



Russian Missions to the Orthodox East: Antonin Kapustin (1817–1894) and his World

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Abstract

This article investigates the Russian Orthodox presence and activities in Christianity's sacred historical center of the Holy Land from the 1840s, when Russia expanded its consular activities in Palestine and began its first spiritual missions to this region, through the end of the nineteenth century. The article particularly centers on the active leadership of Archimandrite Antonin (Kapustin), who served as the leader of the Russian Ecclesiastical mission in Jerusalem from 1865 to 1894. A prodigious scholar of the Orthodox East, Antonin resourcefully developed a respected Russian presence in Palestine, raised prodigious funds for the assistance of Russian pilgrims and for the accumulation of properties throughout the Holy Land, and continued his intensive studies and publications on the region's history, archeology, and human geography. Frary illustrates how the archimandrite in these pursuits exhibited an impressive ability for flexible and sensitive adaptation to a non-Russian, non-Orthodox environment that was revealed in his own scholarly work and in his successes in constructing new regional centers of Orthodoxy in Palestine.

Keywords

Russian Orthodox Church; Russian Orthodox missions; Palestine; Antonin Kapustin; Russian Palestine Commission

Introduction

Since their conversion to Christianity, eastern Slavs have been writing about their voyages to the Orthodox East (*Pravoslavnyi Vostok*). As early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the people of medieval Rus' undertook the dangers and challenges that existed at that time to make the long journey to Palestine. The account of the pilgrim Daniil, who visited the Holy Land in the early twelfth century, generated a remarkable amount of

interest from the time of its first appearance until our day.¹ Since then, Russian travelers have continued to be drawn to the Holy Places – despite the risks and difficulties involved.

Kievan and Muscovite contacts with the Holy Land were sponsored by the state and driven by curiosity and religious zeal. The fall of Byzantium in 1453 marked a new epoch of Russian involvement in Palestine, as Grand Prince Ivan III (1462–1505) and Ivan IV, the Terrible (1533–1584) became the first Russian leaders to claim the right to protect pilgrims visiting in the Holy Land. Later, visions of expanding the Russian Empire's role as defender of Orthodoxy to the Orthodox East were manifested in Catherine II's "Greek Project," which was an ambitious but unfulfilled plan to partition the Ottoman Empire and place an Orthodox sovereign on the throne in Constantinople. War with Ottoman Turkey helped Russia gain control of the Black Sea and Bessarabia and led to the opening of the Dardanelles. The Treaty of Kuchuk-Kaniardji (1774) concluding the first Russo-Turkish War marked a watershed in Russian-Near Eastern relations and enabled Russian rulers to claim a protectorate over Ottoman Christians. Russian prestige began to soar among Christian communities residing in the lands of the sultan.

The appearance of noteworthy accounts by Russian travelers to the Holy Places paralleled the victories of the tsarist armies. For example, after two voyages in the 1720s and 1740s the wandering pilgrim Vasilii Grigorovich-Barskii published a detailed account which became a landmark in the travelogue (*khozhdenie*) genre. His travelogue sheds light on pilgrim routes, ancient monuments, ethnic groups and religious practices.² It inspired a host of similar accounts, often composed by prominent public figures.³ Travelogues became best sellers. Andrei Nikolaevich Murav'ev wrote perhaps the most successful pilgrimage account of the century, issued in five editions between 1832 and 1847.⁴ Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin claimed

¹ Daniil's travelogue is published in Ivan P. Sakharov, ed., *Puteshestviia russkikh liudei po Sviatoi Zemle*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1838), vol. 1, 2–34.

² Vasilii Grigorovich-Barskii, *Peshkhodtsa Vasil'ia Grigorevicha Barskogo Plaki-Albova, urozhentsa kievskogo monakha antiokhiiskogo, Puteshestvia k Sviatym mestam, v Evrope, Azii i Afrike* (St. Petersburg, 1778) and *Stranstvovaniia Vasil'ia Grigor'evicha-Barskogo po Sviatym mestam vostoka s 1723 po 1747 g.*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1885–87).

³ See Theofanis G. Stavrou and Peter Weisensel, *Russian Travelers in the Christian East* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1986).

⁴ Andrei N. Murav'ev, *Puteshestvie ko Sviatym mestam v 1830 g.*, 2 parts, fifth edition (St. Petersburg, 1848).

to have read this work “with emotion and involuntary dependence.”⁵ The proliferation of Episcopal newsletters and “thick journals” demonstrates the keen interest among Russians in Near Eastern affairs. By the end of the nineteenth century (according to Boris Pavlovich Mansurov and Vasilii Nikolaevich Khitrovo) three to four thousand Russians visited the Holy Places every year.⁶ In response to this increased interest, the Russian Foreign Ministry and Holy Synod designed methods to safeguard travelers while “successfully combating the influence of foreign beliefs.”⁷ The protection of Orthodoxy formed an essential component of Russian policy in the Holy Land. Reason for concern stemmed from the expansion of foreign missionary societies during the second half of the nineteenth century in a region considered a traditional Russian sphere of influence.

Russian contacts with the Orthodox East reached a zenith in the second half of the nineteenth century. The spread of non-Orthodox propaganda and proselytizers in the Holy Land generated a profound reaction in personal and public writings by church and state leadership as well as the population at large. The results included the expansion of the consulate system, the establishment of public institutions and the general enrichment of Russian culture. The acquisition of lands and the founding of churches and monasteries helped promote the image of Russia in the minds of Near Eastern peoples.

This essay traces the Russian Orthodox presence and activities in the Holy Land in the nineteenth century. It particularly focuses on the activities of the leader of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Palestine, Archimandrite Antonin (Kapustin) (1817–1894), who made a profound impact on Russian Palestine for nearly four decades. His mission and scholarly activities underscore the special relationship between Russia and its southern periphery and indicate the importance of religion in the formation of Russian foreign policy.

⁵ Alexander Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranoe sochineniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1958), vol. 7, 262.

