Personal Eschatology in the Old Believer Polemical Writings between 17th and 20th Centuries

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Abstract

The article explores manuscripts written between 17th and 20th centuries about people being in the next world. These writings were used by the Old Believers of different denominations to polemicize with the representatives of authority and the established church; they were also the subject of disagreement within the Old Believer movement. Special attention is paid to the writings devoted to polemics on justifying suicide for the sake of faith, preserving ministerial hierarchy (the Popovtsy (“priested ones”) and the Bezpopovtsy (“priestless ones”) – movements in the Old Ritualism)), and remaining faithful to old covenants in everyday life.

Keywords

the Old Ritualism – eschatology – the genre of vision – otherworld

To all appearances, it is not until 14 and 15th centuries that notions of afterlife judgment on a person (“minor” eschatology) were formed in Old Russia, when the idea of personal retribution for sins after death was completely comprehended, and “repentant discipline, obligation to confess, the rules of differential memorial rite”¹ became the norm. Numerous legends contained in patericons, death bills, passages from some hagiographies, and, first and

1 А. И. Алексеев, *Под знаком конца времен: Очерки русской религиозности конца – начала XV вв.* [A. I. Alekseev, *Under the Sign of the End Times: Essays on Russian Religiosity in Late 14th and Early 15th Centuries*], St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 71.

foremost, visions of the otherworld describe an afterlife of a human soul. A vision contains a story of how the visionary's soul, sometimes accompanied by a "psychopomp" (angel, saint or deceased relative), travels in the otherworld, meets there the righteous and the wicked, undergoes different tests, and receives secret knowledge; some of this knowledge is then passed to the astonished listeners, and other knowledge is never shared.² Literary visions are often based on folklore narratives – genuine clairvoyant stories about temporary death, which are still recorded by scholars in different regions of Russia as a living tradition.³

Writings about the otherworld are often responses to real earthly events, but their content is not a historical fact as such, but its providential and symbolic comprehension. The texts of the "minor" eschatology make it possible to unlock the secrets of public sentiments of a particular epoch and to reveal their inner psychological foundations. In the Middle Ages they were often used for political propaganda and religious controversy, since there was no more effective way to discredit an opponent than to tell about God's retribution and to portray them burning in Hell.

The polemical potential of eschatological writings, particularly in visions, was realized by the Old Believer ideologists already within the first years after Patriarch Nikon's church reforms, when the struggle between supporters of "the old piety" and those of "the novelties" just began.⁴ Stories about visions abound in the early Old Believers' manuscripts – works by Pustozersk inmates.⁵ The Deacon Fyodor's *Epistle to his Son Maxim* (Послание дьякона Федора сыну Максиму) (1670s) alone contains over 20 visions.⁶ Most of them are

2 See: А. Я. Гуревич, "Западноевропейские видения потустороннего мира и «реализм» средних веков" [A. Ya. Gurevich, "Western European Visions of the Otherworld and the "Realism" of the Middle Ages"], *Труды по знаковым системам* [Sign Systems Studies] 8 (1977), pp. 3-27; А. В. Пигин, *Видения потустороннего мира в русской рукописной книжности* [A.V. Pigin, *The Visions of the Otherworld in Russian Manuscript Booklore*], St. Petersburg, 2006.

3 See: С.М. Толстая, "Рассказы о посещении «того света» в славянской фольклорной традиции в их отношении к книжному жанру «видений»" [S. M. Tolstaya, "Narratives about Visits to the "Otherworld" in Slavic Folklore Tradition as they Pertain to the Literary Genre of "Visions"'], *Jews and Slavs* 10 (2003), pp. 43-54.

4 Of course, the «major» eschatology (writings about Judgment Day and the Antichrist) was also used for the purpose of controversy. The Old Believer literature on this topic is extensive, however, it's not the subject of this paper.

5 Pustozersk is a prison in the north of Russia, in the lower reaches of the Pechora River. Between 1668 and 1682 the leaders of the Old Believer movement, Protopope Avvakum, Priest Lazar, Deacon Fyodor, and monk Epiphany, were here in exile.

6 See: Л. В. Титова, *Послание дьякона Федора сыну Максиму – литературный и полемический памятник раннего старообрядчества* [L.V. Titova, *The Deacon Fyodor's Epistle*

connected with Fyodor's reflections upon the fate of the Solovki monastery and relationships between the Pustozersk martyrs. However, the most striking and socio-politically oriented is the revelation about Tsar Alexis's afterlife. Fyodor had a vision after praying long. "The Lord showed" to him: the Tsar is sitting in hell in a deep pit, "it's 12 sazhen deep, like a cramped room, and here he sits chained up until the Day of Doom".⁷ This vision has not been fully preserved in any copies of the *Epistle*, since it was removed from the manuscripts because of its sharp accusatory message. Lyubov V. Titova has studied the *Epistle* and considers this fact to be "the rarest example of the sociopolitical effectiveness of the 'vision'".⁸ *The Life of Protopope Avvakum* (*Житие протопопа Аввакума*), another writing of the Pustozersk period, employs a story about visioning paradise. A revelation was bestowed upon Anna, Avvakum's spiritual daughter, during her long sleep ("three days and three nights she slept, not waking up"). Two angels guide her through the realm of the dead:

"And on the left side I heard weeping, and sobbing, and plaintive voices. Then, they took me to a bright place, very beautiful, and showed many wonderful dwellings and chambers; and the most beautiful of them is the chamber that shines with unspeakable beauty, it shines brighter than the rest and is rather spacious" («И на левой стране слышала плачь, и рыдание, и гласы умиленны. Потомъ, де, меня привели во светлое место, зело гораздо красно, и показали, де, многие красные жилища и полаты; и всех, де, краше полата, неизреченною красотою сияет паче всех, и велика гораздо»).

