

Church and religion in Imperial Russia. A Review of Recent Historiography¹

(Церковь и религия в царской России: историографический обзор.)

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Russian Abstract:

Эта статья является историографическим обзором основных научных работ 1990-х и 2000-х годов по проблемам изучения истории церкви и религии в царской России. В данном обзоре литературы основное внимание уделено работам ученых Соединенных Штатов. Среди прочих, особо следует отметить труды историков, оспаривающие дореволюционное положение Русской Православной Церкви единственно как придаток власти, как идеологический инструмент в руках самодержавия. Западные ученые утверждают, что в последние десятилетия старого режима церковь не поддерживала государственный строй и государственную политику в России, а также отдельно взятых царей. Такая ситуация привела к кризису взаимоотношений государства и церкви, ставшего неотъемлемой частью так называемого кризиса самодержавия. Далее, ряд ученых установил, что с точки зрения религиозности, процессы секуляризации в России развивались не идентично и не параллельно таковым процессам в Западной Европе. В России, народная набожность и приверженность религии не исчезли к началу двадцатого века. Наоборот, процент как женщин, так и мужчин, соблюдавших религиозные обряды, был чрезвычайно высок по сравнению с другими странами. Используя гендерный анализ, отдельные историки также показали, что религия часто выступала как источник независимости и контроля для женщин царской России. Так, к концу девятнадцатого века набирает силу и процветает монастицизм (женские общины), ставшие источником альтернативной социальной жизни для женщин всех слоев общества. Значительное количество работ анализируют различные религиозные общины в России (католические, сектантские, старообрядческие, и т.д.), делая особый упор на связь религии и этнического самосознания. Большинство таких работ приходят к выводу, что вне зависимости от контекста и деталей, религия как таковая оставалась наисильнейшей в тех общинах, где она была тесно связана с этническим или национальным самосознанием. Эти и многие другие проблемы обсуждаются в данной работе, наряду с предложениями и пожеланиями в области будущих исследований.

¹ For other historiographical reviews, see S. L. Firsov, "A Short Survey of the Monographs and the Periodical Editions on the History of the Russian Orthodox Church" / "Kratkii obzor obobshchailushchih trudov I seriinich izdaniy po istorii Russikoï Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi," *Nestor* no.1 (2000): 419-431; Gregory L. Freeze, "Recent Scholarship on Russian Orthodoxy: A Critique," *Kritika* 2 (2001): 269-78.

English Abstract:

This article is a historiographical survey of substantial critical revisions of church and religious history in Imperial Russia undertaken since 1991. Among the broad range of works presented in this survey, several significant studies challenge a common assumption that the Russian Orthodox Church was a “handmaiden of the state” by arguing that, in the last decades of the *ancien régime*, the Church was not willing to support the Russian state and that the “crisis of the old order” had incorporated the crisis of the church-state relations. In terms of religion *per se*, it has been established that the dynamics of popular religion in Russia did not parallel the processes of secularization evident in Western Europe. As time progressed, popular piety did not disappear and the rate of religious observance, both among males and females, was extraordinary high in absolute numbers and as compared to other countries. From a gendered perspective, some historians have also suggested that religion often functioned as a source of empowerment for women in Imperial Russia, especially for upper-class women, and that monasticism (convents) enjoyed a revival at the end of the nineteenth century. Finally, a significant body of scholarly works analyses religious minorities in Russia (Muslims, Catholics, Old Believers, etc.) and relates ethnic identity to the discourse of religion to conclude that religion was strongest in those communities where it was linked to ethnic or national identity. Suggestions for further research are also incorporated into this study.

PAGE 1

Introduction

The Soviet historiography of Russia’s religious history began with the work of N.M. Nikol’skii *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi (History of the Russian Church)*.² This was the first and most important survey of the history of Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) undertaken in the Soviet Union from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism, and was to define the development of religious history for subsequent historians in the Soviet Union. Predictably, Nikol’skii left religion out of religious history, arguing that the church was but an institution of feudal society meant to suppress the masses emotionally and economically in order to promote the interests of the upper classes of “oppressors”. The purely Marxist definition of religion as “opium for the people” intended to ensure their obedience is the central theme of the book. Originally published in 1930, it was republished in 1931 and 1983 and remained the sole monograph on the history of Russian Orthodoxy, Old Belief, and sectarianism for over fifty years. However, Nikol’skii was mainly concerned with church history prior to the nineteenth century and explained the role of the ROC in the final pre-revolutionary decades superficially or not at all. For this omission, and “for presenting insufficiently the punitive actions of the church,”³ his work was bitterly criticized by later Soviet scholars who nevertheless failed to offer a satisfactory replacement for Nikol’skii’s *Istoriia*. Numerous other works which appeared in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s did not break through the ideological eggshell of Marxism-Leninism. Most

² N. M. Nikol’skii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi, izdanie tretie*, (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983).

³ *Ibid.*, 14 (in the introduction by H.S. Gordienko).

studies did not go beyond claiming that the ROC was but an instrument of mass oppression used by the exploiting (*ekspluatatorskiie*) classes.⁴ Some works were concerned with peculiarities of the church activities. One such study, P.N. Zyrianov's *Pravoslavnaia tserkov' v bor'be s revolutsiei*, analyzed counter-revolutionary activities of the ROC in the first decade of the 1900's and argued that the only concern of the ROC was to undermine the revolutionary fervour of the proletariat and to support the autocracy (*samoderzhavie*). Various proposals and church reforms of the period were nothing more than "attempts by clergy to regroup their forces [by] developing new methods for their struggle with revolution."⁵ In this work, Zyrianov condemned and professionally disqualified John Curtis and other Western scholars for daring to mention the existence of liberal clergy during several pre-Revolutionary decades, a fact explicitly denied by Soviet scholars of the time.⁶

While many Western, and later post-Soviet, historians agreed that the achievements of Soviet scholars in the field of religious history, including works by G.P. Frantsov, S.A. Tokarev, M.S. Korzun, I.A. Kryvelev, A.I. Klibanov, N.M. Nikolsky, D.M. Ugrinovich, and P.N. Zyrianov, were significant for their empirical research, even the most conservative scholars realized by 1991 that there was a need for "a critical revision of the old-fashioned concepts and a further development of the valuable and advanced heritage accumulated by Soviet scholars"⁷ in the field of religious history.

This article is a historiographical survey of such attempts at the critical revision of church and religious history undertaken since 1991, the year of the so-called "archival revolution" which saw the opening of Soviet archives. Many scholars have indicated that among various research possibilities, the topic of religion is not at the forefront and has not benefited from scholarly attention equal to some other areas of study.⁸ This can be partially explained by the fact that research in post-communist societies is often influenced by political needs and affiliations.⁹ From a down-to-earth economic perspective, it is difficult to obtain funding to defray the expenses of conducting research and publishing one's work without politicizing the topic of investigation and finding a direct relation of one's topic to contemporary politics.

Nevertheless, compared to previous decades as well as in absolute numbers, the sheer volume of publications on various aspects of religious history has increased significantly. Besides such obvious factors as the previous negligence of various religious topics, a miniscule number of credible Western scholarly works on the subject,¹⁰ and the frequent analytical weakness of others, all of which demanded serious reconsideration, the voluminous output of historical religious scholarship can be

⁴ M.S. Korzun, *Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' na slujbe ekspluatatorskih klassov, X vek – 1917 god*, (Minsk: Belarus', 1984).

⁵ P.N. Zyrianov, *Pravoslavnaia tserkov' v bor'be s revolutsiei, 1905-1907gg*, (Moskva: Nauka, 1984), 5.

⁶ John Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia: The Last Years of the Empire, 1900-1917*, (New York, 1972). Other Western works include Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions under the Last Three Czars* (New York, Praeger, 1962); Th. Burd, "Religion and the Revolution of 1905: an introductory word," *Russian History*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Temple, 1977); R. Kosler, *Kirche und Revolution in Russland* (Koln, 1969).

⁷ M. Shakhnovich, "The Study of Religion in the Soviet Union," *Numen*, vol 40, no. 1(1993): 67-81, as quoted in *Science of Religion*, (April 2001).

⁸ M. Tomka, "The sociology of religion in Eastern and Central Europe: problems of teaching and research after the breakdown of communism," *Social Compass*, vol. 41, no. 3 (1994): 379-392.

⁹ *Ibid.*; this is one of five general observations on religious study made by the author.

partially explained by the stimulus which scholars received from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of hitherto inaccessible archives.

Because of the constraints of space and time, our survey will be limited to works dealing with religion in Imperial Russia, with an emphasis on the second half of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries.¹¹ To facilitate our discussion, the works have been divided into three broad categories defined by the predominance of three topics. Two of these are the surveys, monographs, and overviews of history of the ROC, and “gendered” religious history. The third category, that of the history of non-Orthodox religions in Russia, will be addressed more in the fashion of suggestions for further reading than as a critical review.

Several significant studies attempted to analyze the position of the ROC vis-à-vis the Russian government. Since many previous scholarly works, especially those written by Soviet scholars, had represented the ROC as a “handmaiden of the state,”¹² the main goal of recent “broader range” studies was to challenge this assumption by arguing that in the last decades of the *ancien régime*, the Church was not willing to support the state and that the “crisis of the old order” had incorporated a crisis in church-state relations as well. While in general terms this argument was proposed by Western scholars prior to 1991, the last decade saw the continuation and elaboration of this topic.