⁶ Boris Pavlovich Mansurov, *Bazilika Imperatora Konstantina v Sv. gr. Ierusalime. Po povody russkikh raskopok bliz khrama groba gospodnia* (Moscow, 1885), ii, 2; Vasilii Nikolaevich Khitrovo, *Pravoslavnyi palestinskii sbornik*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1881): 75, 97.

⁷ Kirill Melitopolskii, “Po Ierusalimskim delame,” *Otdel' rukopisei Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka* (hereafter, OR RGB), *fond 214, delo 34, folia 1–10*.

Russian Consulates and the First Russian Mission to Jerusalem (1840s–1850s)

Victory at war against the Ottomans in 1828–29 and intervention against the Egyptian Pasha Mohammad Ali in the 1830s and 1840s enhanced Russia's international position and facilitated closer contacts with the Christian peoples of the Balkans and the Near East. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Russian policy aimed at reinforcing Orthodoxy in Ottoman territories. For this reason, the Foreign Ministry (in consultation with the Holy Synod) began devising various means to implement this goal. The most convenient avenue to advance tsarist influence was the creation of permanent diplomatic and ecclesiastical representatives.

Britain's establishment of an Anglican bishop in Jerusalem in 1841 and Rome's decision to found a Catholic patriarchate in 1846 caused considerable concern among Russian state and religious leaders. Catholic missionaries, the arrival of the first Latin patriarch of Jerusalem (Joseph Valerga, 1847–72) and the spread of Latin and Protestant propaganda elicited intense reactions from a wide range of Russian society. Russian concern was not unwarranted when Valerga began establishing monasteries, schools, and hospitals and, at the same time, increased the number of missionary societies ten-fold.⁸

In the 1840s the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs took decisive steps to consolidate influence in Palestine by expanding the consulate system. Earlier precedents, such as the expeditionary force led by Aleksei Grigorievich Orlov (which sailed into the Mediterranean in 1770) laid the groundwork for setting up the first Russian consulates. In 1839 Konstantin Mikhailovich Bazili became the first Russian consul in Beirut, a post which he held until the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853. Extensive travel in the region made him one of Russia's foremost experts in Levantine affairs – and he published a stream of articles, pamphlets, and books about his experiences.⁹ The founding of a Russian post at Jaffa, a few years later, presaged the coming of pilgrims.

St. Petersburg's first steps to send a spiritual mission to Jerusalem were cautious. In 1843 the Holy Synod and Asiatic Department instructed Archimandrite Porfirii (Uspenskii) to travel to the Holy Land as an ordinary

⁸) Khitrovo, 21, 28, 39, 45.

⁹) On Bazili, see James Tabor, "In the Service of the Russian Tsar: the Life and Work of Konstantin Mikhailovich Bazili, 1809–1884" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2003).

pilgrim (he was not to appear as an official).¹⁰ Porfirii's main actions in Palestine consisted of familiarizing himself with the local clergy, visiting monasteries and churches, and participating in daily services. He also traveled extensively, visiting Bethlehem, Jordan, Galilee, Lebanon, among other places, where he studied icon painting, worked with Arabs on spiritual and educational matters, and observed Russian pilgrims. In August of 1845 he traveled to Mount Athos. His stay there resulted in his first major historical work on the Eastern Church based on research in the Holy Mountain's libraries.¹¹

Porfirii's first pilgrimage was a success. In 1847 the government returned him to Palestine along with nine other Russian monks, deacons, and cantors. State officials instructed Porfirii to make Jerusalem a center of Orthodox action in the East, reform and reorganize the Greek clergy, attract Arabs to Orthodoxy and counteract the influence of non-Orthodox missionaries. Other tasks consisted of scholarly research, observing pilgrims, and gathering information about religious conditions.¹² According to one observer, such ambitious goals and the meager resources placed at Porfirii's disposal (the annual budget was 4,000 rubles) displayed the weakness of the Foreign Ministry's intelligence system.¹³

As the leader of the first Russian Ecclesiastical Mission (1847–1853), Porfirii visited religious sites in Palestine, North Africa and Mount Athos. The moment he reached Jerusalem he asserted the Russian presence by attending liturgies and visiting key church figures. Soon he was working to spread Orthodoxy among the Arabs and to counteract Catholic and Protestant propaganda. Porfirii constantly urged the Russian government to supply him with funds to build a home for the mission and a hospital for travelers. He had hoped to open a school in Jerusalem to teach Arabs the fundamentals of Orthodox belief in their own language. He remained very disappointed in the lack of government support.

¹⁰ Aleksei A. Dmitrievskii, *Episkop Porfirii (Uspenskii) kak initsiator i organizator pervoi Russkoi Dukhovnoi Missii v Ierusalime i ego zaslugi v pol'su Pravoslaviia i v dele izucheniiia Khristianskogo Vostoka (Po povodu stoletiiia so dnia ego rozhdeniia)* (St. Petersburg, 1906), 19–29. An eminent historian, theologian, traveler, and archeologist, Porfirii's writings constitute an essential source on the history of Eastern Orthodoxy. See Porfirii's *Kniga bytiii moego. Dnevnik i avtobiographicheskie zapiski*, ed. Polikhronii A. Syrku, 8 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1894–1902).

¹¹ Porfirii (Uspenskii), *Pervoe puteshchestvie v Afonskii monastirii i skiti arkhimandrita, nynie episkopa, Porfiriia Uspenskogo v 1845 godu*, 2 parts in 5 vols. (Kiev and Moscow, 1877–1881).

¹² Dmitrievskii, *Episkop Porfirii (Uspenskii)*, 45–51; Khitrovo, 75–76.

¹³ Gorchakov to Kirill Melitopolskii (July 11, 1858), OR RGB, *fond 214, d. 34, f. 81*.

One of his major accomplishments, however, was the establishment of a printing press (in 1854) at the Saint Nicholas Monastery in Jerusalem. The first books published were the Apostles, an Orthodox catechism in Arabic, and a commentary on the Psalters by Anfim, the Patriarch of Jerusalem.¹⁴ Porfirii also built an orphanage for Syrian children and found teachers and supplies for them in local schools.¹⁵ He became famous for his distribution of alms among the poor in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, on religious holidays.

