

# Russian Monasticism and Social Engagement: The Case of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra in the Nineteenth Century

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A common stereotype has it that the Orthodox Church is “otherworldly” and unengaged in this world, particularly as contrasted with the social engagement of Western Christianity. According to this image, the Orthodox Church is (and has historically been) preoccupied with liturgy and ritual, on the one hand, and contemplative prayer and mysticism, on the other, and therefore has not actively sought to ameliorate the conditions of those in need. Although this depiction is not entirely inaccurate, particularly as pertains to the Orthodox Church in recent centuries, it is my argument that this lack of social engagement is not somehow “essential” to the nature of the Orthodox Church, but rather specific to particular historical circumstances. According to Demetrios Constantelos, philanthropy was a central ideal for Byzantine Orthodoxy; the Church both taught the importance of charity at the individual level, and engaged in philanthropy at the public, institutional level. It was only the Turkish conquest that forced the Church to reduce its sphere of activity to liturgy and prayer and gave it an “otherworldly” focus.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, as I have argued elsewhere, the Russian Orthodox Church underwent a comparable process: the medieval Russian Church both preached charity and operated philanthropic institutions; secularizing rulers of the eighteenth century sought to restrict the Church’s activities to the “spiritual” realm, a trend that was dramatically reinforced by Soviet rule.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Poverty, Society and Philanthropy in the Late Mediaeval Greek World* (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1992), esp. 134; also Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, 2nd rev. ed. (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Scott M. Kenworthy, “To Save the World or to Renounce It: Modes of Moral Action in Russian

This essay examines the social engagement of Russian Orthodox monasticism in the nineteenth century, with a focus on the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra. I pay particular attention to the efforts of the prior of Trinity-Sergius, Archimandrite Antonii (Medvedev, prior 1831-1877), and his cooperation with Filaret (Drozdov), Metropolitan of Moscow (1821-1867).<sup>3</sup> When Antonii became prior of Trinity-Sergius in 1831, the philanthropic activities of Trinity-Sergius were indeed very modest, and his vision of a socially engaged monastery had to work against the prevailing “otherworldly” self-conception of the monastery and the Church at the time, including that of Metropolitan Filaret. Although in the early twentieth century Church and monastic leaders would see a conflict between contemplation and social action, this was not the case with Archimandrite Antonii.<sup>4</sup> As a disciple of Serafim of Sarov, Antonii played a critical role in promoting hesychasm and contemplative spirituality, particularly by founding Gethsemane Skete. For Antonii, therefore, there was no contradiction between contemplation and social action – rather, the two were complementary. Over the course of his forty-five year tenure as prior of the Lavra, he would revolutionize its social role, providing an example for other monasteries to follow. The increased social activism of Trinity-Sergius under Antonii’s leadership indicated transformations that would take place within both the attitudes and activities of the Russian Church, particularly after the mid-nineteenth century. No doubt it was for such significant accomplishments that the Russian Orthodox Church canonized Antonii as a saint in 1998.<sup>5</sup>

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Orthodoxy,” in *Religion, Morality, and Community in Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Mark Steinberg and Catherine Wanner (Washington and Bloomington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Indiana University Press, 2008), 21-54.

<sup>3</sup> For Antonii, Filaret and Trinity-Sergius in the nineteenth century, see Scott M. Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism and Society after 1825* (Washington and New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> See Kenworthy, “To Save the World or to Renounce It”, and *Heart of Russia*, chapter 6.

<sup>5</sup> See Patriarch Aleksii II, “Slovo Sviateishego Patriarkha Aleksiiia v den’ proslavleniia v like mesnochtimykh Radonezhskikh sviatykh namestnika Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry arhimandrita Antoniiia (Medvedeva),” *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, no. 12 (1998).