Other works on the ROC attempted to incorporate many now “fashionable” trends in the discipline of history. Some research has been dedicated to the perceptions of religion and religious change by ordinary people, in contrast to those pertaining to the upper classes or church-state relations. Other works addressed the consequences of modernization and urbanization for religion (arguing *pro* or *contra* secularization). Still others analyzed the feasibility of Soviet claims about the persistence of *dvoeverie* (dual faith) among peasantry and the rise of anticlericalism and the rejection of religion by peasants in the eighteenth-century, the intelligentsia in the nineteenth century, and the proletariat in the twentieth. These historians also attempted to test the applicability of a dichotomized Western model of secularizing society (which perceives religion as “strong” in backward villages and “dying” in proletarian cities) to the Russian situation. As we will see, this history “from below,” while not complete by any means, has helped to paint a picture far more complex than could be suggested by either ideology-informed Soviet research or a simple repetition of models existing elsewhere.

¹⁰ For such works, see Gregory Freeze, *Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-reform*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); same, *The Russian Levities: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth-Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

¹¹ For an overview of recent works on religion in Russia since 1917, see Dimitry Pospelovsky, “The Russian Church Since 1917 Through the Eyes of Post-Soviet Russian Historians,” *Religion, State & Society*, Volume 26, Number 3/4 (September/December 1998). *Religion, State & Society* can serve as an introduction to contemporary scholarship on religion in the Soviet Union and beyond, including but not limited to such topics as ROC and Stalin’s Church policy; Islam, Catholicism, and other non-Orthodox religions in the Soviet Union and Russia; interrelation of Orthodoxy and authority, nationalism and religious belief, etc.

¹² For further criticism of this genre of historiography, see discussion of such works, e.g., as Richard Pipes, *Russia and the Old Regime* (London, 1974) in Gregory Freeze, “Handmaiden of the State?”

Some works have been written about women and children, patriarchy and gender relations as applicable to religious history. While “her-story” is still predominant in this sub-field of study, some major breakthroughs have been evident in “deconstructing” gender and in analyzing religious activities as a source of empowerment for women of the *ancien régime*. Seemingly less “post-modernized” historians took up approaches to studying religion traditional in previous decades. Religious minorities of Russia – Muslims, Catholics, Old Believers, Jews, sectarians, and others - have been scrutinized and studied locally and in the context of broader socio-political and economic changes in Imperial Russia. The overwhelming majority of these works attempt to link ethnic identity to the discourse of religion, arguing, predictably, that religion was strongest in those communities where it was linked to national identity. While this connection is undeniable, the tendency to overemphasize it often leads to one-dimensional representation or the outright misrepresentation of religion, as we will see in our later discussion and especially in the case of Islam. What unites all of the above-mentioned works is their attempt to discern the specificity and peculiarity of religious life, and the position of the ROC, in Imperial Russia.

PAGE 2

The Russian Orthodox Church

The list of books which in one or another way deal with the very complex history of the ROC in Imperial Russia¹³ is long, and promises an unprecedented ealth of scholarship. Yet upon closer examination, many books lose their appeal for the historian because of the quality of scholarship or depth of analysis.¹⁴ Needless to say, this does not qualify every book as repetitious or intellectually shallow since, for example, recent last years have seen the emergence of good textbooks and surveys.¹⁵ But only a small number of monographs and articles offer new approaches and interpretations of the ROC and religion in Russia.¹⁶

¹³ For a very short and readable summary (only several pages long) of the legal history of the ROC and its relationship with the state, see Firuz Kazemzadeh, “Reflections on Church and State in Russian History,” *Emory International Law Review*, vol. 12, issue 1 (Winter 1998): 341-359 (also available at <<http://www.law.emory.edu/EILR/eilrhome.htm>>).

¹⁴ For example, Stephen Frank was criticized for his unscrupulous presentation of the Orthodox Church as a “colonizer” pitted against the peasantry. Stephen P. Frank, “Confronting the Domestic Other: Rural Popular Culture and Its enemies in Fin-de-Siècle Russia”, in Stephen P. Frank and Mark Steinberg, eds., *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, 1994).

¹⁵ Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998) is a solid textbook (whether it was intended to be such or not) on the history of Russian Orthodox Church. L. A. Andreeva, *Religiia i vlast’ v Rossii: religioznye I ksazireligioznye doktriny kak sposob legitimizatsii politicheskoi vlasti v Rossii*, (Moskva: “Ladomir”, 2001) is also a short and readable account of church relations vis-à-vis the state, and the role of Orthodoxy in the legitimization of Russian statehood, although her “spiritual” comments and conclusions should be treated cautiously.

¹⁶ Some collections of articles are noteworthy, although I will be able to discuss only selected articles form them and in far smaller numbers than these collections deserve: Charles E. Timberlake, ed., *Religious and Secular Forces in Late Tsarist Russia: Essays in Honor of Donald W. Treadgold*, (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1992); Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson, eds., *Russian Religious Thought* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); Geoffrey Hosking, ed., *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine* (New Uork: St. Martin’s Press, 1991); Luigi

Already in 1985, Gregory L. Freeze powerfully challenged a common assumption about state-church relations in Russia in his article “Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered.”¹⁷ Freeze argues in this work that even after the reforms of Peter the Great, “the Church never became – in law, in practice, in spirit – a mere ministry of religious affairs”¹⁸ and managed to survive until 1917 as an institution existing *in parallel* with but not as a part of a state apparatus.¹⁹ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the interests of the state and the ROC were progressively moving in different directions. Each new intervention in ecclesiastical authority and each humiliation of the church undertaken by the government – the “reign” of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, a chief procurator from 1880 to 1905; the manifesto of April 17, 1905, which granted freedom of religious conscience; the “reign” of Gregory Rasputin, and so on – was one more step towards the rapid deterioration of state-church relations. As a result, “neither in 1905 nor in 1917 did the Church act as the pillar of autocracy that the authorities expected and demanded.”²⁰

In the last decade Freeze has elaborated on this topic. Russian Orthodoxy has traditionally been one of the main pillars of Russian autocracy, and Freeze begins his study, “Subversive Pity: Religion and the Political Crisis in Late Imperial Russia,” on this note.²¹ As other secular bases of autocracy (political might vis-à-vis foreign powers, well-being of the subjects, and the persona of the tsar) have lost their political legitimacy in the early twentieth century, the government attempted to “resacralize” autocracy by canonizing several saints and thus emphasizing and appealing to popular piety.²² However, numerous controversial canonizations did more harm than good to the autocracy, especially as it unveiled the Church’s desire to embrace an alternative political culture and the Emperor’s commitment to alternative, more spiritualized and less ritualized Orthodoxy. Predictably, this hyperactive attention to religion divorced secularized intelligentsia and non-Orthodox minorities from the state. Surprisingly, these events also invoked a sentiment of resentment towards both the government and the church among the Russian Orthodox population, who questioned newly canonized saints (because the bodies of the saints decomposed, contradicting popular beliefs about

Magarotto and Daniela Rizzi, eds., *Russkaia dukhovnaia literature: La culture spirituale russa* (Trento: Dipartimento di Storia della Civiltà Europea, 1992); Valerie A. Kivelson and Robert H. Greene, eds., *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice Under the Tsars*, (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Stephen K. Batalden, ed., *Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia*, (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993). A special note should be made of the issue of *Otechestvennye zapiski*, no. 1 (2001) which claims for the first time to bring to our attention a multi-dimensional scholarly discussion of the church-state relations. While most articles deal with state-church relations in contemporary Russia, some offer valuable insights on the traditions of Orthodoxy, church-specific language, and legal issues surrounding ROC-state relations in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

¹⁷ Gregory Freeze, “Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered,” in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), 82-102.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

²¹ Gregory L. Freeze, “Subversive Pity: Religion and the Political Crisis in Late Imperial Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 68, no. 1, (January 1996): 308-350.

²² On canonizations, see also Robert L. Nichols, “The Friends of God: Nicholas II and Alexandra at the Canonization of Serafim of Sarov, July 1903,” *Religious and Secular Forces in Late Tsarist Russia: Essays in Honor of Donald W. Treadgold*, Charles E. Timberlake, ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992): 206-229.

sainthood) and disliked the poor staging and performance of related rites. Last but not least, canonizations distanced even most conservative members of clergy from the monarchy, since in the process of preparation for these events the government repeatedly subjected the Church to humiliation and various intrusions. As a result, the Church was no longer willing to support the government, and this conflict could help explain why the Synod failed to undertake any decisive measure in defence of autocracy in 1917. In other words, “the final years of tsarism were marked by a profound crisis not only in state and society but also in the Church,”²³ the crisis which sounded the future collapse of autocracy in 1917.²⁴

Similarly, the abandonment of the church’s support for the government is one of the main themes in S. L. Firsov’s *Russkaia tserkov’ nakanune peremen*.²⁵ The author wants to break down a stereotypical presentation of the Orthodox Church in the early twentieth century as “conservative”, “reactionary”, or “backward”. Firsov argues that the church understood the dilemmas that industrialization and modernization posed for religion. It also wanted to be reconciled with the radically non-religious intelligentsia, but the close relation of the church and state was a visible and well-recognized obstacle in achieving this reconciliation and many other goals. The question of another reconciliation was at the forefront of Church’s concerns after the Edict of Toleration of 1905 – how to reunite Old Belief with “traditional” Orthodoxy. These concerns were the primary reason why the ROC was eager to break with the state, and numerous humiliations both heightened the crisis of church-state relations and served as a pretext for the ROC to withdraw its support for autocracy. Inevitably, such figures as Pobedonostsev, Witte, Rasputin, as well as the discussion of greater independence in the church affairs and a desire to call a *Sobor* on the part of the ROC, played a decisive role in the history of church-state relations in early twentieth century.

Of course, there is more to the study of religion in Russian than church relations vis-à-vis state. Another field of inquiry is the difficulty the church faced as Russian society was becoming progressively industrialized and urbanized. The “urban” aspect of religious history was almost absent from the history of the ROC²⁶ until Gregory Freeze published an article in 1991 on the church’s “urban mission” in post-reform Russia.²⁷ In the first half of the nineteenth century the Church,

²³ Ibid., 337.