While in Palestine and Sinai, Porfirii began composing historical essays, pilgrimage guides, richly illustrated travel albums, and catalogues of Greek manuscripts in monasteries.¹⁶ The fact that this activity was performed on a limited budget underscores his commitment and resourcefulness. Porfirii's actions improved the lives of Arabs. However, political events intervened and the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 forced the mission to close. Porfirii left Jerusalem that year for St. Petersburg.

The Palestinian Commission (1857–64) and Palestinian Committee (1864–1889)

Defeated, humiliated and financially drained by war, Russian pursuits in Palestine began to revive after the Treaty of Paris in 1856. Tsar Alexander II, who maintained that the issue of the Holy Land was for him “a question of the heart,” continued to show concern for the status of ancient Christian sites and the well-being of pilgrims.¹⁷ Although Russia could no longer

¹⁴ Agafangel, Metropolitan of Odessa and Izmailskii, “Episkop Porfirii (Uspenskii),” *Vyshenskii palomnik*, no. 1 (2001): 68; Aleksei A. Dmitrievskii, *Russkaia literature v arabskikh perevodakh* (Petrograd, 1915).

¹⁵ Porfirii (Uspenskii), *Kniga byta moego*, vol. 4, 391.

¹⁶ Porfirii's works include: “Ukazatel' aktov, khraaniashchikhsia v obiteliakh Sv. Gory Athonskoi,” *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* (hereafter, *ZhMNP*), no. 7–8 (1847), part 2, 25–74, 169–200; “Siriiskaia tserkov,” *ZhMNP*, no. 9 (1850), part 2, 117–143; “Otryvki iz puteshestviia v egipeskii obiteli (prepodobnykh Antoniiia Velikogo i Pavla Thiveiskogo,” *ZhMNP*, no. 3 (1855), lit. pribavleniia, 31–62; idem, *Pervoe puteshestvie v Sinaiskii monastyr v 1845* (St. Petersburg, 1856); *Vtorow puteshestvie v Sinaiskii monastyr v 1840 gody* (St. Petersburg, 1856); and *Vostok khristianskii, Egipet i Sinai. Vidy, ocherki, plany i nadpisi k puteshestviiam* (St. Petersburg, 1857).

¹⁷ Nikolai N. Lisovoi, “Russkoe delo v Sviatoi Zemle. (Po materialam Arkhiva vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi imperii),” *Diplomaticheskii ezhegodnik. 2001* (Moscow: Nauchnaia kniga, 2001), 330–31.

secure predominance in Near Eastern affairs, efforts to assert prestige and authority continued. As a first step, Vladimir Ivanovich Dorgobuzhinov became the Russian consul in Jerusalem in 1858.¹⁸ Assisting merchants, overseeing pilgrims, and gathering information about the other powers constituted his primary tasks.

An event that inaugurated a sharp increase in Russian-Palestinian contacts was the establishment of the Russian Society of Steam Navigation and Trade (RSSNT) in 1856. The RSSNT began organizing regular, affordable trips for pilgrims from Odessa to Jaffa.¹⁹ In the next year the government sent the second Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to Jerusalem and created a Palestinian Commission to coordinate the activities of the consulate and RSSNT. Under the leadership of Grand Prince Konstantin Nikolaevich, the Palestinian Commission became an important instrument in developing the Russian presence in Palestine. The tsar initiated the process by donating 500,000 rubles from the state treasury. The grand prince also ordered provincial governors to announce the need for donations to offset the “Orthodox pilgrims’ exposure to diverse burdens and deprivations in the East, due to the absence of shelters, permanent buildings, commons for nurses and doctors, hospitals, and in general different charitable establishments.” According to Konstantin Nikolaevich, the strong presence of Catholics and Protestants in the region “which each year multiplies, increases the danger to Orthodox pilgrims.”²⁰ Five years later the Palestinian Commission had raised nearly 300,000 rubles from the Russian people, one of the most impressive charitable efforts in the post-emancipation period. By 1864 the Mission boasted a total of more than 1,000,000 rubles.²¹

In addition to Grand Prince Konstantin Nikolaevich, State Councillor Boris Pavlovich Mansurov was the most influential member of the Palestinian Commission. His first visit to the Holy Land in 1857 provided

¹⁸⁾ The Imperial Russian consuls (from 1891 general consuls) in Jerusalem were: V. I. Dorgobuzhinov (1858–60), K. A. Sokolov (1860–61), A. N. Kartsov (1863–67), V. F. Kozhevnikov (1867–76), N. A. Illarionov (1876–78), V. F. Kozhevnikov (1879–84), A. A. Girs (1885), D. N. Bukharov (1886–88), A. P. Beliaev (1888–89), S. V. Maksimov (1889–91), S. V. Arsen'ev (1891–94), A. G. Iakovlev (1894–1907), and A. F. Kruglov (1908–14).

¹⁹⁾ Sergei I. Ilovaiskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk piatidesiatiletiiia Russkogo Obshchestva Parokhodstva i Torgovla* (Odessa, 1907).

²⁰⁾ “Predpisanie velikogo kniazia Konstantina Nikolaevicha Vilenskomu grazhdanskomu gubernatoru ob okazanii pomoshchi palomnikom, napravliaiushchimsia v Palestinu,” March 16, 1858, Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter, GARF), *fond 722, opis' 1, delo 548*, ff. 1–3.