## The Russian Church and Philanthropy

Although observers at the time, and historians since, have dismissed the social contributions of Orthodox monasteries in the nineteenth century, little research has actually been conducted on the philanthropic activities of the Russian Church on the whole, let alone those of monasteries.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, however, one quarter of philanthropic societies in Russia were operated by the Orthodox Church, and all levels of the Church were engaged in philanthropic activities, from the Holy Synod and individual hierarchs to monasteries and women's religious communities, brotherhoods, and parishes. Far more research needs to be conducted before an accurate picture of the Church's involvement in society – from ministering to the poor to operating schools – can be properly assessed.<sup>7</sup>

In medieval Russia, the Church was the primary source of institutionalized charity. Peter the Great's affect on the social involvement of the Church (and monasteries in particular) was contradictory. On the one hand, he regarded monasticism, particularly in its contemplative and eremitical forms, as socially useless and sought to make monasteries more "useful" by establishing almshouses or forcing them to give shelter to retired or wounded soldiers. On the other hand, he wanted to restrict the Church's sphere of activities to the "spiritual" in order to remove its interference in secular matters that were, in his conception, the proper sphere of the state. Catherine the Great's confiscation of the Church's land in 1764 decisively eliminated the Church's ability to offer extensive, institutionalized assistance to

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<sup>6</sup> [D. I. Rostislavov], *Opyt issledovaniia ob imushchestvakh i dokhodakh nashikh monastyrei* (Saint Petersburg, 1876), 355-79, for negative perception. For more recent research, see: P. N. Zyrianov, *Russkie monastyri i monashestvo v XIX i nachale XX veka* (Moscow: Verbum-M., 2002); D. A. Pashentsev, "Blagotvoritel'naia deiatel'nost' russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi v vtoroi polovine xix-nachale xx veka," Kand. Diss. (Moscow State Social University, 1995); Brenda Meehan, "From Contemplative Practice to Charitable Activity: Russian Women's Religious Communities and the Development of Charitable Work, 1861-1917," in K.D. McCarthy (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick, 1990), 142-56.

<sup>7</sup> On education, see S. N. Poltorak (ed.), *Prosveshchenie na Rusi, v Rossii: Materialy deviatnadsatoi Vserossiiskoi zaochnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (St. Petersburg: Nestor, 2000); G. N. Minenko (ed.), *Problemy sotsial'nogo sluzheniia i obrazovatel'noi deiatel'nosti Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi: Materialy mezhrregional'noi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 2002); L. V. Skvortsov et al (eds.), *Religiia i obrazovanie: Sbornik obzorov i referatov* (Moscow: INION RAN, 2002).

the poor, although the state never effectively responded by providing its own forms of support, relying instead on the system of serfdom to care for the needy. As a result of the reforms of Peter and Catherine, however, the Church itself came to regard its proper sphere of activity as pertaining primarily to prayer and ritual, especially from the mid-eighteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. Although the state did not provide any systematic poor relief after the abolition of serfdom, it did begin to encourage local initiatives beginning with the Great Reforms in the 1860s and 1870s. From that time until the Revolution of 1917 both the Church's conception of its social role and the range of its social activities transformed dramatically, and it contributed significantly to a need that the state failed to provide for.<sup>8</sup>

Eighteenth-century reforms, particularly Catherine the Great's secularization of Church lands, affected monasticism such that prevailing mentalities accepted that it was not the role of monasteries to be socially engaged and also that they were unable to do so because they lacked the financial resources. Although Catherine the Great herself supported the establishment of the first almshouses at the Trinity-Sergius Lavra with the support of Metropolitan Platon (Levshin) in 1768, these were supported in part by state subsidies and were relatively small-scale operations that provided mostly for the Lavra's own employees.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> G. L. Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 82-102; Gregory L. Freeze, "The Disintegration of Traditional Communities: The Parish in Eighteenth-Century Russia," *Journal of Modern History* 48 (1976): 32-50; Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Scott M. Kenworthy, "An Orthodox Social Gospel in Late-Imperial Russia," *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe* 1 (May 2006): 1-29, <http://rs.as.wvu.edu/contents1.htm>; Simon Dixon, "The Church's Social Role in St. Petersburg, 1880-1914," in *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Geoffrey Hosking (London: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 167-92; Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); Page Herrlinger, *Working souls: Russian Orthodoxy and Factory Labor in St. Petersburg, 1881-1917* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> There was one almshouse for twenty-five men and one outside the monastery for twenty-five women. On its establishment, see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnykh aktov [hereafter RGADA], fond 1204 (Trinity-Sergius Lavra), opis' 1, delo 259. Hereafter notation follows standard archival abbreviations: f. [fond, collection], op. [opis', inventory], d. [delo, file], l. [list', folium], ll. [listi, leaves], ob. [oborot, verso].

