Does History Repeat Itself? Public Discourse of the Contemporary Russian Old Believer Elite
Author(s): Ekaterina Levintova
Published by: the Modern Humanities Research Association and University College London, School of
Slavonic and East European Studies
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25479137
Accessed: 15/06/2014 23:58

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range
of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms
of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
Does History Repeat Itself? Public Discourse of the Contemporary Russian Old Believer Elite

EKATERINA LEVINTOVA

New Frontiers of Research

Until very recently, scholars studying Old Believer value orientations and attitudes would almost certainly have had to conduct their investigations by becoming members of anthropological expeditions or by studying historical records and secondary accounts. Due to the inherent features of the Soviet system, access to religious literature was highly restricted and empirical research on domestic religious groups discouraged. Scholars circumvented research restrictions by doing anthropological and archeographical work in areas heavily populated by Old Believers or by probing historical records. Indeed, among the most common types of research done during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods were exhaustive analyses of historical documents and anthropological or ethnographic cataloguing of culture, material culture, social relations and religious practices of discreet Old Believer communities.1

Ekaterina Levintova is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

Field research for this article was supported by a Texas A&M University-Texarkana Faculty Senate Research Enhancement Grant. I wish to thank S. I. Zhuk and K. M. Kain who commented on the earlier drafts of this article and the four anonymous SEER reviewers who urged me to address and elaborate several unexplained points. I am especially grateful for their questions about the strength of content analysis as a methodology and for the generous sharing of possible explanations behind the findings reported in this article.

1 See, for instance, numerous entries in several series, including I. V. Pozdeeva (ed.), Mir Staroobriadchestva, Moscow, Yaroslavl', 1992-2005; Staroobriadchestvo: Istoriia, kul'tura, sovremennost', Moscow, 1996-2000, and several Old Believer-related anthologies, including Staroobriadchestvo: Istoriia i sovremennost'. Mestnye traditsii, russkie i zarubezhnye sviazi, Ulan-Ude, 2001 (hereafter, Staroobriadchestvo: Istoriia i sovremennost'); Staroobriadchestvo kak istoriko-kul'turnyi fenomen, Gomel’, 2003 (hereafter, Staroobriadchestvo kak istoriko-kul'turnyi fenomen); E. M. Iukhimenko (ed.), Staroobriadchestvo v Rossii v XVII–XX vv., Moscow, 2004 (hereafter, Staroobriadchestvo v Rossii); Yu. V. Arsen’ev (ed.), Staroobriadchestvo Sibiri i Dal’nego Vostoka. Istoriia i sovremennost'; Vladivostok, 2000, and others. These volumes contain not only the best Russian scholarship on the subject, but several articles by Western researchers, including Richard Morris. Doug Rogers represents the new generation of Western-trained anthropologists studying the lives and religious activities of ordinary Old Believers in the Russian provinces. Unlike earlier researchers, Rogers goes beyond mere description to offer important insights into the complex interaction between the post-socialist state and different strands of Old Belief. See Douglas Rogers, ‘An Ethics of Transformation: Work, Prayer, and Moral Practice in the Russian Urals, 1861-2001’, unpublished PhD
But things are significantly different today and allow a systematic investigation of contemporary Old Believer public discourse. The 2005 exhibition of Old Believer history and artefacts at the State Historical Museum is emblematic of the changed atmosphere. Never before has this Russian religious minority been allowed an official presence so close to the centre of Russia’s political and economic power, the Kremlin. Besides the obvious symbolism, it was the first time that Old Believers themselves were able to share their most valuable objects with the general public and researchers. In the words of Old Believer priest Leontii Pimenov,

The souls and hearts of today’s Old Believers [were] overflowing with emotions similar to those our ancestors felt a hundred years ago, when the holy sanctuaries of the Church of the Veil [at Rogozhskoe cemetery] were unsealed. Today, in the main museum of Russia, seals have also been removed and doors thrown open to this conference and exhibition about the tradition of Old Belief. It gives us hope for cooperation between living Old Believers and living researchers.2

This new research project investigating Old Believer public discourse is of course only possible because their periodicals are now freely available to scholars and the general public in Russia’s most important libraries, church bookstores, or even online. Researchers can finally see whether contemporary Old Believer literati articulate the same attitudes as their pre-Revolutionary co-religionists and whether these attitudes are discernibly different from those of modern day Russian Orthodox authors. In other words, our assumptions can now be tested against new empirical evidence, a task which is undertaken in this article.

Another reason for studying contemporary Old Believer attitudes and value orientations is equally compelling. With Russian public opinion data indicating that the average Russian is not strongly pro-democratic nor necessarily market-oriented,3 one is hard pressed to find sub-groups within Russian society that engender these attitudes. Education and income have been shown to have a significant impact

---

1 *Continued*


3 According to Levada-Tsentr, *Otechestvennoe mnenie. Ezhegodnik*, Moscow, 2004, pp. 12–13, in 2004, 34 per cent of Russians preferred private property and market-based economy, 53 per cent of respondents would choose the economic system based on state planning and distribution. Only 24 per cent preferred Western democracy, while 41 per cent would support the Soviet political system; the remaining 19 per cent are satisfied with the existing system.
on support for democracy and the market. But what about religious beliefs? A look at how Old Believer authors frame their political, economic, ideological, inter-confessional and foreign policy discourse may tell us how particular religious views affect attitudes to democracy, the state, the market, the West and other religions among key Old Believer figures. This investigation is also all the more pressing since past historical and anthropological literature identifies pre-Revolutionary Old Believers as a group with attitudes and behavioural patterns similar to both Calvinist pro-market attitudes and populist, proto-democratic tendencies of folk communities.\footnote{See my survey of existing literature in the section below.} Importantly, this public discourse unfolds on the pages of mass produced periodicals with circulations of 10,000 to 50,000 copies, published specifically for the Old Believer rank and file, not for the elite’s private consumption.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there remains the question of how contemporary Old Belief measures up to its historical arch-rival, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). The ROC bears the brunt of Old Believer criticisms, and their century-old religious split is often viewed, especially by the Old Believer camp, as an irreconcilable enmity, but are the adherents to Russian Old Belief all that different from their historical opponents as far as ideological and non-doctrinal differences are concerned? Are Old Believer writers more tolerant and more market-oriented than their Russian Orthodox counterparts? Or do both active Old Believers and the Russian Orthodox espouse the same highly conservative constellation of social and political attitudes, as both gravitate towards the illiberal, anti-market, nationalistic camp of the Russian political landscape? The absence of any measurable differences would in itself be significant, indicating that, irrespective of historical experience and self-demarcating lines, the tenets of Russian Orthodoxy in whatever shape, be it the unofficial state religion or a religious, and for the most part oppositional, minority, fundamentally translate only in conservative value orientations.

