

## Article

# Not Tourists, but Pilgrims: Defining and Defending Modern Pilgrimage in a Late Imperial Russian Periodical

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**Abstract:** For a historian of religion, Christian pilgrimage offers a perfect example of how religious ideals and practices are reimagined and transformed in response to the changing historical and cultural context. This dynamic displays itself in a particularly interesting way in modernity, with its advent of mass communication and transportation, as well as other economic and socio-political changes. This article discusses some of the resultant changes in the practice of and perspectives on pilgrimage in late-nineteenth-century Russia as seen through the lens of a popular religious journal of the era, *Russian Pilgrim*. As the first commercial mass publication devoted solely to this subject, *Russian Pilgrim* was highly instrumental not only in providing its readers with information about pilgrimage places, practices, and travel procedures, but also in shaping their perceptions of what constituted a good pilgrimage. The paper includes close reading of selected materials from the journal, as well as an accompanying analysis of the debates on the value and meaning of modern mass pilgrimage reflected in these examples.

**Keywords:** pilgrimage; Russian Orthodox Christianity; religious periodical press; religion in modernity; religious tourism; the Holy Land; A.V. Eliseev



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## 1. Introduction

What would be better, money-wise and otherwise—to travel from the port of Jaffa to Jerusalem by stage coach, mule, or possibly on foot? What kinds of nun-made handicrafts are offered at the Novotikhvin Monastery shop, and what is the exact pricelist for souvenirs from the fabled Valaam? How much should you budget for your daily snack of kvas and pickles at the pilgrim hostel in the Holy Land? And (an important question for a Russian traveler!) is rye bread to be found anywhere in Palestine, or should you bring a sack or two along?

Detailed answers to all these and many other questions posed by prospective pilgrims could be found in the pages of *Russkii Palomnik* (*Russian Pilgrim*)—a weekly illustrated journal published in Russia from 1885–1917.<sup>1</sup> Conceived of by its founder and first editor-in-chief, A. I. Popovitsky, as a publication for and about Orthodox pilgrims, this journal was an indispensable source of varied logistical, geographical, and financial information about pilgrimage. This informational function of the journal, however, is only one factor accounting for its religious and cultural significance. *Russian Pilgrim* also presented its readers with a particular vision of what constitutes a good pilgrimage, thereby actively shaping their choices, expectations, and behaviors.

This formative function of the journal is particularly significant when viewed against the background of the transformations taking place in Russia's religious life during that time. Among such changes documented in recent historical studies were wide-ranging administrative and parish reforms, spiritual renewal movements, and increased educational opportunities for the middle and lower classes (Chulos 2003; Shevzov 2000, 2004; Strickland 2013). The resultant formation of a more self-conscious and informed laity that sought

active participation in ecclesial life inevitably produced new—and at times, conflicting—interpretations of the Orthodox tradition. The rapid modernization of the country and the propagation of secular ideals likewise had a profound and complex effect on the religious experiences of Russian people. Although the cultural and socio-political centrality of Orthodoxy remained effectively unchallenged until the revolution of 1917, intense debates about the meaning of the Orthodox tradition and the authentic ways of living it out continued throughout the late imperial era, among Russian laity and clergy alike (Cunningham 1997; Shevzov 2004; Strickland 2013).

As an iconic Orthodox religious practice, pilgrimage offers a particularly illustrative example of such transformations and contestations. The massive surge in popularity of pilgrimage in late imperial Russia went hand in hand with drastic transformations in its modalities, with pilgrimage becoming progressively more convenient and affordable but simultaneously more structured, controlled, and commercialized (Campbell 2014; Greene 2012; Kane 2015; Worobec 2009<sup>2</sup>). Not surprisingly, these changes provoked suspicions of spiritual inauthenticity in certain quarters of the Orthodox community. At the same time, there was a concerted effort, on multiple levels, to promote these new modes of pilgrimage as both practically advantageous and fully congruent with Orthodox Christianity's traditional spiritual goals. To some extent, this debate about the merits of modern pilgrimage was also a debate about the nature and contemporary relevance of the Orthodox tradition itself: what was the proper balance of continuity and change, and how effectively could tradition respond to the challenges of modernity?

A highly significant contribution to these ongoing debates about the nature and relevance of Orthodox tradition was made by the Russian periodical press. As pointed out by scholars of late imperial Russia, newspapers and journals were at this time beginning to play an increasingly active part in the formation of collective self-consciousness among the Russian reading public (McReynolds 1991; Strickland 2013; Tatsumi 2020). Religious periodicals in particular were the site where contested models of religious and cultural identity were offered for the public's reflection. The last decades of the 19th century saw a major increase in the number of religious periodicals, and, in particular, religious journals: over forty journals were published during this time. These publications ranged widely in terms of their provenance, audience, and format, from the official organs of the Russian Orthodox Church, to specialized academic journals published by theological academies and scholarly societies, to the so-called "edificatory" journals offering instruction in Orthodoxy to the general public (Kasinec 1978; Netuzhilov 2009a, 2009b). The latter type of journals had a particularly significant effect on the formation of Orthodox readers' ideals and perspectives, by virtue of their wide circulation and popular appeal.

The source that is the focus of this study, *Russian Pilgrim*, falls within the latter category. However, several of its features—most importantly, its specialized thematic focus, distinctive format, and its status as a successful commercial publication—set it apart from other edificatory journals. As such, *Russian Pilgrim* offers a unique lens through which to examine religious and cultural developments in late imperial Russia. By analyzing *Russian Pilgrim's* presentation of pilgrimage, this article thereby seeks to contribute to the general historical study of Russian Orthodoxy and religion in several ways. Since this journal has so far received very limited scholarly attention, the inclusion of this primary source in an ongoing historiographical conversation expands the latter's depth and range.<sup>3</sup> This is especially important insofar as this source falls outside of the category of official church documents and theological writings, and thus gives access to alternative perspectives and underrepresented voices, which are urgently needed in the field (Shevzov 2000, 2004; Worobec 2006, 2012–2013). In fact, the journal's inherent polyvocality, stemming from its wide range of published materials, contributors, and intended audiences, makes it a perfect case study for a cultural historian seeking to go beyond the constricting binaries of the "official" and "popular" religion, and to instead approach religion as a "lived experience of faith and ritual among believers of all classes" (Worobec 2012–2013, p. 221). The journal's thematic focus on pilgrimage likewise makes it a rich resource for the study of religious

materiality and its role in the formation of religious identities. In this way, this article contributes both to the developing field of Eastern Orthodox pilgrimage studies, and to a broader body of scholarship engaged in the exploration of the complexities and tensions of the “lived religion”.<sup>4</sup>

I will begin my discussion with a brief overview of the journal itself, in order to highlight some of its important features, before proceeding to the analysis of select materials published in it. My main focus will be on the ways in which official and commercial documents, pilgrim travelogues, historical vignettes, and personal testimonies are combined in the journal to create and promote an appealing vision of modern pilgrimage as both spiritually authentic and practically advantageous. Theoretical and historical context for this analysis will be provided by placing it in conversation with a wide range of scholarly studies of modernity’s effect on the nature and modes of religious travel (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003; Greene 2012; Kane 2015; Swatos 2006; Timofeeva et al. 2019; Tomasi 2002; Worobec 2009; Zhitin 2020).