Archimandrite Antonii worked to transform the prevailing attitude in Russian monasticism. He endeavored to expand Trinity-Sergius's charitable activities soon after becoming prior of the monastery, although he had to do so against both the inertia of the monastery and even the reluctance of Metropolitan Filaret. In one early instance, Antonii sought to distribute food to local inhabitants following the previous year's crop failures and rising prices. Filaret responded in an extremely revealing letter of January 1833: "God bless your care for the poor people of God, Father Prior. It is good that you even awaken my laziness to zeal." But Filaret also expressed his reservations about Antonii's efforts and repeated "what I have always said" (indicating that Filaret and Antonii had already discussed these issues before), namely that "the government takes care, acts, and uses much money. Therefore it thinks what is necessary to do and what is not possible to do further." He added that, "others will say that there is bread, and that everything will pass of its own, just like the cholera passed." He concluded that "our means in relationship to the social situation is only prayer."<sup>10</sup>

Filaret's response to Antonii's efforts is indicative of the internalization by the Church's leaders of the "otherworldly" conception of the Church's role that prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century. He clearly felt that it was not the Church's role to alleviate the conditions of the poor because that was the state's role. The state both had the financial means and the knowledge to address what needed to be done, and also knew where the limits were. It was up to the government to respond in times of need, whereas Filaret advocated a passive response for the Church – arguing that such things as food shortages and epidemics "pass" of their own and also that the Church's only proper response was that of prayer. However, Filaret's admission that Antonii was "awakening" him to zeal was prophetic, as Antonii would indeed succeed in transforming Filaret's attitudes regarding the Church's "relationship to the social situation."

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<sup>10</sup> Letter of January 22, 1833, in Filaret (Drozdov), *Pis'ma k Prepodobnomu Antoniiu namestniku Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 1831–1867* [hereafter *Pis'ma*], 3 vols. (Sergiev Posad: Trinity-Sergius Lavra, 2007), vol. 1, 54.

The following winter Antonii asked Filaret permission for the monastery to purchase extra flour so that it could provide for the poor, and especially the monastery's employees, when bread ran out the following spring. He wrote that he was "thinking about feeding the workers with the remainder of the brother's *trapeza* [refectory] together with the pilgrims and the poor."<sup>11</sup> By this point, Antonii had succeeded in changing Filaret's opinion, for Filaret responded that he had been considering the same course of action and recommended purchasing even more flour than Antonii had asked for.<sup>12</sup> Thus Filaret was now advocating a more active role for the Church to take in the face of poverty.

### **Assistance to Pilgrims**

Antonii's letter indicates that his efforts were directed not only to meet a temporary situation that concerned only the Lavra's own employees, but that he was already engaging in providing more regular meals for "the pilgrims and the poor." Although in the earliest stages he was only distributing to the poor and to poor pilgrims food that was left over from the monks' own refectory, Antonii soon established a separate refectory specifically for the pilgrims that began to provide them with free meals on great feast days and then, within a few years, offered free meals to pilgrims on a daily basis. St. Sergius of Radonezh, the fourteenth-century founder of the monastery, had commanded his disciples to care for pilgrims to the monastery, but it had ceased to provide such a service by the eighteenth century and its leadership had come to believe that it was beyond its means at the time Antonii became prior. Antonii was able to challenge the monastery's conception of its limitations. Within a few years after Antonii established the tradition, Filaret had come to embrace Antonii's efforts as fulfilling St. Sergius's command when he wrote that it gladdened him that feeding the pilgrims brought them consolation: "May the Saint bless this, and may he not leave us without brotherly love."<sup>13</sup> In addition to providing for pilgrims,

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<sup>11</sup> Antonii's letter to Filaret, December 11, 1833, in *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 420.