\textit{A Brief Description of Contemporary Old Belief}

Without going into a detailed account of Old Belief’s origins and evolution since the late seventeenth century, this section summarizes available statistics on the status of contemporary Russian Old Believers. There are currently nine functioning Old Believer concords. Several other Old Believer subgroups, including \textit{danilovtsy, aristovtsy, riabinovtsy, dyrniki, babushkintsy/samokresty}, etc., which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have not survived or else have merged with other concords.\footnote{For example, \textit{danilovtsy} merged with \textit{fedoseevtsy} and \textit{pomortsy}, while \textit{riabinovtsy} merged with \textit{melkhesideki}.}
Table 1. *Old Belief in Contemporary Russia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concord</th>
<th>Membership (in Russia, Religious Centre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priestly Old Believers</td>
<td>6–7 bishoprics, 250 parishes and about 400,000 active members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Belokrynitsa</em> or Austrian <em>popovtsy</em> (officially, Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novozybkov or <em>beglopopovtsy</em> [headed by priests who broke with the dominant Nikonian church] (officially, Old Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia)</td>
<td>8 monasteries, 1 theological school, 5 bishoprics, 150 parishes and about 100,000 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priestless Old Believers</td>
<td>more than 500 parishes with 300,000 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Chasovennye</em> [Chapel-goers]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrying <em>pomortsy</em> (officially, Old Orthodox Pomorian Church)</td>
<td>75 parishes and about 800,000 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-marrying <em>filippovtsy</em> [Followers of monk Filipp] (officially, Christians of Solovki and Old Pomorian Descendants)</td>
<td>10 parishes led by elders and 200–300 members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Table 1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-marrying fedoseevtsy</th>
<th>about 20 parishes led by Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery in Moscow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Followers of monk Feodosii (officially, Old Pomorian Celibate Christian Community of Old Believers)]</td>
<td>7 elders and about 10,000 active members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beguny/stranniki [Wanderers] (officially, True Orthodox Christians Itinerant)</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spasovtsy/netovtsy [Salvation-seekers/negators]</td>
<td>about 30,000–40,000 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melkhesideki [Melchathedek’s followers]</td>
<td>2 parishes; total membership unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinovery [Co-Religionists]7</td>
<td>8 parishes within ROC and about 6,000–12,000 members (1998)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table ranks Old Believer concords in descending order from the most collaborative with the state and the ROC to the most unreceptive and eschatologically deterministic. The priestly concords of Belokrynitsa and Novozybkov reject the physical coming of the Antichrist and portray the seventeenth-century schism as a singular episode of apostasy; they accept legitimacy of the secular power and collaborate with the state and its dominant religion, the ROC. At the other end of the continuum, spasovtsy and melkhesideki contend that Antichrist is present not only among heretics, including the ROC, but

7 Edinovery [Co-Religionists] is a group of Old Believers who although preserving Old Believer rituals and tenets belong to the Russian Orthodox Church.
also among the faithful. Thus all forms of religious life are meaningless and salvation is possible only as a result of a particular act of divine providence. Obviously, spasovtsy and melkhisedeki do not recognize the state and any form of organized religion except their own. Although the world of contemporary Old Belief is a heterogeneous one, this article only examines public discourse of the three most visible concords — Belokrylnitsa, Novozybkov and pomortsy.

Existing Literature on Old Believer Value Orientations in Historical and Contemporary Contexts

Russian pre-Revolutionary historians and anthropologists described Old Believers as socially and religiously conservative, but also democratic, tolerant and economically enterprising. Even Old Believer historians themselves tended to isolate certain proto-democratic and pluralistic elements of pre-Revolutionary Old Belief, for instance, its support of individual initiative and critical approach to authority.

Soviet researchers, despite their obvious anti-religious bent, mainly repeated these contentions, isolating the ‘democratic’, if not populist, thrust of original Old Believer movements. Their counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic, including both émigré Russian historians and Western researchers, likewise saw Russian Old Belief as somewhat similar to European Protestantism and the emergence of the ‘modern’, ‘ascriptive’ value orientations usually associated with it. Naturally, Old

8 D. N. Kanaev, "Russkoe staroobriadiestvo: sotsial’no-filosofskii analiz," Moscow, 1999; Sovremennaya religioznaya zhizn’ Rossii, pp. 171–73.

9 Shchapov identified Old Believers as a vestige of ancient Russian folk democracies that survived into the nineteenth century. See A. P. Shchapov, "Russkii raskol staroobriadiestva, rasmatryvaemyi v sviazi s vnutrennimi sistemi Rossiiskoi tserkvi i grazhdanskostvu v XVII i pervoi polovine XVIII vv.," St Petersburg, 1906. Similar ideas were argued by populist Russian historians Kablits and Prugavin. See I. I. Kablits (Yuzov), Rossiiskie dissidenty: starovery i dukhovnye khristiane, St Petersburg, 1881, and A. S. Prugavin, Staroobriadiestvo vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka, Moscow, 1904.

10 Shchapov’s work did much to inspire Alexander Herzen’s renewed interest in the Old Belief. Herzen, in turn, recruited Vasilii Kelsiev, another politically radical Russian émigré, to study, comment upon and publish a number of the reports of the government’s secret commission on the Old Believers which the former had illegally obtained. Kelsiev’s investigation concluded that Old Believers were not only the preservers of Russian democracy, but that as a result of their better education, discipline and resourcefulness, they were superior to the majority of Russian society. See Paul Call, Vasily L. Kelsiev: An Encounter Between the Russian Revolutionaries and the Old Believers, Belmont, MA, 1979. On the discussion of Old Believer market characteristics, see P. I. Mel’nikov, Istoriicheskie ocherki popupshchiny, Moscow, 1864.

11 V. Senatov, Filosofia istorii staroobriadiestva, reprint, Moscow, 1995. Similar sentiments are found in the article by contemporary Old Believer author Egor Druzhinin (’Staroobriadiestvu ob’javlena voina?’, Tserkov’, 3, 2000, pp. 80–85).

12 V. F. Milovidov, Staroobriadiestvo v proshlom i nastoiashchem, Moscow, 1969; V. F. Milovidov, Staroobriadiestvo i sotsial’nyi progress, Moscow, 1983; A. I. Klibanov, Narodnaia sotsial’naya utopitsa v Rossii, Moscow, 1977.
Believers were treated as important agents of Russian capitalist development.12

Contemporary Russian historians also report the acceptance of democratic norms among pre-Revolutionary Old Believers.13 The parallels between Old Belief and the European Reformation, popular in Western literature in the 1970s and 1980s,14 continue to circulate in recent Russian scholarship.15 Descriptions of pre-Revolutionary Old