## 2. “It Is for People Like These That I Want to Publish My Journal!”: *Russian Pilgrim* as a Pilgrimage Information Hub

### 2.1. *Russian Pilgrim*: Context, Objectives, and Character

Among other commemorative materials, the 25th anniversary edition of *Russian Pilgrim* contains a story about the journal’s conception and christening (*Russkii Palomnik* 1910, vol. 47: pp. 750–52). One day, the story goes, the journal’s founder A. I. Popovitsky was out riding with his son as they brainstormed ideas for Popovitsky’s new publishing project (a replacement for his previous periodical, *The Church and Society Messenger*, closed down by government censors). As their carriage approached the Alexandro-Neviskii monastery, they saw a group of pedestrians walking down the road. Popovitsky struck up a conversation with people in the group, inquiring about their identity and destination, and was told that they were “Russian pilgrims”. At this point, reportedly, Popovitsky exclaimed “this is it—a perfect name for my journal!”, adding that it was people like these that he intended to serve with his new publication. Accordingly, when the new journal saw the light of day on 1 September 1885, its first page proudly displayed not just the title “Russian Pilgrim” but also a drawing of its anonymous “godfather”—the humble Russian pilgrim Popovitsky met that day.<sup>5</sup>

Whether this was a chance encounter or (as Popovitsky himself was convinced) an omen, the publisher’s reaction is quite telling. A profound respect for pilgrims had deep roots in the Russian Orthodox tradition, as well as in Christian tradition as a whole. Seen as a means of directly accessing the sacred, as well as a voluntarily undertaken ascetic practice, pilgrimage was extolled by many Orthodox Christians as a paradigmatic spiritual feat (Chulos 2003; Poplavskaya 2001; Worobec 2006, 2014–2015). The conflation of the figure of a pilgrim with that of an ideal Christian that we find in Popovitsky’s journal therefore has numerous precedents in the Orthodox literary tradition. What makes this publication noteworthy is its ability to distill, shape, and disseminate this ideal to the widest possible audience across the country.

To a considerable extent, this ability was a result of *Russian Pilgrim*’s distinctive place within the Russian periodic press, and its aesthetic and literary format. By positioning his new publication squarely within the category of edificatory journals, Popovitsky ensured its mass appeal as well as unimpeded circulation among a wide range of religiously affiliated institutions and organizations.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, its status as a private commercial publication worked to its advantage, as compared to the journals financed by the Church or Russian government, in terms of its freedom to address controversial issues.<sup>7</sup> The journal’s marked diversity of content would have likewise increased its popular appeal. As evidenced by the annual table of contents for 1885, during just the first year of its publication, *Russian Pilgrim* featured materials in the following thematic rubrics: sacred sites of the Orthodox East; Russia’s holy places and objects; the history of Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church; missionary news; Orthodox theology and ethics; and the

so-called “miscellaneous” section, containing a mixture of curious facts related to religion, from new archaeological discoveries to technological novelties such as candle-vending machines. This thematic variety was complemented by a great diversity of genres, including biographies and hagiographies, scholarly essays, official governmental and Church reports, sermons, philosophical tractates, short stories, poems, travelogues, and excerpts from personal diaries. Additionally, a prominent place in the journal was given to visual images, from photographs of sacred places and objects, to portraits of important spiritual figures, to ancient and contemporary works of art.<sup>8</sup> Unmatched by any other contemporary journal, this artistic aspect of *Russian Pilgrim* was, by its founder’s admission, a part of his overall objective: to create a completely novel type of religious periodical, enabling its readers to “expand their knowledge of [religious] subjects... and satisfy their religious-moral sensibilities” (*Russkii Palomnik 1885*, vol. 1, p. 1). Taken together, the journal’s innovative literary and aesthetic features ensured that it successfully engaged its audience’s intellectual curiosity as well as their imagination and emotions, thereby enhancing its formative effect.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2. “We Will Make Our Pilgrimage to Every Place a Pious Christian Might Aspire to Visit”: *Russian Pilgrim* as a Travel Guide

These features of *Russian Pilgrim* manifest themselves most prominently in the treatment of its central topic: pilgrimage. In keeping with Popovitsky’s objective of creating a publication serving Russian pilgrims, the journal was designed as a convenient one-stop resource for all kinds of information that could be sought by prospective travelers. Each year, its readers were treated to a detailed discussion of numerous pilgrimage destinations, both in Russia and abroad. Importantly, this list is not confined to the major pilgrimage centers such as Moscow, Kiev, Valaam, or Mount Athos. The journal’s editors also made a point of regularly featuring little-known local holy places, providing their readers with meticulous descriptions of their physical locations, sacred images and objects, local rituals, and relevant historical accounts and legends.

A good example is offered in a lengthy entry by I. K. Golubev on the Abalaskii monastery in Western Siberia. Spanning two weekly issues (*Russkii Palomnik 1892*, pp. 3–4), the article starts out with a description of the monastery’s geographical location that combines a factual account with an emotional commentary on the natural beauty of the “wondrous Siberian landscape” (*RP 1892*, vol. 3, p. 41). The author then proceeds to a description (accompanied by photographs) of the monastery’s overall architectural configuration, before zeroing in on its specific structures—an impressive stone wall surrounding the place, the main “winter” church and two additional churches, monastic dormitories, and the newer stone seminary building of a “distinguished architectural style” (*RP 1892*, vol. 3, p. 42). Having described the monastery’s current state, the author launches a summary of the place’s history that both situates it within the national historical framework—specifically, the Russian migration to Siberia—and highlights interesting aspects of the monastery’s own development, such as “divine revelations” that prompted the building of a new church. Finally, there is a vivid and detailed description of the sacred images housed in the monastery’s churches, including its greatest treasure: a miracle-working icon of the Theotokos. Taking up most of the second part of the article published in Issue 4, this description includes both an iconographic analysis of the image and an incredibly detailed inventory of its physical features—the exact weight of the gold inner *riza* (cover) and of the outer silver frame, the number and sizes of pearls embedded in the image, the colors of its enamel seals, and so on. Both this vivid account and the concluding claim regarding the “great miracles” associated with the icon (*RP 1892*, vol. 4, p. 50) serve to stimulate the audience’s interest in this sacred location, which otherwise would have remained unknown to most of the readers.

This detailed map of Russia’s sacred topography was only one of *Russian Pilgrim*’s contributions to the development of pilgrimage. The journal also provided its readers with detailed logistical information that could assist in making pilgrimage plans, from travel conditions and the accessibility of each destination, to the availability and quality

of accommodations, to pilgrim services available at each place. For example, potential visitors to the ancient Georgian monastery of Gori-Dovkari (*RP* 1885, vol. 6, pp. 46–47) are forewarned that only those with “bellows for lungs and legs of mountain goats” would possibly stand a chance of reaching this exotic holy place. (A useful tip—start very early in the morning, and fortify yourself with a glass of local wine!) A first-hand account of a pilgrimage to the Sarov monastery (*Russkii Palomnik* 1902, vol. 25: pp. 424–26, vol. 26: pp. 440–42) contains a wealth of practical advice, from the condition of the roads in the area (extremely treacherous after the rains) to the best ways to navigate them (pedestrians do not have to endure the bone-rattling ruts and potholes, but if you need to use a carriage be sure to engage one in advance). The author of these “Travel Notes”, writing under the *nom de plume* “Traveler”, also points out the limitations of the monastery’s accommodations. As he explains, at the time of his own visit—which, granted, coincided with the celebration of the monastery founder’s canonization—pilgrims were forced to sleep outside on the ground, packed so closely together that it was impossible to cross the monastery’s backyard during the night (*RP* 1902, vol. 25, p. 426). Clearly, readers wanting to avoid the crowds would do well to take notice of the “peak dates” identified by Traveler—namely, the Dormition holiday in the fall, which happens to be Sarov’s temple festival. Of course, even avoiding those dates might not help that much, given the tremendous draw of Seraphim of Sarov—one of the most beloved Russian spiritual figures, recently made a saint.<sup>10</sup>

A similarly detailed account of a first-hand pilgrimage experience features a celebrated northern center of Russian monasticism, the sketes of Valaam (*RP* 1885, pp. 15–16). In addition to a lengthy description of travel procedures and the features of Valaam’s landscape and buildings, this article also contains two long pricelists—one for religious services available for order, the other for the monastery shop. The first pricelist (displayed at the entrance of the monastery’s hostel) informs the pilgrims that monastics in the sketes still hold the ancient tradition of the “unceasing” reading of the Psalms, and that one could request commemorative services for one’s beloved as a part of this rite. The prices given are: 3 rubles for a three-week service, 10 rubles for the annual commemoration, and 60 for remembrance “throughout eternity”. (A footnote to the list: candles are extra, and can be added for another 14 rubles). The author also mentions, for comparison, the prices charged at the main church of Valaam, which are lower for some of the services but are performed only once a day, during the liturgy.