<sup>12</sup> *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 70.

<sup>13</sup> *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 148 (no date for the letter, but evidently written mid-1837).



the monastery also continued to feed local poor people during times of need. Although Filaret accepted Antonii's institution of feeding poor pilgrims, he opposed Antonii's proposal to formally establish permanent poor relief, claiming they did not "have the right" to and that it would involve the monastery in too many complications.<sup>14</sup> The rigid government control in that age prevented such initiative. Only after Filaret's death would Antonii establish a refectory several times a year for the poor, which he did in honor of Filaret.<sup>15</sup>

The institution of offering daily meals to poor pilgrims continued to grow in importance in subsequent decades as their numbers increased dramatically – encouraged, no doubt, in part because the support monasteries offered made pilgrimage possible. Forty years later, in 1876, Antonii reported that, "every day after the late Liturgy and the evening service there is established an afternoon and evening *trapeza*, and the greater part of the pilgrims take advantage of this."<sup>16</sup> By 1859, the monastery estimated that it was offering such meals to 200,000 pilgrims a year; by the 1880s, that number had doubled and certainly continued to rise thereafter.<sup>17</sup> The Lavra thus offered a service of profound significance, despite the money and effort that it cost the monastery.

Archimandrite Antonii continued to build upon this foundation, diversifying the services the monastery offered to poor pilgrims. In particular, the monastery began not only to feed, but also offer shelter the pilgrims by establishing two hostels, one within the monastery for men and one outside the monastery for women, that offered shelter for up to several thousand people a day in the 1870s.<sup>18</sup> As the number of

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<sup>14</sup> Filaret's letters to Antonii, March 22 and July 30, 1840, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 210 and 219; see also 212, 216.

<sup>15</sup> See RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 10893.

<sup>16</sup> See Antonii's report on the Lavra's charitable institutions (no date, probably 1876), RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, l. 141 ob.

<sup>17</sup> RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 9107, l. 1 (report for 1859); Nikon (Rozhdestvenskii), *Chem zhiva nasha russkaia pravolsavnaia dusha* (Saint Petersburg, 1909; reprinted Saint Petersburg, 1995), 11. Rostislavov estimated 300,000; Rostislavov, *Opyt*, 105.

<sup>18</sup> See Antonii's reports in RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, ll. 141–42, 156–58.

pilgrims continued to rise, Trinity-Sergius also had to expand its ability to offer these services. In addition to the expansion of the hostel and other services for women (considered further below), the monastery converted a building donated by the Rumiantsev family in Sergiev Posad into a new hostel for male pilgrims in 1878.<sup>19</sup> Even this was not enough to accommodate the ever-growing number of pilgrims, however, and in 1892 Archimandrite Pavel (Glebov, prior 1891-1904) built a monumental three-story stone hostel in honor of the five-hundred anniversary of the death of St. Sergius.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, Trinity-Sergius also offered medical assistance to its pilgrims. When the monastery renovated the hospital for the monks in 1834, it opened a wing with 100 beds for pilgrims that also accommodated local inhabitants as well, as there was still no hospital in Sergiev Posad. Archimandrite Antonii reported that patients were administered with the “spiritual doctoring” of Confession and Communion as well as medical healing. There was a special wing for those suffering from terminal diseases, and the monastery would also bury in its own cemetery those who died in its hospital; those who died in its hospitals were counted among the brotherhood and prayed for accordingly.<sup>21</sup> In the 1890s, Archimandrite Pavel – no doubt much inspired by Antonii’s example of expanding Trinity-Sergius’s philanthropic institutions – constructed a massive hospital-almshouse complex for pilgrims on the west side of the monastery.<sup>22</sup> In short, the monastery began to feed, shelter, and offer medical assistance to those who came to the monastery beginning in the 1830s, and continually expanded these services to keep pace with the rise of pilgrimage.