This heavenly "chamber" is prepared for Avvakum. But the angels also promise Anna eternal dwelling there, if she obeys her spiritual father:

"Listen to him and live the way he teaches you how to hold fingers to make the sign of the cross and how to bow, praying to God; do not oppose him in anything and by doing so you will stay with him here" («Слушай ево и живи такъ, какъ онъ тебе наказывает перъсты слагать и креститца, и кланятца, Богу молясь, и во всемъ не протився ему, такъ и ты будешь с ним здесь»).

to his Son Maxim as a Literary and Polemical Manuscript of the Early Old Belief], Novosibirsk, 2003, p. 94.

7 Л. В. Титова, *Послание дьякона Федора сыну Максиму*, p. 221.

8 Л. В. Титова, *Послание дьякона Федора сыну Максиму*, p. 100.

9 Житие протопопа Аввакума [The Life of Protopope Avvakum], in: *Памятники литературы Древней Руси: XVII век. Книга вторая* [Literary Artifacts of Old Rus': 17th Century. Book Two], Moscow, 1989, p. 395.

Mentioning the sign of the cross made with two fingers as a necessary condition for salvation provides this vision with sociopolitical character. Depicting Protopope Avvakum as an inhabitant of paradise also occurs in another Old Believer literary work of the 17th century – *“The Word about a Certain Man by the Name of Timothy”* («Слово о некоем муже именем Тимофее»), which was created in the 1680s in the Don region.

Between the 17th and 20th centuries texts belonging to personal eschatology were used by the Old Believers of different denominations both for polemics with the representatives of the established church, and in internal disagreements within the Old Believer movement. Since there's no possibility to deliver this material to the full extent, I'm going to dwell only on some examples.

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It's well known, that one of the reasons for the split within the Old Ritualism was the difference in attitude of its ideologists towards the issue of voluntary quietus (usually as self-immolation) for the sake of preserving faith in the face of their torturers – Nikon's followers. As early as the end 17th century the Old Believers split into two camps – apologists and determined opponents of suicide. It is believed, one of the first theorists of “suicidal death” was Protopope Avvakum, the author of *“The Epistle to a Certain Brother”*, («Послание к некоему брату»), *“The Epistle to Simeon”* («Послание к Симеону»), and *“The Conversation on Abraham”* («Беседа об Аврааме») (the question of the authenticity of these works is debatable). In 1691 monk Euphrosynus wrote an extensive treatise against self-immolations – *“The Rejecting Scripture”* («Отразительное писание»), which survived in a single copy. According to Natalya S. Demkova, the drafts for this “scripture” are *“The Mourning”* of Pomorian elders («Жалобница» поморских старцев) (1691), excerpts from patristic writings, and a sermon against self-immolations, all of them preserved as a part of the so-called “The Kizhi Codex”.¹⁰ In late 17th century and first quarter 18th century the founders of the Old Believer Vygo-Leksinsk community, Daniil Vilkulin, Peter Prokop'ev, and Semen Denisov, took a stand for self-immolation;¹¹ their position on this matter was presented in Peter Prokop'ev's *Message to*

10 “The Kizhi Codex” is housed in the manuscript collection of the Kizhi Museum (the city of Petrozavodsk).

11 The Old Believer Vygo-Leksinsk community existed for about a century and a half (1690s–1850s). It was located in the Povenets Uyezd (county) of the Olonets Governorate (on the territory of present-day Karelia). It was the largest center of the Bezpopovtsy (“priestless ones”) movement (the Pomorian denomination) in the Old Ritualism.

Daniil Vikulin (Послание Петра Прокопьева Даниилу Викулину) and in Semen's Denisov *Story about the Siberian Sufferers* (Повесть Семена Денисова о сибирских страдальцах). However, later, in the 1740-1750s, the Vygo-Leksinsk community revised their attitude towards self-immolation and condemned it: by that time they had realized the need to preserve their culture and abandoned the extreme forms of opposition to the official church and authorities. At this time elder Philipp (Photios Vasilyev, 1674-1742; the founder of the Philipian denomination), who initially lived in the Vyg Hermitage, but then split with Vyg monks over the issue of intercession for the Tsar and founded his own skete on the Umba River in October 1742, not willing to surrender to the military command that had entered the skete, immolated himself and died along with his associates.