²⁴ For further discussion of the importance of a crisis in state-church relations and the role of this crisis in 1917, see Gregory L. Freeze, “Critical Dynamic of the Russian Revolution: Irreligion or Religion?” from the personal file of the author.

²⁵ S. L. Firsov’s *Russkaia tserkov’ nakanune peremen (konets 1890-x – 1918gg)*, (Moskva: “Duhovnaia literature, 2002). See also S. L. Firson, *Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ I gosudarstvo v poslednee desiatiletie sushchestvovaniia samodержaviiia v Rossii*, (Moskva: Russkii Khristianskii Gumanitarnii Universitet, 1996).

²⁶ As Freeze mentions in his articles (fn. 16), one could derive only occasional glimpses on urban church from such works as: John S. Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia: The Last Years of the Empire, 1900-1917* (New York, 1940); Gerhard Simon, ‘The Russian Orthodox Church and the Social Question in Russia before 1917’ (Paper presented to the Conference on the Millennium on Christianization in Russia in Uusi Valamo, Finland, September 1988); and J.M.H. Geekie, ‘The Church and Politics in Russia, 1905-1917: A Study of the Political Behavior of the Russian Orthodox Clergy in the Reign of Nicolas II’ (PhD Dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1976).

²⁷ Gregory Freeze, “Going to the Intelligentsia’: The Church and its Urban Mission in Post-Reform Russia,” in Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow and James L. West, eds., *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991): 215-32.

surprisingly, was little concerned with its position in urban centres. By the mid-century, the church became disenchanted with the city, but by the late 19th century it began to reevaluate its attitudes towards the city. Freeze is studying why and how the Church attempted to reach out to the intelligentsia (*obshchestvo*) in order “to forge ties with a useful collaborator to help lead the people and resist the state” (224). As the author explains, various factors prompted the Church to look to the city: the development of “this-worldly” theology (the church’s need to embrace secular issues); recognition of the decline of religious appeal in the city; the Church’s attempts to restore conciliarism (*sobornost’*, meaning a greater involvement of laity in the Church); and finally the newly-found interests in spiritual matters on the part of intelligentsia (who were moving away from pure materialism). However, the mission was a failure. Above all, it was a failure because the Church prioritized investing its energy in solving a simultaneous religious crisis (whether real or perceived) in the village, choosing to preserve its influence in the village over the already lost city. But there were other reasons as well, which included the so-called supraclass ideology (the Church was beyond and above class), the isolation of clergy as a closed estate (*soslovie*), the disorganization of urban parishes, and to some degree the repressive activities of bishops and bureaucrats. While one leaves this article craving more information about particular actions undertaken by the Church during its “urban mission,” the complexity of explanation made nevertheless made it a backbone of research on the urban Church, inviting other scholars to enrich this dimension of religious history with detail and to offer variations by analyzing the special characteristics of particular domains.

The “Individual domain” is what interests Simon Dixon,²⁸ who offers a fresh look at the Church in Late Imperial St Petersburg.²⁹ It is fair to say that, in the early twentieth century, the Church’s position in the urban centres was typically more difficult than that in rural centres. St. Petersburg was no exception to this rule. Some factors of urban life (e.g. popular appeals for saintly intervention as a side affect of the misery of urban life) worked to the Church’s advantage, while others (e.g. the spread of literacy and the availability of secular entertainment), complicated the

²⁸ Simon Dixon, “The Orthodox Church and the Workers of St. Petersburg, 1880-1914,” *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930*, ed. by Hugh McLeod, (New York: Routledge, 1995): 119-145.

²⁹ Other important works include Reginald E. Zelnik, “To the unaccustomed eye: religion and irreligion in the experience of St. Petersburg workers in the 1870s,” in Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, eds., *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs, vol. II: Russian Culture in Modern Times* (California Slavic Studies, vol. XVII), (Berkeley, CA, 1994): 49-82; Sergei L. Firsov, “Workers and the Orthodox Church in Early 20th Century Russia”, in *New Labor History: Worker Identity and Experience in Russia, 1840-1918*, eds. Michael Melancon and Alice K. Pate (Slavica Publishers, 2002). Another work which deserves our attention is Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, “The Search for a Russian Orthodox Work Ethic,” in *Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, eds. Edith W. Clowes and Samuel D. Kassow, (Princeton University Press, 1991). Rosenthal looks at Weber’s argument that the transition from feudalism to capitalism was facilitated by the so-called “Protestant ethic”, which gave religious sanction to gaining wealth and also promoted such personal qualities as hard work, discipline, etc. In the last decades in the *ancien régime*, similar attempts to create a specifically Russian Orthodox work ethic based on the older Russian religious tradition were undertaken by Petr Struve, Nikolai Berdiaev, Simeon Frank, and Sergei Bulgakov. The article briefly surveys the thoughts of the first three men and analyzes the works by Bulgakov. All four men were expelled from Russia under the new Soviet regime, and their works had very limited appeal regardless of the fact that their ideas were very similar to Bolshevism. This article was not included in the general discussion because of the limited appeal and influence this development had both on the Church and society at large.

Church's position. However, out of a wide range of possible obstacles that clergy in St. Petersburg had to face, three were of primary importance, these being the social isolation of the clergy, inadequate provision of worship, and finally the patterns of social transience. First, the clergy's separate *soslovie* status only increased their isolation from the workers while not allowing them to enter the circles of the intelligentsia. Inadequate provision for worship was a problem similar to the one faced by other Western European churches. Finally, St. Petersburg was a city of migrants, both between cities and between city and village. This constant movement of the populace did not allow the clergy to establish close contact with parishioners and contributed to the changing patterns of family life which did not fit the preaching of the church.

While Dixon analyzes various factors which contributed to the decline in the role of religion in the workers' milieu, K. Page Herrlinger in her dissertation attempts to suggest ways in which Orthodoxy survived and flourished in this workers' environment.³⁰ Of course, she agrees that factory life in particular and urban life in general had altered the workers' perceptions of spiritual and religious matters and put many restraints on traditional practices. In this and in many other respects, the urban Russian Church faced the difficulties associated with urbanization and modernization applicable to Western European churches. Nevertheless, the Church undertook various attempts to return the workers to traditional orthodoxy, as the Church leaders recognized the changing social context of religious life and the Church's need to accommodate it, and these attempts were not always without success. Hence, although some workers broke away from the Church, religion continued to hold its power over the masses in cities to a degree previously unacknowledged. While a more detailed discussion of this study will become possible only after this dissertation is published, Herrlinger's work is clearly a challenge to traditional assumptions about workers' irreligiosity.

Steinberg draws a resonating, although not necessarily parallel, conclusion in his article "Workers on the Cross: Religious Imagination in the Writings of Russian Workers, 1910-1924."³¹ Steinberg explicitly states at the beginning of his work that he is not trying to demonstrate the endurance of Christian faith among workers. His concern is rather with the persistence of religious symbols, images, and language among the workers-writers. The poems that these workers wrote were heavily embedded with religious imagery, even if other non-Christian symbols also made their occasional appearance. What is more crucial, "worker-writers used images such as crucifixion and resurrection neither as empty devices nor as literal signs of faith but as vehicles of emotional

³⁰ K. Page Herrlinger, PhD. *Class, Piety, and Politics: Workers, Orthodoxy, and the Problem of Religious Identity in Russia, 1881-1914* (University of California: Berkeley, 1996). Various chapters of her dissertation and overall thesis have been presented at different conferences, including "Unorthodox Orthodoxy: Popular Religious Protest Against the Church in St. Petersburg, 1905-17," presented at the AAASS meeting in 1999 (alongside with two Brandeis' graduate students, Scott M. Kenworthy, who presented "Drunkness, Idleness and Riches: Problems and the Reform of Monastic Discipline in Early Twentieth-Century Russia," and George T. Kosar, "The 'Spiritual Proletariat': Problems of Church Reform in 1917-18").

³¹ Mark D. Steinberg, "Workers on the Cross: Religious Imagination in the Writings of Russian Workers, 1910-1924," *Russian Review* 53, 2 (April 1994): 213-239. See also the book by the same author, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925*, (Ithaca, 2002).

meaning.”³² These images appealed to workers emotionally as signs which were familiar and comforting to them since childhood and also as signs resembling their non-elitist “life-feeling” (*zhizneoshchushchenie*). Hence religious language, even if not religion itself, was exceptionally persistent among workers-writers.

While some scholars specifically deal with urban settings, another “faction” of historians addresses the issues of rural and popular religion.³³ Thus, Chris Chulos is more concerned with historiographical interpretations of peasants’ religion than, e.g., with the interaction between institutionalized church and popular belief.³⁴ Historians had typically characterized peasants’ religiosity by using four categories: Orthodox piety (*nabozhestvo/blagochestie*), Orthodox ignorance (*nevezhestvo*), dual faith (*dvoeverie*), and sectarianism. Thus, many of the traditional elements of Orthodox piety (“church attendance, pilgrimages to holy places, interest in religious places, interest in religion writings, fasting, sober behavior, and decoration of homes with icons and other religious objects,”³⁵) had a strong manifestation in the life of peasants, proving their adherence to the visual attributes of religion. At the same time, historians believed that peasants had exceptionally limited or non-existent knowledge of religious tenets and followed religious rituals brainlessly, a fact which explained their overall “backwardness” and “darkness.” Furthermore, historians never failed to point out the existence of *dvoeverie* (the combination of Christian and pagan belief), the various manifestations of this, and the mutilation of “true” religion which resulted from the peasants’ adherence to old superstitions. Finally, some attention was given to Old Believers and various sectarians, who were attacked by the Church as a threat to its authority and to the association of Russian autocracy and Orthodoxy.