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<sup>19</sup> Report of the Governing Council of the Lavra to Metropolitan Innokentii, December 4, 1878, *ibid.*, d. 12621, l. 1; report of December 20, 1878, l. 12

<sup>20</sup> RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 14259, ll. 6–7. On the celebration, see Scott M. Kenworthy, “Memory Eternal: The Five Hundred Year Jubilee of St. Sergius of Radonezh, 1892,” in *The Trinity-Sergius Lavra in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Vladimir Tsurikov (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2005), 24-55.

<sup>21</sup> Antonii’s report on the Lavra’s charitable institutions, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, l. 141 ob-142.

<sup>22</sup> RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 14639. Today the building houses the theological seminary.



## Education

The Trinity-Sergius Lavra offered assistance not only to those who came to the monastery, but also extended its social activism to serve the local community. In addition to the almshouse and hospital mentioned above, the monastery became particularly active in education and care for children. In 1838, Trinity-Sergius established the first popular elementary school (*nardnoe uchilishche*) in Sergiev Posad. Archimandrite Antonii evidently proposed the idea in 1836, but Metropolitan Filaret opposed it because he did not want the monastery's school subject to the unavoidable control and intrusion of the Ministry of Education — as, indeed, Filaret generally opposed the meddling of the state in the Church's affairs in the restrictive era of Nicholas I (1825-1855). In a typical fashion, Filaret suggested an alternative to get around this bureaucratic intrusion, namely that they establish a school for clergy children (which would thus be under the direct control of the Church) and allow some non-clergy children to attend.<sup>23</sup> In February 1837, Filaret wrote to Antonii that an opportunity had arisen for him to propose to the Holy Synod a school that could operate without the state's interference. Precisely at that time, Nicholas I and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were discussing ways to combat the spread of the Old Belief and other schismatic groups through church-run schools.<sup>24</sup> Filaret seized this as an opportunity to bring a general proposal before the Holy Synod, which resulted in a Synodal decree encouraging all monasteries in the Russian Church to establish schools for children of employees of the monastery and, where means permitted, for other children from the neighboring settlements.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Filaret's letter to Antonii, December 30, 1836, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 142–43. On Filaret's relationship to the state, see Gregory L. Freeze, "Skeptical Reformer, Staunch Tserkovnik: Metropolitan Philaret and the Great Reforms," in *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, 1782–1867: Perspectives on the Man, His Works, and His Times* (Jordanville, N.Y.: Variable Press, 2003), ed. Vladimir Tsurikov, 151–91; and John D. Basil, *Church and State in Late Imperial Russia: Critics of the Synodal System of Church Government (1861–1914)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 7–19.

<sup>24</sup> Filaret's letter to Antonii, February 3, 1837, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 145 (see also the following letter); Secret Synodal ukaz to Metropolitan Filaret, October 29, 1836, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5108, ll. 21–23.

<sup>25</sup> Filaret's letters to Antonii, April 10, 1837 and May 4, 1837, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 146–47; Synodal ukaz to Metropolitan Serafim of Saint Petersburg, May 12, 1837, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5108, ll. 2–3.

Thus, Antonii's project of establishing a school for ordinary children at Trinity-Sergius propelled Filaret, despite his initial reluctance, to take advantage of an opportunity in the Holy Synod to bring into being the type of school that they wished to establish (for the general public, but without government interference). Moreover, Antonii's idea ultimately resulted in a Synodal decree that addressed the entire empire – although it would only be in the post-Reform era that monastery-operated schools would proliferate more widely. Although the Synodal decree, following the state's lead, focused particularly on combating the Old Belief, this aspect does not appear in Filaret's correspondence with Antonii, and the reasons Trinity-Sergius gave in its own documents for establishing the school focused on “disposing [children] at an early age to piety and morality and confirming them in Orthodoxy,” without any mention of combating schism.<sup>26</sup> This episode is very important because it demonstrates that the Church was not merely a department of the state that passively implemented what the latter dictated. On the contrary, even in the restrictive age of Nicholas I, when initiative “from below” was anything but encouraged, someone like Antonii could propose a project — one that had to seize upon an opening created by the state, to be sure — that would find support in the Holy Synod and implementation as Antonii himself originally envisioned. Antonii and Filaret were not simply instruments fulfilling the state's designs; rather, they were using the state (and, indeed, the Church bureaucracy) to fulfill their own intentions to serve the people.

As Antonii intended, the school served not only those within the monastery's sphere (children of its employees), but extended out to the community to include Sergiev Posad residents, particularly orphans and the poor, where there was no school for the general public. Despite the Synodal decree in May 1837, it was not until spring of the following year that Trinity-Sergius received full permission to establish the school. Indeed, the fate of this school concerned the highest level of Church leadership, and the busy Metropolitan of Moscow was intimately involved in the smallest details. The Synod evidently debated aspects

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<sup>26</sup> Regulations for the school (1838), RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5108, l. 25; see also the report of the Governing Council to Metropolitan Filaret, February 26, 1838, ll. 4-6.

of the school in its meetings (in particular, some opposed Antonii's plan to have the pupils live inside the monastery itself).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Filaret discussed the minutiae of the school's operation with Antonii, from the number of students to admit (as usual, Antonii was more ambitious and Filaret tried to restrain him), to what the students would study, to punishment for disobedient students and rewards for good students.<sup>28</sup>

The Lavra opened the school, together with an orphanage inside the monastery to shelter those students who had no home, in the fall of 1838. As teachers, it appointed monks who had graduated from the seminary. The monastery not only offered the education free of charge, it also provided the textbooks and other supplies and even food and clothing. The Lavra originally planned to have one hundred students and offer a two-year course of study, but in response to local demand, it quickly expanded the school to a three-year course with twice as many pupils from a variety of social classes from the town of Sergiev Posad and the surrounding villages.<sup>29</sup> The first-year curriculum included the study of prayers, the Creed, and reading; the second year focused on the basic catechism, learning to read the Bible and saints' lives, and basic mathematics and writing. In the third year, the students studied the full catechism as well as Russian grammar and history, arithmetic, and geography. In addition to classroom studies, the school provided practical instruction in the Lavra's various workshops, including painting, handicrafts, metalworking, and woodworking.<sup>30</sup> By 1864, the school consisted of 6 teachers and 215 students, of whom 172 were supported by the monastery and studied at its expense whereas

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<sup>27</sup> Filaret's letters to Antonii, February 3 and April 10, 1838, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 168, 170.

<sup>28</sup> Filaret's letter to Antonii, November 20, 1838, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 182.

<sup>29</sup> Report of the Governing Council to Filaret, February 26, 1838, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5108, ll. 4–6. See also regulations of the school, *ibid.*, ll. 25–26, and d. 5108a; for the 1840s, see d. 6400. In 1847, out of 210 students, 30 were children of the Lavra's employees (so-called *shtatnosluzhiteli*, former Church peasants from the Lavra's land before secularization of 1764); from Sergiev Posad, 20 were from merchant families, 56 from petit-bourgeois (*meshchane*) families (the majority estate in the town, consisting of poor craftsmen etc.), and 31 peasants. From the surrounding villages, 12 were petit bourgeois, 41 peasants, 12 were children of retired soldiers, 6 were children of clergy, and 2 were children of government officials (Report to the Moscow Ecclesiastical Consistory, July 13, 1847, d. 6400, l. 9).

<sup>30</sup> *Pervonachal'noe narodnoe uchilishche v Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavre* (Moscow, 1850), 5–6.

43 received support from their families. A decade later the number of students reached the 330s with a greater percentage receiving support from their families.<sup>31</sup> The monastery was therefore providing a service that responded to a great need in the local community.