Both apology and denial of self-immolations required ideological justification. Protopope Avvakum (or Pseudo-Avvakum) in his writings gave examples from ancient Acts of the Martyrs about saints, who had to commit suicide in the face of torturers in order to preserve their faith and virtue. He interpreted the suicides of his co-religionists as a repetition of these earlier feats. Later, Semen Denisov and Peter Prokop'ev followed the same path in justifying suicide. In the middle 18th century an unknown Vyg author compiled an extensive edition of Petrer Prokop'ev's *Message to Daniil Vikulin*, significantly increasing the number of examples of saints' suicides from ancient manuscripts.¹²

The opponents of self-immolations had their own arguments. According to elder Euphrosynus, the author of *"The Rejecting Scripture"*, saints' suicides in ancient times are *oikonomikoi* ("by condescension"), in other words, absolutely exceptional, beyond the church law, but, nevertheless, by mysterious ways of God, they are justified by the Lord. These *oikonomikoi* cases belong to the realm of miracle and providence; therefore they cannot be a subject for emulation. Excerpts from patristic works about sinfulness of suicide also had to bring advocates of self-immolations to reason. For example, the above-mentioned "The Kizhi Codex" contains 46 excerpts on this topic from works by John Chrysostom, Basil of Caesarea, Pope Peter I of Alexandria, and other authoritative authors of antiquity.

However, theological arguments could convince only the educated part of the Old Believers; "simpletons" needed more compelling evidence. The texts of the "minor" eschatology were used as such evidence by both camps. According

12 See: A. Pigin, Hagiographic Writings in the Old Believer Controversies over 'the Suicidal Death' at the End of the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth Centuries (Peter Prokop'ev's *Message to Daniil Vikulin*), *Scr* 10 (2014), pp. 230-244.

to Euphrosynos, supporters of self-immolation relied on “miracles and visions” in their preaching. One of such visions is found in *“The Rejecting Scripture”*:

In Pomorye a peasant had a vision: he suffered from the fire illness and was out of his mind. He saw people burned in a bright place wearing wreaths, and another place was a wheel, revolving and horrible; people were tortured by revolving the wheel and words were uttered: this is the place of those who didn't want to burn themselves, but live in sins and serve the Antichrist; go and preach throughout the whole land: let all burn themselves to death! A drop from the revolving wheel fell on the peasant, he awakened from his dream, but his lip got rotten; and he preached to people: you must burn yourselves. And this sign the dead ones sent to me, who hadn't wanted to burn themselves.

В Поморьи же мужикъ подобне виде: огневою боляше, и умъ ему отступаше. Виде же згоревшихъ во светлемъ месте и венцах, а на другом месте колесо вертячее страшно, в томъ человековъ мучеть, обращая и гласъ оглашая: се место не хотевших самозгорети, но во ослабе живущихъ и антихристу работающихъ; иди и проповеждь по всю землю, да вси погорятъ! Укану же мужику капля отъ вертячего колеса, мужикъ отъ сна возбнулъ, а губа згнила; и проповедалъ людемъ: добро, де, гореть. А се де мне знамение покойники зделали, кои не хотели гореть.¹³

The revolving “horrible” wheel mentioned here is a durable topos in describing Hell; according to some texts, Judas – the traitor of Christ and the Antichrist himself are chained to this wheel.

According to Euphrosynos, stories about suicides' afterlife were also common among the opponents of self-immolation. However, in these texts self-immolators do not dwell in the otherworld in “a bright place, wearing wreaths”, but “mournfully lie wrapped in shrouds, lament, terribly wheeze, look back, and ineffably tremble, as if they are expecting certain torment” («в саванахъ лежать скорбны, сетующе и сипяще неподобно и озирающесе вспять, неизреченно трепещуще и яко бы мучения некоего ждуще»), heavenly fire scorches them, they are underwater, captured by evil spirits.¹⁴ Such stories, un-

¹³ Отразительное писание о новоизобретенном пути самоубийственных смертей. Вновь найденный старообрядческий трактат против самосожжения 1691 года. Сообщения Х. Лопарева [The Rejecting Scripture about the Newly Invented Way of Suicidal Deaths. The Old Believer Refound Treatise against Self Immolation (1691). Kh. Loparev's paper], St. Petersburg, 1895, p. 71.

¹⁴ Отразительное писание, p. 72.

doubtedly, made a strong impression on listeners and readers and were very effective means of agitation.

The motif of punishing self-immolators in the afterlife was also used later, in the middle 18th century, in the Old Believer writings of the Pomorian Vyg Hermitage, aimed against elder Philipp (Photios Vasilyev). In the Vyg manuscripts one can find collections of small stories about the otherworld: *Eleazar's Vision* (*Видение Елеазара*), *Vision of a Certain Vyg Inhabitant* (*Видение некоего выговца*), *Vision of a Certain Woman* (*Видение некоей женщины*), etc. Philipp's followers are condemned in these texts for their self-immolation in 1742.¹⁵ In these visions ample naturalism and at the same time symbolism characterize the images seen by visionaries. In *Eleazar's Vision*, Philipp's dead followers rest in the otherworld "on the left side" in "the dark blackness" as a "multitude of burned corpses, as if huge bulks were stacked on top of each other, representing meat, burned with fire" («множество телес горелых, якобы великия громады наложены в виде мяса, огнем опаленного»). In the other two visions, several more details add to naturalism in similar descriptions: a "black ferocious" spirit rises from the mass of "countless dead corpses" and starts to "crush" the visionary (*Vision of a Certain Woman*); the bodies of Philipp's followers emanate "great flame" (*Vision of a Certain Vyg Inhabitant*). The latter image – the "great flame" – is especially notable: the fire that had killed Philipp's followers during their self-immolation revealed to the visionary its true nature – it's Hellfire. Those who ended their lives on fire, hoping to find eternal salvation, are now doomed to burn in the next world. Purificatory and redemptive fire, that's what self-immolators thought of it, turned out to be fire of eternal damnation. This eschatological symbolism of fire was also employed in other Old Believer writings against suicide. The author of "*The Mourning*" of the Pomorian elders calls self-immolation "the river of fire" that destroyed "many paradise cedars", and he likens the "pitiful wailing" of "voluntary condemned ones" to the cries of sinners in "Hell and Gehenna".¹⁶ The "river of fire" in Hell is an image occurring both in the Old Russian apocryphal works (*The Descent of the Virgin into Hell*, etc.) and in eschatological spiritual verses. The anti-Philippian writings were intended primarily to convince those Old

