

Document publication

УДК

930.25+930.253+23/28+283/289+316.354.4+316.776+373.32+37.017.93+316.356.2+37.013.7
8

doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2023-2-430-446

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“The Main Subject for My Labours and Research Have Been Manifestations of Spiritual and Intellectual Life of the Russian People ...”: Autobiography of the Narodnik, Religious Scholar, and Sociologist A. S. Prugavin (1898)

Abstract

The recent years have seen a growing interest of scholars in the history of the right (non-revolutionary) wing of Narodnichestvo (Populism), which was engaged in cultural and educational activities in the interests of the people, and in the personalities of its prominent representatives. One of such figures was a well-known publicist and sociologist, researcher of Old Believers and sectarianism, who also studied state of popular reading and primary public education, Alexander Stepanovich Prugavin (1850–1920). Various aspects of his work, especially in the field of religious studies, are being studied; many of his works have been republished. But until now, the personality and activities of A. S. Prugavin have not become a subject of special monographic study, many facts of his biography have not been studied. In the late 19th century, the famous literary critic and bibliographer S. A. Vengerov began collecting autobiographies of modern writers and scientists. This publication presents A. S. Prugavin's autobiography written in 1898, which is kept in the Manuscript Department of the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Pushkin House) in St. Petersburg in the S. A. Vengerov fond (fond 377, series 7, file 2998, pp. 1-3). A. S. Prugavin's autobiography is a valuable source on his life and work, as well as on the socio-political situation in Russia in the last third of the 19th century. It permits to understand the formation of A. S. Prugavin political views, his contribution to the study of Old Believers and sectarianism and his conscious departure from this problem in the mid-1880s under the pressure of the authorities and his turning to studying sociology of popular reading and public education. The autobiography of A. S. Prugavin contains references to all his significant newspaper and magazine publications and books. A large number of works published by A. S. Prugavin over 20 years bespeaks of his high creative activity and journalistic talent and showcases existence of a large number of liberal and liberal-populist newspapers and magazines (despite the opposition of the authorities) regularly offering him their pages. The autobiography of A. S. Prugavin permits to clarify some points of his biography and publication activity, of history of Russian intelligentsia, right-wing Narodnichestvo (Populism), of study of Old Believers and sectarianism and the state of popular reading and public education.

Keywords

Historical sources, A. S. Prugavin, S. A. Vengerov, Russian intelligentsia, right-wing Narodnichestvo (Populism), Old Belief, sectarianism, sociology of reading and education.

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Submitted 16.03.2022, published (for citation):

PASHKOV, A. M. “Glavnym predmetom dlya moikh rabot i issledovanii vseгда sluzhili i sluzhat proyavleniya dukhovnoi, umstvennoi intellektual'noi zhizni russkogo naroda...”: avtobiografiya narodnika, religioveda i sotsiologa A. S. Prugavina. 1898 g. [“The Main Subject for My Labours and Research Have Been Manifestations of Spiritual and Intellectual Life of the Russian People ...”: Autobiography of the Narodnik, Religious Scholar, and Sociologist A. S. Prugavin (1898). In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2023, no. 2, pp. 430-446. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2023-2-430-446

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Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .