РЕЛИГИОВЕДЕНИЕ

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R. WIPPER'S RELIGIOUS MYTH THEORY[1]

This research is devoted to the views of Robert Yurievich Wipper, a historian who has worked both in Russia and abroad, in the study of religion. His work can be divided into two main areas of research: 1) the Reformation, especially Calvinism, 2) the first centuries of Christianity. It is important to note that the research topics concerning religious and political events of the 16th century were related to the early stages of his activity. The formation of Wipper as a historian occurred at the end of the 19th century. It was time when there were popular ideas of positivism. A later development of ideas with the advent of Christianity fit into the so-called mythological school. Wipper's ideas on this evolved, including the environmental spread of religion, but the main postulate for several decades, regardless of where the historian, worked at the time, Latvia or the Soviet Union, remained unchanged: the figure of Jesus Christ was mythological rather than historical. His ideas were not only affected in the person of Klyiuchevskiy or Guerrier, but foreign researchers as well, links to whom are often found especially in his early works, from the end of the 19th century to 1910. The ideas of Marxism had a significant influence which was understandable for the time. Refs 14.

Keywords: Wipper R. Yu., myth theory, religion studies, Christianity.

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МИФОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ТЕОРИЯ Р. Ю. ВИППЕРА

Исследование посвящено анализу взглядов Роберта Юрьевича Виппера, историка, трудившегося как в России, так и за рубежом, на изучение религии. Можно условно выделить два основных направления исследований Р. Ю. Виппера. Первое — Реформация, в частности кальвинизм, второе — первые века существования христианства. При этом важно заметить, что исследования, касающиеся религиозных и политических событий XVI в., относятся к раннему этапу его деятельности. Формирование Виппера-историка происходило в конце XIX в., в то время когда в научной среде были популярны идеи позитивизма. Дальнейшее развитие его идей о появлении христианства укладывалось в рамки так называемой мифологической школы. Идеи Виппера развивались, изменялось, в частности, его мнение относительно среды

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распространения данной религии, однако главный постулат на протяжении нескольких десятилетий, вне зависимости от того, где историк работал в тот момент — в Латвии или СССР, оставался неизменным — фигура Иисуса Христа была мифологической, а не исторической. Влияние на его идеи оказали не только его учителя в лице Ключевского или Герье, но и зарубежные исследователи, ссылки на которых неоднократно встречаются в его работах, особенно ранних, относящихся к концу XIX — первому десятилетию XX в. Серьезное влияние, безусловно, оказали на Виппера идеи марксизма, что вполне объяснимо для того времени. Библиогр. 14 назв.

Ключевые слова: Виппер Р. Ю., мифологическая теория, исследование религии, христианство.

In 2007 was published a book „The Jesus Legend…“ which shows that the problem of Christ and the origins of Christianity is open for today [1, p. 2–4]. One of the most important positions are religious myth theories which connected with Christ myth theory [2, p. 5–9 etc.], the hypothesis that Jesus of Nazareth neber existed, or if he did, he had virtually nothing to do with the founding of Christianity and the accounts in the gospels. The Christ myth theory contradicts the mainstream historical view, which concludes that Jesus was a Jewish religious reformer. The gospels include many mythical or legendary elements, but historians identify these elements as religious elaborations added to the biography of a historical figure [3, p. 51].

Variations of the Christ myth theory may be asserted by different proponents of the theory. Typically, one or more of the arguments used are derived from or directly taken from the threefold argument first developed in the XIX century by B. Bauer, who is credited as the first scholar to deny the existence of Jesus. According to A. Kalthoff a social movement produced Jesus when it encountered Jewish messianic expectations [4, p. 93–118]. A. Drewssaw Jesus as the concrete form of a myth that predated Christianity [4, p. 90].