15 The Manuscript Department of LRAS, V.G. Druzhinin's Collection, № 486, sheets 52– 63 verso.

16 Н.С. Демкова, "Из истории ранней старообрядческой литературы. V. «Жалобница» поморских старцев против самосожжений (1691 г.)" [N. S. Demkova, "From the History of the Old Believer Early Literature. V. The Mourning by the Pomorian Elders against Self-Immolations (1691)"], in: *Древнерусская книжность. По материалам Пушкинского Дома* [*The Old Russian Booklore. The Pushkin House Materials*], Leningrad, 1985, pp. 48–61.

Believers who resided in the Vyg Hermitage, but sympathized with Philipp and considered his self-immolation a feat of martyrdom.

Moreover, in the Vyg writings Philipp is accused not only of suicide, but also of separation from the Vyg community and establishing his own denomination. In *Vision of Akilina* (*Видение Акилины*) the visionary is “in a thin dream”, in a certain place, divided into two parts with a “black curtain”. Icons are in one of them, candles emanate bright light, and the elders of Daniil’s denomination (the Vyg monks) conduct church service. There is no light for those, who are “behind the gloomy curtain – these are the people of Philipp’s denomination”.¹⁷ The gloomy curtain symbolically manifests the division, made by Philipp, which doomed his followers to languish in eternal darkness and deprived them of the possibility of taking part in church service. The text tells nothing about the background of this conflict and doesn’t contain historical details or arguments from the disputing parties. The historical event is displayed from the perspective of eternity, when specific particular details lose their significance.

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A gradual division of the Old Ritualism into two movements – the Popovtsy (“priested ones”) and the Bezpopovtsy (“priestless ones”) occurred in the late 17th century. The basic principles of the priestless doctrine were “the theory of spiritual Antichrist, the idea of enforced absence of the priesthood, giving prominence to most necessary sacraments (baptism and repentance), and the justification of the canonical possibility of administering such sacraments by “laymen””.¹⁸ The priested Old Believers, in their turn, sought to preserve the priesthood and the fullness of church life. The Old Believer communities had debates over the issues of priesthood and the permissibility of self-immolation; besides theological and dogmatic arguments, evidence of various miracles and omens was also employed, including visionaries’ stories about what they saw in the afterlife. The texts presented below convince us that such disputes involved the Old Believers living in different regions of Russia: both in the North – the Pomorian region, as well as southern lands. It is noteworthy that the polemicists independently of each other used the same techniques and topoi derived from medieval literature.

17 The Manuscript Department of LRAS, V.G. Druzhinin’s Collection, № 486, sheets 55 verso–56 verso.

18 Е.М. Юхименко, *Старообрядчество: История и культура* [Е.М. Yukhimenko, *The Old Ritualism: History and Culture*], Moscow, 2016, p. 56.

In "*The Legend of the Resurrection Miracle of a Dead Man Michael by Name*" («Сказание о чуде воскресения мертвого некоего человека именем Михаила»)¹⁹ events unfold in Zaonezhie in 1692 in a certain Old Believer hermitage of "Father Theodosius" near "the Vodla River" before the establishment of the Vyg community. On the eve of the Assumption of Mary, "a certain person", the hermitage dweller Michael, died, but on the third day he rose from the dead and told his co-religionists what he had seen during his "dying". Accompanied by an angel, Michael went through aerial ordeals, visited "paradise and torment", and saw the righteous and sinners. The value of this work as a historical fact lies in the fact that it reflects the formation of the priestless doctrine. Father Theodosius mentioned in the text is a well-known Old Believer figure, priestmonk, the founder of the Beglopovovtsy ("runaway priests") denomination. The main issue discussed in "*The Legend...*" is the following: who can and should perform church sacraments. The author is consistently opposed to the idea that "laymen" can perform sacraments, as was customary among the priestless Old Believers. Michael sees in the otherworld sinners, who

"devastated themselves by neglecting shrines, neither took Communion from faithful priests, nor confessed their sins, but took Communion from heretics and confessed to them" («опустошиша себе... нерадением всякая святыни, еже от правоверных священник ниже причащахуся, ниже исповедахуся о гресех своих, но от еретик причащахуся и исповедахуся им»).