PAGE 3

However, the application of these categories and pagan/orthodox dichotomy to the study of popular religion fails to break through the stereotype of “otherness” and “backwardness” and to see popular religion “from below” and “inside out.” What is missing, according to Chulos, is the understanding that to peasants the so-called paganistic elements were an integral part of their

³² Ibid., 237.

³³ Other important works on this “sub-topic”, which will not be discussed in detail but are noteworthy, include: Christine Worobec, “Death Ritual among Russian and Ukrainian Peasants,” *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, eds. Stephen Frank and Mark Steinberg, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Jeffrey Burds, *Peasant Dreams and Market Politics*, (Pittsburgh, 1998); W. Arthur McKee, “Sobering Up the Soul of the People: The Politics of Popular Temperance in Late Imperial Russia,” *Russian Review* 58, 1 (April 1999): 212-33; A. V. Buganov, *Russkaia istoriia v pamiati krest’ian XIX veka i national’noe samosoznanie* (Moscow: Institut etnologii i antropologii Akademii Nauk, 1992); Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³⁴ Chris Chulos, “Myths of the Pious or Pagan Peasant,” *Russian History/ Histoire Russe*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 181-216. This work is based on the author’s PhD dissertation, entitled “Peasant Religion in Post-Emancipation Russia: Voronezh Province, 1880-1938”, 2 vols, (University of Chicago, 1994), which has been recently reworked and published as *Converging Worlds: Religion and Community in Peasant Russia, 1861-1917*, (Northern Illinois University Press, November 2003).

³⁵ Ibid., 187.

Orthodox Christianity and that peasants “failed to see themselves as anything other than Orthodox Christians.”³⁶ The distinction between pagan and Orthodox ritual and beliefs was irrelevant to peasants, to whom these beliefs were a part of the same means aimed at preserving traditional village community and explaining the outside world in the paradigm of benevolent vs. malevolent, sacred vs. profane. Moreover, such combination of “pagan” and Orthodox resulted in a diversity of religious beliefs which first, shows that the popular religion defies simple generalization, and second, allowed its adaptation to a specific situation with never-ending combinations. This fact of unity of religion with a degree of diversity might also help to explain why peasants failed to “lose” their pagan roots in favor of “pure” Orthodox Christianity.

Glennys Young adopts a more politically-oriented approach to the study of popular religion in her work entitled *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia*.³⁷ The author’s main emphasis in the work is on the first decade of Soviet rule, during which, as she concludes, religion remained important to peasants’ social identity, especially as it was used in the discourse of village power by various factions. What concerns us in her work, however, is the first chapter of the book which analyses religion in the village in the early, pre-revolutionary twentieth century. Drawing on her own research and new scholarly works, Young concludes that “well before the Bolshevik inaugurated yet another round of subordinating rural Orthodoxy to political ends, Russian villagers were contesting religion’s role in providing the cultural underpinning of village power and, implicitly, the national political order it supported and shaped.”³⁸ Of course, this conclusion speaks more of the persistent image of close state-church relations rather than of popular religiosity.

Vera Shevzov addresses the question of popular religiosity more directly, taking an unusual approach to its study. Already in her dissertation, Shevzov concluded that the peasants expressed a profound interest in religious teachings and religious literature, an interest suggestive of the central role religion played in the lives of many rural believers.³⁹ This theme of popular religiosity is picked up in her article, “Chapels and the Ecclesial World of Prerevolutionary Russian Peasants,”⁴⁰ in which Shevzov analyses the forgotten (by historians) chapels, or *chasovnia*, which existed “for the reading of hours, something that could be performed by the laity without the presence of clergy” (587). To peasants, these chapels were often a substitute for far-away churches which became entirely inaccessible in bad weather. By building chapels, peasants wanted to maintain their connection to and remain a part of a larger Christian community. At the same time, chapels were often built to commemorate important events in the life of the community, such as natural disasters or communal

³⁶ Ibid., 207.

³⁷ Glennys Young, *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). Other works by the author include Glennys Young, “Trading Icons: Clergy, Laity, and Rural Cooperatives, 1921-28,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies (Revue canadienne-américaine d’études slaves)*, volume 26, issue 1-4 (1992): 315-334.

³⁸ Ibid., 48.

³⁹ Vera Shevzov, “Popular Orthodoxy in Late Imperial Russia” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1994).

⁴⁰ Vera Shevzov, “Chapels and the Ecclesial World of Prerevolutionary Russian Peasants,” *Slavic Review*, 55:3 (1996); see also Vera Shevzov, “Miracle Working Icons, Laity, and Authority in the Russian Orthodox Church, 1861-1917,” *Russian Review* (January 1999): 26-48; same, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, (forthcoming).

and personal vows, and in the life of the country, such as various political events and dates of importance for royal family. Because of these purposes, chapels became sacred historical monuments meant to reinforce familial and communal bonds and to preserve historical bonds to God and church on a local, village level. Thus, while seemingly distancing peasants from the parish and the institutionalized church, chapels in fact demonstrated the simultaneous dual orientation of peasant religiosity towards the Orthodox community at large and towards its interpretation in the context of the immediate village community. The church hierarchs, however, failed to realize that not everything which was not explicitly directed towards the centre was harmful to the authority of the Church. They failed to realize that the heart of the Russian Orthodoxy was in these small chapels and local traditions which were perceived by peasants as a part of a larger Orthodox identity. Had the church recognized this trend, its fate under the Soviet regime might have been entirely different.

Shevzov's work is especially noteworthy for her attempts to recapture popular religiosity, as opposed to religious observance. Historians have more or less agreed that in the last decade the level of observance among Russian peasants of the late nineteenth - early twentieth centuries was extraordinarily high and not similar to Western European countries,⁴¹ just as they concluded that the church's relation to the state was breaking away in the last decades of *ancien régime*. Yet the above discussion was also meant to demonstrate that a scholarly consensus on the degree and purity of religious beliefs among workers and peasants alike is yet to be reached.

PAGE 4

Women, Gender, and Religion

After the publication of Joan Wallace Scott's "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,"⁴² it became almost impossible to ignore gender in history, as it became almost a cliché to mention Scott's work in every discussion of gender history. Although some scholars working in the field of Russian secular and religious history adopted gender as a concept for their analytical inquiry (often aimed at reclaiming the "women's dimension" of religion), scholarship on gender and religion has developed in Russia later than in and for other Western countries, and it is still in an inchoate phase. Many works that have been produced to the moment are merely descriptive "her-stories" lacking a solid analysis of gender construction and power assertions through gender, and are of

⁴¹ It seems fair to say that much less has been done on religious history in Imperial Russia for other periods of time than on religion and church in the last decades of the *ancien régime*. Thus, an attempt to revisit church history during the times of the so-called Great Reforms was made by S. B. Rimskii. Three sections of the book deal with state-church relations in the first half of the nineteenth century, preparations for reforms and the reforms themselves respectively. Although not without its merits, one must agree with Gregory Freeze after reading this work who once said that very little could be done on the church history of the nineteenth century after the completion of his work. Besides several curious paragraphs on Orthodoxy among Cossacks and in the Baltic States, this work adds little to our understanding of the church history of the time. S. B. Rimskii, *Rossiiskaia Tserkov' v epohu velikih reform: Tserkovnie reformy v Rossii 1860-1870-x godov*, (Moskva: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvorie, 1999).

⁴² Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," in *Gender and the Politics of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, several editions). For more information on Gender Theory, see Joan Wallach Scott, ed., *Feminism and History*, (Oxford University Press, 1996).

limited scholarly value. Most of them are life stories of famous women built on a dichotomized male/female perception of history.⁴³ While these accounts are entertaining, they often cannot satisfy one's craving for a serious full-scale explanation of, for example, the reassessment of patriarchy through the language of religion or women's empowerment in the sphere of the religious.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, several scholars have worked with such categories as gender, marriage and/or family with some success, providing noteworthy scholarship from either an empirical or analytical perspective, or both. One of the first attempts⁴⁵ to write a history of power relations through the prism of gender issues as related to religion was made by Gregory Freeze in "Bringing Order to the Russian Family."⁴⁶ While Freeze's article was researched and came out before our set date of 1991, it is still one of the most conceptually ground-breaking and important works in the field of the religious history of Imperial Russia, more particular on the interrelation of church and society and the usage of family and gender discourse as a means of power reassessment.⁴⁷ Prior to the Petrine reforms, divorce was

⁴³ For example, see Natalia Pushkareva (translated by Eva Levin), *Women in Russian History: From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997). The praise on the cover of the book says: "As the first modern survey of Russian women's history to be published in any language, this book is itself as historic event." In fact, the book is disturbing for a number of reasons: there are many factual mistakes, which often distort the role of women in various public events and politics; it studies the lives of "great" women at the expense of others, etc. If this book really sets the precedent to follow for future writings in history, we are not going to see a solid survey of women's history in Russia for a long while.

⁴⁴ This is not to say that "she-stories" necessarily lack any merit, historically useless or cannot combine strong analysis with descriptiveness; for a solid example, see Isabel de Madariaga, "Catherine as Woman and Ruler," in James Cracraft, ed., *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia*, (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1994).

⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that the first attempt made by Soviet scholars to revisit Russian history and incorporate gender (including Russian religious history) is presented in Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, *Russian Traditional Culture: Religion, Gender, and Customary Law* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992). In the West, the first serious attempt to incorporate women into Russian history can be dated from the publications of *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), edited by three leading U.S. scholars on gender history in Russia Barbara Clements, Barbara Engel, and Christine Worobec. This volume makes several references to popular or institutionalized religion, for example, on the Church's attitude towards childbirth in pre-Petrine Russia in a section authored by Eve Levin. Also of interest to historians are: David Ransel, *The Family In Imperial Russia: New Lines Of Historical Research* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Faith Wigzell, "Reading the Future: Women and Fortune-Telling in Russia (1770-1840)," in Marsh, Rosalind J., ed., *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Noteworthy is the work by Sally A. Boniece, "The Spiridonova Case, 1906: Terror, Myth, and Martyrdom, in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 4, no. 3, (Summer 2003), which tells the story of the "SR Blessed Virgin" revolutionary terrorist and the construction of heroic myth around her image. It might be included in the study of religion as an example of religion's ability to provide a common milieu and language for even a political discourse. For works on pre-Imperial Russian history that set a stage for women's religious history in Imperial Russia and which are not to be overlooked, see, for example, Isolde Thyrêt, "'Blessed is the Tsaritsa's Womb': The Myth of Miraculous Birth and Royal Motherhood in Muscovite Russia," *Russian Review*, vol. 53, no. 4, (October 1994): 479-96, "Muscovite Miracle Stories as Sources for Gender-specific Religious Experience" in Samuel H. Baron and Nancy Shields Kollmann, eds., *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Russia and Ukraine* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 115-131, and *Between God and the Tsar: Religious Symbolism and the Royal Women of Muscovy*, (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

⁴⁶ Gregory Freeze, "Bringing Order to the Russian Family: Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia, 1760-1860, in *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 62, no. 4, (December 1990), 709-746. See also Gregory Freeze, "Profane Narratives and a Holy Sacrament: Marriage and Divorce in Late Imperial Russia", forthcoming in *Sacred Narratives*.

⁴⁷ This work makes me question whether the "archival revolution" mattered as much for the history of Imperial Russia as it did for Soviet studies. Freeze successfully shows that a historian could gain access to archives in the Soviet Union prior to

mainly left in the hands of the laity as the church lacked an efficient means to influence the reality of marriage practices. Yet in the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, the ROC's control over divorce increased, adherence to the doctrine of the indelibility of marriage was strictly enforced, and it became almost impossible to get a divorce or an annulment, except in a very small number of cases such as the Siberian exile of a spouse. As the author says, "the result was a marital order of a rigidity unknown elsewhere in Europe."⁴⁸ This regressive change was important for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that after the Petrine reforms, ecclesiastical powers of the church *increased* rather than decreased, as was maintained in traditional studies on the reign of Peter the Great and Imperial Russia. This was so because the Church acquired better-functioning and new bureaucracy, laws, and system of documentation.⁴⁹ Secondly, the church used this discourse on marriage and divorce as a means to reassert its spiritual power at a time when social attitudes were changing in a society rapidly becoming more rational, industrial, and overall more modern. Educated elites and later all strata of Russian society (including the lower classes) rejected such rigid enforcement of marital regulations. Hence this enforcement alienated people from the church, fostered an influx of former-Orthodox into more-open-minded sects and religions (e.g. Old Belief, Protestantism), and offered a new impulse toward secularization and dechristianization, which was evident by the end of the *ancien régime* in Russia.

PAGE 5

While Freeze utilizes family issues to draw broad, far reaching and society-wide conclusions, other works are more "women-specific." Many of these works on women and gender in Russian religious history have adopted arguments made by Western historians for women in Western Europe. Charitable activities, available predominantly to upper-class women, are being discussed as an arena of considerable social autonomy and influence for women, as well as a source of female sociability. The increasing "feminization" of religion is measured as reflected in the growth of female religious orders. Church activities in general are often seen as a source of empowerment for politically and socially underprivileged groups such as women.

Thus, the theme of religious vocation was picked up by Brenda Meehan(-Waters). Meehan's *Holy Women*⁵⁰ has all the attributes of the "her-story." The lives of five women – all deeply religious,

1991, especially in such "unfashionable" areas as religious history.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 711.

⁴⁹ For further discussion of this topic and critique of traditional literature, the author refers readers to: Gregory Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), 82-102.

⁵⁰ Brenda Meehan, *Holy Women of Russia* (San Francisco, 1993). Several chapters of this book had previously appeared in other publications: "To Save Oneself: Russian Peasant Women and the Development of Religious Communities in Pre-Revolutionary Russia," in Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola, eds., *Russian Peasant Women* (New York, 1992), 121-33; "The Authority of Holiness: Women Ascetics and Spiritual Elders in Nineteenth-Century Russia," in Geoffrey Hosking, ed., *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991). Other works by Meehan-Waters include: "Wisdom/Sophia, Russian Identity and Western Feminist Theology," *Cross Currents* 46 (1996): 149-168; "Popular Piety, Local Initiative, and the Founding of Women's Religious Communities in Russia, 1764-1917," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1986): 117-41; "Russian Converts and the Secularization of Monastic

all involved in charity work and in establishing, entering, or running religious communities – are recreated with careful attention to both the socio-political environment in which they had to function and their spirituality and religious beliefs. Nevertheless, this book is not just a life-story of these five women; it is also a work about female convents in the second half of the nineteenth century and about women who entered them. As was mentioned above, the idea of looking at the convents in this period of time is not new to Meehan but was previously explored by historians of religion in various Western European countries,⁵¹ and the conclusions she draws, including the fact of the increasing number of female convents at this time, are not always inconsistent with those offered in the studies of women's convents in England or France. Meehan further argues that religious models of personal transformation through monastic vows allowed women to claim traditionally male qualities and characteristics, such as self-determination, authority and responsibility, thus empowering women in a traditionally patriarchal society and religion. A convent was, after all, the place which offered social and religious meaning for women's lives and allowed them to exercise power unavailable in other social and political spheres.

Meehan's deep, although not always explicit analysis also demonstrates the persistent power of Orthodoxy over people in nineteenth-century Russia. The grip of Orthodoxy was expressed not so much in the lives of these holy women (simply because of their small number) as in the widespread acceptance of the tradition of holiness and in people's ability to interpret outwardly "abnormal" behaviour as signs of holiness and not necessarily as signs of madness or bewitchment. These women could be viewed as holy only because such ideas as holiness, sanctity, and piety existed and persisted in Russian society and culture and were widely respected and valued. Yet gender roles and the expectations of society for the fulfillment of these roles imposed considerable constraints on female religiosity. Women were expected to marry and bear children rather than devote their lives to God. As a result, for the majority of women monasticism and all-consuming religiosity were mid-life options open only after the death of a spouse, a child or elderly parents. While society at large respected women's holiness and sanctity, it could accept these manifestations of extreme religiosity only in women who have fulfilled their primary maternal and familial functions.

Furthermore, Meehan was among the first scholars to introduce numerous variables, such as class, education, and age, into the discussion of gender and religion in Russia. For example, women of noble origin had the obvious advantage of wealth over their less privileged counterparts, which allowed them to engage actively in almsgiving even during their married lives and later to establish religious communities that they dreamed of. These were not options available to peasant women whose beliefs in class-transgressing virtues of munificence and beneficence did not help them to achieve those goals which were closely connected to the availability of financial resources (e.g.

Property," in *Russia and the World in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by R. P. Bartlett, A. G. Cross, and Karen Rasmussen, (Columbus, OH: 1988): 112-24.

⁵¹ See, for example, Claude Langlois, *Le Catholicisme au Féminin: Les congrégations françaises à supérieure générale au XIX siècle* (Paris, 1994); Susan O'Brien, "Terra Incognita: The Nun in Nineteenth-Century England," *Past and Present*, no. 121, (1998): 110-40; also briefly mentioned in Margaret Lavinia Anderson, "Piety and Politics: Recent Work on German Catholicism," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 63, no. 4 (December 1991): 681-716.

founding religious communities). For pious women seeking holiness in life, differences of age, class, and education could only be overcome once they joined already-established *zhenskie obshchiny* (women's religious communities) which functioned not only as a sort of social welfare system for the homeless and aged but also as institutions able to bridge these various educational and other gaps.⁵²

Religion, however, could be a source of empowerment not only for 'holy' women but also for 'pious' women as well, even if it assumed different forms. In his microhistorical study, Marker analyses memoirs and diaries of Anna Labzina, a noblewoman of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to trace the creation of a "women's public sphere" framed in religious terms.⁵³ Marker looks at the writings by Labzina against the background of Enlightenment and "the prevailing oppositions of male/female, public/private, freedom/discipline, and – most crucially – faith/reason that form the very basis of the contemporary debate over the Enlightenment."⁵⁴ In her memoirs, Labzina was mostly concerned with her domestic life. She devoted substantial attention to telling the story of her first marriage, especially by carefully carving out an image of her first husband – a brilliant scientist educated abroad in the best Western and "Enlightened" traditions – as a sexual maniac, a pervert, and a despot in the sphere of domesticity.

Upon closer examination, however, Marker concludes that Labzina's accounts cannot reflect unadorned truth and are written in the best traditions of *zhitie*, or traditional life-stories of Orthodox saints.⁵⁵ By denouncing an "enlightened" free man, Labzina was attempting to find a space for herself, and the logical opposition to "egoistic" and "evil" was "pious" and "self-sacrificing." But the Enlightenment advocated greater individual rights, and however much Labzina detested the intellectual findings of the Enlightenment, she unintentionally absorbed its ideas and through the language of *zhitie* attempted to enrich her own rights and her own role. By writing this account and by the example of her entire life, Labzina attempted to be more than a mere almsgiver. She attempted to be an intercessor (*zastupnitsa*), or "the one who used her standing to champion the needs of the powerless and downtrodden by intervening on their behalf with constituted authority,"⁵⁶ and who with a sense of self-sacrifice faced this authority. This was an exclusively feminine activity which often manifested itself in serving as a mediator "in the name of God for those in need" between those searching for a favour and a politically powerful husband. For Labzina, it was a form of engendered empowerment, which allowed her to carve out for herself, "a third social realm – faith – outside both the civil and the household [realms], in which social patriarchy [was] finally supine before the fatherhood of God and in which the feminine [became] truly powerful."⁵⁷ Prior to her work, women rarely saw religion as an outlet of empowerment, and prior to analyzing her memoirs historians rarely

⁵² Brenda Meehan-Waters, "Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) and the Reform of Russian Women's Monastic Communities," *Russian Review*, vol. 50, no. 3, (July 1991): 310-323.