Interest in history is characteristic of many researches. Religious concepts of the historical process, presented in the historic-philosophical works of thinkers in XIX–XX centuries, and study of the history related to secular interpretation of the historical process, are known. The establishment of this approach started in the age of Enlightenment, together with development of historiography as a special historical discipline, and finally emerged in XIX century in the university science. Thus, occurrence of mythological concepts of the origin of Christianity, not only in Europe but also in Russia seems reasonable, but you have missed a certain stage of the discussion.

Professional historians who tried to apply existing philosophical concepts to the historiography initiated establishment of the secular concepts of history philosophy in the national traditions. These historians-theorists, or according to N. I. Kareev “philosophers-historians”, understood the history as the ontology of freedom world. However, they distinguished history as a process from the history as a form of knowledge. Establishment of different concepts was often influenced by appurtenance to a particular research school or an imprint was imposed by certain political beliefs. And sometimes it was quite difficult to determine which aspect played a major role, scientific or political. In this regard, it seems that study of religious processes in terms of development of the old and formation of new schools, as well as changes in the political situation in Russia in the first half of XX century, were interrelated.

Application to Robert Yuryevich Wipper was caused by the fact that he was both a representative of the pre-revolutionary school and an activist of the Soviet science, teaching, moreover, at a foreign university, if Riga may be considered a foreign University?

He graduated from historical-philological faculty of Moscow University (1876–1880), his mentors were V. I. Gerier and P. G. Vinogradov. In 1894 he defended his thesis "Church and State in Geneva of XVI Century in the Era of Calvinism", for which he was honored Ph.D., was honored to a degree of "Doctor of Russian History". He taught at Novorossiysk University (1894–1897) and from 1899 to 1922 was a professor at Moscow University. In 1923 the historian emigrated to Latvia, where from 1923 to 1940 he worked as professor at the University of Latvia (Riga). Since 1941 returned at Moscow State University [5, p. 201].

Why Wipper's study of religion became the object of analysis? This is mainly due to the fact that the researcher witnessed major political changes that reflected in relations of the church and the state. This resulted in rethinking of the religion place in society, in particular in the historical context.

Two main trends of the study of R. Yu. Wipper related to the study of religion: reformation, in particular Calvinism and early centuries of Christianity, draw attention. It is important to note that the subject of his studies related to religious and political events of XVI century, refer to the early stages of activity of the scientist. Thus, there is a question, if views of Wipper to religion in the early and late stages were similar. In this case, we are interested in the aspect related to a mythological component of the religious knowledge and if there are common features in the views on religious events different in nature.

Several stages in Wipper's activity may be determined. The early stage refers to an early end of XIX century and is related to the thesis of R. Yu. Wipper devoted to the era of Calvinism, as mentioned above. At the stage of its preparation Vipper could not be influenced by his mentors — representatives of Moscow historical school at the end of XIX — beginning of XX century Klyuchevskiy [6, p. 170] and V. I. Guerrier [7, p. 165].

Apparently, the first one influenced R. Yu. Wipper with his approach to the study of history that required study of multidimensionality of the historical process reflected in diversity of constantly developing historical relations. This approach combined sociological and concrete historical methods, studying the laws of historical movement, as well as events related to the phenomena of the world history. He tried to develop a new and effective method for the study of past events, identifying their origin and considering development with the use of reliable sources, and if they were not sufficient — retrospective operations, considering consequences of the phenomena. Thus, he refused from the role of the historian-chronicler, and became a "historian taxidermist", according to the terminology of S. Benn.

R. Yu. Wipper shared the views of his teacher on importance of economic factor and social ideas in the historical process, and he was ready to underestimate the role of historical characters who were, in his opinion, not capable of altering the smooth, "viscous" flow of the history. As for V. I. Guerrier, maybe he influenced the formation and development of Wipper's skills of historic and historiographical analysis. He pushed his follower to think on the status of history, as choice of the history's place by the researcher determined his position in relation to historical fact, recognition of its authenticity or doubts about its authenticity. In addition, Gerier engendered skepticism of R. Yu. Wipper with regard to potential of adequate study of the history, having convinced him in inevitable formation of the history's image in the researcher's mind, as "subjective synthesis" of the scientist's thoughts with not less subjective written evidence of the past does not inspire confidence in the possibility of objective study of the historical reality. Subsequent trend of R. Yu. Wipper to mythologizing of the earliest stages of ancient history, "suffering" from a

lack or absence of reliable sources, may be considered one of the lessons he learned good, when he learnt from V. I. Guerrier.