The angel orders Michael to tell his brothers in the monastery and all people living on earth, that

"for every day and every hour (...) people should always learn from their confessors how to repent and confess their sins... If there are no priests around, people, in case of great need, should confess to experienced monks, since when "in need" one has to deviate from rules, for the end of the world is nigh" («чтобы людие (...) на всякий день же и часъ в покаянии ко отцемъ духовнымъ обучали всегда и исповедалися о грех своих (...). Аще ли несть близъ священниковъ, нужды ради великия ко искуснымъ инокомъ да исповедуются, занеже в нужде и закону пременение бываетъ, занеже близъ кончина веку сему»).

19 The text has survived in several copies dated between 18th and 20th centuries; the passages cited in the article are from the copy dated 1764: The Manuscript Department of SHM, Museum collection, № 75, sheets 159-177.

Thus, *"The Legend..."* maintains that only priests can administer Communion and confession, and monks – "for the sake of great need" («нужды ради великия»). It's no coincidence that the author places Daniil Vikulin and Andrey Denisov – the ideologists of the priestless doctrine and founders of the Vyg Monastery – in "the dark regiment" in the otherworld, and, among elders living in Pomorye, singles out priest Theodosius, a supporter of priesthood preservation.

Around the same years, at the end 17th century, in a completely different place – the Don region – a writing similar in content and topic appeared – *"The Word of a Certain Man Timothy by name"* («Слово о некоем муже именем Тимофее»).²⁰ The ten-year-old boy John received a revelation after the death of his father – Timothy – an Old Believer from the Don Chir Monastery,²¹ about Timothy's afterlife. John witnessed a dispute between angels and demons over his father's soul. Despite the fact that Timothy had committed "much evil", the Lord ordered the angels to free his soul from the demons, since Timothy had atoned for all his sins before his death and had become a monk of the Chir Monastery. However, the description of what happened to Timothy after his death is only a pretext to show John scenes that are much more significant for the future of the Old Believers. The unknown author of *"The Tale of... Timothy"* presented in his work a dramatic episode in the history of the Old Believer movement in the Don region in the late 17th century: a sharp confrontation between the "revolutionary" wing of Kozma Larionov Kosoy and the "moderate" wing of Hegumen Dositheos.

Kozma Kosoy is a native of Yelets town, who joined the Old Believer movement during his stay in Solovki and moved to the Don region around 1667. In the late 1660s the Don and Moscow Old Believers already knew him as a preacher, the father of teachings, which he supposedly received from God Himself. The gist of these teachings is to mix the ideas of chiliasm with the Old Believer priestless doctrine. Kozma taught "about the deity and great mysteries", predicted the imminent onset of "the last day and hour", and

20 The text has survived in several copies dated between 17th and 19th centuries; the passages cited in the article are from copies: The Manuscript Department of NLR, O.XVII.37, sheets 44 verso-55 verso; The Manuscript Department of SHM, Museum collection, № 19, sheets 232-238.

21 The Chir Monastery was located on the bank of the Chir River 50 versts away from its confluence with the Don River. It was founded by Job of Lgov in the early 1670s. Around 1685, Hegumen Dositheos, a well-known figure of the early Old Ritualism, became the head of the Monastery.

“said that Tsar Michael stayed with him; our Christ orders that our land be cleansed; we are not afraid of tsars or the whole universe, and the Christian faith has completely fallen apart, and in Moscow land is no piety, no churches or priests, there isn’t any sacrament; everyone has fallen away from faith, and only five years is left for our world to live” («сказываль у себя царя Михайла, нашъ, де, Христось велить землю очищать, мы, де, не боимся царей ни всей вселенной, а христианская, де, вера вся отпала и въ Московскомъ государстве благочестия нетъ, ни церквей, ни поповъ, ни какого таинства нетъ же, все, де, отъ веры отступили, а житья, де, нашего всемирнаго только пять летъ»).

According to Kozma, at “the end of times” there will be no Judgment Day, described in the Book of Revelation by John of Patmos, but “the change of the world” («пременение света»), which means the wicked will be punished and “the Christian kind” will reign over the earth. Tsar Michael will carry out this “change”; he will “cleanse the earth”, “the unfaithful” will “end”, but “the Christian kind will not end, they will be like gods, immortal and beaming like the sun, and will not know death” («всему христианскому роду скончания не будетъ, но будутъ, яко бози, и безсмертны и просветятся вси, яко солнце, и смерти не имутъ во веки»). Thus, the kingdom of God will be established on earth forever.²²

Kozma’s teachings were condemned by Moscow Old Believers, who in their letter (circa 1680) to the Chir Monastery warned their co-religionists about the danger of this “wisdom”. In the Don Region Hegumen Dositheos was Kozma’s opponent. Dositheos – a staunch advocate of preserving priesthood in the Old Ritualism and a like-minded ally of monk Euphrosynos (the author of *The Rejecting Scripture*) lived in the Chir Monastery (the Don Region) from 1685 until his death in the early 1690s.