²¹⁾ *Ibid.*

him with valuable insights into the resources available to pilgrims. His personal letters constitute vivid portraits of town and country, while shedding light on relations between Turks, Greeks and Arabs. Although Mansurov often complained of the climate, road conditions, and high prices, he praised the natural setting and the hospitality of the local Greek clergy:

Since reaching this land sanctified by our savior I have experienced so many wonderful and profound feelings ... the route leading to Jerusalem is extremely picturesque but with a gloomy, sad and savage character ... we were received with open arms at the Patriarch's home and in the evening Metropolitan Meletii visited us, which is an exceptional honor.²²

Returning to Russia in 1858, Mansurov published a booklet, *Orthodox Pilgrims in Palestine*, which deals with a variety of practical topics, including weather conditions, housing and transport, the number of monasteries and the character of foreign missionaries. *Orthodox Pilgrims* includes a unique call for further involvement: "If each of the fifty million Orthodox Christians of the Russian Empire donated one kopeck, this would enable us to gather 500,000 rubles or 2 million francs. Moreover, if each person donated two kopecks, we would raise 1,000,000 rubles to improve conditions of Russian pilgrims in Palestine."²³ *Orthodox Pilgrims* did not fail to command attention. By 1858 the Russian state and its people raised funds to purchase a large area within the walls of Jerusalem near the Church of Christ the Savior, where the mission's new headquarters, subsequently known as the Russian Compound, were established. After laboring for years, Mansurov took great pride in the achievement.²⁴

The second Ecclesiastical Mission had goals similar to those of its predecessor under Porfirii (Uspenskii) in the 1840s. Under the leadership of Bishop Kirill (Naumov) of Melitopol' and later Archimandrite Leonid (Kavelin) the mission endeavored to advise and protect Russian pilgrims, encourage education, build schools, and engage in charitable works.²⁵ Due

²² Mansurov to Pavel B. Mansurov, Jerusalem, January 28, 1857, GARF, *fond* 990, *op.* 1, *d.* 32, ff. 61v.-62v.

²³ Boris P. Mansurov, *Pravoslavnye poklonniki v Palestine* (St. Petersburg, 1858), 105.

²⁴ Mansurov to M. N. Mansurova, Jerusalem, January 12, 1864, GARF, *fond* 990, *op.* 1, *d.* 38, ff. 47–50; Mansurov, *Bazilika Imperatora Konstantina*, ii.

²⁵ Fedor I. Titov, *Preosviashchennyi Kirill Naumov, Episkop Melitopol'skii, byvshii nostoiatel' russkoi dukhovnoi missii v Ierusalime* (Kiev, 1902). Aleksei A. Dmitrievskii, "Ocherk o zhizni i deiatel'nosti arkhimandrita Leonida (Kavelina), tret'ego nachalnika Russkoi Dukhovnoi Missii v Ierusalime, i ego nauchnye trudy po izucheniiu Pravoslavnogo Vostoka," *Bogoslovskie*

to its substantial material resources, the Ecclesiastical Mission exerted a strong presence in Jerusalem and Beirut. It also worked with the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria to combat the influence of Protestant and Catholic propaganda.

Antonin Kapustin and the Palestinian Commission (1865–1889)

Archimandrite Antonin (Kapustin, Andrei Ivanovich) became the leader of the Ecclesiastical Mission in 1865. He was extremely successful in strengthening Russia's position in the Orthodox East and is among the foremost Russian religious figures of the second half of the nineteenth century. He published over one hundred books and articles in a variety of Russian and foreign arenas, and he significantly expanded of Russian territorial possessions in the Near East. Furthermore, his philanthropic and educational activities made him one of the best known and most praised members of the clergy at the time.

Born on August 12, 1817 into the family of a village priest in the Perm region, Antonin studied at the Dalmatovskii Ecclesiastical School, the Perm and Ekaterinoslav Ecclesiastical Seminaries, and matriculated at the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy in 1839.²⁶ After completing a master's degree in 1843, he taught German, Greek and moral theology at the academy, where he also fulfilled various administrative duties. In 1845 he received the tonsure by the Metropolitan of Kiev Filaret. Antonin was an atypical Russian

Trudy (hereafter, *BT*) 36 (2001): 57–175; and Andrei Prosvirnin, "Bibliografiia trudov arhimandrita Leonida (Kavelina)," *BT* 9 (1972): 226–40.

²⁶ For biographical information, see Aleksei A. Dmitrievskii, "Nachal'nik Russkoi Dukhovnoi Missii v Ierusalime arhimandrit Antonin (Kapustin) kak deiatel' na pol'zu pravoslaviia na Vostoke, i v chastnosti v Palestine," *Soobshcheniia Imperatorskago Pravoslavnago Palestinskago Obshchestva* (hereafter, *SIPPO*), vol. 15, no. 2 (1904): 95–148; Archimandrit Kiprian (Kern), *O Antonin Kapustin* (Belgrade, 1934; Moscow: Graal, 1997); "Iz zhizni Pravoslavnago Vostoka," *Strannik*, no. 1 (1892): 181–88; Lora Gerd, "Arkhim. Antonin Kapustin i ego nauchnaia deiatel'nost' (po materialam peterburgskikh arkhivov)," in *Rukopisnoe nasledie russkikh vizantinistov v arkhivakh sankt-peterburga*, ed. Igor P. Medvedev (St. Petersburg: RAN, 1999), 8–35; Nikolai N. Lisovoi, *Russkoe dukhovnoe i politicheskoe prisutstvie v Sviatoi Zemle i na Blizhnem Vostoke v xix-nachale xx v.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 147–59. See also the autobiographical sketches, "Avtobiographicheskaia zametka, sostavlennaia po pros'be S. A. Vengerova," in Sergei A. Vengerov, *Kritiko-bibliographicheskii slovar' russkikh pisatelei i uchenykh*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1889), 627–28; and "Iz avtobiographicheskikh zapisok byvshego nachal'nika Russkoi dukhovnoi missii v Ierusalime o arhimandrita Antonina," *SIPPO* 10, no. 1 (1899): 9–29.

monk: he traveled, resided in society and studied with many secular individuals throughout his lifetime

From an early age, writing consumed a major role in Antonin's life. "While studying at the Perm Seminary," he wrote, "I was known as 'the poet' and I became well-known in my circle."²⁷ In Kiev during the 1840s Antonin's excellent command of German and Greek enabled him to contribute (often anonymously) a stream of articles in translation as well as original works in *Voskresnoe chtenia* (Sunday Reading). His first book consisted of a collection of sermons, conversations and lessons about religious celebrations.²⁸ Antonin eventually published hundreds of articles, books, editorials and other writings on a wide variety of historical and religious topics.²⁹

Antonin received his first foreign experience in 1850 when he was appointed as the superior of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Athens. Thus began a new phase of his life – he remained in the Orthodox East for the next fifty years. Antonin very much enjoyed his decade of service in Greece. He became a keen observer of antiquities, particularly ancient Christian and Byzantine monuments. The fruit of his energy includes a major article on Christian inscriptions and buildings.³⁰ According to one observer, he was well-liked: "In Athens we had the pleasure of meeting with Archimandrite Antonin, who's erudite and spiritual life gained him general respect and love ... People, whom he did not even know, would stop him on the street, and express their concerns about the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire."³¹

During these years Antonin's most celebrated accomplishment was the restoration of the Byzantine church St. Nikodim, considered to be "one of the most wonderful monuments of Christian antiquity" in Athens.³² After

²⁷ "Avtobiographicheskaia zametka," 628.