At the beginning of XX century some shifts in Wipper's approach happen that may have been associated with scientific crisis, after which the researcher limited his analysis solely to the sphere of ideas [8, c. 379]. At this time, R. Yu. Wipper turned to the history of Christianity in the early XX century, sharing the views of representatives of the new comparativism, a trend that arose in the western historiography in the early XX century [4, c. 396]. He wanted to include the history of the rise of Christianity into the context of religious development that he was considering. Some researchers attribute him to the followers of panbabylonismus. For example, in according to O. V. Metel Wipper is by analyzing the text of the Gospels, consider painting the emergence of a new religion false. One may agree with that in part, as from his point of view, the occurrence of Christianity was a reflection of the idea of searching for a divine Redeemer widespread in the Euphrates valley [9, c. 166].

By the time of the October Revolution, Wipper probably considered Christianity as a product of collective creativity of the Jewish communities, who were looking for a Messiah of Heaven after defeat of two Jewish revolts. Enriched with elements of Greco-Roman culture, the Christianity became widespread in the empire, finding its followers among wealthier sectors [10, p. 102]. In his works published before emigration, R. Yu. Wipper finally builds early Christianity in the context of development of the ancient world, claiming that it is a reflection of processes of the religious restoration generated by the preceding period of wars and deep internal social changes.

These conclusions, which looked very original within framework of pre-revolutionary tradition, were in tune with the spirit of the times after the October Revolution that marked occurrence of a new Marxist historiography, trying to destroy the picture of early Christian history, going back to the church tradition, and create a new one, "materialist" concept of the origin [5, p. 258–263]. At first glance, ideas of R. Yu. Wipper who also focused on the roots of religious phenomena, should have made him one of the most respected scientists in the emerging Soviet science. However, criticism of the marxism ideas in 1918 resulted to the fact that his conclusions were condemned by V. I. Lenin, who, in particular, accused the investigator of "…making simply ridiculous and most reactionary claim to rise above both "extremes": idealistic and materialistic ones" [7, c. 166].

After emigration of R. Yu. Wipper in Latvia, he (along with K. Kautskiy) [2, p. 152], he was sharply criticized in the late 1920-s — early 1930-s. This may be due to the fact that at this time two groups formed among the new Soviet intelligentsia, especially teachers and researchers dealing with study of religion. Some of them wanted to study religion, understanding the term "critique of religion" in a philosophical sense as a historical and sociological analysis (not denying the Marxism idea of gradual extinction of the religion on the way to the "communistic tomorrow"), and others performing the ideological order, tried to expose the religion, looking for evidence for possible prosecution [2, p. 151]. Of course, in this difficult situation, there were people who criticized ideas of Wipper, expressing radical statements against the scientist, and more justified assessments. In particular, one of the members of the League of Militant Atheists L. Dunaevskiy, who referred Wipper to the "bourgeois apology of religion" for his work on the early history of Christianity, was one of the first [2, p. 151]. A. B. Ranovich was among others who also criticized the scientist [11, file 125, p. 1]. However, he did not argued the Marxism, in Soviet understanding, nature

of concepts of R. Yu. Wipper. Moreover, Soviet "classic" was even more cautious in critical remarks in the unpublished comments on several chapters of a new monograph and finished his work with a wish to correct some drawbacks in the work of R. Yu. Wipper, which will allow including his ideas in common Marxism concept of the early Christianity.