The pricelist for the monastic store is even more detailed, allowing would-be pilgrims to find out in advance what to expect in terms of the types of souvenirs available and their costs. One of the pricier items on the list is “photographic cards” of the iconic spots of Valaam that are supplied by the monastery’s own photographer—10 kopeks per card. Monastic handicrafts, such as small wooden crosses and medallions with the imprinted images of SS. Herman and Sergius, the patron saints of Valaam, are considerably cheaper—3 and 5 kopeks, respectively. The attention of female pilgrims is drawn particularly towards wooden prayer beads, since they can be also worn as necklaces. (Male pilgrims, on the other hand, were likely the target consumers for the monastery brochures with such catchy titles as “The nastiest demon of all is in vodka and tobacco!”.) Whatever their needs and preferences, thanks to the information offered in the journal, its readers would arrive at Valaam knowing what to expect and how much to budget.

One final—and particularly representative—example that I will discuss in this section concerns *Russian Pilgrim’s* handling of the information related to travel to the Holy Land. Considering that this particular pilgrimage had long been regarded as the archetypal spiritual journey in the Christian tradition, the amount of attention it receives in the journal is unsurprising. In fact, as Popovitsky himself stated in his inaugural editorial, “it is to be taken for granted that our first steps will be directed to the most sacred place of all, the very country where the light of our faith was kindled, where our Savior himself was born, lived, died, and was raised again in glory” (*RP* 1885, vol. 1, p. 1). Accordingly, most of the first issue of the journal is dedicated to the “geography of the Gospels”, designed to help its audience with potential itineraries. After providing a basic overview of Palestine’s

“borders and territory,” it then goes on to spotlight several specific locations including Nazareth, Tiberias, and Capernaum. This project of familiarizing the audience with the Holy Land, both narratively and through visual images, continues in the next four issues (*RP* 1885, pp. 2–5) which feature articles on the history, geography, and archaeology of Palestine. Although the main thematic focus shifts in Issue 6 to Kiev and, later on, to other major pilgrimage centers in Russia itself, the stream of information about travel to the Holy Land never dries up—in fact, it provides a consistent thematic thread through the entire period of the journal’s publication.

Aside from geographical and historical facts about Palestine, *Russian Pilgrim* presents its readers with a wealth of cultural, logistical, and financial information deemed indispensable for a successful pilgrimage. The source base employed for this purpose is impressively comprehensive and diverse: one finds selections from scholarly treatises, ancient and modern travelogues, personal diaries, and selections from official documents. The Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) was a particularly important supplier of the latter. Founded only a few short years before *Russian Pilgrim*, in 1882, the Society—although technically a private organization—enjoyed active support from the Russian imperial family and government, and played an important role in the strengthening of the Russian political and cultural presence in the Middle East (Astafieva 2017; Gerd 2021; Izmirlieva 2014; Stavrou 1963). The Society’s officially stated mission, however, was purely scholarly and philanthropic, as well as explicitly concerned with facilitating Russian pilgrimage to the Holy Land.<sup>11</sup> Due to this focus on pilgrimage, the Palestine Society’s documents and news appeared in *Russian Pilgrim* on a regular basis, even prior to the formalization of this relationship in 1892.<sup>12</sup> Already during its first year of publication, *Russian Pilgrim* featured multiple selections from the minutes of the Society’s meetings, as well as other informational items circulated by the IOPS. Among other things, the readers were informed about the opening of a new hospital in Jerusalem serving Russian pilgrims (*RP* 1885, vol. 11, p. 87); a proposed lowering of ticket prices for those traveling by the first and second class (*RP* 1885, vol.14, p. 111); and a plan for improving pilgrim accommodations in Jerusalem, including purchases of new felt tents and the founding of a “tea house and a *banya* [Russian sauna]” (*RP* 1885, vol.14, p. 111).

Starting in 1892, the informational materials associated with the IOPS increase in frequency as well as volume, even outside the dedicated “supplements”. The most important types of information passed on by *Russian Pilgrim* to its readers during these years concern travel methods to the Holy Land and associated costs; descriptions of pilgrim accommodations in the so-called “Russian Compound” in Jerusalem; and types of activities recommended to pilgrims in the Holy Land. For example, several issues of *Russian Pilgrim* published in the early and mid-1890s contain reports on the expansion of steamboat and railroad travel to the Holy Land, including maps of a new route from Jaffa to Jerusalem (*RP* 1892, vol. 12, p. 189). Additionally, readers learn about various arrangements made by the IOPS with the Russian Railroad Society, the Russian Steamship and Trade Company, and the Jaffa–Jerusalem Railroad Society to make travel to the Holy Land affordable, such as pilgrim travel vouchers [*palomnicheskie knizhki*] (*Russkii Palomnik* 1896, vol. 15, p. 219). Descriptions of the Russian pilgrim hostels in Jerusalem are clearly directed at travelers of varying socio-economic classes, as they cover the entire range of housing options, from the deluxe rooms at 1–2 rubles per day (heat, lighting, and servants included) to the cheapest shared rooms available at no charge for the first two weeks, and 3 kopeks daily afterwards (*RP* 1896, vol. 16, pp. 249–50). The readers are also reassured as to the presence of a reasonably priced sauna and laundry facilities in the compound. The same journal issue contains a detailed discussion of the available food services, this time primarily directed at lower-class travelers. The menu at the pilgrim canteen includes two major items: “soup, borscht, or stew” for 6 kopeks, and porridge for 2 kopeks, both served with unlimited kvas and rye bread (*RP* 1896, vol. 16, p. 250). Extra supplies can be purchased at the shop, which sells essential food items such as pickles, bread, sauerkraut, and kvas, along with non-food merchandise such as edificatory and informational brochures printed by the Palestine

Society. The long article ends with a brief overview of the educational opportunities and religious services available to the guests staying in the Russian Compound, and a highly inspirational conclusion about pilgrimage's spiritual significance and benefits (*RP* 1896, vol. 16: pp. 251–52).

### 3. *Russian Pilgrim* as a “Prospective Device”: Apologia for Modern Pilgrimage

Undoubtedly, any attentive reader of *Russian Pilgrim* would have been well prepared for—and encouraged in—their pilgrimage endeavors, whether in Russia or in the Holy Land. In fact, as some historians suggest, the wide circulation of information about pilgrimage by popular religious publications was one of the factors that accounted for a massive surge in pilgrimages in the late imperial era (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003; Worobec 2009). Other key factors included increased mass mobility resulting both from major technological advances in the long-distance transportation system, and from the softening of administrative restrictions on the movement of Russian people. During the fifty years following Alexander II's “Great Reforms” of the 1860s, the Russian railway network increased from 1626 to approximately 70,000 km of total rail length, making travel across the Russian Empire faster, more reliable, and more affordable (Greene 2012; Kane 2015). As a result, the numbers of annual visitors to the Russian monasteries and other popular pilgrimage destinations increased dramatically, with even some of the remotest places, such as the Solovetskii Monastery, registering a four-fold increase (Greene 2012; Worobec 2009). A similarly rapid development in the long-distance travel infrastructure changed the conditions of pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The development of new steamship lines by the Russian Society of Shipping and Trade made it possible, for the very first time, to transport large groups of Russian pilgrims, both Orthodox and Muslim, to the Middle East (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003; Campbell 2014; Kane 2015; Zhitin 2020). In particular, the new line from Odessa to the port city of Jaffa (the “Alexandrian line”) played a key role in the expansion of Orthodox pilgrimage to Palestine given Jaffa's relative proximity to the ultimate destination (Zhitin 2020). The establishment of a daily passenger coach line from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and the inauguration in 1892 of a railroad connecting the two cities, made even this typically arduous leg of the journey much more convenient—at least for those who could afford the fees. Between these new developments in the mass transportation infrastructure and a radical simplification of application procedures for the “pilgrim passport”, the numbers of annual Russian visitors to the Holy Land grew exponentially during late imperial era, from 300–400 people per year in 1840s to 6000–7000 by the end of the 19th century, and as many as 10,000 in 1910s (Astafieva 2017; Campbell 2014; Izmirlieva 2014; Kane 2015; Zhitin 2020).<sup>13</sup>