“*The Tale of... Timothy*” was written by a Dositheos supporter; one of the author’s purposes was to refute Kozma’s teachings, using an eschatological topic. An angel accompanying John in the otherworld shows him a river of fire into which Kozma and his disciples are immersed. His punishment is compounded by Dositheos’ accusations:

22 Kozma’s doctrine is reconstructed on the basis of his speeches during interrogation in Ambassadorial Prikaz, speeches and letters of his followers and opponents, see: В.Г. Дружинин, *Раскол на Дону в конце XVII века* [V.G. Druzhinin, *The Schism in the Don Region in the Late 17th Century*], St. Petersburg, 1889. pp. 96-99 and other; А.Т. Шашков, “Козьма Ларионов” [A.T. Shashkov, “Kozma Larionov”], in: *Словарь книжников и книжности Древней Руси* [Dictionary of Bibliophiles and Book Culture of Old Russia]. St. Petersburg, 1993, iss. 3, part 2, pp. 172-174.

“Kozma, Kozma! You suffer for your wrong teachings! You insulted the priesthood and sacraments, and you said that there would be no river of fire, and that Christ wouldn’t come to earth to judge the living and the dead and to render to each one according to his works. You said, we would be renewed without all of this ⟨...⟩”. («Козма, Козма! Что се страждеши за неправое свое разсужение? Зане укориль еси священство и таинство и сказывалъ ты, яко река огненная не будет и Христос, де, чювьственно не приидет на землю судити живым и мертвым и воздати комуждо по деломъ его. Мы, де, такъ и обновимся ⟨...⟩»).

The author contrasts Kozma’s priestless doctrine with the idea of preserving the priesthood: John sees a church of the Chir Monastery where Hegumen Dositheos serves, and the Lord Himself sits atop a throne in there. Angels tell John that everyone who enters this church “with fear” receive “great gain”. *“The Tale of... Timothy”*, probably written shortly before Kozma’s death, turned out to be prophetic in a sense. In the end, Kozma did really make a complete fiasco: the Don Cossacks didn’t back up his idea of Moscow armed campaign. He was betrayed by his former allies and sent to Moscow, where he died in the fall of 1687 after torture and interrogation.

However, Kozma’s terrible death was perceived by a significant number of the Old Believers as a feat of martyrdom for “the old faith”, therefore, he was able to wash away guilt for “the mistakes” of his past. The name of Kozma was listed by the famous Vyg writer and cenobiarch Simeon Denisov in his martyrology *The Russian Vineyard* (*Виноград Россійскій*) (1730s). The Vyg author honored Kozma as a martyr, “mentor of the Don Cossacks”, “virtuous speaker” of “prophetic words”. This description of Kozma could be interpreted as a direct polemic against *“The Tale of... Timothy”*, provided that Simeon Denisov was familiar with the text. A change in the attitude towards Kozma inevitably brought about a change in his position in the afterlife. Not the river of hellfire, as stated in *“The Tale of... Timothy”*, but “peaceful villages” (i.e. paradise), where he “ascended” by means of “the bitterest death by burning” («горчайшая казнь огнесожжения»). According to Simeon Denisov, that is Divine judgment on Kozma.²³

The texts of “the minor” eschatology were used later in the controversy between the priested and priestless Old Believers. For instance, the Vyg priestless ones turned to this tradition in order to prove that the Rite of Baptism (re-baptism, to be more precise) could be performed out of necessity (“for the sake of

23 С. Денисов, *Виноград Россійскій* [S. Denisov, *The Russian Vineyard*], Moscow, 2008, p. 162.

need”) («нужды ради») by community members who weren’t ordained into the priesthood. An early 19th-century text, written by a priested Old Believer, refutes the idea of the priestless ones that blessed saints’ relics don’t exist on earth. St. Sergius of Radonezh comes to “a certain girl” in a vision. He shows her his own relics, housed in the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, and assures her that “there are holy relics on earth and God’s grace comes from them”. In the end, in order to strengthen the edification, the girl was shown the torments of the priestless Old Believers.²⁴

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The possibility of preserving the priesthood and legitimacy of suicide in the name of faith belong to the most fundamental issues discussed among the Old Believers. However, sometimes “the minor” eschatology texts touch upon more specific questions, including the maintenance of various ethical standards and following the rules of behavior in everyday life. Between 18th and 20th centuries the Old Believers created thematic collections, entirely consisting of works, which condemned swearing, shaving beards, tobacco smoking, drinking alcohol, drinking tea and coffee, eating potatoes, wearing European clothes, etc. According to Old Believer writings, all these sins took root after Patriarch Nikon’s church reforms and European innovations by Peter the Great. The Old Believers’ negative attitude towards these pernicious phenomena can be phrased in the shape of direct prohibition:

“If an Orthodox Christian dares to drink tea, he will be the despair of the Lord Himself: let him be thrice anathematized. (...) If an Orthodox Christian dares to smoke tobacco, he will be anathematized seven times” («Аще кто от православных христиан дерзнет пити чай, сей отчаётся самого Господа Бога и да будет предан 3-жды анафеме. (...) Аще кто от православныхъ христианъ дерзнет пити табакъ, той да будетъ преданъ анафеме 7-жды»).

24 См.: А.В. Пигин, “«Сказание о дивном видении некоей девице» в 1804 году – неизвестный памятник старообрядческой полемики XIX века” [A.V. Pigin, “The Tale of a Miraculous Vision Experienced by a Certain Maiden” in 1804 – an Unknown Text of the 19th-Century Old Believer Polemics”], in: *От Средневековья к Новому времени: Сборник статей в честь Ольги Андреевны Белобровой* [From the Middle Ages to the Modern Period: Collected Essays in Honor of O.A. Belobrova], Moscow, 2006, pp. 312-323.