²⁸ Antonin (Kapustin), *Krug podvizhnykh Prazdnikov Tserkvi. Sobranie slov, besed, i pouchenii*, vol. 1 (Kiev, 1850). For reviews, see *Otechestvennye zapiski*, vol. 74, no. 1, part 6 (1851): 41; *Moskvitianin'*, no. 19, razdel "Kritika" (1850): 107.

²⁹ See the bibliography compiled by Stepan I. Ponamarev, "Pamiati ottsa arkhimandrita Antonina," *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii* (hereafter, *TKDA*), vol. 3 (1894): 636–52; reprinted in *BT* 36 (2001): 239–251.

³⁰ Antonin (Kapustin), "Khristianskii drevnosti Gretsii," *ZhMNP*, no. 1 and no. 3 (1854): 1–38 and 1–88.

³¹ *** [anon.], "Iz vospominanii o poezdke na Vostok v 1860g.," *Dushepoleznoe chtenie*, vol. 3 (1867): 180.

³² Antonin (Kapustin), *O rasrytiakh vntri rossiisko-posol'skoi tserkvi v Athinakh* (St. Petersburg, 1860), 1–2.

several years of meticulous work, Antonin discovered ancient Christian inscriptions, mosaics, walls and other evidence of early Christian architecture. Antonin hypothesized that the site was first constructed during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117–138 CE) when it was used as a bath.³³ After the archeological dig and reconstruction, the chapel became the main place of worship for the Russian diplomatic mission.

In addition to archeology, Antonin was busy studying Christian inscriptions in Athens and its vicinity. His endeavors resulted in a major tome: *On Ancient Christian Inscriptions in Athens*.³⁴ According to one contemporary, Antonin's book "without doubt occupies the most important place among the new and growing body of literature on Greek Christian inscriptions ... it contains much that is new, supplements earlier studies, corrects much that has been mistakenly written before and intelligently explains and preserves the Athenian inscriptions."³⁵ The book's contribution to archeological and historical studies helped further these disciplines in Russia. The numerous plates, diagrams, and lithographic reproductions of the inscriptions provided readers with fresh material on ancient Christianity. Because of these and many other accomplishments, Antonin attained the rank of archimandrite in April 1853.

A key event during Antonin's tenure in Athens occurred in 1857 when he visited Jerusalem for the first time. He recorded his impressions in a beautifully composed travelogue: *Five Days in the Holy Land and Jerusalem in 1857*.³⁶ The unity of the Orthodox world, Russia's activities in Palestine, an open attitude towards people of other faiths, and a strong religious zeal to visit ancient Christian sites constitute the main themes. The opening paragraph engages the reader:

The long awaited and desired spectacle of the Eastern sunrise on the open sea was before my eyes. On all sides the horizon was clear. A light tailwind behind us welcomed our meeting with the sight of the sun and the East covered itself in miraculous crimson light. It seemed as if the sun shined for us alone and we had never seen anything like it before. Then the splendid early moments waned and the sun shined its typical best – just like a golden fire. Waves grasped for it, but as the limitless sea was careening and

³³ Ibid, 25.

³⁴ Antonin (Kapustin), *O drevnikh khristianskikh nadpisiakh v Afinakh* (St. Petersburg, 1874).

³⁵ Izmail I. Sreznevskii, "Paleograficheskiia nabliudeniiia po pamiatnikom grecheskago pis'ma," *Zapiskii Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk*, 28.3 (1876): 8.

³⁶ Antonin (Kapustin), *Piat' dnei na Sviatoi Zemle i v Ierusalime, v. 1857* (Moscow, 1866).

pouring forth the sun appeared in it as million moving sparks. The East and the sun magnetically attracted each other ... When you have arrived in the East for the first time, it is hard to become self-conscious that this is the East of the east [*Vostok vostoka*] ... God has christened us.³⁷

For the most part, *Five Days* demonstrates Antonin's tolerance of Catholic and Protestant missionaries and stresses the ultimate unity of the Christian faith. With the exception of a few remarks regarding fanaticism in Syria Antonin comments little on Muslim activities.³⁸

In February 1859 Antonin learned of St. Petersburg's decision to transfer him to the embassy in Constantinople. "This strongly decides my future," wrote Antonin to his friend and fellow traveler Peter Ivanovich Sevast'ianov. At first he indicated "distress about [leaving] Athens."³⁹ Fortunately he soon came to enjoy life in the Ottoman capital, where he made many new acquaintances, something he had been unable to do in "quiet Athens."⁴⁰ Porfirii, who arrived in Constantinople in November, was among his new friends. Later Antonin wrote to Metropolitan of Moscow Filaret (Drozdov) to express his gratitude for the appointment.⁴¹

Antonin's position afforded him opportunities to travel. He continued to publish descriptive essays of his trips, including accounts of religious and historical sites on the islands of Khalki and Prinkipo and a detailed description of a theological school near Jerusalem founded by Patriarch Kirill.⁴² Most interesting is Antonin's extensive notes of his travels in Sinai in the early 1870s. *From the Memoirs of a Worshipper at Sinai* describes a trip from Jerusalem, through Jaffa and the Suez Canal, to Sinai.⁴³ In this work Antonin appears as an educated Russian Orthodox tourist interested in both contemporary affairs and history. Naturally he is especially interested in sites

³⁷ Ibid, 1.