This surge in pilgrim numbers created an interesting dilemma for the Russian Orthodox Church and the imperial government. On the one hand, these armies of pilgrims crisscrossing Russia or filling up steamboats headed to the Holy Land served to conjure an image of a “vibrant Holy Russia defying the dangers posed by growing secularism ... and atheism” (Worobec 2009, p. 64). The fact that such “dangers” were clearly a matter of great concern to the Russian authorities as well as to certain Orthodox lay thinkers (including *Russian Pilgrim's* editors and contributors themselves) made this image all the more appealing.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, these masses of pilgrims presented a very serious challenge of their own, both on a logistical level and in terms of control over their attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

Christine Worobec's careful analysis of the complaints brought forth by Russian monasteries overwhelmed by pilgrim hordes suggests that the focus of these complaints ranged from food shortages, to unreasonable demands on clergy's time, to difficulty in keeping pilgrims safe from petty thieves, to threats of scandals stemming from the presence of women at male monasteries (Worobec 2009). The problem of control over the ritual behaviors and spiritual intentions of pilgrims ran even deeper. An archetypal extra-institutional and anti-structural religious practice, pilgrimage has always been resistant to attempts by religious institutions to define its precise form and meaning (Swatos 2006; Tomasi 2002;

Turner and Turner 1978; Worobec 2012–2013). The modern pilgrimage modalities that came into being during the late imperial era further exacerbated these traits. The mass character of pilgrimage in itself had the potential to increase its inherent polyvalency as it invited an even wider range of meanings from its participants.<sup>15</sup> In addition, by the end of the nineteenth century, the new affordability and convenience of long-distance transportation produced new categories of travelers whose goals and behaviors differed from those of traditional pilgrims (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003; Timofeeva et al. 2019; Tomasi 2002). Accordingly, a growing concern about “tourists” treating their visits to the holy places as mere “excursions” or “pleasure outings” is present both in the official church documents and in popular literary works.<sup>16</sup>

As demonstrated in several recent studies, Russian ecclesial and secular authorities made various attempts to impose some measure of control over pilgrimage, from increasing consular supervision, to regulating pilgrim itineraries and liturgical practices, to promoting group pilgrimages in the hope of transforming “accidental travel” into a highly organized activity (Campbell 2014; Greene 2012; Kane 2015; Worobec 2009). However, these measures of direct control over pilgrims’ movements and experiences had very limited success—spontaneous and unstructured pilgrimages remained the norm. I would like to argue that it is in this context that the significance of publications such as *Russian Pilgrim* can be fully appreciated. In addition to serving as a public information hub, it also functioned—to use Georgia Frank’s helpful phrase—as a “prospective device” that simultaneously described and generated pilgrims’ experiences (Frank 2000, p. 30). In other words, by presenting its readers with compelling depictions of satisfying forms of spiritual travel, *Russian Pilgrim* shaped their expectations and plans, and cultivated a desire for particular experiences.

In the remaining portion of this article I will explore one specific manifestation of this “prospective” function of the journal—namely, the ways in which *Russian Pilgrim* worked to convince its audience of the desirability of “modern” pilgrimage. This task, I suggest, involved two complementary rhetorical moves. On the one hand, prospective pilgrims needed to be persuaded of the practical advantages of the new modes of travel. At the same time, they needed reassurance that their trips would still be spiritually efficacious, and count as a genuine *podvig* [spiritual feat]. For the purposes of this analysis, I will focus on select examples of published materials related to late imperial Russian pilgrimages to the Holy Land. As I will demonstrate in this discussion, *Russian Pilgrim* employs three main strategies to make the case for modern pilgrimage. First, it confronts heads-on any arguments suggesting that the spiritual authenticity of a pilgrimage can be diminished by the use of modern-day commercial and technological conveniences. This case is also made more subtly, through a historical comparison that juxtaposes positive descriptions of contemporary travelers’ experiences with those of the suffering pilgrims of old. Finally, it uses personal accounts by contemporary pilgrims to demonstrate how their behaviors, objectives, and spiritual experiences mark them out as genuine spiritual seekers rather than those interested in secular objectives—in other words, that they retain the status of authentic “pilgrims”, as distinct from contemptible “tourists”.

### 3.1. “Be at Peace, O You Pious People”: *Russian Pilgrim’s* Defense of Modern Travel

The same article in *Russian Pilgrim* that informs its readers about the upcoming railroad linking Jaffa with Jerusalem contains a polemical section dealing with the objections to the pilgrims’ use of modern means of transportation (RP 1892, vol. 12, pp. 189–90). As suggested in the opening remark, certain devoted Orthodox people tend to be “suspicious of the constantly expanding conveniences that are being offered to the travelers to the Holy Land thanks to successes in contemporary science and technology” (RP 1892, vol. 12, p. 190). These suspicions appear to stem from a conceptual disjunction between these people’s vision of traditional pilgrimage as a “high feat of Christian self-sacrifice” and their perception of contemporary pilgrimage as little more than “entertainment travel”. This nostalgic comparison compounds their fears that, with the current and future advances in travel, there “will come the time when under influence of all the comforts surrounding



pilgrims to the Holy Land their religious sensibilities will gradually dry up and ultimately disappear altogether" (*RP* 1892, vol. 12, p. 190).

"Be at peace, o you pious people who think this way," the writer implores his audience, before proceeding to make five key points in support of a more optimistic take on modern-day pilgrimage (*RP* 1892, vol. 12, p. 190). First, one's external circumstances, such as more comfortable ways of travel, cannot have a diminishing effect on one's religious feelings and beliefs, as long as those are "deep and genuine". Second, holy places and objects "will always remain holy, regardless of whether we can reach them quickly or at length"; it therefore stands to reason that their "sacred quality" will not simply disappear if a pilgrim reaches them by rail or steamboat. The readers are then reminded that the recent advances in the Russian transportation system reenergized rather than compromised the practice of pilgrimage, with the numbers of pilgrims going up while their religious fervor remains undiminished. In addition, the ability to reach their destination quickly means that contemporary pilgrims are able to spend more time in their chosen holy place with no ill effects on their ordinary responsibilities at home. Finally (in case some people in the audience still remain unconvinced) the author points out that the rising popularity of modern pilgrimage does not cancel out more traditional options: all pilgrims are free to perform their travels in "whatever particular fashion that best expresses their religious fervor" (*RP* 1892, vol. 12, p. 190).

This analysis of modern pilgrimage to Palestine claims that a particular method of travel is an indifferent factor in terms of categorizing one's journey. Rather, it is internal factors, such as travelers' spiritual states and objectives, that determine the nature of travel. This argument allows the author to firmly position late-nineteenth-century Russian travelers to the Holy Land within the category of "pilgrims", as opposed to that of leisure travelers or "tourists". Of course, this verdict likely oversimplifies the reality of the situation: after all, this was the exact period of time that gave rise to a new travel phenomenon—what Doron Bar and Cohen-Hattab call "modern tourist pilgrimage" (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003<sup>17</sup>). Indeed, some of the aspects of travel we find referenced in *Russian Pilgrim* (e.g., attention to the quality of accommodations and types of souvenirs, or interest in local scenery and customs, evident in some accounts of travels in the Holy Land) fit rather well into this new modality of travel (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003, especially pp. 132, 139–42). Certain materials found in *Russian Pilgrim* likewise seem to suggest that "modern tourist pilgrimage" was practiced by at least some Russians traveling to Palestine. For example, a short piece titled "Letters From the Road: Letter One" by "Old Pilgrim", published in Issue 12 for 1885, contains an interesting typology of Russian visitors to Palestine. The author dubs the first type "flyer-byes" due to their tendency to only spend a week or two in the Holy Land as a part of a larger journey. (As Old Pilgrim contemptuously remarks, "they are always in a hurry, these people—on their way to Italy, or Switzerland, or in most cases, Paris"—*RP* (1885, vol. 12, p. 91)). While visiting the Holy Land, they tend to settle for a few quick and convenient excursions, drop 100–200 rubles on various items, and take off while congratulating themselves on their first-hand acquaintance with this holy place (something they boast about incessantly when they come home). In other words, while these visitors might be genuinely appreciative of the religious significance of Palestine, their overall objectives, behaviors, and travel patterns mark them out as "tourist pilgrims" rather than "traditional pilgrims", according to Bar and Cohen-Hattab's classification. The latter category is represented by the second type of visitors described by Old Pilgrim: those who stay in Palestine for an extended period of time, engage in "serious contemplation" of their surroundings, and are always conscious of the ultimate religious objective of their journey. Once their journey is completed they do not simply cross the Holy Land off their list of future travel destinations—rather, they are "possessed by such a strong desire to go back once again to the places where the Great Teacher lived, taught, and died, that at the first possibility they visit those sacred places once again" (*RP* 1885, vol. 12, p. 91).