Despite the criticism, the Wipper's ideas on origin of Christianity and place of religion in the history of the society, after accession of Latvia to the Soviet Union, the researcher returned to Moscow State University and was elected an academician. There is a question, how much, in terms of another political situation, did research concept of R. Yu. Wipper change in the 1940-s — early 1950-s. Apparently, we may say that the historian remained faithful to the old pattern of occurrence of the Christian religion, having amended his earlier ideas, close to the concepts of mythological school, with a declaration of commitment to the Marxism theoretical developments. Deconstructing Christian tradition and refusing to consider the early Christian documents as authentic sources for the history of Christianity of I century, R. Yu. Wipper insisted that Christianity was a religion, that served as "an ideological weapon in the hands of ruling classes of the capitalist society". In other words, the core mythological of the works of R. Yu. Wipper got Marxism framing.

It should be mentioned that the researcher did not consider formation of Christianity outside the historical process. According to him, "questions of religious history in fact did not differ from other historical issues". I. e. he perceived the problem of the origin of Christianity in the light of gradual formation of religious knowledge.

Wipper related occurrence of religion to the era of Neolithic culture, putting forward a hypothesis of four periods in the development of religious consciousness. The first period — a century of magic, which was based on a motif of deification of nature. The next period — occurrence of the religion itself, formation of large states, highly technological culture based on a disciplinary moment. The third period — the period of heresies and mutual collisions, time of criticism and wars with previously ruling authorities. At the end there was a period of restoration, reconstruction of destroyed integrity of the religious consciousness and establishment of the former system of ideas. All world religions are restoration: Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam.

Four eras of religious consciousness may be considered as four successive types. One type is replaced by another, but it always has a lot of remnants of the old one. Thus, the doctrine of God-manhood, being the central idea of Christianity, has its roots, according to Wipper, even in the ancient era of magic.

On the other hand, if in his early work "On the Origin of Religion" (1918) R. Yu. Wipper suggested that Christianity was originally born among the wealthy circles of provinces, Roman traders and moneylenders, infringed in their rights, in his later works Wipper agreed that in I century the Christianity recruited its followers from slaves and the oppressed, but in the meantime, and he claimed that already in II century A. D. it became the religion of the affluent population [12, p. 86].

He finds association of the sublime and material, connection of the abstract origins and practical interests, in the formation of religious communities and churches as in any other sphere of human life. "The complexity of religious phenomena of life, their close interrelation with other aspects of human existence, obliges to study this area in general historical circumstances, not losing sight of the diversity of the strands connecting it with forms of living, turns of politics and cultural currents of time" [12, p. 5]. Thus, in the preface to his work "Rome and Early Christianity" Wipper wrote: "… While the New Testa-

ment originated in an atmosphere of slave society of the ancient world, it still serves as an ideological weapon of the ruling classes of capitalist society" [13, p. 5.].

One of the evidence of his hypothesis was Wipper's transfer, after Bauer, of the establishment of the New Testament from the middle to the second half of the II century A. D. [13, p. 284] Taking into account that in his later work of 1954, the researcher mentioned an article of Engels "Bruno Bauer and the Early Christianity" [12, p. 8], one may assume that either Wipper acquainted with his works really thanks to Engels' work, or he was familiar with the study and a reference to the classic was a necessity, which was not uncommon at the time.

As a conclusion would like to say that the formation of Wipper-theologian took place at the end of XIX century, time when ideas of positivism were popular in the scientific community. A more recent development of concepts of the Christianity origin built so-called mythological school. Therefore Wipper's ideas developed, in particular with respect to the religion propagation medium. But the main postulate for several decades, despite of the fact where the historian worked at that time, in Latvia or Soviet Union, remained unchanged — the figure of Jesus Christ was mythological rather than historical. In a sense his ideas resonate with the previous study of Calvinism, which, including he considered myths about Calvin [view more 13, p. 259–262]. His ideas were influenced not only by his teacher in the person of Klyuchevskiy or Guerrier, but foreign researchers, references thereto are often found especially in his early works, related to the end of XIX — the first decade of XX century. Of course, ideas of marxism had a major influence, what is understandable for that time. However, as it seems, this is due to the popularity of these ideas in the scientific community of that time, rather than caused by political events, and not related to the party circles.

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