13 For instance, Belokrynitsa Old Believers supported the creation of the pre-Revolutionary Duma and advocated various civil rights; several hierarchs (Kirill, bishop of Odessa, Innokentii, bishop of Nizhni Novgorod, Aleksandr, bishop of Ryazan’, and Georgii of Petrograd) worked on legal documents regulating Old Believer political activity and religious freedoms in general, cooperating with the Duma and the government. See O. Razumovskaiia, ‘Staroobriadcheskaia sistema tsennosti i ee evolutsia na sovremennom etape’, in *Problemy dukhovnoi zhizni Rossi: istoria i sovremennost*, Moscow, 2000. Klukina also notes the existence of ‘liberal’ political views, articulated by intellectuals among the Belokrynitsa Old Believers (F. E. and V. E. Melnikovs, I. K. Peretrukhin, N. D. Zenin, I. I. Zakharov, and V. G. Usov) who supported popular representation, civil liberties, political and social reforms, and believed that the ‘existing regime based on the dominance of police and bureaucracy does not respect the rights of a Christian and a citizen; […] it prevents the spiritual and economic development of the people’. Since politically these demands were close to the programme of the Constitutional Democrats (*kadets*), political proponents of constitutional democracy, many Belokrynitsa Old Believers cooperated with this party in the first Duma. Belokrynitsa industrialists residing in Moscow and St Petersburg, including P. P. Riabushinskii and A. I. Guchkov, belonged to a more conservative Sioiz 17 oktiaabria [Union of October 17] or *Oktobrists* which supported constitutional monarchy. *Chasovennye* peasants supported leftist ezers [Socialist Revolutionary party]. See Yu.V. Klukina, ‘Politicheskie vzgliady staroobriadetsv v 1905–1917 gg: Ocherossiiskii i regionalnyi aspekt’ (hereafter, *Politicheskie vzgliady*) in *Staroobriadchestvo: istoria i sovremennost*, pp. 91–92. Vinogradova reaches similar conclusions. Although Old Believers (mostly of the Belokrynitsa concord) started as monarchists, they gradually evolved toward centrist oktobrists and then even more to the left, when Old Believers started to support kadets during their electoral campaigns in the fourth Duma. See O. A. Vinogradova, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaiia zhizn’ staroobriadchestva v Rossii v nachale XX veka*, Moscow, 1999 (hereafter, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaiia zhizn’*), pp. 20–21.

14 See footnote 12.

15 Kerov and Raskov compare Russian Old Belief with the early Protestant movements of the sixteenth century (especially Calvinism) and find important ‘instrumental’ parallels in the pro-capitalist and pro-modernization value orientations (e.g., rationality, individual responsibility, individual choice) and actions of these two religious denominations. See V. V. Kerov, ‘Formirovanie staroobriadcheskoi kontseptsiia “truda blagogo” v kontse XVII — nachale XVIII vv.: K voprosu o konfessionalno-eticheskikh faktorakh staroobriadcheskogo predprinimatel’stva’, *Staroobriadchestvo: istorii, kul’tura, sovremennost’, 5, 1996, pp. 36–44; V. V. Kerov, ‘Opot kontent-analiza “Zhitiiia” i poslanii protopopa Avvakuma: K voprosu o modernizatsionnom aspekty staroobriadchestva’, *Mir Staroobriadchestva*, 4, 1998, pp. 172–82; V. V. Kerov, ‘Rol’ obstschiny v khoziaistvennoi sisteme staroobriadchestva v XVIII — pervoi polovine XIX vv.’ (hereafter, ‘Rol’ obstschiny v khoziaistvennoi sisteme’), in *Staroobriadchestvo: istorii i sovremennost’, pp. 39–45. D. E. Raskov, ‘Khoziaistvennaia etika russkogo staroobriadchestva’ (hereafter, *Khoziaistvennaia etika*), in ibid., pp. 45–49;
Believers’ strong democratic, pro-market and tolerant, albeit socially conservative, attitudes culminate in the following glowing descriptions:

When Old Believers found themselves in democratic conditions, they fit so easily and naturally, as if a democratic ‘suit’ was tailored not on the British Isles, but in the Volga forests. [...] Guchkov and Riabushinskii were true European conservatives, a political orientation which was very rare among the Russian Orthodox. [...] Old Believers who happened to live in the West easily fit into the local lifestyle. [...] They married Lutheran Germans, had the same social position as local Protestants and exhibited the same social attitudes [...] Some parishes, primarily fedoseestsy, remind us of Calvin’s Geneva rather than an Orthodox monastery.16

These propositions extend not only to the pre-Revolutionary period, but to contemporary Old Belief. Shakhov, for instance, contends that despite the obvious insistence on the religious superiority of Old Belief, historical experience made contemporary Old Believers religiously tolerant and supportive of civil rights, including freedom of confession for themselves and others.17 Vorontsova and Filatov as well as Kabanov assert that Old Believers, especially fedoseestsy and pomortsy, are uniquely suited to contemporary democracy and the market.18 So far, however, most research has concentrated on speculative extrapolations and inferences from historical research. Basing their assertions on the pre-Revolutionary Old Believer practices and rhetoric, contemporary authors suggest or outright contend that today’s Old Believers exhibit similar attitudes. In the meantime, the bulk of empirical research on contemporary Old Believers has been carried out by anthropologists and ethnographers who were not necessarily interested in public discourse or individual attitudes.

Compounding the dearth of empirical findings, recent works that probe the political programme or public discourse of Russian Orthodoxy exclude Old Belief from consideration and naturally eschew

---

15 Continued


17 Staroobriadchestvo, obschestvo, gosudarstvo.

18 ‘Staroobriadcheskaia alternativa’, and ‘Tserkov’ dostoinstva’.
any comparisons between the two strands of Russian Orthodox faith. The new investigations of ROC’s political programme, however, conclude that authors writing on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church are most closely affiliated with, if not outright supportive of, illiberal, nationalistic, undemocratic, anti-Western and intolerant segments of the Russian political landscape.\(^{19}\) The next logical step, therefore, is to compare these research results with Old Believer discursive data.

To date, there is only one systematic and empirical analysis of contemporary public discourse of Old Belief and its underlying ideology.\(^{20}\) Samsonov found that various strands of modern Old Belief are neither pro-market nor particularly pro-democratic.\(^{21}\) His investigation, however, is limited to the early 1990s and does not consider several important elements of Old Believer public discourse, including foreign policy, inter-confessional relations, views on the ideal state and ideological preferences. This article is therefore the first English-language work to systematically study and categorize the public discourse of Old Believer leaders in the post-Communist period and to juxtapose it against the fairly well established political and ideological tenets of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In this work, I test propositions derived from the existing literature against empirical data. I hypothesize that in today’s Russia, as reported by numerous researchers, Old Believer religious and social tenets that stress individual responsibility, participation of congressionists in church management, tolerance, entrepreneurship and accumulation of capital, are conducive to the articulation of pro-democratic, pro-market, tolerant, although not necessarily pro-Western, attitudes among its leaders, attitudes that are significantly different than those supported by the Russian Orthodox Church. Naturally, this finding might have important political implications for the relevant views of individual Old Believers and for the prospects of tolerance and democracy in Russia.


