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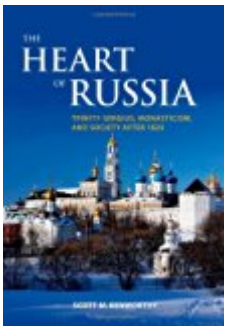
**Scott M. Kenworthy.** *The Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism, and Society after 1825.* New York: Oxford University Press; Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010. xv + 528 pp. $74.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-973613-3.

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Scott Kenworthy's *The Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism and Society after 1825* is a remarkable achievement and a welcome addition to the historiography of late imperial Russian Christianity and its intersections with society and politics.[1] The work is ambitious in temporal scope, and Kenworthy skillfully navigates the varying secondary literature and primary-source bases for both the late imperial and early Soviet periods, drawing on sources as varied as the monastery's archive and its publications, Synodal documents, correspondence, Russian newspapers, memoirs, works of literature, and Soviet police files, among others. It is noteworthy that Kenworthy bridges the late imperial-Soviet divide and that in relating Trinity-Sergius' story he examines in detail not only the experience of the revolution, but also the experience of World War I, which is often neglected in Russian historiography. In peering through the lens of the Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Lavra--a monastery that was, and has become again, one of the most important symbols of Russian national identity--Kenworthy provides us with a fascinating portrait of Russian society as it, and the Orthodox Church along with it, changed and adapted to confront the challenges of modernity. In the process, he successfully demonstrates "Russian Orthodoxy's ability to maintain its vitality and relevance" in modern times (p. 110). It did so for many ordinary Russians even in the Soviet Union--believers who, as Kenworthy poignantly relates, continued to seek out the advice of monastic elders, and who rallied to the defense of St. Sergius' relics on more than one occasion.[2]

*The Heart of Russia's* focus on the adaptation of religion to modern conditions makes Kenworthy's monograph germane to scholarly discussions outside the study of Russian Orthodoxy. It will be of interest to all those engaged in examining the significance of religious beliefs, sensibilities, practices, and institutions in modern history, an interdisciplinary area of study that is flourishing, in part due to critical engagement with the secularization thesis in recent decades by sociologists, historians, political scientists, and philosophers.[3] By focusing on the national symbolic power of

the cult of St. Sergius, Kenworthy also speaks to a continually vexing question for the broad modern Russian field--that of the extent to which national consciousness had penetrated the Russian masses on the eve of the collapse of the old regime. Kenworthy's observations on the geographical diversity of those who made pilgrimages to the monastery suggest the possibility of a more significant emerging national consciousness than many scholars have admitted. ***The Heart of Russia*** will also be a must read for anyone interested in the revival of Hesychasm and ***starchestvo*** (monastic eldership) in late imperial Russia, so prominently portrayed in Dostoevsky's ***The Brothers Karamazov*** (1880). Thus literary scholars will find much of interest in the book.

Kenworthy does an excellent job of accessibly explaining such complex concepts as theosis and Hesychasm for non-specialist readers. The inclusion of a glossary is also welcome, but non-specialists in Russian religious history may find themselves wishing it contained more entries. For specialists, Kenworthy brings a wealth of new data to the table, supplementing, and occasionally revising and correcting, the conclusions of previous scholarship on lived religion in late imperial Russia.[4] Certainly the book succeeds in demonstrating that monasticism, which expanded and democratized in nineteenth-century Russia, "represents a unique bridge between the institutional church and the religion of the common people" (p. 6) and that the monastery was an institution "in a much closer symbiosis with the faithful" than the institutional church as a whole (p. 219).

Perhaps the greatest success of Kenworthy's book is its skillful synthesis of a moving human narrative with meticulously evaluated social historical data. Kenworthy makes creative use of the data available to him in his examination of pilgrimages to Trinity-Sergius, which became a popular custom in late imperial Russia. While the monastery kept no records of the total yearly visitors, Kenworthy is able to plausibly estimate the scale and rate of growth of pilgrimages by examining the monastery's economic records, particularly income from candle sales. And while historians' representations of such data are often dry and unreadable, Kenworthy's prose is, by and large, anything but. ***The Heart of Russia*** is a pleasure to read, and it is precisely Kenworthy's biographical focus on his human subjects that makes it so. Most of the chapters are framed with the remarkable story of Trofim/Toviia (Tsymbal) (1836-1916), a man who rose from peasant origins to become first Trinity-Sergius' archdeacon and ultimately its prior. Other memorable characters include monastic elders such as Varnava and Aleksii, in addition to Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) (1782-1867) and Archimandrite Antonii (Medvedev) (1792-1877), crucial administrative leaders who played key roles in transforming monasticism and in leading the Russian Orthodox Church to greater direct engagement with the world, especially through philanthropy.

Kenworthy's narration makes clear that he is very sympathetic to his subjects of study. For the most part, Kenworthy's sympathy does not hinder him from providing a very evenhanded analysis of his subjects. He does not paper over conflicts and power struggles in his attempt to get at the day-to-day experience of Russian monasticism. Furthermore, his comparison of unflattering journalistic portrayals of monasticism to Trinity-Sergius's own archival sources justly debunks stereotypes of monastic "parasitism" and ignorance that were widespread in the late imperial Russian press and in Soviet scholarship. On rare occasions throughout the book, however, Kenworthy is so close to his sources that the necessary level of critical distance between himself as historian and his subjects of analysis is collapsed, making it difficult for the reader to sort Kenworthy's scholarly voice from the voices of the figures in his study.