Regardless of the exact nature of the classifications and labels one finds in *Russian Pilgrim*, the dichotomy between a genuine spiritual seeker and someone with a merely

superficial interest in sacred places is an important polemical tool used throughout the journal. Among its other functions, it is employed to reassure the journal's readers (who are presumed to be among such genuine seekers) that pilgrimage's value is not tied to its external form, and that their use of modern means of transportation does not make their pilgrimage inferior. In fact, a number of materials published in *Russian Pilgrim* have a distinctly celebratory tenor when it comes to their presentation of such contemporary modes of travel. Select examples of such materials will be discussed in the sections below.

### 3.2. "There Was Very Little Good about the Old Times, Mostly Just Trouble": *Russian Pilgrim* on the Disadvantages of the Old Modes of Travel

One of the literary genres featured most prominently throughout *Russian Pilgrim* is the travelogue. This preference for travelogues is not coincidental, since personal stories of one's journeys and eye-witness accounts of places visited and people seen are highly conducive to stimulating readers' desires for comparable experiences (Frank 2000; Swatos 2006). The travelogues that appear in different issues of *Russian Pilgrim* vary widely in terms of their literary features, specific subjects, authorship (from nationally famous writers to anonymous pilgrims), and the extent of their representation in the journal (shorter narratives are usually published in full, but digests of longer literary works are also popular). Likewise, while some of the accounts focus exclusively on the author's own experiences, others use their personal journeys as narrative threads for comprehensive ethnographic and historical analyses of pilgrimage.

Issues 9 and 10 of *Russian Pilgrim*'s inaugural year (1885) contain selections from a particularly interesting example among such historical–ethnographic studies—a book by a military doctor, traveler, and writer A. V. Eliseev, *With Russian Pilgrims to the Holy Land in the Spring of 1884*. Acting on an assignment from the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, in 1884 Eliseev completed an extended pilgrimage to the Holy Land with a group of Russian pilgrims, with the objective of providing a detailed first-hand report regarding pilgrimage conditions and procedures. This official report, delivered by Eliseev in the fall of 1884, became the foundation for a 365-page-long book in which the author presents his observations on what was a fairly typical pilgrimage at that time. The readers are treated to detailed descriptions of a lengthy steamboat trip from Odessa; a tricky debarking in Jaffa followed by consular processing; a two-day trip in a "pilgrim caravan" (a custom mix of carriages, riders, and pedestrians) to Jerusalem; a stay in the Russian Compound; attendance of the Lenten and Easter services at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; and trips to Jordan and to Nazareth (Eliseev 1885). In addition to "the witness of his own eyes," the author relies on numerous accounts shared by other pilgrims—"the living words of those performing God's work", which, Eliseev claims, are "the best and most truthful of all sources" (Eliseev 1885, p. 9). Importantly, the pilgrimage accounts that Eliseev collected from his sources are chronologically varied and, in the cases of older pilgrims, often span decades of pilgrimage experience. This allows the writer to offer not only on-the-ground observations on his contemporary pilgrimage and pilgrims, but also a historical time slice.

Selections from the freshly published book included in *Russian Pilgrim* are preceded by a short note from the editors announcing their intention to "give pleasure to their readers by presenting several excerpts from Mr. Eliseev's book dealing with difficult conditions faced by Russian pilgrims even in relatively recent times" (RP 1885, vol. 9, p. 67). This comment on the "difficult conditions" is immediately followed up—and reinforced—by a quotation from Eliseev's interview with one of his sources, an 82-year-old man who had already traveled to the Holy Land five times. "In this day and age", the venerable pilgrim insists, "it is not fitting to remember the old times as good ones, for there was very little good about the old times, mostly just trouble: it is only at great cost that I myself or any other Orthodox Christian desiring to venerate the Holy Sepulchre could make one's way to Jerusalem" (RP 1885, vol. 9, p. 67).

Commenting on this pilgrim's statement, Eliseev remarks that "this quotation can be used as a fitting epigraph for the entire history of pilgrimage, especially Russian, for nobody

experienced as many difficulties in their travel to the Holy Land as Russian pilgrims" (*RP* 1885, vol. 9, p. 67). The rest of the selections included in the digest (primarily based on Chapter One, pp. 9–34 of Eliseev's book) elaborate on this statement. The writer talks at length about physical and psychological ordeals of Russian pilgrims forced to navigate often hostile foreign lands, and offers a description of frustrating travel mishaps resulting from the lack of basic maps and travel guides (*RP* 1885, vol. 9: pp. 68–70). He also points out various financial challenges faced by the aspiring pilgrims, who often had to fall back on the generosity of their community [*mir*] in order to afford their journeys. Some of the most scathing descriptions are reserved by the author for the excessive bureaucracy the pilgrims of old had to face, both within the Russian empire and abroad. Eliseev's commentary on the inane procedure for obtaining pilgrim passports (or, in the writer's words, "a chain of painful ordeals, begging, and bribes") is paired up with a sad personal story of "pilgrim Vasilii" (a.k.a. "the old pilgrim" introduced by Eliseev earlier on) about his attempts to make a journey to the Holy Land in 1840s. According to Vasilii, he tried three times to obtain permission to travel, with cruel lashings being the only palpable result received. It was not until a decade later, in the 1850s, when Vasilii went over the heads of his own landlord and the local police (thereby collecting more beatings in the process) to petition a local dignitary that his application was finally accepted. No wonder, Eliseev concludes, that many peasant pilgrims simply chose to run away instead of following the legal process, so as to avoid such lengthy and painful formalities (*RP* 1885, vol. 9, p. 68).

Similarly sad stories and examples of the outrages inflicted on the hapless Russian pilgrims punctuate Eliseev's depiction of their journeys "through the land of the Turks". Even the eventual arrival at the longed-for destination did not put an end to their "ordeals": the Holy Land, as drawn in these pilgrims' stories, is filled with violent natives, greedy Ottoman administrators, and dishonest Greek clergy. By the end of this litany of dangers, trials, and disappointments, it is hard not to agree with the writer's summative statement: that the condition of Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century was very sad indeed (*RP* 1885, vol. 10, p. 87). Fortunately, the excerpt does not end with this depressing statement: the rest of the concluding paragraph is dedicated to the recent radical improvements resulting from the Russian government's "energetic efforts in support of our pilgrims in the distant Orient" (*RP* 1885, vol. 10, p. 87). Here, Eliseev references many of the same accomplishments that we have seen extolled elsewhere in the pages of *Russian Pilgrim*, e.g., the founding of the Russian Mission and new Russian consulates supporting Russian visitors to Palestine; the building of the Russian Compound in Jerusalem and additional hostels in other parts of Palestine; and the introduction of new steamboat lines in the Mediterranean. Accordingly, the last selection in the series ends on a very optimistic note, with the author proclaiming that, at this point in history, Russian pilgrimage "has entered a new phase of its existence where travel to the holy places in Palestine has been made so much easier and simpler that it makes no special demands on the pilgrim, whether in terms of their energy or physical and financial expenditures" (*RP* 1885, vol. 10, p. 87). The bad old days of haphazard and disorganized individual pilgrimage are over; a bright future for all Russian pilgrims has dawned.

Without question, Eliseev's vivid account of the trials and tribulations inherent in "old" pilgrimage offers a devastating argument in favor of "new" pilgrimage—the kind where travelers can take advantage of efficient contemporary modes of transportation and the structured activities and processes promoted by the IOPS. It is important to note, however, that this impression of Eliseev as a whole-hearted apologist of modern pilgrimage is dependent on a creative editorial decision made by the journal. The ending to the 1885 series that is chosen by the editors is not the actual ending of the book, or even of the first chapter: in the original text, the latter ends with a promise to offer an equally close analysis of modern-day pilgrimage, "from the contemporary pilgrim's first steps, through the entire pilgrimage cycle, until his return back to Russia" (Eliseev 1885, p. 34). This promised analysis, which occupies the rest of Eliseev's book, turns out to be at least equally devastating.