³⁸ Ibid, 16.

³⁹ Antonin to Sevast'ianov, Athens, April 17, 1860, OR RGB, *fond* 269/1, *karton* 11, *delo* 26, f. 18v.

⁴⁰ Antonin to Sevast'ianov, Constantinople, November 22, 1860, OR RGB, *fond* 269/1, *karton* 11, *d.* 26, f. 22v.

⁴¹ Antonin to Filaret, Constantinople, January 12, 1861, in A. N. L'vov (ed), *Pis'ma dukhovnykh i svetskikh lits k mitropolitu moskovskomu Filarety (s 1812 po 1867 gg.)* (St. Petersburg, 1900), 473–4.

⁴² Antonin, *Prinkipo. Pis'mo iz Konstantinopolia* (Khar'kov, 1862); "Ot Bosfora do Iafy," *TKDA*, vols. 1–2 (1869); and "Bogoslovskoe uchilishche bliz Ierusalima," *Dukhovnaia beseda*, no. 37 (1868): 161–69, no. 40 (1868): 234–42.

⁴³ "Iz zapisok sinaiskogo bogomol'tsa," *TKDA*, no. 2, 4, 8 (1871); no. 5 (1872), no. 3, 9 (1873).

connected with Orthodoxy but he also makes reference to Catholic and Protestant propaganda. *From the Memoirs* sheds light on a variety of subjects: charming passages describe camel rides through the desert, the life of Coptic Christians, and the beauty of the natural surroundings. *From the Memoirs* also contains interesting ruminations on religious topography. Antonin at times made critical observations that challenged contemporary scholars. Perhaps the most important section of the account is the detailed description of the Library at the Monastery of Mount Sinai.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the prolific Antonin completed a two-volume folio account of his trip to Sinai during the summer of 1865.⁴⁵

Antonin's life changed dramatically in 1865 when he became the leader of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. He served in this post in Jerusalem until his death in 1894. Perhaps the most valuable single source on the history Orthodoxy in Palestine during these years is Antonin's detailed dairy.⁴⁶ Considered too sensitive to be published after his death, excerpts have been gradually typographically fixed.⁴⁷ The nineteen bound journals contain rich materials of the history of the Orthodox Church in the second half of the nineteenth century. Antonin recorded his travels and activities nearly every day for more than sixty years, from August 1830

⁴⁴) Ieromonakh Isaiia (Belov), "Issledovaniia arkhimandrita Antonina (Kapustina) na Sinae," *BT* 26 (1985): 326–33.

⁴⁵) Antonin (Kapustin), *Poezdka v Rumeliu*; idem, *Iz Rumelii* (St. Petersburg, 1879). *Iz Rumelii* received at least four reviews, including P. A. Syrku in *ZhMNP*, no. 6–7 (1880): 382–429, 171–215; Ivan V. Pomialovskii, "Zametka po povodu odnoi retsenzii na knigu arkhimandrita Antonina," *ZhMNP*, no. 6 (1880): 429–31; Gavriil S. Destunis in *ZhMNP*, no. 8 (1880): 412–31; and *Istoricheskii vestnik*, no. 4 (1880): 884.

⁴⁶) Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv, *fond* 834, *op.* 4, *dela* 1118–1131; M. A. Salmina, "Dnevnik arkhimandrita Antonina (Kapustin)," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury Institutu russkoi literatury AN SSSR*, t. 27 (1973): 420–30. According to Lisovoi, copies of the notebooks also exist in the Library of the Imperial Russian Palestinian Society in Moscow. See, Lisovoi, *Russkoe dukhovnoe i politicheskoe prisutstvie*, 447

⁴⁷) Antonin, "Dnevnik za 1866, 1868 i 1881 gody," *BT* 36 (2001): 57–175; N. N. Lisovoi, ed., *Rossia v Sviatoi Zemle. Dokumenty i materialy*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mozhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2000–01), vol. 1, 147–60; Antonin, "Zhal' mne do smerti vsego proshedshego'. (Stranitsy iz dnevnika)," Nikolai N. Lisovoi, ed., *Rossia v Sviatoi Zemle. Dokumenty i materialy*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mozhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2000–01), vol. 2, 544–88; Nikolai N. Lisovoi, "Arkhimandrit Antonin Kapustin – issledovatel' sinaiskikh rukopisei (Po stranitsam dnevnika)," *Tserkov v istorii Rossii*, 208–224; "Pervye dni sushchestvovaniia Russkikh podvorii v Ierusalime," *SIPPO* 12 no. 1 (1901): 72–84; Lora Gerd, "Arkhim. Antonin Kapustin i ego nachnaia deiatel'nost'," 8–35.

though January 1894. The journal entries constitute a treasure-trove of information on the key events and important personalities of the age. The scholar and pilgrim Aleksei Afanas'evich Dmitrievskii remarked, that combined with the writings of Porfirii, no other source (Eastern or Western) contains as many details.

The archimandrite's diaries indicate that a primary task of the Ecclesiastical Mission remained counteracting the influence of non-Orthodox missionary societies. In keeping with his mild and tactful temperament, Antonin attempted to maintain a flexible attitude with regard to foreign beliefs. The unity of the Christian church was foremost in his mind. As in *Five Days*, he tried to convince people of the virtue of tolerance:

We may consist of different people and languages, yet we remain members of a single Orthodox church – let not the Greeks, nor the Russians, Romanians, Georgians, Arabs or any other national or ethnic Church aspire to predominate over another, and just the same for the Latin church ... The strength of Orthodoxy, like the power of any organic body, is not in the extraordinary development of one part of it to the detriment of another, but in the strict balance of its form and its complete agreement. Do not let the automaton of Catholicism entice us. It may exist and operate, if you will, as a living organism as well.⁴⁸

However, the impression that Antonin remained a passive observer to non-Orthodox missionaries would be misleading. He wrote that “the Latins are the opponents of the Orthodox – they want to take over the Cathedral of the Resurrection [in Jerusalem]! The Latins ought to admit, that the entire cathedral belongs to Orthodoxy. The Orthodox should admit that it is impossible for the Latins to remain aloof from the Holy Places, that they have the right to portions of it, but not the right to own or dominate them.”⁴⁹

Despite Antonin's relatively even-tempered approach to the actions of non-Orthodox proselytizers, his efforts to counteract their propaganda were hampered by the meager material means at his disposal. The Mission itself received 14,650 rubles a year from St. Petersburg, 3,000 of which remained at Antonin's personal disposal. With the exception of the original million rubles earmarked for the Ecclesiastical Mission, the annual budget remained far from generous, especially considering the scope of its activities and the number of pilgrims. In contrast, the English Bishop of Jerusalem

⁴⁸) Antonin, *Piat' dnei*, 90–91.