While ***The Heart of Russia*** has very few weaknesses, its discussions of the relationship between

religion and modernity could have been more thoroughly developed and articulated on a theoretical level. For example, while Kenworthy is undoubtedly correct in observing that "the revival of traditional contemplative monasticism" was "distinctive to Russia," he could have more systematically probed what was not distinctive to Russia (p. 3). Kenworthy tentatively suggests that the secularization thesis may have been overstated for the West, but he does not bring in much comparative material except for a few observations on monasticism in Lourdes, France. In addition, more direct engagement with the sociology of religion might have helped Kenworthy explain a phenomenon he views as paradoxical, namely that "precisely as modern notions of self were spreading in turn-of-the-century Russia, monasticism flourished so intensely" (p. 145). In fact the strictest monasteries experienced greater growth than the more relaxed monasteries.[5]

Nevertheless, Kenworthy's analysis of the intersections between Russian Orthodoxy and modernity is fascinating. Particularly intriguing are his findings about faith, science, and modern medicine, including the finding that those who received miraculous healing through the intercession of St. Sergius were typically expected to visit doctors and exhaust their secular options first. On this basis, Kenworthy finds that there was no inherent conflict between faith and science among late imperial Russian believers. The monastery's documentation of healings provide a particularly rich collection of sources. Kenworthy finds these sources especially important since they provide the voices of those who experienced miracles themselves, people whose voices would often otherwise be lost to the historical record.

Scott Kenworthy's ***The Heart of Russia*** is a truly impressive book. Epic in scale and meticulous in its use of a wide and rich primary-source base, the book bears on many important questions in modern Russian history and modern history in general. It manages to do so in the form of a beautifully crafted narrative. The complex emotional state evoked in the reader on finishing the book is reminiscent of that experienced when one finishes ***Dr. Zhivago*** (1957) for the first time, which, although a work of fiction, similarly interweaves compelling human stories with momentous historical events and trends that take place over decades. Few writers are capable of sustaining so compelling a narrative over a book of such scope. That Kenworthy has done so makes it likely that he will become known as one of the few historians of Russia--Martin Malia comes to mind--valued not only for their scholarly skill and insights, but also for their beautiful narratives. Like Malia's study of Herzen, Kenworthy's study of Trinity-Sergius deserves to become a cherished classic in the field. At the very least, it should shape the study of Russian Christianity--and hopefully contribute to the study of modern Christianity more broadly--for many decades to come.

Notes

[1]. Important recent works in this vein in English include Nadieszda Kizenko*, **A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People,*** Penn State Series in Lived Religious Experience (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Argyrios Pisiotis, "Orthodoxy Versus Autocracy: The Orthodox Church and Clerical Political Dissent in Late Imperial Russia, 1905-1914," (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2000); and Jennifer Hedda, ***His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia*** (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008). These works, like Kenworthy's, all owe something to the many valuable contributions of Gregory Freeze to the study of Orthodoxy in the Russian Empire, too numerous to list here.

[2]. Although he does not cite it, in this respect Kenworthy's work is similar to that of Richard Hernandez. See "Sacred Sound and Sacred Substance: Church Bells and the Auditory Culture of the Russian Village during the Bolshevik 'Velikii

Perelom'" in *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 5 (2004): 1475-1504, and "Good Shepherds: The Public Authority of Parish Clergy in the Era of Collectivization" in *Russian History / Histoire Russe* 32, no. 2 (2005): 195-214. It would be desirable to see more research on Russian Christianity in the Soviet Union, in addition to more research spanning the imperial-Soviet divide.

[3]. Many relevant works could be adduced here, but I will limit myself to a few of the broadest. Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Peter Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: The Ethics and Public Policy Center, and Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1999); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); and Genevieve Lloyd, *Providence Lost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[4]. For example, Kenworthy finds that, contrary to the earlier conclusions of Christine Worobec and Robert Greene, the element of divine punishment for sins was present in ordinary believers' understanding of and experience of the miraculous, and was not only a didactic contrivance of priests (p. 210). The works to which Kenworthy refers here are Greene, *Bodies Like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009); and Worobec, "Miraculous Healings" in Mark. D. Steinberg and Heather J. Coleman, ed., *Sacred Stories: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 22-43. Other important, recent English-language works on imperial Russian lived religion with which *The Heart of Russia* is in dialogue include: Chris J. Chulos, *Converging Worlds: Religion and Community in Peasant Russia, 1861-1917* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Robert H. Greene and Valerie Kivelson, ed., *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice under the Tsars* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Christine Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Roy Robson: *Solovki: The Story of Russia Told through Its Most Remarkable Islands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[5]. For example, the following insight of Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, themselves proponents of secularization theory, may be apropos: "Where identity is threatened in the course of major cultural transitions, religion may provide resources for negotiating such transitions or asserting a new claim to a sense of worth." See Wallis and Bruce, "Secularization: The Orthodox Model" in Steve Bruce, ed., *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992 ), 8-30, esp. 18.

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