For one thing, Eliseev generates an impressive list of physical discomforts, financial and logistical issues, and bureaucratic and even spiritual abuses characterizing this allegedly efficient and safe new mode of pilgrimage.<sup>18</sup> Even more importantly, however, some of the later sections of the book express Eliseev's profound disillusionment with the effects of new pilgrimage modalities on the spiritual status of this practice. In Chapter Nine, for example, Eliseev sets up a binary of "ideal pilgrims"—the true spiritual seekers, the "laborers for God"—and false pilgrims who come to Jerusalem simply because they "feel a need for an outing, have some free time on their hands and an extra hundred rubles or two in their pockets" (Eliseev 1885, pp. 339–40). The alarming proliferation of such leisure travelers that Eliseev claims to have observed during his journey is attributed by the author to the conditions of modern travel: more convenient and safer travel, he suggests, leads to "numerical increase" in Russian pilgrimage, while having a reverse effect on its "quality" (Eliseev 1885, p. 340). In the end, Eliseev unequivocally identifies his "ideal" pilgrim with the pilgrims of the past, and nostalgically bemoans the spiritual superiority of the "old" pilgrimage:

[...] Of the ideal pilgrims that I was describing only a few are still around. The good old times are gone, taking away with them much that was outdated but also much that was good; they have also taken away with them the true ideals of pilgrimage. The vast majority of pilgrims of old times conformed to the archetype of pilgrim that I have described—a true pilgrim that I mentioned on multiple occasions. The very conditions of the travel to the Holy Land that demanded of a pilgrim not only many months of travel but also many sacrifices and even sufferings [...] had the power to make anyone into a true pilgrim... (Eliseev 1885, p. 339<sup>19</sup>)

It is clear that, for Eliseev, there is a direct—and problematic—correlation between contemporary modalities of travel and the travelers' spiritual states; it is also clear that he is perfectly willing to relegate many modern-day pilgrims to the category of tourists or leisure-travelers. Ironically, by ending their publication of his book excerpts in 1885, the editors of *Russian Pilgrim* were able to use Eliseev's travelogue as an *apologia* for modern pilgrimage. Some other modern travelogues included in the journal did not, however, require such creative editing, as they expressed their authors' sincere conviction in the spiritual efficaciousness of their travels. It is to the discussion of such a travelogue by Eliseev's contemporary that I turn in the last sub-section.

### 3.3. "Under My Feet Is the Very Same Ground That My Savior Had Trod, and My Eyes See the Mountains and Valleys That Surrounded Him": Traditional Pilgrim Sensibilities in the Era of Modern Travel

The first three issues for 1892 contain a travel account written by a female author, A. Rozanova, titled "A Journey to the Jordan River". As can be deduced from her introductory remarks, Rozanova came to Palestine in 1890 and, by the time the narrative begins, she has already spent a considerable amount of time in the Holy Land, completing a standard pilgrimage program in and around Jerusalem (*RP* 1892, vol. 1, p. 7). It is her trip to the Jordan River, however, that appears to have made a particularly strong impression on the author—an impression she now strives to convey as faithfully as possible to her readers.

Several aspects of Rozanova's account are worth noting. First of all, our pilgrim is clearly a fan of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, and tends to abide faithfully by its guidelines. As she explains in her opening paragraph, Rozanova has decided to travel to the Jordan River as a part of an organized pilgrim caravan accompanied by a travel guide [*kavas*] and an armed escort supplied by the Society. Her explanation makes clear that the author believes this to be an absolute necessity, given the dangers presented by "this wild country's predatory natives" (*RP* 1892, vol. 1, pp. 7–8). This theme of ever-present danger to the pilgrims, which is only forestalled by traveling in a highly structured way and following all the rules set by the Society, is very prominent throughout the entire account. The local population is clearly perceived by Rozanova as an imminent menace.

She repeatedly notes the unwelcoming and gloomy expressions of the Bedouin women (*RP* 1892, vol. 2, p. 28) and the “hostile looks” directed at the pilgrims by the Bedouin men with “smoldering black eyes” (*RP* 1892, vol. 2, p. 28). She confesses to having a panic attack during her stay at the pilgrim hotel in the valley of Jericho, stemming from her unease about “this wild place and its strange people” (*RP* 1892, vol. 3, p. 38). Even at the very climax of her story (arriving at and bathing in the Jordan), Rozanova inserts a scare story about herself and her fellow bathers being spied upon by the “dark faces” lurking in the bushes and casting “predatorial glances in the direction of the Christian flock” (*RP* 1892, vol. 3, p. 39). As she makes clear to her readers, it is only the protective services of their brave and heavily armed *kavas* Marko (whom Rozanova describes, at another point, as “a veritable Richard the Lionheart”—*RP* 1892, vol. 1, p. 8) and other employees of the Palestine Society that stand between the pilgrims and the threat of violence and death. She even references the sad experience of Zosima the Deacon, a famous 15th-century Russian “wanderer” who—much like the various “pilgrims of old” discussed in Eliseev’s book—experienced innumerable trials during his travels and was almost murdered while in the Holy Land. Rozanova’s recollection of this story (prompted by a realization that her caravan is traveling through the same place where the hapless Zosima was attacked) transitions into a pronouncement on the advantages of modern pilgrimage:

In this day and age we are traveling under very different conditions, but, should we take even the smallest step back from the established routines and rules, we risk being treated in the exact same way [as Zosima] by the natives who have not changed their attitude towards us over the past four and a half centuries. . . .  
(*RP* 1892, vol. 2, p. 28)

To Rozanova, this highly organized and supervised mode of travel is clearly a positive development, and the Society’s “routines and rules” are indispensable to making pilgrimage a success.<sup>20</sup> She is also appreciative of the availability of travel comforts, such as overnight accommodations and a tea service, provided by the Russian hostel in Jericho, including separate, well-furnished sleeping quarters and a special *samovar* reserved for the upper-class travelers (*RP* 1892, vol. 3, p. 38). (It is at this point that we learn that Rozanova herself belongs to that group—throughout the earlier parts of her travelogue she is conveniently vague about her own status, referring only to the fact that there are very few aristocratic women [*baryni*] in the caravan, and that they are virtually indistinguishable from the lower-class pilgrims clothing-wise—*RP* 1892, vol. 2, p. 27). Our pilgrim also enjoys the benefits of mounted rather than pedestrian travel: although she dismounts from her donkey at one point, in order to experience the “apostolic way of travel,” this experiment lasts only a few minutes before the travel guide convinces Rozanova to remount (*RP* 1892, vol. 1, p. 8).

It is equally clear that Rozanova does not see all of these new travel routines and comforts as detrimental to the intensity of her spiritual experience as a pilgrim. In fact, one of the most striking features of Rozanova’s account is its affective quality, with the author constantly reporting on the profound psychological and emotional experiences triggered by her presence in scared places. The segment describing the first part of the journey—through the Josaphat Valley and up the Mount of Olives—is a good example of such emotionally evocative writing (*RP* 1892, vol. 1: pp. 8–9). Rozanova starts with an ekphrastic description of the pilgrim’s natural surroundings (a literary device the author consistently employs throughout her travelogue).<sup>21</sup> As the account unfolds, readers are invited to see the shapes and colors of the mountains “drowning in the sparkling golden sunlight,” smell the freshness of the clean mountain air, and imagine the sensation of prickly grass and bare rock under their feet. By simultaneously evoking not only visual but also kinetic, tactile, and olfactory sensations, this account actively draws its readers into the reality that these descriptions conjure. This conjured reality is not, however, confined to the physical landscape as seen on this beautiful day in 1890. There is yet another reality that is evoked simultaneously, another landscape that is superimposed on the physical one: the reality and the landscape of the Gospels. As the author reminds us, everything she sees and allows her readers to see—the Garden of Gethsemane, a glimpse of the distant Dead Sea,

Bethany, Lazarus's cave—are the same sights that Christ himself saw; this rocky ground under her feet is the same that he walked on. It is this realization—that she is walking in Jesus' footsteps—that fills her heart with “inexpressible wonder and awe” and triggers her sudden desire to “jump off my mount and walk the path with my own two feet” (RP 1892, vol. 1, p. 8). Rozanova also confesses to an overwhelming desire to “put my head down to these rocks and kiss them; to cry pure tears just like back in the days of my innocent youth; to cry and to pray...”. She concludes this account with a moving description of her transformed spiritual state: “O what kinds of emotions I have experienced in those moments!... What faith, what tenderness, what joy!...”. (RP 1892, vol. 1, p. 8).