\(^{21}\) There is another indirect confirmation of Samsonov’s results. In the brief description of actual interviews with contemporary *pomortsy* in Verkhokam’e conducted by Kulikova, one can also detect a certain etatist value orientation: ‘the state is paying us [a pension] now and this is right. [The state] must support us.’ I. S. Kulikova, ‘Religioznye broshury, posobiia po bezrabotit’e i drugie “novshestva” sovremennoi zhizni: razmyshlenia staroover-bespopovtsev Verkhokam’ia’, in *Staroobriadchestvo: Istoriiia i sovremennost’,* pp. 75–78.
Data and Methods

Data was drawn from the texts of printed and on-line Old Believer publications discussing political, economic, social, inter-confessional and foreign policy issues. The sample was derived from articles in (1) Old Believer periodicals which were intended for all concords and (2) journals/calendars published by particular concords (see Table 2 in Appendix). These publications were selected because they were either representative of Old Belief in general or its most numerous, vocal and recognizable concords who popularize their views both among their co-religionists and other confessions. Selected periodicals had continuous circulation, albeit under different names (see Table 2 in Appendix), and had the highest circulation numbers. 22 Only relevant parts of these publications, i.e., articles discussing Old Believer political, economic, ideological, inter-confessional, foreign policy and cultural priorities, were analysed. Sections of the Old Believer newspapers and periodicals reserved for parish news, hagiographical and theological discussions, church calendars, social information, although interesting and important in their own right, were excluded from this examination as irrelevant to its research question.

I have also included books and book chapters written by contemporary Old Believers which dealt explicitly with the relevant elements of Old Believer public discourse (see Table 3 in Appendix). Finally, I analysed several on-line interviews of Old Believer hierarchs which also discussed the relevant issues (see Table 4 in Appendix). The overall sample included eighty-four publications appearing between 1990 and 2005 that represented both priestly (Belokrynitsa and Novozybkov) and priestless (pomortsy) concords.

I performed qualitative content analysis of the acquired sources, selecting statements that reflected political, economic, ideological, inter-confessional and foreign policy views of contemporary Russian Old Believer leaders. Since discussions of Old Believer attitudes and behaviour centre around tolerance, democratic potential and capitalist aspirations ascribed to this denomination both before the 1917 Revolution and today, my selection of variables (attitudes towards the state, democracy, the market, other religious denominations, the West, etc.) was effectively predetermined. All statements reflecting these attitudes, regardless of their normative content, be it democratic or undemocratic, pro-market or anti-market, etc., were included in the sample. Eventually, I isolated ninety-five statements that fell into nine discreet categories (see Table 5 in Appendix).

22 For instance, Tserkovnyi Kalendar', an annual periodical published by the Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church, has circulation numbers of 10,000, while some issues of Religiozno-filosofskaia biblioteka, a series published by Novozybkov concord, had a circulation of 50,000 copies. See Table 2 in the Appendix.
Content analysis as a methodology is subject to additional questions about its reliability and validity.23 Yet it can and does provide vital social scientific data, including typical representations of political or economic concepts in media or public documents. This information is essential not simply for reconstructing particular manifest characteristics of language, but because public discourse contributes to socialization, thus suggesting at least some link between its message and the individual attitudes of its recipients, although content analysis never claims it outright. Rather, it reconstructs public discursive settings in which individual socialization takes place.

My research question is likewise non-causal; it is descriptive. I am interested in understanding the intellectual atmosphere in which contemporary Old Believers live and its relationship to pre-Revolutionary public discourse. Can we assume continuity in Old Believer public discussions? Public writings and documents produced by today’s Old Believer elite for Old Believer readers (and potential converts) naturally lend themselves to my examination. Even if a non-Old Believer researcher could survey a representative sample of various Old Believer concords in post-Communist Russia, they would most definitely not have similar data for the pre-Revolutionary period.

Of course, content analysis of the writings produced by the Old Believer elite and activists — the most articulate, albeit relatively narrow, stratum — may not tell us about what the regular service-attending parishioners think or believe. One would need to conduct personal interviews with Old Believers themselves as to whether or not they read the articles, believed what they have read, and how this has influenced their political or social actions. This is decidedly not an article that claims or even suggests causality between public discourse of the elite and individual attitudes and actions. By tracing the preferences of the Old Believer literati one can, however, with a great degree of certainty, get a sense of the cultural matrix that frames (and confines) a particular menu of options for contemporary individual Old Believers. Thus the study of the thematic structure of Old Believer public discourse is important not so much for our ability to determine whether or not the same thematic structure is present on an individual level, but for the reconstruction of the general climate of opinion among a crucial segment of the Old Believer population that, given

23 Kimberly A. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2002. Even the most seasoned practitioners of content analysis admit that ‘for no historical situation do we possess all of the documentation that existed; nor are we assured that the documentation that has been released into the public domain can as a matter of course be accepted as being entirely trustworthy’. Robert C. North, Ole R. Holst, M. George Zaninovich, and Dina A. Zinnes, *Content Analysis: A Handbook with Applications for the Study of International Crisis*, Chicago, IL, 1968, p. 19 (emphasis added).
the nature of Old Believer socialization, is very likely to have an impact on the attitudes of the faithful. The study of this intellectual and discursive environment provides a different type of understanding of contemporary Old Belief that is unlikely to emerge from ethnographic research or more quantitative public opinion surveys.

Based on the results of qualitative content analysis, I was able to determine the overall thematic structure of contemporary Old Believer public discourse. Democracy was associated with permissiveness and disunity; the market economy was viewed as a source of religious corruption, social stratification and various societal sores; the ideal state was portrayed as the defender of Old Belief and a filter for all other Christian and non-Christian confessions; inter-confessional dialogue (ecumenical movement) was perceived as a distortion of the Holy Scripture and apostolic teachings; the official Russian Orthodox Church as a hireling of the state and persecutor of dissidents; the West as a cultural, religious and geopolitical enemy; globalization as destroying nature, religion and humanity; liberalism as a new idolatry and source of social conflict.

Contrary to the literature and my initial hypothesis, the collected data show consistent patterns of anti-market, anti-democratic, illiberal, intolerant and anti-Western attitudes common to all concords analysed in this study. These attitudes are, of course, remarkably similar to the attitudes reported by the researchers of the political programme of the Russian Orthodox Church.24 There also emerged some important nuances among various sub-groups of Old Believers. Priestless Old Believer writers (pomortsy) are especially vocal in their rejection of contemporary political, economic and foreign policy processes and institutions. At the same time, contemporary Belokrynitsa and Novozybkov leaders avoid severe criticisms of existing political and economic institutions and go beyond the mere critique of modern political institutions to offer their own vision of an ideal state and desirable economic and political system.

I ideological, Political, Economic, Foreign Policy and Religious Elements of Contemporary Old Believer Public Discourse: Conservative Paradigm

In this section, I describe specific content-analytic findings and catalogue the most representative signifiers (both individual words and phrases) associated with my pre-selected categories, including

ideological liberalism (alternatively called humanism or secularism),
democracy and its corollaries, the state, the market, the West, global-
ization, the ecumenical movement and the Russian Orthodox Church.25 The signifiers reveal core attitudes of Old Believer authors and confirm the thematic structure of their public discourse, but not necessarily the intensity of this public discourse. The overall number of statements in each content analytical category, a better indicator of the intensity of a particular value orientation or attitude, is listed in Table 5 in the Appendix.