⁵³ Gary Marker, "The Enlightenment of Anna Labzina: Gender, Faith, and Public Life in Catherinian and Alexandrian Russia," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 59, No. 2, (Summer 2000): 369-390.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 371.

⁵⁵ Marker does, however, give credit to Barbara Heldt, who noted a tendency to perfectionism, including à la *zhitie*, among Russian women-writers in *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (Bloomington, 1992).

⁵⁶ Marker, 384.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 386.

saw any form of intervention on behalf of the poor as of any significance to the role of women or to religious history. This engendered empowerment, which manifested itself in a carefully veiled form in her memoirs, became possible only in the context of Enlightenment and only once Labzina was able to re-think and re-work its call for change in terms of the spiritual inheritance of women's work as religiously-motivated charity givers and protectors of the innocent. While the typicality of her case remains questionable, the possibility of the "engendering of spiritual inheritance and its liberating role for this [*sic*] worldly affairs"⁵⁸ should be carefully considered in any study of female religiosity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

PAGE 6

The idea that charity and religious self-sacrifice in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries was a form of social and political empowerment of women is, of course, not new or unique to Marker. In her fundamental study, *Poverty is not a Vice*, Adele Lindenmeyr draws on the inheritance of Gertrude Himmelfarb, Natalie Zemon David, and Linda Gordon,⁵⁹ to name but a few, in order to reconstruct and assess political and social importance of an official and religious discourse of poverty and charity in Imperial Russia.⁶⁰ Lindenmeyr explains that the ROC had traditionally interpreted beggars as Christ-like figures whose poverty was a personal misfortune rather than a result of their laziness or evilness. According to a Russian proverb, one should never renounce poverty or prison, for in this unstable world no one is secured against encountering both. Voluntary almsgiving was thus seen as an act of major religious significance, of personal connection with people touched by God. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the state and some educated elites attempted to secularize poverty by insisting that suitable employment rather than charitable giving was a remedy for poverty. While Lindenmeyr's work is not primarily concerned with women's "public sphere" but rather with the government's failure to develop a functional poverty relief system and welfare state, she nevertheless makes it explicit that charity, almsgiving and religious self-sacrifice for the benefit of the needy were the only forms of social and public activity available, accessible, and even expected of women at the time. Hence women were on the side of a pro-charity argument resisting the state's intervention into predominantly female sphere of religiosity.

PAGE 7

Another curious perspective on popular and institutional religion is offered by Christine Worobec in *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia*.⁶¹ Worobec investigates the phenomenon of *klikushestvo*, or demon possession, which was recorded already in the eleventh

⁵⁸ Ibid., 387.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in Early Industrial Age*, (New York: Knopf, 1984) and *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (New York: Knopf, 1991), and Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare*, (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁶⁰ Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty Is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁶¹ Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

century in the first *letopisi* (historical chronicles) but appeared more prominently from the sixteenth century and onwards. The manifestations of *klikushestvo* were very similar to those of witch possessions in Western Europe – abnormal public behavior, accompanied by screaming and writhing, and were popularly considered signs of bewitchment. The “witches” who bestowed this bad charm were often attacked by their neighbors. As can be assumed, most participants of such occurrences – accused, accusers, bewitched, - were women, although not exclusively so. Worobec, however, does more than describe this phenomenon. From the perspective of popular religion, her work is an analysis of persistent *dvoeverie* (dual faith) among Russian peasantry and especially women, an aspect interesting but not new in itself. What is more interesting is Worobec’s analysis of how this “female” phenomenon was used by the state, educated nobility, and institutionalized church to construct an image of peasantry as “dark” and “primitive,” which was especially applicable to peasant women. Ever since Peter the Great, the clergy and the state attempted to root out such manifestations of irrationality among peasantry, but with little success. With the advancement of “enlightened” ideas and science, the clergy became more interested in rooting out folk superstition. Moreover, ethnographers, psychiatrists and even some clergy became so “rational” and often “secular” that they were unable to explain the continuing occurrences of *klikushestvo* as anything but a manifestation of Russian peasants’ backwardness. At the end, *klikushestvo* of the late-nineteenth – early twentieth centuries came to represent “a peasantry so ignorant, backward, primitive, and destructive that it had the power to destroy everything that was progressive and Western in Russian society.”⁶²

We can conclude this brief discussion of “gendered” history by saying that the studies discussed broke the ice in women’s and gender studies in Russia as applicable to religion. Yet their number is still small, and “gendered” scholarship is still very poor. More questions remain unanswered than have been answered so far. Just to name a few out of a wide range of unexplored topics, it would be curious and important to see more explicit studies answering questions like: What were the effects of existence of married priests on gender relations in Russia, as compared to Catholic countries? Did it allow for a greater persistence of male religiosity? Did it diminish men’s fear of control that clergy held over their wives, evident elsewhere? Or what were the social, physiological, and religious functions of a white clergyman’s wife⁶³ in the women’s network of any given village? Was she seen by peasants as just a useless consumer of resources? Was she the “anti-thesis” of a “proper” woman? Or a model of such? These and numerous other questions could also open up the discussion of masculinity in the context of religion. Inevitably, some of the questions will remain unanswered simply for the lack of adequate sources to study these issues. Yet after reading the above mentioned accounts, a historian is left craving more information of the role of religion in the construction of gender and the role of gender in the history of religion.

PAGE 8

Old Belief and Non-Orthodox Religions

⁶² Ibid., 146–47.

⁶³ In the Orthodox Church a "white" clergyman may be married while a "black" clergyman is celibate.

As Vera Shevzov has noted in her article on Russian peasants, the tendency to view the Orthodox Church as imposed on Russian people, among other things, “has prompted historians to search for more ‘authentic’ representations of peasant religious beliefs, with the result that Old Believers and the various ‘sects’ have received more extensive scholarly attention than ‘official’ Orthodox believers.”⁶⁴ This statement is as true of the scholarship in the 1990s as for that of previous decades. Of course, there might be other explanations for the popularity of the topic. For Soviet historians, the study of these “revolutionaries in their own right” was often the only permitted outlet for the study of the history of religion, while for any scholar in general it is understandably and undeniably easier to tackle one single community of religious “rebels” rather than to trace the nationwide dynamics, variations, and politics of official religion. Regardless of the reasons, the fact remains that scholarship on non-Orthodox religion and Old Belief is generally more extensive than on traditional Orthodox belief. Need it be added that the “archival revolution” spurred the craving among historians to revisit such classics as Klibanov’s studies of sektanstvo⁶⁵ and Smirnov’s *Staroobriadchestvo*⁶⁶? Probably not. But of course, we should understand this “more extensive attention” in terms relative to the very limited attention paid in general to religion in Imperial Russia. Unfortunately, considering the scope of this paper, the following section will assume a form of suggestions for further reading rather than a critical evaluation of various works. The topic of non-institutionalized religions in Imperial Russia merits a historiographical survey of its own.

⁶⁴ Vera Shevzov, “Chapels...”, 585.

⁶⁵ Alexandr Il’ich Kilbanov, *Istoriia religioznogo sektantstva v Rossii: 60-e gody XIX v.-1917 g.* (Moskva, 1965); *Religioznoe sektantsvo i sovremennost’ : sotsiologicheskie i istoricheskie ocherki* (Moskva, 1969); *Religioznoe sektantstvo v proshlom i nastoiashchem* (Moskva, 1973); *Iz mira religioznogo sektantstva: vstrechi, besedy, nabliudeniia* (Moskva, 1974); *History of religious sectarianism in Russia, 1860s -1917* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

⁶⁶ Petr Semenovich Smirnov, *Istoriia russkogo raskola staroobriadchestva*, (Moskva, 1971).

Let us first look at the Old Belief in Imperial Russia.⁶⁷ Probably the most fundamental of the 1990' studies of the Old Belief is Roy Robson's *Old Believers in Modern Russia*.⁶⁸ The author briefly surveys the history of Old Belief (fortunately without getting bogged down in repeating the story of the Schism of 1666), but the main emphasis of his work is on the decade following the establishment of religious toleration by the Edict of Toleration of April, 1905. Prior to 1905, Old Believers had successfully survived repressions under Nicholas I and renewed attacks on them in the 1880's and 1890's and even managed to attract converts. Their cohesive liturgy, architecture, iconography, and ritual are proofs of the coherent substructure of the Old Belief. However, the problems of the Old Believers changed with the coming of religious freedom. The responses to the 1905 manifesto varied greatly among these dissenters from the traditional church. Surprisingly, the response had less to do with theological than with the geographical and social positions of those reacting to the change. Residents of large cities, like Moscow and St Petersburg, were "modernizers" who welcomed the change and strove to adapt to the new social and political circumstances. However, Old Believers in more distant areas, e.g. Siberia and the Urals, were radical traditionalists and resisted any changes. Attitudes to the state, to modern technology and to "communitarianism" were being disputed. Hence the freedom brought more tensions upon, and fragmentation within the Old Belief than the time of oppression. Robson never openly declares that the first two decades of the twentieth century were a crisis in the coherence of the Old Believers' community, yet he repeatedly suggests that religious toleration was in many ways more challenging to the "Ancient Piety" of the Old Belief than the centuries of persecution.