25 IRLI, The Ust-Tsilma Collection, № 66, sheet 252 verso.

A lot of stories have been composed on this subject. They are often based on an etiological folk motif or a revised plot of a patericon legend. Tobacco is sinful because it has grown out of a dead body of a harlot who had sex with a dog. Potatoes are forbidden to eat because they have emerged from the Devil's bowl movements. Swearing offends three mothers: your birth mother, Mother Earth, and the Virgin Mary. There is a story explaining a demon's disgusting appearance: the demon gave its all beautiful attire to people in order to seduce them. That's how fashion came into being.

It's a rare case when an Old Believer vision of the beyond doesn't depict the punishment of at least one category of such sinners (foul-mouthed men, those who shave their beards («брадобритцев»), tobacco smokers, fashionably dressed women and men). In the otherworld foul-mouthed men stand in fire with their tongues stretched out (*"The Legend of the Resurrection Miracle of... Michael"*). In the Vyg Vision of Philipp Stakhiev (*Видение Филиппа Стахиева*) a bloody bubble hangs down the mouth of a foul-mouthed man, because he "defiled his tongue and mouth" with "nasty obscene swearing".²⁶ This motif goes back to a very popular among the Old Believers *The Homily on the Swear Word* (*Поучение о матерном слове*), attributed to John Chrysostom in some manuscripts. It states:

"If a person curses violently on any day, his mouth will be caked with blood on that day because of evil faith and unclean stench coming from his mouth" («Котораго дни человекъ матерно изругается, и того дни уста кровию закипятся злыя ради веры и нечистаго смрада, исходящаго из устъ человеческихъ»);²⁷

Swearing is identified in the *Homily* with both a dog's barking («излается матерно») and unholy faith – a kind of heretical prayer. Those who shave their beards are punished in the otherworld by absence of their heads: "...he saw a regiment standing: people without heads, only body corpses" (*"The Legend of the Miracle Resurrection of... Michael"*). According to the eschatological Old Believer verse *"Bulletin from Hell"* («Газета из ада»), demons in Hell clean the noses of snuff users with hooks.²⁸

26 The Manuscript Department of RSL, E.V. Barsov's Collection, № 290, sheet 49 verso.

27 IRLi, The Mezen Collection, № 20, sheet 144.

28 IRLi, The Latgale Collection, № 357, sheets 114 verso – 115. About the manuscript see: С.В. Алпатов, «Ведомость из ада»: Судьба европейской сатиры в отечественных религиозных субкультурах XVIII–XX вв. [S.V. Alpatov, "Bulletin from Hell": Vicissitudes of European Satire in Russian Religious Subculture between 18th and 20th Century], *Вестник церковной истории* [Messenger of Ecclesiastical History] 1/2 (2014), pp. 149–175.

The Old Believer authors were especially worried about the penetration of these sinful habits into their co-religionist milieu. The world of Nikon's followers, clouded by the devilish "charm", died irrevocably and it cannot be saved. Therefore the Old Believers should not join this world either on a large or small scale: no joining in performing church rites, eating or wearing clothes. In the second half of the 18th century the Vyg writer Vasily Danilov Shaposhnikov raised the subject of the Old Believers' damaged morality under the influence of "the outer" world.²⁹ In the late 18th century another Vyg writer, Timothy Andreev, composed an extensive treatise "*On the Old Rite*" («О древнем обряде»). In this work he presented the history of European fashion, legends about the origin of ties and artificial beauty marks known as "mouches", which 18th century society ladies pasted on their faces. According to the author, disloyalty to national attire in favor of foreign one means disloyalty to faith. The author laments:

"Oh, my regret! (...) Those who fast adorn themselves not with virtue, but precious robes; they adorn themselves not with fearful submission, but expensive clothes..." («Оле, моя жалости! (...) Ибо украшаются постники и постницы не целомудриемъ, но блещащими ризами, не кротостью и благоговеинствомъ, но одеждами добрейшими...»)³⁰.

The influence of European fashion spread to the Vygo-Leksinsk community, lost in deep northern forests; the Old Believers residing in St. Petersburg were affected by this influence even more so. *The Vision of a Certain Petersburg Burgher Daniil Grigoryev* (*Видение петербуржца Даниила Григорьева*) dates from the year 1819.³¹ This work, containing motives of "the minor" eschatology, was written to bring the Old Believers of the Petersburg Pomorian community

29 See: Е.М. Юхименко, "Неизвестный выговский писатель Василий Данилов Шапошников и «Сказание о преставлении Симеона Дионисиевича»" [Е.М. Yukhimenko, "The Unknown Vyg Writer Vasily Danilov Shaposhnikov and 'The Legend of Simeon Dionisieievich's Death'"], *ТОДРЛ* 46 (2010), pp. 441-452, at pp. 443-445.