⁴⁹) Antonin, *Piat' dnei*, 57.

received in the 1880s the equivalent of 15,000 rubles annually, which was supplemented by tens of thousands of rubles of aid from British donors.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Antonin made the most of the means at his disposal. He was a sagacious businessman (as an inventory of the purchases of land made by the Mission demonstrates).⁵¹

Although Antonin enjoyed a reputation of charm, intelligence, and tact, he could be harsh to those who visited his Mission and failed to appreciate his efforts. For example, he responded immediately (under a pseudonym) to an article by the Russian pilgrim and writer Anton Dmitrievich Ushinskii that criticized the Mission in Jerusalem for neglecting pilgrims, lacking sufficient hospital space, and being inadequate overall. According to Ushinskii, the facilities and services of the Russian Mission paled in comparison to those available to Protestant pilgrims, who benefited from much better accommodations. Ushinskii suggested that the inclusion of two families of priests to the Mission would be most beneficial – and even went so far as to suggest abandoning the Mission altogether.

Antonin was not pleased with Ushinskii's impressions. In deftly-crafted, blistering letters to the editors in the journals *Grazhdanin* (The Citizen) and *Tserkovnyi vestnik* (The Church Bulletin) he defended the Mission's efforts and refuted Ushinskii's complaints: "And just who has been looking after pilgrims in the course of just under twenty years? ... It seems that in the days of Ushinskii's arrival it suddenly seemed to him that the mission did not have time and resources for pilgrims ... I am sure that scores (even hundreds) of pilgrims visiting at the same time remember with childlike glee their tours in Jerusalem." Antonin claimed that if Ushinskii had behaved more like a pilgrim, than like a tourist, he would have encouraged other pilgrims to visit the Holy City.⁵²

Despite extensive responsibilities, Antonin maintained his interest in Christian history, archeology and antiquities. In fact, the intensive growth of Greek and Near Eastern manuscripts in Russian archival collections in the nineteenth century was the result of efforts by pioneering travelers

⁵⁰ "Iz zhizni pravoslavnago Vostoka," *Strannik*, no. 1 (1892): 186; Lisovoi, *Russkoe dukhovnoe i politicheskoe prisutstvie*, 152.

⁵¹ Nikolai N. Lisovoi, Z. I. Platonova, V. A. Savushkin, "Svodnyi catalog russkikh nedvizhmostei v Sviatoi Zemle," *Rossia v Sviatoi Zemle*, vol. 1, 691–719.

⁵² P. Aleksei Vvedenskii [Antonin], "O russkom poklonnichestve v Palestine (pis'mo v redaktsiiu)," *Grazhdanin*, no. 51 (Dec. 23, 1874): 1290–91; Antonin, "Interesy russkoi tserkvi i polomichestva v Palestine," *Tserkovnyi vestnik*, no. 50 (Dec. 20, 1875): 1–4.

like Antonin.⁵³ As a result of these efforts, the Russian National Library, today, contains a uniquely valuable collection of Cairo Genizah material that sheds light on nearly all fields of Hebrew, Judaic, and Arabic literature current at the time of the Genizah period in Egypt.⁵⁴ Additionally, Antonin developed a profound interest in the history of the Greek middle ages, calling himself an “inveterate Byzantinist.”⁵⁵ The renowned Byzantinist Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus noted that Antonin was among the foremost Byzantologists and modern Hellenists in the world. His efforts led to the significant expansion of Byzantine studies in Russia.⁵⁶ The Patriarch of Jerusalem Kirill claimed that “father archimandrite knows the Greek language better than any native Greek.”⁵⁷

The archimandrite’s expertise in ancient and modern languages facilitated his research and archeological work in Rome, Egypt, Mount Athos, Rumelia, Athens, Jerusalem and other places. He published a large number of studies which helped establish the foundation for the Russian Archeological Institute in Constantinople.⁵⁸ By the end of his life Antonin was known as one of the most learned and experienced archeologists in the world.⁵⁹ The excavations he led in Jerusalem helped reveal the Threshold of Judgment Gate, and he was the leader of a dig on the Russian Compound. Aside from archeology, he continued to lead the Russian Mission while publishing scholarly works in other disciplines, especially paleography.

⁵³ Boris L. Fonkich, “Antonin Kapustin kak sobiratel’ grecheskikh rukopisei,” *Drevne-russkoe iskusstvo. Rukopisnaia kniga. Sbornik tretii*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), 368–79; idem, “O sud’be Kievskikh glagolicheskikh listov,” *Sovetskoe slavianovedenie*, no. 2 (1972): 82–88; Nikolai N. Lisovoi, “Arkhimandrit Antonin Kapustin – issledovatel’ sinaiskikh rukopisei (Po stranitsam dnevnika),” *Tserkov v istorii Rossii. Sbornik 4*. (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk, 2000), 197–224.

⁵⁴ Abraham I. Katsh, *The Antonin Genizah in the Saltyko-Schedrin Public Library in Leningrad* (New York: Institute of Hebrew Studies, NYU, 1963).

⁵⁵ Antonin, *Poezdka v Rumeliu*, 21; Fonkich, “Antonin Kapustin kak sobiratel’ grecheskikh rukopisei,” 368.

⁵⁶ V. V. Guruleva, “Arkhimandrit Antonin kak numizmat,” *Numizmaticheskii sbornik 1998. K 80-letiiu V. M. Potina* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennyi Ermitazh, 1998), 235–243.

