is spreading of Eastern teachings (Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism) and of the “most vile sins of the East”. Finally one unwillingly and with horror thinks that “not Christian nations now make impact on the pagan East, as it was before, but vice versa.”^[56]

The set of characteristics of Chinese religious teachings was negative and obviously superficial. Confucianism is nothing more than “practical life tips”. Taoism is a “dry discourse about morality not based on religion and therefore barren, cold and dead, groundless and not compulsory to anyone”. Buddhism in its original form is “devoid of religious character and kills the individuality and personal life”, in China the religion of “fo” is “distorted by superstitions and most abominable idolatry.” According to Vostorgov, the Chinese are ready to turn to Christianity, because they understand that Heaven, which they worship as God, under the influence of pagan wisdom turned into “Great Emptiness” (tai xu). The Chinese are burdened by “elevating of hatred into virtue and of revenge into duty (Confucius), by vague speculations on immortality that are equal to its negation (Lao-Tzu)”^[57]

The theme of penetration of Eastern “paganism” to the West and to Russia in particular amid the frustration of the Chinese with their traditional beliefs was present in other publications of the “Kitajskij blagovestnik”. An initiative of construction of Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg caused discontent among the conservative part of the Orthodox clergy who suspected the sign of return to “idolatry” and harbinger of transition from free thinking and weak faith to no faith at all. Meanwhile, the former “seat of idolatry and paganism” China has been awakened from centuries of sleep, it throws away the idols, the temples turn into public places and offered up for sale—it was reported that the Russian Mission in Peking recently purchased an abandoned Taoist temple. Bad times have come in China also for Confucius. It gets more and more difficult to buy in a bookstore a good edition of classical texts, instead of them booksellers offer books on mathematics and science, illustrated edition in beautiful bindings. It was not left unnoticed that some “obscure authors diligently popularize Darwin, Newton and other scientists, as well as Russian atheists and revolutionaries such as count Tolstoy, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and others; descriptions of the French revolution and the systems of legal institutions of the West, and the like. So, the gods are buried, Confucius is debunked. In front of us face

[55] Ibid. 9-10.

[56] Восторгов И. \ Vostorgov I «Восток свыше». [Vostok svyshe \ The East from above] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 6. Issues 15-16, 1909. 1909 September 15th, 2.

[57] Ibid. ,4-5.

to face is China that rejected all religion, materialistic and not believing in anything.”^[58]

Russian missionary publications from 1904 to 1917 demonstrate that in this period Russian Orthodox Church made serious plans for spreading its message across China. It was a unique period in the life of the Russian Mission that focused in the past on diplomatic functions on behalf of the Russian state and on China Studies instead of proselytism. While discussing the problems of propagation of the Orthodox faith in China, Russian priests touched many problems that were debated by the Western Christians in China for a long time such as compatibility with the cult of Confucius and worship of ancestors.

Researcher of the history of Russian-Chinese interactions Nikolay Samoylov noted the ambivalence of perception of China in Russia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The process of modernization of the Russian society stimulated growth of ideas of “civilizing mission” of Russia among the nations of the East thus leading to the perception of China as backward country that needs outside spiritual guidance. “At the same time, searches for original roots of the Russian culture and its recognition as “non-West” has led some Russian thinkers to opposite conclusions; the origins of true spirituality should be sought in the East, particularly in China.”^[59]

In the missionary articles prevailed the first approach that called for Christian reconstruction of Chinese culture and for Russian Orthodox participation in this process. This trend was visibly weakened during the years of the First World War when the inflow of financial help to Mission from Russia has dried out. There were no funds to support all missionary stations established in China in the previous years. After the Russian revolution of 1917 hundreds thousands of refugees fled to China from Russia. The Mission completely concentrated on their spiritual needs and woes. Problems of Chinese culture and religion were taken off the agenda together with the tasks of propagation of the Orthodox faith among the Chinese.

[58] 《Не сотвори себе кумира》 [Ne sotvori sebe kumira \ Do not create an idol to yourself] “Китайский благовестник” [Kitajskij blagovestnik \ Chinese Good News]. Year 7. Issue 7, 1910. August 1st, 3-4.

[59] Самойлов Н. А. Samoilov N. A. Россия и Китай в XVII-начале XX века; тенденции, формы и стадии социокультурного взаимодействия [Rossiya i Kitai v XVII-nachale XX veka; tendentsii, formy i stadii sotsiokul'turnogo vzaimodeistviya \ Russia and China in the XVII-early XX century; tendencies, forms and stages of sociocultural interaction]. — СПб; Изд-во С.-Петерб. ун-та, 2014 [SPb; Izd-vo S. - Peterb. un-ta \ St Petersburg; St Petersburg University Press] 2014, 252.

中文题目:

中国文化与宗教问题在俄罗斯驻北京传教团的期刊(1904—1917)

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提要:20世纪初俄罗斯驻北京传教团开始了在中国人间传教,因此俄罗斯传教士更重视中国文化和宗教问题。1904年俄罗斯东正教人士于哈尔滨创办了“中国东正教兄弟会消息报”(Izvestiya Bratstva pravoslavnoj tserkvi v Kitae),1907年刊物编辑部移动到北京而期刊名称改为“中国福音报”(Kitajskij blagovestnik)。此刊物反映了俄罗斯传教士对中国文化传统,宗教仪式和日常习俗的看法。本文在原文材料基础上研究俄罗斯传教士如何评价中国文化和宗教生活,分析他们对现代化和革命化背景下的中国基督教传播前景的不同解读,解释他们如何试图使东正教布道内容和教会组织适应中国社会的具体情况。这个时期限于1917年,因为俄国革命后俄罗斯驻北京传教团不得不放弃在中国人之间传道。

关键词:俄罗斯、中国、东正教、传统、现代化