30 IRLI, The Latgale Collection, № 16, sheets 406-406 verso; also see: М.Г. Бабалык, "Выговский старообрядческий книжник Тимофей Андреев и его сочинения о немецком платье и новомодном облике" [M.G. Babalyk, "The Vyg Old Believer Writer Timothy Andreev and His Writings on German Dress and Trendy Look"], in: *Федосовские чтения: материалы научно-практической краеведческой конференции, посвященной 190-летию со дня рождения И. А. Федосовой. Петрозаводск, 27-28 апреля 2017 г.* [*Fedosova Readings: Proceedings of the Research-to Practice Area Studies Conference, Dedicated to I.A. Fedosova's 190 Anniversary. Petrozavodsk, April 27-28, 2017*], Petrozavodsk, 2017. pp. 73-79.

31 The Manuscript Department of RSL, E.V. Barsov's Collection, № 1197.16, sheets 1-3.

to their senses. In the Vision, Daniil Grigoryev communicates with a certain holy elder, who reproaches the Old Believers of the Pomorian denomination for “sinning in their oratory”.³² From the dialogue between the visionary and the holy elder we learn that the Old Believers’ fault lies not in the mistakes made in worship or confession, but in “the weakness” («слабость») of conduct and deviation from the Old Russian traditions of everyday life. Petersburg Old Believers work on Christian holidays, overeat and overdrink, but most important – “they wear the dress that violates the Christian code” – the dress with “German decoration”, and they sew extra buttons for the sake of beauty. A door is ajar and Daniil Grigoryev sees the Garden of Eden. In order to enter the Garden, the Old Believers should give up the above mentioned sins. The Old Believers are presented in the writing as a kind of “regiment”, “as if they are covered with gloom and look dejected”. The gloom that covers them is a symbolic depiction of their sins and blasphemous garments.

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Thus, the Old Believer texts belonging to personal eschatology touch upon faith, rite and morality – significant issues for the Old Believer communities. Meanwhile, the theme in the title of the article can be considered from a different angle. The Old Believers were shrewd readers, connoisseurs of the Old Russian Literature and used ancient literary texts in order to sustain their own doctrine and refute that of their opponents. For polemical purposes they employed various patristic works, Byzantine-Russian hagiographies, homiletic literature, as well as texts of “the minor” and “major” eschatology. Sometimes these ancient texts were criticized; the Old Believer ideologists considered to what extent these texts corresponded to the Orthodox doctrine.

For example, the above-mentioned “*The Rejecting Scripture*” against self-immolation written by monk Euphrosynus echoes the Old Believer polemic about the Byzantine *Life of St. Basil the Younger* (Житие Василия Нового) (10th century). The extremely popular in the Old Russian literature text about the Constantinople saint contains two extensive passages: the vision of the Judgment Day by Basil’s disciple Gregory, and a story about the soul of Theodora (Basil’s servant) traversing aerial toll houses. Euphrosynus reports, some Old Believers considered this work to be false, or even heretical, since it described “an indecent affair”: “the woman served the elder in a cell”. However,

32 This refers to the oratory in Mokhovaya Street (St. Petersburg), constructed in the out-building of the house belonging to Ivan Feoktistovich Dolgoy (1734-1799), a representative of the family of the largest philanthropists of the last quarter 18th-first half 19th century.

Euphrosynus suspects the real reason for such attitude towards the *Life*. In the description of the Judgment Day, suicides are listed among sinners; this notion was a powerful argument against voluntary self-immolation. Euphrosynus, an opponent of self-immolation, was convinced, that this book was “full of goodness and Orthodoxy”. He also considered the story of Theodora traversing aerial toll houses to be fairly consistent with the Orthodox doctrine of the human soul’s afterlife and the personal Last Judgment.³³ Later, this attitude towards the *Life of St. Basil the Younger* got a hold over the Old Believers. The hagiography was printed many times in Old Believer publishing houses between 18th and 19th centuries, and its manuscripts were decorated with miniatures depicting Heaven and Hell. At the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, the well-known Old Believer publisher D. V. Batov, from the city of Tula, criticized a story about the vision of the afterlife, printed in a publishing house of the established church. He recognized the text as false on the grounds that it didn’t correspond to Theodora’s traverse through aerial toll houses in the *Life of St. Basil the Younger*.³⁴

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We have considered a number of texts related to “the minor” eschatology. They reflect some of the most important discussions held by the Old Believers of two denominations – the priested and priestless one. Unlike polemic treatises, where the same problems are discussed in terms of abstract theology, the examined texts (legends and visions) provide very clear answers in the shape of vivid and impressive images. Texts belonging to “the minor” eschatology are close to folklore and in terms of visual expression resemble book illustrations (miniatures); as a rule, they are based on a gripping storyline and also possess psychological elements. All these factors explain their great popularity among readers and such long life in the Old Believer literature.

Translated from Russian into English by Serge V. Orlov (Petrozavodsk State Glazunov Conservatory).

33 Отразительное писание, pp. 65-66.

34 См.: А.В. Пигин, “Рассказ об «ожившей женщине» в осмыслении тульского старообрядца Д.В. Батова” [A.V. Pigin, “A Narrative about a “Resurrected Woman” in the Reception of D.V. Batov, an Old Believer of Tula”], *Studia Litterarum* 2 (2017), nr, 4 pp. 326-339.

Abbreviation List

LRAS	Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg)
SHM	State Historical Museum (Moscow)
IRLi	The Institute of Russian Literature (The Pushkin House) of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg)
RSL	The Russian State Library (Moscow)
NLR	National Library of Russia (St. Petersburg)