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Materials of the Vyatka Spiritual Consistory Fond from the State Archive of the Kirov Region as a Source for Studying Old Believers of the Second Half of the 19th – Early 20th Century

Abstract

The article analyzes documents of the Vyatka spiritual consistory fond of the State Archive of the Kirov Region containing important information on the history of the Vyatka Old Believers of the second half of the 19th and early 20th century. These are journals and minutes of meetings of the consistory office, reports, and business correspondence. They allow to follow main trends in the state religious policy, in the implementation of which the Orthodox Church participated fully. The designated chronological period represents a new stage in history of the state-old-believers relations characterized by a considerable liberalization in religious policy

reflected in legal acts of the period (Decree "On granting some civil rights and rights of occasional offices" of May 3, 1883, Decree "On promoting principles of religious tolerance" of April 17, 1905, etc.). Secular authorities and Orthodox clergy forewent the more severe pressuring of the Old Believers and focused on studying their ideology, on enlightenment of the people and missionary work. Statements and reports of Orthodox priests contain information on the relationship between official clergy and Old Believers. Furthermore, a special attention is paid to parish clergy with direct contacts among Old Believers, who were a main conductor of the religious policy of the Synodal Church in situ. Prior to advent of diocesan missionaries, it was parish clergy who were responsible for outreach and preaching criticizing Old Believer fundamentals in order to bring Old Believers into the fold of the state religion. Moreover, materials of the fond allow to trace dynamics in number of Old Believers in the designated chronological period, to identify the most densely inhabited Old Believer regions in the Vyatka gubernia, Old Believer spiritual centers, and also study relations between Old Believers and local administrative bodies. Journals and minutes of the consistory office meetings are an important source for studying religious policy in regard to Old Believer centers of worship, as well as book and icon art. Altogether, the Vyatka spiritual consistory documents allow to reconstruct various aspects of material and spiritual culture of the Vyatka Old Believers and their place in socio-cultural life of the Vyatka-Kama region.

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Keywords

Historical sources, archive, Vyatka spiritual consistory, Russian Orthodox Church, Old Believers, missionary activity, journals and minutes of meetings of the consistory office, reports, business correspondence.

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