_Ideological Views_

There is a surprising disconnection between historical accounts and
contemporary reality. Historical narratives present significant segments
of the Old Believer intellectual elite, especially among the Belokryntitsa
concord, as gravitating towards liberal ideas.26 Yet today both cultural
and economic liberalism is an ideological lightening rod for Old Belief,
including both priestly and priestless concords.

_Pomortsy_ are the most vocal in rejecting their ideological rival.
Liberalism is often compared to its materialistic predecessor, commu-
nism, and this comparison, according to _pomortsy_ leaders, does not
show any difference between the two. The liberalism-as-another-
reincarnation-of-communism precept is obvious in phrases like ‘ unholy
rulers without consciousness and morals’, ‘materialistic ideology’ and
‘materialistic communists’.27 _Pomortsy_ authors also see liberalism as
excessively individualistic, relativistic, ignorant, conflictive, antagonistic
to Christianity and opportunistic. Accordingly, adherence to liberalism
or humanism leads to ‘faithlessness and vice’, ‘gradual descent of
human reason into the depth of misconceptions’, ‘a current of passion
and crime’, ‘spiritual catastrophe’, ‘noxious stink and darkness of
intellectual and moral deviation’, ‘disappointment and rage’ for the
young, ‘difficulties and depravation, uncertainty in old age, lack of
respect and disappointment’ for the old, and ‘spiritual sores [...],
including profiteering, indifference, hypocrisy and the ancient sins

25 When trying to explain the current public discourse of the Old Believer elite as it emerged through content analysis, I present a picture of public discourse, but can only speculate as to why it is the way it is. When my speculative suggestions appear, they are meant more as hypotheses for further research, not as categorical pronouncements.

26 See, for instance, Klukina, ‘Politicheskie vzgliady’; Vinogradova, _Obshchestvenno-
politicheskaya zhizn’_; James West, ‘The Riabushinskii Circle: Burzhuazia and Obshche-

of envy, enmity, arrogance and greed'. Belokryntitsa Old Believer periodicals are more muted in their critique of liberalism, simply demarcating it as sinful. In fact, generic 'sin' is the only signifier associated with liberal ideology.

Political Views

There are two important discussions that take place within this thematic block, Old Believer evaluations of democracy and its specific elements (freedom of speech, mass media and political parties) and a vision of the role that the ideal state must play. Between the two sub-topics, democratic discussions are more popular. According to Old Believers, democracy, especially its liberal variety, undercuts and corrupts Christian faith, leads to crime and corruption, dilutes national culture; it is a weak political system with too many opinions, unable to achieve social harmony. Accordingly, the most frequent epithet which is associated with democracy is 'permissiveness' (вездозволенность).

Pomortsy writers are the most sceptical about democracy, describing it as an agent of 'enmity, quarrels and competition', which 'rejects harmony of opinion' and 'leads to undesirable consequences, introduces negative actions and permissiveness'. Democracy thus becomes 'another trial, perhaps the last and thus the hardest one', a struggle against 'loose morals and impunity, arrogance and false self-esteem, gain-seeking and thievry, aggression, murder and all other kinds of evil'. And while seemingly in a democratic society 'there is no religious persecution' and 'total freedom', it is also 'wide open to various alien religions, together with the alien customs and habits associated with them'. While pomortsy are more vocal in their criticism of democracy as a political system, only priestly concords offer their own alternatives. There is a certain historical logic to this. After all, pre-Revolutionary Belokryntitsa thinkers and spokesmen were actively engaged in supporting constitutional democracy or parliamentary

32 E. S. Lepeshin, 'Obrashchenie', Izveshchenie Rossiiskogo Soveta Drevlepravoslavnoi Pomorskoi Tserkvi, 16, 1997, p. 3.
monarchy through their participation in, or association with, the short-lived State Duma.\textsuperscript{35} And if the pre-revolutionary political preferences of priestly Old Believers can be characterized as fairly progressive for their age, contemporary Old Believers do not accept conventional democratic institutions and advocate conservative political systems.

Novozybkov Old Believers would prefer constitutional/parliamentary monarchy. Even though historical circumstances make this option almost unattainable, Apollinarii, bishop of Kursk, still believes that ‘constitutional monarchy is the most preferable political system for Russia’.\textsuperscript{34} Belokrynitsa leaders opt for conservative democracy based on sobornost’ (conciliarity or congregationism) with its stress on the common good, social harmony and universal well-being. In their eyes, unlike ‘compromised’ liberal democracy, its sobornaia alternative creates a correct synthesis of ‘democracy, a widely accepted value of contemporary civilization’ and the ‘ancient church notion of sobornost’ which alone can produce both ‘personal and social harmony and well-being’.\textsuperscript{35}

Specific elements of democracy, including the freedom of speech and mass media, are viewed decidedly negatively; they are associated with destroying morality, spreading lies and promoting greed. These attitudes are equally characteristic of priestly and priestless concords. Freedom of speech is repeatedly associated with an ‘ability to sow the false, the corruptive, the vile and the disingenuous’, ‘irresponsible lies’ and ‘destructive evil’.\textsuperscript{36}

Contemporary Old Believer leaders have specific party preferences. They clearly differentiate between democratic and liberal parties and movements associated with the nationalistic far right. Only nationalistic and chauvinistic political parties and leaders are explicitly acknowledged and admired. The democratic parties, on the other hand, are ridiculed and charged with hypocrisy.

\textit{Pomortsy} give favourable reviews to works by Vladimir Zhirinovskii and Aleksandr Dugin, two emblematic nationalist spokesmen.\textsuperscript{37} The Zhirinovskii of Old Believer periodicals is a person who is ‘widely respected by people’, a ‘patriot’ and a possible ally in ‘cultural, not


\textsuperscript{35} Andrian, metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia, ‘Staroobriatsy — liudi, kotorye khotiat vniknut’ v veru glubzhe . . . ’; interview, \textit{Tserkov’}, 6, 2004, pp. 37-38.


\textsuperscript{37} While Zhirinovskii is well known in the West for his nationalistic political programme, fewer now know Aleksandr Dugin, a founder of the Eurasia party and chief ideologue of the Russian geopolitical school that stresses a unique historical path for Russia which is irreconcilably incompatible with Western development. Dugin publicly stated his adherence to edinoverie.
political, cooperation’, who sees original Old Believers ‘not as fanatics, but as defenders of their human rights, who were tolerant towards dissent, in contrast to contemporary quasi-democrats’.38 Going even further, pomortsy declare that Dugin, a ‘famous Russian philosopher, traditionalist and specialist on geopolitics’ and a ‘world-renowned philosopher’, is their defender and protector.39

Belokrytnitsa leaders engage in a dialogue with thinkers associated with the ultra-nationalist newspaper Zavtra. Indeed, Andrei Ezerov, secretary to the late Alimpii, Metropolitan of Moscow and the All Russia of Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church, ‘has been actively cooperating with the New Right’, and even ‘took part in the round table’ organized by Zavtra, where he ‘offered his vision of the synthesis between Old Belief and patriotic ideology’.40