Another work on Old Belief, a study of Karelian Old Believers in Russian by O.M. Fishman, deserves a special mention, as it is one of the few works which analyses "foreign" Old Belief in Imperial Russia in the context of ethno-confessional history.⁶⁹ Following the general discussion

⁶⁷ I. M. Yuhkimenko, ed., *Starobriadchestvo v Rossii* (Moskva: 1999) is a collection of micro-historical inquiries into various aspects of Old Belief, including studies of chapels and monasteries, family burial places, etc. N.N. Pokrovskii, N.D. Zolnikova, *Staroveriy-chasovennye na vostoke Rossii v XVIII-XX vv: problemi obshchestvennogo soznaniia*, (Moskva, 2002) offers a textual, "post-structuralist" analysis of eschatological writings by Old Believers in Eastern Russia. For broader analysis, see such works as Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and empire: missions, conversion, and tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). The forthcoming dissertation by Douglas J. Rogers, "Old Belief and Rural Economies in the Russian Urals, 1861-Present," (app. 2004, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) appears to be promising, judging from various presentations at the professional meetings. Irina Paert, *Old Believers, Religious Dissent and Gender in Russia, 1760-1850*, (Manchester University Press, 2003) analyzes priest-less Old Believers' communities of St Petersburg and Moscow from the perspective of their economic activities, religious views, and social organization. M.O. Shakhov, *Filosofskie aspekty staroveriia* (Moskva: Izdatelskii dom "Tretii Rim", 1997) is more of a meditation upon religiosity of Old Belief than a historical work but it is not without its historical interest. F.F. Bolonev, *Starobriiadtsy Zabaikal'ia v XVIII-XX vv*, (Novosibirsk: Izd-vo "Fevral", 1994) took a very local approach to Old belief. Of course, Robert O. Crummey, *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist: The Vyg Community and the Russian State, 1694-1855*, (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970) became a "classic" of the Old Belief studies. Finally, Susan Wiley Hardwick offers curious glimpses into the history of Old Believers, Dukhobors, Molokane, Baptists, and Pentecostals in California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska. Susan Wiley Hardwick, *Russian Refuge: Religion, Migration and Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim*, (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁶⁸ Roy R. Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia*, (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996).

⁶⁹ O.M. Fishman, *Zhizn' po vere: tihkvinskie kareli-starobriiadtsy*, (Moskva: "Indrik", 2003).

among Western European historians that “religious identities were most intense and least problematic where they were intertwined with ethnicity,”⁷⁰ Fishman argues that the Old Belief became a core of Karelian ethnic identity and community, formed as a result of their migration to the Novgorod district after the 1617 Peace Treaty of Stolbova.⁷¹ Analyzing ethno-folkloristic sources, Fishman concluded that to the members of the community, especially in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, to be Karelian also by default meant to be an Old Believer, and to be an Old Believer was to be the “other” (the immigrant) on the Russian territory. By the nineteenth century this identification was so intricately linked to Karelian self-perception that while not knowing the origins of schism in 1666, the name of the patriarch Nikon or the protopope Avvakum, Karelians constructed their own mythologized history, according to which they came to Russia *in 1617* as Old Believers. Whatever their misunderstanding about the origins of Old Belief, the link between ethnicity and confessionalism allowed for the preservation of local community in the face of assimilation for three and a half centuries.

PAGE 9

Non-Orthodox religions should also be incorporated into the study of religion in Imperial Russia. Studies of Islam are disproportionately concerned with the religious justification that Islam offers to Chechen terrorists and other various minority groups in the Caucuses and with ways in which it explains various internal and external conflicts in the region. Linking the past to the present, these studies predominantly analyse Islam in Imperial Russia in order to explain its violent nature and to show the long continuation of the conflict between Chechen and Russians, brought upon by Russia’s intolerance towards mountain peoples.⁷² These works, with little variation, argue that since the acceptance of Islam by Chechens at the end of the 18th Century, Chechen men have relied heavily on ideas of *jihad*⁷³, or holy war with exceptionally violent features, to resist Russian Imperial

⁷⁰ Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914*, (New York: St. Martin’s Pres, 2000), 233.

⁷¹ After the long disputes over the Baltic States and access to the Baltic Sea ports, Russia and Sweden signed the Stolbova peace-treaty in 1617, according to which Ingria had been annexed to Sweden as a part of the Baltic province. In the middle of the 17th century the local Orthodox population deserted the Ingria in fear of Lutheran conversion. The refugees moved to Russia (mostly Tver province) and became known as Karelians.

⁷² See, for example, Sebastian Smith, *Allah’s Mountains: Politics and War in the Russian Caucasus* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998); James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, (University Park, PA: PSUP, 1997); Alexander Malashenko, *Islam Revival in Modern Russia*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Moscow: 1998); R. G. Abdulatipov, *Sudby islama v Rossii: Istorii i perspektivy*, (Moskva: Mysl’, 2002); Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and empire: North Caucasus mountain peoples and the Georgian frontier, 1845-1917*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002).

⁷³ In the traditions of Islam, jihad is a holy war that should be carried out endlessly until no one unfaithful to the Muslim religion remains on the face of the earth. Defensive jihad, in defense of one’s family, encourages males to participate in killing in order to defend their families and avenge their lost loved ones. “Converting” jihad is carried out once a year for the purposes of converting or killing infidels. These two types of jihad – “converting” and defensive - when combined, justify to Muslim men the use of any means in this holy war. Moreover, the idea of jihad promotes struggle further by stipulating that all killed infidels will become one’s slaves in the afterworld. Another important feature of jihad is that the political and religious are not separated. The rulers of an Islamic state should, according to jihad, perform both political and religious obligations when they engage in holy warfare. Last but not least, jihad dictates that if a family member of a

domination and to commit violent crimes, presumably or realistically in defence of their homeland. These discussions are so straight-forward and one-dimensional that little can be said about their importance for the history of religion. The argument has even been made that these studies misrepresent Islam in general and Islam in the Caucasus under the Empire in particular as, e.g., the regulations of warfare written in Koran are nowhere to find in the discussion of jihad in these “pseudo”-historical studies.⁷⁴ But let us leave the discussion of jihad and its credibility to the specialists on Islam and only add that these studies might better belong to the history of violence and terrorism and occasionally to the field of ethnic studies than to religious history. Of course, this is not the only dimension of Islam in Russia which is being studied,⁷⁵ and some important works have appeared on Islam among Crimean Tatars or in Central Asia (in the broadest sense), among others.⁷⁶ But the works on Islam among peoples of the Caucasus are at the forefront of research done in the last decade.

Similarly, the study of Jews in Russia⁷⁷ is dominated by one major theme, namely anti-Semitic violence.⁷⁸ The pogroms of 1881-82, 1903-06, and 1919-21, were violent manifestations of Russian popular anti-Semitism, which resulted in many deaths and the destruction of property. Inevitably, such dramatic events drew the disproportionate attention of scholars. Although some efforts have been made to bring new insights into the dynamics of pogroms (by John Klier, Shlomo Lambroza, and Edward Judge), most of what has been done up till now repeats earlier findings that the Russian

Muslim is killed, the male relatives of the murdered person should exterminate the murderer’s entire family. Unless this is done, a man can not live in peace with his soul and his obligations. James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997): 29-129.

⁷⁴ Vladimir Ustinov, *Obviniatsia terrorism*, (Moskva: Olma Press, 2002).

⁷⁵ Hopefully, Ben Loring will offer us a different dimension of Islam in his study of underground Islam in Russia.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Allen J. Frank, *Muslim religious institutions in Imperial Russia: the Islamic world of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780-1910*, (Boston: Brill, 2001); Robert Landa, *Islam v istorii Rossii*, (Moskva, 1995); Peter R. Weisensel, “Russian-Muslim inter-Ethnic Relations in Russian Turkestan in the last Years of the Empire” and Azade Ayse Rorliche, “Sultangaliev and Islam,” both in *Ethnic and National Issues in Russian and East European History: Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies, Warsaw, 1995* (Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies, Warsaw, 1995), John Morison, ed., (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000); Hakan Kiriimli, *National Movements and National Identity Among Crimean Tatars, 1905-1916*, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996).

⁷⁷ Although not a scholarly work, I can not ignore the controversy surrounding the publication of the last book by Solzhenitsyn, entitled *Two Hundred Years Together*. The basic goal of the book is to unveil the role of Jews in the Russian Revolution and the Soviet purges, and its main theme is that the Jews were no less, if not more, the perpetrators of repression than Russians themselves. For example, Solzhenitsyn says that Kiev Cheka was in two-thirds made up of Jews, and facts like this should not be overlooked. It is not to say that the Jews did not suffer under the Soviet regime, but they were only part-victims, while being part-perpetrators. Expectedly, the Jewish community (of Russian origins in particular) around the world was infuriated by many claims made by the author but especially by his argument that in the camps, the Jews received softer treatment than other nationalities, and that the Soviet regime was not as anti-Semitic as often perceived. A. I. Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti let vmeste, 1795-1995*, (Moskva: Rossiiskii put’, 2001).