This constant interplay between the seen and the imagined, the visual and the visionary experiences that one finds in Rozanova's account is one of the central aspects of traditional pilgrim sensibilities. Referred to as the “eye of faith” in the Christian spiritual tradition, this mode of perception signified the observer's ability to imaginatively enter into the sacred past (Frank 2000, chp. 1, p. 4). The other feature noted above—the heightened intensity of Rozanova's emotional response to her surroundings—is also characteristic of this mode of perception: as the writer's account makes clear, she is reacting not only to the landscape around her but to the sacred reality to which it points. The emotional reactions and behaviors that may strike outside observers as undignified and strange in fact serve as embodied signifiers of the transformative experience the pilgrim herself is undergoing.<sup>22</sup>

The transformative nature and intensity of Rozanova's reported experience is further emphasized in the text by the contrast with the deportment of “the English tourists” that the Russian pilgrim caravan runs into on the way (RP 1892, vol. 2, pp. 27–28). The members of the group are riding good Arab horses, and are carrying their own camping equipment. The group is accompanied by only one local guide—perhaps due to the fact that all of the male members of the group are heavily armed, and at least some of them seem to speak Arabic. (By Rozanova's report, the same unfriendly “Bedouin women” who haughtily ignore Russian pilgrims have an extended conversation with one of the Englishmen, who even shares his precious water supply with them.) The group's behavior is described as being very matter-of-fact: they are clearly intent on their practical tasks—riding, setting and breaking the camp, hunting, and some mysterious cartographic note taking—and do not display any strong emotions or religiously motivated behaviors.

Curiously, even though Rozanova only sees the people in question for a few minutes and has no knowledge of their objective, she immediately classifies them as “tourists”. This choice of label is rather revealing. The Englishmen, Rozanova is suggesting here, are motivated purely by secular concerns, such as the desire for sightseeing and adventure, whereas she and her fellow Russian travelers are different: they are true “pilgrims” who spiritually participate in the events of the sacred past by traversing the Holy Land. Rozanova's emotional account of her journey not only embodies this traditional type of pilgrim sensibility, but also models it for her readers. Ultimately, the audience of *Russian Pilgrim* is reassured that such transformative spiritual experiences are an ever-present possibility, regardless of exactly how they arrive in Palestine and whether they traverse it on a donkey or by foot.

#### 4. Conclusions

The late imperial era brought about drastic transformations in the religious life of Russia in general, and in the popular Orthodox practice of pilgrimage in particular. A combination of socio-political, cultural, and economic factors increased both the visibility and the accessibility of pilgrimage, resulting in an exponential increase in the number of pilgrims. Although widely celebrated by church and government as conclusive evidence of the Russian people's deep religiosity, this new modality of pilgrimage also provoked certain concerns in Orthodox communities. In addition to the concrete logistical challenges posed by the transportation, accommodation, and supervision of huge masses of pilgrims, it raised questions regarding these travelers' religious aspirations and behaviors. Does more affordable and convenient travel detract from the spiritual value of pilgrimage, since

it no longer demands an immense sacrifice of energy, time, and material resources? And if a trip to Solovtsy or Palestine becomes less of an ascetic feat, is there a danger of it becoming something closer to a leisure outing, with modern pilgrims turning into little more than tourists?

Direct responses to these concerns took many shapes and came from many quarters, from the establishment of structured parish pilgrimages within Russia, to educational campaigns and expanded pilgrim services offered by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, aimed at promoting organized pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A less direct but nonetheless effective response was offered by the Russian religious periodical press. As I have argued in this article, popular publications such as *Russian Pilgrim* were uniquely positioned to reach the widest readership possible, and used a variety of rhetorical strategies to shape their audience's perspectives—including their conception of a proper pilgrimage. In addition to disseminating information about pilgrimage routes, accommodations, and services, *Russian Pilgrim* presented its readers with multi-level apologia for new modalities of spiritual travel. The creative compilation of diverse reading materials that was one of *Russian Pilgrim's* signature features enabled it to make its case both explicitly, through direct argumentation, and implicitly, by petitioning the audience's emotional and imaginative identification with particular experiences. The use of carefully selected—and, in some instances, creatively manipulated—travelogues was especially effective in reinforcing the contrast between the “bad old days” of dangerous and disorganized pilgrimage and the efficient and safe new ways. These first-hand pilgrimage accounts also added a valuable personal touch, allowing readers to access and empathize with the travelers' emotional and spiritual experiences. The conclusion the readers were invited—or, in some cases, subtly or unsubtly pushed—to draw is that the transformative spiritual experiences sought by traditional pilgrims of old were equally available in their own day and age, and that wise travelers who took advantage of the conveniences of modern pilgrimage still counted among the “laborers of God”.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Publication of the original *Russian Pilgrim* stopped in 1917 in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution. In 1988, a new periodical under the same name and with the same thematic focus and mission was started by Fr. Herman Podmoshensky, the abbot of the St. Herman of Alaska Monastery in California, in an attempt to revive Popovitsky's project and to satisfy the growing interest in Orthodox spirituality and practice in perestroika-era Russia.
- <sup>2</sup> Although this paper focuses on the pilgrimage practices of the Christian Orthodox citizens of the Russian empire, the same trend—i.e., significant growth in the numbers of religious practitioners participating in a highly structured and organized pilgrimage—can also be observed with regard to the other major group of Russian pilgrims, i.e., the Muslim *hajji* discussed in Elena Campbell's and Eileen Kane's studies.
- <sup>3</sup> At this point, there are very few scholarly works in English that include more than a passing reference to *Russian Pilgrim*. Part of the problem is the limited access to the primary source in question: there are very few archival collections of *Russian Pilgrim* in existence outside of Russia. Yukiko Tatsumi's essay on the nineteenth century Russian publishers (Tatsumi 2020) provides a helpful overview of factual details related to the journal's publication and circulation; however, given that the author's interest is in the history of publishing, rather than Orthodox religious history or pilgrimage practices, the essay understandably has a different focus, as well as a limited space dedicated specifically to *Russian Pilgrim*. Konstantin Netuzhilov's comprehensive overviews of the Russian religious press (Netuzhilov 2009a, 2009b) are very helpful for contextualizing *Russian Pilgrim* and its contribution, but, similarly to Tatsumi's work, they do not offer an in-depth analysis of the journal's content. An earlier article I co-authored with Charles Arndt III (Arndt and Solovieva 2019) was the first in-depth study to focus specifically on *Russian Pilgrim's* contribution to the formation of religious ideals; the present article builds on the previous textual and historical study of the source, but takes its analysis in a new direction.
- <sup>4</sup> For a helpful overview of this “historiographical turn” in Eastern Orthodox studies, see (Shevzov 2004; Worobec 2006, 2012–2013). This shift of attention away from the study of religious intellectual and institutional history towards research into the “lived

religion” is also a broader trend in the field of religious studies; some representative examples include McGuire (2008) and Orsi (1997).