⁵⁷ “Iz zhizni pravoslavnago Vostoka,” *Strannik*, no. 1 (1892): 181.

⁵⁸ See E. Iu. Basargina, *Russkii Arkheologicheskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole* (St. Petersburg: DB, 1999); Konstantinos Papoulides, *To Rosiko Arkheologiko Instituto* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997).

⁵⁹ See Sergei A. Beliaev, “Neizvestnaia rabota arkhimandrita Antonina (Kapustina) o rannekhristsianskoi grobnitse v Ierusalime,” *BT* (1999): 111–14; Mansurov, *Bazilika Imperatora Konstantina*; idem, *Russkii raskopki v Sv. gr. Ierusalime* (Riga, 1887).

The reader of only a small portion of his scholarly studies can only be impressed with his zeal for bibliographic and archival research. His diaries reveal a nearly pathological curiosity for libraries and manuscript collections.

Despite restrictions in official Russian state funding, Antonin found ways to acquire an impressive amount of land in Palestine. Monetary contributions from the imperial family, the nobility and many ordinary Russian subjects facilitated territorial acquisitions. For example, Kapustin arranged for the Russian state to obtain property in Hebron, Jaffa, Jericho, Tiberias, and Mount Eleon. At the latter site Antonin helped to construct a new chapel and renovate the Church of the Ascension. The enormous belfry on Mount Eleon, thirty-three meters tall and visible from most parts of Jerusalem, contained an eight-ton bell sent from Russia in 1885. Volunteer Arab, Turkish and Greek workers pulled the bell from Jaffa to Mount Eleon over the course of three weeks.⁶⁰ Today the belfry is still known as the Russian Tower.

Antonin helped purchase a shrine at Abraham's Oak and at the mausoleum of Saint Tabitha in Jaffa. He also established the Convent of Ein-Karem, where Russian nuns are still in residence, and he supervised the construction of gardens and churches in Jaffa, Ein-Karem, and Gethsemane. In accord with his instructions, Antonin built schools on the purchased territories in order to spread Orthodoxy among Arabs and assist the spiritual needs of Russian pilgrims. In 1885 alone the Orthodox Palestine Society opened five schools for girls and boys in Nazareth, Beirut, Rame, Beit-Jal, and Mzhdel which taught Arabic, prayers, religious history, catechism, the Gospels, Russian, mathematics, geometry, and singing. More than 200 Orthodox students received their education at these schools, which received more than 10,000 francs a year from the Palestinian Society. According to one account, the well-built and furnished buildings contained Russian maps on the wall and plenty of Russian books.⁶¹

Antonin died in Jerusalem in 1894 at the age of 78. Despite his hectic lifestyle, he claimed to have always had "stone-like health." Near the end, his pace of work eased up, and, he fell ill just two months before his death.⁶² Before Antonin died he visited the Russian General Consul in Jerusalem,

⁶⁰ *Russkii palomnik*, no. 23 (1888): 276.

⁶¹ "Russkiiia shkoly v Sv. Zemle," *Russkii Palomnik*, no. 12 (1888): 141–2.

⁶² "O poslednikh dniakh zhizni, konchine i pogrebenii Nastoiatelia Russkoi dukhovnoi missii v Palestine Arkhimandrita Antonina," *TKDA*, no. 5 (1894), 161.

Sergei Vasilievich Arsen'ev, to arrange for his library and collection of antiquities, scientific instruments and other possessions to be delivered to the Imperial Russian Public Library, the Kievan Ecclesiastical Academy, and other Russian institutions.

In order to guarantee the proper use of his properties after his death, Antonin decided to transfer some of his land into a pious foundation or *waqf*. By taking advantage of the Muslim system of religious endowments, Antonin ensured that the property would not be frivolously managed. Although some diplomats maintained that Antonin aimed to deceive them, the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, supported his efforts to establish a *waqf* with some of the properties he had purchased.⁶³ Such philanthropic efforts no doubt help explain Antonin's popularity and reputation for generosity. Indeed, over a thousand Orthodox people of all ethnicities – Greek, Arab, Slavic – attended his funeral, where the Secretary of the Patriarch of Jerusalem (Fotii) delivered a eulogy.⁶⁴ Today a marble tombstone marks his grave at the Church of the Resurrection on Mount Eleon in Jerusalem.⁶⁵

Conclusion

“Russian Palestine” – as we may call it – constitutes a unique phenomenon which led to major educational and cultural enterprises in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the state support was at times less than generous, the Ecclesiastical Missions worked well and helped consolidate the Russian presence in the Orthodox East. The resources, hard work and energy of Russian state and ecclesiastic officials led to the creation of churches, manuscript collections, schools, hostels and hospitals. Archimandrite Antonin and other members of the missions acquired territories and rendered material support to local churches and monasteries, while promoting Russian scholarly work. This essay has illuminated the facts behind some of these programs, which formed a part of the renaissance of Russian spirituality.

⁶³ Lisovoi, *Russkoe dukhovnoe i politicheskoe prisutstvie*, 154–56.

⁶⁴ “Slovo, skazannoe pro pogrebenii nastoiatelii russkoi dukhovnoi missii v Ierusalime arkhimandrita Antonina arkhimandritom Fotiem, sekretarem Ierusalimskago Patriarkha,” *TKDA*, no. 6 (1894), 185–90.

⁶⁵ A picture of his tombstone appears in Isaiia (Belov), “Issledovaniia arkhimandrita Antonina (Kapustina) na Sinae,” *BT* 26 (1985): 332.

The Near Eastern consulates and the Russian Ecclesiastical Missions in Jerusalem, originally established in the 1840s, assisted thousands of pilgrims to the Holy Land. Personalities such as Archimandrite Porfirii and State Councilor Boris Mansurov expanded Russian prestige and authority. Archimandrite Antonin's presence had a profound impact on this Russian-Near Eastern history, not only for his work for the Russian Orthodox Church, but also his academic pursuits. He became a world-renowned scholar, manuscript collector, archeologist, linguist, and more. His efforts constitute one of the most remarkable pages in the history of Russian contacts with the Orthodox East.