All Old Believer concords see the main role of the state as guaranteeing freedom of religion. Accordingly, the state is to ‘observe a real constitutional equality of religions’ and ‘prevent the monopolization of Orthodox faith by the Moscow Patriarchate’.41 Belokrytnitsa authors, however, go further in describing the ideal state in a broad developmental sense (protecting Russians abroad, encouraging a higher birth rate, improving public morality, teaching discipline). The state becomes more than a supportive environment for a religion. Indeed, Belokrytnitsa authors place an equal emphasis on a strong state as a guarantor of both security and moral development. Of course, only a strong state can create a sense of physical and spiritual security and maintain the territorial integrity of Russia. And so ‘the state must be strengthened, discipline must be approved’.42 But the government is also urged to ‘offer real measures to protect the Russian nation which is on the brink of total disappearance’ by adopting ‘laws which would encourage a higher birth rate, adequately support big families, ban degrading TV and radio programmes and effectively stop the production and distribution of drugs’, thus becoming a true motherland to its citizens which ‘calls upon them, needs them, loves and cares for them’.43


Economic Views

This is one of the most popular topics in contemporary Old Believer discourse. Economic issues are especially important for pomortsy who reject the market and capitalism as uprooting Christianity, creating social problems, substituting moral values with the materialistic pursuit of benefits and preventing the church from full functioning. A constant refrain in pomortsy discussion of the market is their inability to compete and succeed in the new economic reality. Implicit in this lament is an almost nostalgic longing for Communist times, which at least were characterized by more equitable economic distribution. Here, ideological opposition to the market economy conflates with the frustration of a minority group which has not succeeded in the contemporary economic reality. This is especially surprising given the strong market orientations and practices ascribed to pre-Revolutionary pomortsy. For this concord the market is most often associated with 'economic shackles', 'economic suffocation', 'economic and other trials', 'economic depression', 'social tensions', 'internal social disintegration', 'moral poverty', and an 'abyss between the rich and the poor'.

Belokrytnitsa Old Believers are not as emphatic in their rejection of the market: perhaps because they are financially more successful. Today, wealthy parishioners donate large sums of money to restore or build new churches; the Moscow government is helping to rebuild the main religious centre at the Rogozhskoe cemetery. Importantly, this concord also has a long history of economic success in the pre-Revolutionary capitalist economy. Rather than rejecting market changes wholesale, Belokrytnitsa authors urge parishioners to assist those who lost during the market reforms (while in general accepting them). Indeed, when encountering market-induced economic

44 M. B. Pashinin, 'K stoletiu ukazov 17 aprlia i 17 oktiabria 1905 g. o veroterpimosti i svobode sovesti', Kalendar' Drevlepravoslavnoi Pomorskoi Tserkvi 2005, Moscow, p. 9.

45 See 'Rol' obshchiny v khoziaistvennoi sisteme staroobriadchestva'; 'Khoziaistvennaia etika'; Europe in the Western Mirror; 'Staroobriadcheskaia alternativa' and many others.

hardships, parishioners are urged to exercise ‘social tolerance’, ‘mutual empathy’, and ‘brotherly assistance’. Implicit in these discussions is a desire for a social market economic model with strong built-in welfare-state provisions for those unable to compete under market conditions.

**Foreign Policy Views**

Foreign policy views include two major concerns: attitudes toward the West and views on globalization. Discussions of the West are by far the more popular topic, especially among pomortsy. There is a geographical explanation for this phenomenon. After the breakdown of the USSR, a large segment of pomortsy who historically resided in the Baltic states became directly involved in Western culture. Baltic communities of pomortsy are therefore admonished not only against communicating with ‘corrupt’ Western elements, but also against borrowing Western values of religious and ethnic tolerance. The situation in the Baltic states, of course, follows on the heels of defection among American pomortsy. American pomortsy already de facto converted into edinovertye when, in the early 1990s, Simon (Pimen), a leader of the pomortsy community in Erie, PA, accepted priests from the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. The prospects of losing historical traditions, religious uniqueness and an entire raison d’État, compels Russian pomortsy, who already witnessed a certain diluting influence coming from the West on their breakaway congregations, to condemn the latter in no uncertain terms. In particular, contacts with the West bring ‘secularization of clergy and Pomeranian believers’, ‘communications with other confessions, secularization, ecumenism’, and even communal prayers with or election of church hierarchs from the ‘unfaithful Catholics and Protestants, not to mention Nikonians’.48

For the priestly concords, the West is associated not only with cultural and spiritual competition and social sores, but with geopolitics. In their own words, the West represents ‘a real danger of the disintegration of the Russian state’, ‘dependency’, ‘drug abuse’, ‘forced and alien lifestyle’, ‘secularization’, ‘destruction of Russian uniqueness’, ‘damnation of soul’ and ‘degrading influence’.49

---

47 Tserkovnyi Kalendar’ Russkoi Prawoslavnoi Staroobriadcheskoi Tserkvi 2005, Moscow, p. 84.
Globalization is the second foreign-policy-related topic actively discussed by Old Believers, especially Novozybkov and pomortsy. Both concords articulate their opposition to the new type of international order. There is one important difference, however. Novozybkov authors treat globalization metaphysically and religiously as the coming of Antichrist. In short, globalization is a ‘time when a man prepares to greet the Antichrist’. Pomortsy, on the other hand, are more concerned with globalization’s practical consequences and manifestations, including exploitation of natural resources and loss of cultural uniqueness. Globalization is thus depicted as a process destructive for nature and humanity, an instrument of total control and even global dictatorship. Among the most common manifestations of globalization for this concord are the ‘predatory depletion of natural resources’, ‘their senseless use’, ‘neglect of spiritual improvement’, and the ‘blind continuation of limitless science’.

The block of Old Believer religious views includes discussions of the ROC and the ecumenical dialogue. Both topics are equally popular. Old Believers of various denominations describe the ROC, often referred to as the Nikonian Church, as a religious monopolist which enjoys the unfair advantage of state protection. The Moscow Patriarchate is associated with ‘monopolization’, ‘state religion’, ‘prosecution of those who do not agree with it’, and a throwback to 1905 as far as religious toleration and freedom of religion are concerned.