⁷⁸ John Klier, “Christians and Jews and the ‘dialogue of violence’ in late imperial Russia,” in *Religious Violence Between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives*, ed. Anna Sapir Abulafia, (New York: Palgrave, 2002); J. Kniesmeyer and D. Brecher, “Beyond the Pale: The History of Jews in Russia,” (Exhibit, 1995); *Byt’ evreem v Rossii: materialy po istorii russkogo evreistva, 1900-1917 gody*, (Ierusalim: Center for the Study of Slavic Languages and Literatures, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002); Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the pale: the Jewish encounter with late imperial Russia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

government was not a perpetrator of violence in the pogrom and might only be blamed for tolerating anti-Semitic discourse which essentially lead to pogroms.⁷⁹ At the moment, only a small number of works are promising to offer new insights into the “Jewish question” in Russian history,⁸⁰ by suggesting, for example, that there was a liberal tendency in the Russian autocracy of recent decades in dealings with Jews.⁸¹

PAGE 9

The Uniate Church also benefited from some attention from scholars during the last decade. Barbara Skinner discovered⁸² that after the forceful conversion of Uniate Ukrainians to Russian Orthodoxy in 1794, there was a substantial, though covert resistance to the conversion. Thus, many Uniates preferred to have their children not baptized at all, and their dead not to have the last rites or a proper funeral, rather than to accept the Orthodox rites. Moreover, many Uniate priests the removed visual signs of their religion from church buildings, thus approximating them to Orthodox requirements, but continued to carry out Uniate services. This work also demonstrates the difficulties in the state-church collaboration over the conversion effort (at least until the final conversion in 1839, when the detailed discussion ends) and the state’s free manipulation of religious affairs for the sake of territorial integrity and political interests. All along, the regulation of religious matters and

⁷⁹ John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991); Edward H. Judge, *Easter in Kishinev: Anatomy of a Pogrom (Reappraisals in Jewish Social and Intellectual History)*, (New York University Press, 1992, 2nd edition 1995). In his other work, John Klier analyzes the discourse of Jewishness among intelligentsia in late Imperial Russia, when the assumption that Jews were a nation was questioned. John D Klier, “The Russian Jewish Intelligentsi and the Search for National Identity”, in John Morison., ed., *Ethnic and National Issues in Russian and East European History: Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies, Warsaw, 1995* (Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies, Warsaw, 1995), (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000): 131-146. For further inquiry into the “Jewish question” in Imperial Russia, see useful guides such as: M.S. Kupovetskii, E.V. Starostin, Marek Veb, eds., *Dokumenty po istorii i kul'ture evreev v arkhivakh Moskvy: putevoditel'*, (Moskva: Rossiiskii gos. gumanitarnyi universitet, 1997); A. Vasil'ev, *Obzor dokumental'nykh istochnikov po istorii evreev v fondakh RGVIA* (Moskva: Ob-vo “Evreiskoe nasledie”, 1994); and G.M. Deich, *Arkhivnye dokumenty po istorii evreev v Rossii v XIX- nachale XX vv.: a research guide to materials on the history of Russian Jewry, 19th and early 20th centuries, in selected archives of the former Soviet Union* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo “Blagovest”, 1994). See also such scholarly works as: Michael Aronson, *Troubled waters: the origins of the 1881 anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia*, (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990); V. Kel'ner, ed., *Evrei v Rossii: XIX vek*, (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2000); Erich Haberer, *Jews and revolution in nineteenth-century Russia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Boris Moiseevich Pudalov, *Evrei v Nizhnem Novgorode (XIX-nachalo XX veka)*, (Nizhnii Novgorod: Nizhegorodskii gumanitarnyi tsentr, 1998); V. F. Boikov, ed., *Taina Izrailia: "evreiskii vopros" v russkoi religioznoi mysli kontsa XIX-pervoi poloviny XX vv.*, (Sankt-Peterburg: “Sofia”, 1993); O.V. Budnitskii, ed., *Evrei i russkaia revoliutsiia: materialy i issledovaniia*, (Moskva; Ierusalim: Gerashim, 1999); Aleksandr Selianinov, *Evrei v Rossii*, (Moskva: “Vitiiaz”, 1995).

⁸⁰ See, for example, Michael Stanislawski, “Jewish Apostasy In Russia: A Tentative Typology,” in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, ed. Todd Endelman, (New York, 1987), 189-205; ChaeRan Y. Freeze, “When Chava Left Home: Conversion, Gender, and the Jewish Family in Imperial Russia,” forthcoming in *Polin*, 19 (2004); Gabriella Safran, *Rewriting the Jew: Assimilation Narratives in the Russian Empire*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁸¹ Christoph Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1900-1914: The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

⁸² Barbara J. Skinner, *The Empress and the Heretics: Catherine II's Challenge to the Uniate Church, 1762-1796* (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus). Georgetown University, 2001.

conversions was more in the hands of the Minister of the Interior and the General-Gubernator of Kiev than of religious authorities. Bruess' work expresses a similar collaborationist theme when he discusses often unsuccessful attempts of state and church, undertaken during the reign of Catherine the Great, to unify various minority groups of the Russia's Southern frontier into a single "Russia."⁸³

Finally, a comment should be made on Protestant and Catholic churches in Russia. The most substantial is the work by Gregory Freeze, "Lutheranism in Imperial Russia: A Critical Reassessment,"⁸⁴ which aims to reevaluate the relationship of the Russian Orthodox and Lutheran churches in Imperial Russia. The author argues that contrary to the previous assumption that the mid-nineteenth-century saw a rapid change in the relationship between Orthodoxy and Lutheranism,⁸⁵ the change was not as dramatic as might appear. Lutheranism did not influence the church reforms of Peter the Great as much as many argued, and after the mid-19th century the ROC continued to express an interest in Lutheran methods, though very cautiously and covertly. Moreover, the author argues that Lutheranism (unlike Old Belief or Catholicism) was not a major threat to the ROC, neither in terms of early-twentieth-century conversions nor in terms of the size and geographic locations of Lutheran "communities," and overall only very little official contact took place between the two. The most important place of conflict between the two churches was in the Baltic States, where the two major assaults on Lutheranism came in 1840's and 1880's. In the 1840's, thousands of destitute peasants converted from Lutheranism to Orthodoxy in the misperceived hope of "earthly rewards." In the 1880's, there was an abrupt Russification campaign instigated by the state (in contrast to the Orthodox Church) which converted very few but left many irreligious.

Compared to Lutheranism, Catholicism was much more threatening in all respects. The position of the Catholic Church in Russia withstood many persecutions, and its relations with the Orthodox Church and the Russia state were complicated by the "Polish question." Most Catholics resided in [former] Poland and every major Polish uprising (i.e. 1830 and 1863) brought down renewed persecutions on the Catholic Church. The history of this complex and unstable relationship has been revisited by several scholars, among whom are Dennis Dunn and E. Tsimbaeva.⁸⁶ Additionally, more needs to be said about sectarianism and other religious denominations in Russia but these must be left for another time.⁸⁷

⁸³ Gregory Lynn Bruess, *Religion, Identity and Empire: A Greek Archbishop in the Russia of Catherine the Great*. (Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁸⁴ Gregory L. Freeze, "Lutheranism in Imperial Russia: A Critical Reassessment," in *Luther zwischen den Kulturen*, ed. Hans Medick and P. Schmidt (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003).

⁸⁵ The author refers to O.V. Kurilo, *Ocherki po istorii po istorii liuteran v Rossii (XVI-XXvv.)*, (Moscow, 1996): 19-21, for a recent overview of historiography.

⁸⁶ [Dennis J. Dunn](#), *The Catholic Church and Russia: Popes, Patriarchs, Tsars, and Commissars*, (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004); E. N. Tsimbaeva, *Russkii katolitsizm: zabytoe proshloe rossiiskogo liberalizma*, (Moskva, 1999).

⁸⁷ For the introduction to the various Christian groups and sects (including Old Believers, Dukhobors, Molokane, Baptists, and Pentecostals) as they existed in Russia, see the above cited work by Susan Wiley Hardwick. See also work by Heather Coleman, "Becoming a Russian Baptist: Conversion Narratives and Social Experience," *Russian Review* 61 (2002): 94-112.

Conclusion

In conclusion it seems fair to say that some general facts and trends in the history of church and religion in Russia have been revisited and established anew in recent decades. Thus, mainly thanks to works by Gregory Freeze, the ROC is no longer believed to be a tool of the state but rather an independent agent. In the nineteenth century, the ROC attempted to reassert its powers, especially through the marriage and divorce discourse, but it had to face numerous humiliations from the autocracy, which further divorced the church and the state. Moreover, it also had to face various financial and bureaucratic difficulties associated above all with population growth and urbanization.

In terms of religion *per se*, it has been established that the dynamics of popular religion in Russia did not parallel the processes of secularization evident in Western Europe. Popular piety did not disappear and the rate of religious observance, among both males and females, was extraordinarily high in absolute numbers and when compared to other countries. Russian people embraced various manifestations of Orthodoxy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even if in the last decades of the *ancien régime* some workers (but by no means all) became irreligious or apathetic towards religious matters, some elements of paganism persisted in popular rural culture, and the number of non-conformists with respect to the established church went up.

Some historians have also suggested that religion was able to be a source of empowerment for women, especially for upper-class women, and that monasticism (convents) saw a revival at the end of the nineteenth century. Yet gender roles still limited the range of possible religious experiences for women, and historians still have to integrate gender fully as a useful tool in their studies on women and religion in Russia.

Nationality was able to function as a key factor in the persistence of one or another religion in various communities. To the members of those communities, life in multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Russia was often difficult, the degree of difficulty varying from the borderlands to the heartlands. But the issue of ethnic minorities is only now being fully reintegrated into the history of religion in Imperial Russia.

While this survey has attempted to show that some important breakthroughs have been made, the study of religion in Russia is still poorly developed and not comparable with the historiography of religion in Western European countries. Many issues pertinent to the study of religion are still unexplored, and some of them have been mentioned in this discussion. But to begin with, we may at least hope that the discourse of religion finds its way into general accounts of Russian history and introductory courses of study on Russian and Modern European History.

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