- 5 Details of A.I. Popovitsky’s biography and journalistic and publishing career can be found in a tribute article published in *Russian Pilgrim* by E. Poselianin (RP 1910, vol. 47, pp. 753–55). A more detailed overview of *Russian Pilgrim*’s founding and publishing history is available in Arndt and Solovieva (2019) and Tatsumi (2020). For information on Popovitsky’s previous publication (*The Church and Society Messenger*) see (Malyshev 2017; Netuzhilov 2009a).
- 6 *Russian Pilgrim* was sold by subscription (5 rubles per year in 1885), to individuals as well as institutions. The fact that its publishers managed to successfully secure the approval of all relevant governmental and ecclesial authorities (RP 1896, vol. 52, p. 752) meant that it could be used in seminary libraries as well as in public libraries. As the editorial commemorating *Russian Pilgrim*’s 10th anniversary claims, the journal’s subscribers also included “communal houses, military barracks, old folks homes, hospitals, workers’ centers, and prisons” (RP 1895, vol. 41, p. 671).
- 7 For an interesting discussion of the new ideological possibilities stemming from the commercial nature of mass publications, see (McReynolds 1991).
- 8 Interestingly enough, some of the illustrations were created specifically for the journal by a group of young Russian artists who were inspired by Popovitsky’s project—hence, *Russian Pilgrim* is credited with making a significant contribution to the development of modern Russian illustration art. A more in-depth discussion of the visual aspect of *Russian Pilgrim* is available in Arndt and Solovieva (2019).
- 9 The pedagogical and transformational role of religious images has been a focus of multiple recent studies, both by religious studies scholars and art historians. A comprehensive cross-cultural analysis of the key functions of religious images is offered in Morgan (2005); Margaret Miles’s study provides a helpful historical overview of traditional Christian conceptions of the instructional capabilities of images (Miles 1985).
- 10 On the effects of the “glorifications” of new Russian saints in the late 19th century on the increase in pilgrim numbers, see (Worobec 2009). As Traveler notes in his description of the festivities associated with St. Seraphim’s canonization, his fellow pilgrims travelled from all over Russia, including the Caucasus and the “remote corners of Siberia” (RP 1902, vol. 25, p. 426).
- 11 As stated in the Society’s regulations, it was dedicated to “(1) research work concerning Palestine and the Near East, mainly in history and archaeology, edition of sources, and popularising this information in Russia; (2) supporting, organising and promoting pilgrimage in the Holy Land; (3) supporting Orthodoxy in the East, e.g., organisation of schools and hospitals for the local population and providing material assistance to the local churches, monasteries and clergy” (quoted in Gerd 2021, p. 276). Interestingly, a speech given by the IOPS’s founder and Secretary, V.N. Khitrovo, during the “modest celebration” of the Society’s tenth anniversary that was reported in *Russian Pilgrim* not only reports on the major accomplishments in all three of the aforementioned areas, but also offers a scathing retort to the “libelers” accusing the Society of secret political motives and tasks (RP 1892, vol. 21, p. 350)—a witness to the controversies surrounding some of the IOPS’s activities in the Middle East.
- 12 In 1892, the editorial board of the journal posted the following notice to its readers: “The editors of ‘Russian Pilgrim’ inform its readers that, per agreement with the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and by permission of his Imperial Highness the Great Duke Sergii Alexandrovich, the Chairman of the Society, the journal’s supplements from now on will be publishing “The Palestine Society’s Reports,” for which purpose the editors will reserve volumes 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 of the supplements” (RP 1892, vol. 5, p. 79). The “supplements” in question were additional volumes available for free each year to the journal’s subscribers; these volumes contained literary works, philosophical and theological writings, and other materials on various religious topics. As an historical overview of *Russian Pilgrim* offered in its 10th anniversary issue suggests, these supplements were one of the factors responsible for the journal’s popularity and commercial success (RP 1910, p. 47).
- 13 As mentioned earlier in the article, *Russian Pilgrim* regularly provided information about new developments in transportation systems (i.e., information about steamship and railroad lines, schedules, and fares); it also offered step-by-step guidelines on the application process for the “pilgrim passport” and other requisite travel documents—see, for example, Kliment Fomenko’s lengthy essay “Essential Information for Travelers to the Holy Land”, published in Issues 27 and 28 for 1886. For an overview of changes in the pilgrim passport application procedures, see (Zhitin 2020). Eileen Kane’s and Elena Campbell’s studies of the Russian *hajji* provide some interesting context for the analysis of Orthodox pilgrimage to the Holy Land by highlighting a similarly drastic increase in the number of Muslim pilgrims from the Russian empire during the same period of time (Campbell 2014; Kane 2015).
- 14 *Russian Pilgrim* contains multiple critical statements regarding what its contributors perceived as “existential indifference to Christian faith and life” (RP 1892, vol. 12, p. 182), which they see as a marker of their contemporary “age of faithlessness and materialism” (RP 1892, vol. 48, pp. 754–55), especially among the Russian intelligentsia. Not coincidentally, the journal itself was conceived as “edificatory” in its orientation, i.e., directed towards the religious and moral education of its readers (RP 1885, vol. 1, p. 1; see also Section 2.1 above). For other examples and in-depth discussions of this widespread sentiment among Russian clergy and lay Orthodox authors, see (Strickland 2013).
- 15 As Robert Greene’s excellent study of the phenomenon of “parish pilgrimage” makes clear, mass pilgrimage was inherently imbued with a “wide range of multiple meanings” even when performed within the structured setting of a parish group—see Greene (2012, especially pp. 260–68).



- <sup>16</sup> To some extent, this concern with distinguishing between authentic pilgrims and those using spiritual travel as a way of satisfying their curiosity or “wanderlust” goes back to Christian antiquity—see, for example, (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005; Frank 2000). In the Russian context, prior to the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, there was an added concern about fugitive peasants posing as religious “wanderers,” which accounted for highly restrictive procedures involved in applying for pilgrim passports by the peasant pilgrims (Poplavskaya 2001; Worobec 2014, 2014–2015). However, there is a marked change in the rhetoric with which such concerns are expressed in the late imperial era, with “tourist” becoming a popular slur. For representative examples, see textual analysis in Greene (2012) and Worobec (2009), and my discussion of *Russian Pilgrim’s* critical depictions of “tourists” in Sections 3.1–3.3 below.
- <sup>17</sup> Some other works exploring the transformation undergone by traditional pilgrimage in modernity and the gradual erosion of the dichotomy or antithesis between “pilgrims” and “tourists” during modernity and the contemporary era include Timofeeva et al. (2019); Tomasi (2002).
- <sup>18</sup> In fact, it appears that Eliseev’s report to the Palestine Society, where he presented those critical observations and recommendations, spurred a number of rapid improvements in the buildings, procedures, and available services in the Russian Compound, including those advertised in the later issues of *Russian Pilgrim*. For a discussion of the IOPS’s reaction to Eliseev’s report, see Astafieva (2020, especially pp. 163–68). Select examples of *Russian Pilgrim’s* presentation of the improvements to pilgrimage accommodations in the Holy Land are offered in Section 2.2 above.
- <sup>19</sup> Interestingly, a similar opinion was expressed by Eliseev at the conclusion of his study of the Russian *hajjis* which he performed during the same year—see Campbell (2014, especially pp. 240–42).
- <sup>20</sup> Of course, the rule set by the Palestine Society regarding organized group travel was not heeded by all Russian pilgrims, especially among the lower classes. This issue is also addressed by *Russian Pilgrim*, which over the years published several cautionary stories about the horrific perils facing such disobedient travelers. One particularly heartbreaking account likewise features a female pilgrim traveling to the Jordan River; however, unlike Rozanova, this simple peasant woman chooses to defy established travel regulations and sets out on this demanding journey with a handful of other “illegal” pilgrims. On the way back, within just a few miles of Jerusalem, Agathia is left behind in the desert by her irresponsible travel companions, kidnapped by the evil shepherds, and raped and severely beaten up. As a result, Agathia spends the rest of her life blind and disabled, first at the pilgrim hospital in the Russian Compound, and later on as a charity case in the hospice run by the very same Palestine Society whose regulations she so disastrously chose to ignore (M. Velikolutskaia, “Blind Pilgrim: From the Palestine Diaries”, (RP 1902, vol. 20, pp. 348–49)).
- <sup>21</sup> Ekphrasis is a literary device that is employed by the writer in order to bring a picture, object, or scene alive in the audience’s imagination. For a helpful discussion of some important functions of ekphrasis within the context of spiritual and religious literature and art, see (Miller 1998; Roberts 1989, especially pp. 38–57).
- <sup>22</sup> As Rozanova’s account makes clear, the local travel guide attached to the group, Rashid, was clearly disturbed by her behavior and concerned about her wellbeing (RP 1892, vol. 1, p. 8).

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