Although both Belokrynitsa and pomortsy concords condemn the Nikonian Church, they do so for different reasons. Belokrynitsa charges the ROC with suppression of religious freedom (both inside its own churches and in regards to other confessions). For instance, Russian Orthodoxy allegedly deprives its adepts of ‘all the rights common among the church folk’ and ‘transforms [them] into silent slaves’. Pomortsy are dissatisfied with the ROC’s openness to secular influences and other religions as well as its closeness to the state. It charges that

50 ‘Ne popadaite v seti diavola’, Religiozno-filosofskaia biblioteka, 6, 2000, p. 87.
52 Although Old Believers generally praise Nicholas II’s 1905 Manifesto which granted them important political, civil and religious rights, their post-1905 status was far from ideal. First, Russian Orthodoxy remained the recognized state religion and pressures to convert into it continued to be strong. Secondly, despite a certain liberalization of the Russian empire, political and economic oppression persisted for the majority of the population, including, of course Old Believers.
54 Pravoslavnyi Staroobriadchesski Tserkovnyi Kalendar’ 1999, Moscow, p. 99.
the Russian Orthodox ‘communicate in prayer, Eucharist and through food not only with the so-called Christians, including Roman Catholics, Quakers and others but, strangely enough, with idol worshippers, spiritualists, sodomites and other unfaithful’ and engage in state-supported ‘imperial thinking’. 55 Old Believers of all concords see cooperation with the ROC only as a last resort in extreme cases, specifically, in opposing ‘the adoption of various types of electronic documents and Identification Numbers of Taxpayers (INT)’. 56

The ecumenical movement is criticized mostly from religious and theological points of view. Comparatively speaking, Belokrynitsa leaders are more concerned with the ecumenical movement than their pomortsy counterparts. Both, however, treat the ecumenical movement as ‘illegitimate,’ ‘illegal’, ‘heretical’, ‘groundless and totally false’, ‘distorting the Gospel and Apostolic teachings which tell us of a single Church of God’. 57 It is ‘inspired, financed and advertised by those forces who await the arrival of the false Messiah, or Antichrist, and prepare for him a wide and spacious path which would lead humanity into the abyss of perdition’. It also ‘violates the Holy Scripture’, ‘corrupts the faith’ and ‘fulfils false prophesy’. 58

Conclusions
First, Old Believers are politically active; they are concerned not only with their own history and societal rehabilitation, but also with Russia’s present and future. New economic realities, democracy and its elements, the role of the state, cultural and economic liberalism, the West, globalization and relations with other Christian religions are the most popular and well articulated topics. Discussions of economic and democratic issues in particular occupy a central place in Old Believer public discourse.

Secondly, these discussions form clear and coherent conservative and traditionalist constellations of attitudes articulated by the leaders of various Old Believer concords. This is a value system based on negative


56 Aleksandr (Kalinin), patriarch, ‘Drevlepravoslavnaia Tserkov’ ne zastyla i ne meniaetsia’, interview, Blagoevost, 22 December 2000.


attitudes towards economic and cultural liberalism, liberal democracy, the market economy, the West, globalization, ecumenical dialogue and the official Russian Orthodox Church. Leaders of all concords analysed here openly endorse nationalistic parties of the far right. Thus, regardless of intra-confessional differences, leaders of various Old Believer concords articulate a very similar public discourse. However, some significant stylistic differences are also easily observable.

Among all Old Believer concords studied, *pomortsy* periodicals are the most available, although not necessarily in terms of sheer numbers,\(^\text{59}\) they appear regularly and continuously. Not surprisingly, *pomortsy* writers are quite articulate and active, commenting especially on the market. Because of the recent split among the *pomortsy*, there is more explicit criticism of the Russian Orthodox Church, the ecumenical movement, cultural and economic liberalism and the West. The situation in the Baltic states and the US, and the failure to succeed in the new market reality stimulate this concord’s more vocal public agenda. Compared to priestly concords, *pomortsy* are more realistic in assessing the negative consequences of globalization which they see in physical rather than religious terms. However, *pomortsy* political discussions do not go beyond the mere critique of democracy or the market; this concord has still not formulated its own political or economic alternatives.

The leaders of the Belokrytnitsa and Novozybkov concords are less vocal in their criticisms of contemporary liberal and secular ideology and the economic situation, but are more involved in religious and political discussions. Compared to priestless *pomortsy*, the priestly Belokrytnitsa and Novozybkov concords are more concerned with concrete alternatives to liberal democracy and the contemporary Russian state. They prefer constitutional monarchy or conservative democracy. There is a clear preference for a strong developmental state whose function is not only to protect Old Believers and to guarantee their equality with the official Russian Church, while stamping out other Christian and non-Christian religions, but also to intervene in the economy, providing social services, enforcing public morals and protecting Russians abroad. Priestly Old Believer authors also criticize the Russian Orthodox Church for religious persecution rather than religious toleration and permissiveness (a charge common in religious discussions of the *pomortsy*). On the other hand, the priestly concords

\(^{59}\) Periodicals published by the Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church have the largest circulation numbers. However, they are more difficult to acquire outside the congregation, a fact which perhaps reflects a greater success of Belokrytnitsa concord in post-Communist Russia. Two explanations are equally plausible. Belokrytnitsa might be in high demand by the parishioners themselves. Alternatively, there may also be a lesser need to circulate Belokrytnitsa periodicals among potential converts since the concord is on a rebound.
advance more metaphysical views on globalization which are set in religious rather than geopolitical or geo-economic terms. The Belokrynitsa concord is more explicit in describing the West and Russia as geopolitical enemies. Finally, Belokrynitsa authors rarely forward explicit criticism of the new market economy. Rather, they advocate moderate social justice and economic redistribution.

Importantly, these value orientations are very different from the speculative inferences and projections that survived the pre-Revolutionary period and are often applied to contemporary Old Belief. The expected continuity of public discourse has not been confirmed; Old Belief’s traditional views appear to be fundamentally transformed by decades of surviving in the Soviet Union and the relatively inhospitable environment of post-Communist Russia. Clearly, contemporary Old Believer leaders articulate conservative, traditionalist and anti-modern constellations of attitudes, but these constellations are significantly different from the pro-market and occasionally pro-democratic or even pro-liberal value orientations found in pre-Revolutionary Old Belief, especially among Belokrynitsa intellectuals. Thus, contrary to the ‘frozen’ image that one might expect from the literature and public discourse of Old Believer leaders themselves, Old Belief appears to be sensitive to both radical institutional changes (i.e., changes in political and economic systems) and the ‘war of attrition’ with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Lastly, this perennial self-described conflict masks the fact that the secular, non-doctrinal value orientations and public discourse of both branches of Russian Orthodox faith are remarkably indistinguishable. Both the Old Believer and Russian Orthodox authors advocate a very similar political agenda and there is no reason to suspect that Old Belief represents a somewhat more tolerant, liberal, pro-democratic and market-oriented segment of the Russian religious scene. Contrary to both historic extrapolations and contemporary expectations, Old Belief in its various reincarnations remains fundamentally conservative, intolerant and strongly xenophobic. Beyond the important differences of creed, both historical arch-rivals share more than their authors, especially on the Old Believer side, are willing to acknowledge.

*From ‘What’ to ‘Why’ Questions*

Although this article probed the quintessential ‘what’ question, implicitly it raised several ‘why’ queries that deserve further investigation. First, how did the discontinuity reported in this article come about and what explains it? Why were Old Believer leaders, who (for all we know) were tolerant, critical of authority and the state and who were pro-capitalistic before the revolution, transformed into a conservative and reactionary force, which is not only anti-democratic, but decidedly anti-market and intolerant?
Conceivably, contemporary Old Belief may have lost its standing in society and thus may be fundamentally different from its pre-Revolutionary antecedent. Vorontsova and Filatov report that current Old Believer numbers are proportionately much lower than in the past. If pre-Revolutionary (and probably conservative) estimates listed sixteen million, or 10 per cent of the entire Russian population, as Old Believers, in today’s Russia they represent fewer than 1.5 million, or less than 1 per cent of the populace.  

More significant than numeric changes is, perhaps, Old Belief’s inability to replicate its pre-Revolutionary character and sense of community. The problem of identity affects a number of religious denominations, including Evangelical Christians, who were excluded from the privileged category of ‘traditionally Russian’ religions in the 1997 Law on Religion, but not to the same extent. Old Believers are obviously different since their ‘traditional’ status was never questioned. Their revival in the 1990s thus did not reproduce their pre-Revolutionary raison d’être, the preservation of identity in the face of persecution and discrimination.  

Secondly, why is public discourse of contemporary Old Belief so strikingly similar to that of the Russian Orthodoxy? Perhaps, because both are reacting to different realities than those of their predecessors. Following the Communist period, the very conception of the state and its obligations changed as did the meaning and functions of the market and the world outside Russia. A globalized world, the welfare state and the liberal notion of human rights are alien to pre-Revolutionary Old Believers and the Russian Orthodox alike and elicit similar traditionalist responses from both. But the assumptions and rationalizations behind ostensibly similar responses may be radically different, and the Old Believer leaders’ reasons for rejecting democracy, globalization, the West or the market might be truer in spirit to, if not the letter of, their pre-Revolutionary attitudes. This more nuanced understanding can be fleshed out through detailed personal interviews with individual articulators of public discourse.  

Finally, it is also true that this article uncovered discontinuity in elite discourse, and that the views of ordinary Old Believers, old and young, urban and rural, new converts and old adherents, frequent church-goers and occasional participants, deserve their own detailed and empirical investigation. The views of ordinary Old Believers may be very different from the elite discourse designed for public consumption reported in this article. It is my hope, therefore, that these hypotheses will be investigated in the very near future.

## Table 2. Post-Communist Old Believer Periodicals Included in the Sample[^61]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concord</th>
<th>Name of Periodical</th>
<th>Years/Issues</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drevlepravoslavnyi Vestnik [Old Orthodox Herald]</td>
<td>No. 1, 1998, No. 2 1999</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staroobiadcheskiye Vesti [Old Believer News]</td>
<td>No. 17 (21), April 2005</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church (Belokrynitsa)</td>
<td>Vestnik Metropolii [Herald of Metropolinate]</td>
<td>No. 2, 2004</td>
<td>Unlisted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russkoi Prawoslavnoi Staroobiadcheskoii Tserkvi [Church Calendar of Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church]</td>
<td>2000, 2001, 2002,</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staroobiadcheski Tserkovni Kalendar' [Old Believer Church Calendar] Kishinev</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^61]: Circulation numbers are occasionally quoted from *Contemporary Religious Life in Russia*, otherwise they are taken from the periodicals themselves.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concord</th>
<th>Name of Periodical</th>
<th>Years/Issues</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia (Novozybkov)</td>
<td><em>Drevlepravoslavnyi Kalendar</em> [Old Orthodox Calendar]</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Tserkovnyi Kalendar</em> [Old Orthodox Church Calendar] (Kursk, Apollinarii)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Unlisted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religiozno-Filosofskai Biblioteka [Religious and Philosophical Library]</td>
<td>Issues 1–5, 1993(2), 1998, 1999, 2000</td>
<td>100,000; 11,000; 5,000; 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Orthodox Pomorian Church (marrying pomortsy)</td>
<td><em>Staroobriadcheski Tserkovnyi Kalendar</em> [Old Believer Church Calendar published in Riga until 1994]</td>
<td>1990, 1991</td>
<td>10,000?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Izveshchenie Rossiiisko Soveta Drevlepravoslavnoi Pomorskoi Tserkvi [News from the Russian Council of Old Orthodox Pomorian Church]</td>
<td>1990–2002</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Drevlepravoslavnyi Kalendar</em> [Old Orthodox Calendar] (Moscow parish)</td>
<td>No. 1, 2003</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. *Printed Works of Old Believers Included in the Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and His/Her Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Book Title, Publisher, Date of Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aleksandr Antonov, Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church (Belokrynitsa), editor</td>
<td><em>K semiedesiatletiju vysokopreosveshchennogo Alimpia, mitropolia Mosovskogo i vsia Rusi</em> [Celebrating the 70th Birthday of His Holiness Alimpiii, Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia]. Moscow: Tserkov’, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleksandr Antonov, Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church (Belokrynitsa), interview</td>
<td>‘Keeping the Faith’, <em>The Moscow Times</em>, No. 3175, 27 May, 2005, p. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrian (bishop of Kazan’ and Viatka), Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church (Belokrynitsa)</td>
<td>‘Staroobriadchestvo kak chast’ obchenatsionalnoi kultury’ [‘Old Belief as Part of National Culture’] in <em>Staroobriadchestvo kak istoriko-kulturnyi fenomen</em> [Old Belief as Historical and Cultural Phenomenon]. Gomel’, 2003; pp. 17–22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pankratov, A. V., Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church (Belokrynitsa)</td>
<td><em>Ot Vostoka napravo: Istoria, kultura, souremnnye vosproy staroobriadchestva</em> [From the East to the Right: History, Culture, and Contemporary Problems of Old Belief], Moscow, 2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. *On-Line Old Believer Publications*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and His/Her Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Title, Publication, Date of Publication, Internet Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aleksandr (Kalinin), patriarch, Old Russian Patriarchate of Moscow and Old Russia (Novozybkov)</td>
<td>‘Drevlepravoslavnaia Tserkov’ ne zastyla i ne meniaetsia’ [‘Old Russian Church Neither Froze nor Changed’], interview to Internet Orthodox newspaper <em>Blagovest</em>, 22 December 2000, <a href="http://www.cofe.ru/blagovest/">http://www.cofe.ru/blagovest/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apollinarii (Dubinin), bishop of Kursk, Old Orthodox Church of Russia (division of Novozybkov)</td>
<td>‘My vsega dolzhny bolet’ za svoe gosudarstvo…’ [‘We Should Always Care About Our State…’], 27 June 2003, <em>Evrazhskoe obozreniie</em> [Eurasian Review], <a href="http://www.evrazia.krk.ru">http://www.evrazia.krk.ru</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Results of Content Analysis: Thematic Structure of Old Believer Public Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>West = Globalization and spiritual enemy</th>
<th>Liberalism as a sign of Antichrist, destructive for nature and humanity</th>
<th>Russian Orthodox Church = Ideology = promotion of sin, relativism, individualism, substitution of moral with materialistic values</th>
<th>Ecumenical Movement = Role of the State corruption and its role of sin</th>
<th>Market = Democracy and its Elements = spirituality and division of disunity society</th>
<th>Miscellaneous (role of corruption and its role of sin)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of statements</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This content downloaded from 188.72.126.47 on Sun, 15 Jun 2014 23:58:13 PM