In the 1860s, the school for boys was transferred to the Home for the Poor, and after Archimandrite Antonii's death in 1877 the Home for the Poor passed out of direct control of the monastery (see below) and with it the monastery's direct involvement in education for a few decades. Even after that, however, the monastery sheltered and supported many orphaned boys who became part of a boys' choir that it established in the 1860s. By the early twentieth century, the choir included some forty boys, to whom the monastery offered education both in church singing and in literacy. In 1901, Trinity-Sergius decided to establish a formal school to regularize instruction and support for the boys with a permanent teacher.<sup>32</sup> The school was originally founded as a one-year parish school, but in 1907 expanded to a two-year course to provide the students with a more advanced education.<sup>33</sup> The orphans came from various parts of Russia, and many of their fathers had been killed in the Russo-Japanese war. Many remained in the Lavra after finishing school to learn iconography or a trade in one of the Lavra's workshops or its typography.<sup>34</sup> The leading initiator of the Lavra's activity in this regard was the treasurer, Archimandrite Nikon (Rozhdestvenskii), who not only actively participated in the foundation of the school for the choirboys, but also initiated the establishment of village parish schools in the region that were supported by the Lavra. Thus, in 1901 Trinity-Sergius and Archimandrite Nikon established the Krestovskaia parish school for both boys and girls in a building that belonged to the Lavra; in 1904, the Lavra founded and constructed a schoolhouse for another parish school in the village of Naugol'na. Both schools, run by monks from the monastery,

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<sup>31</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv [hereafter RGIA] f. 796 (Holy Synod), op. 146, d. 214, ll. 2-3 (for 1864); RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12235, ll. 1-10 (reports for 1874-1876).

<sup>32</sup> Report of the Governing Council to Metropolitan Vladimir, July 9, 1901, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 15955, l. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Governing Council to Metropolitan Vladimir, August 21, 1907, *ibid.* d. 17124, l. 2; see the plan for the lessons, l. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Report to the Council of Moscow Diocesan Schools, December 31, 1907, *ibid.*, l. 8.

had about forty students from local peasant families and provided not only a free education but also food and clothing.<sup>35</sup> Since the students came from peasant households and returned to their homes to help with the fieldwork, the Council of Moscow Diocesan Schools recommended that the Lavra teach agronomy as well.<sup>36</sup> In short, providing education became a very important means for the monastery to extend its social service beyond the monastery walls to the poor in the local community, and by the early twentieth century these services extended even beyond the local community of Sergiev Posad to include surrounding villages.

### **Assistance for Women: The Home for the Poor**

The most impressive philanthropic institution established by Archimandrite Antonii was the Home for the Poor (*Dom Prizreniia*), which was located outside the monastery to serve both poor local women and female pilgrims. The opportunity for this arose when a fire burned the Lavra's hotel in Sergiev Posad and the neighboring home of Countess Tatishcheva in 1833. As the monastery had recently built a new hotel, Antonii decided to turn this property into a hostel for female pilgrims. Countess Tatishcheva donated her own property for the same purpose, and two other aristocratic women — Anna Lunina and the great benefactress of the Church, Countess Anna Orlova-Chesmenskaia, donated large sums of money to the construction.<sup>37</sup> The Home for the Poor opened in 1840; aside from the hostel for female pilgrims, the almshouse for women was relocated there and a hospital and church were added. In the 1860s, the complex was expanded; it had a capacity for 250 women who were there on a long-term or permanent basis in the hospital and almshouse, and the hostel could shelter up to 2000 pilgrims a night. The boys' school was also relocated to the Home and educated over 200 students in the 1860s and over 300 students in the 1870s, as mentioned above. The boys' school continued to be

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<sup>35</sup> See the reports to the Council of Moscow Diocesan Schools from 1907 in *ibid.*, ll. 10, 12.

<sup>36</sup> The reports cited above (*ibid.*, ll. 10, 12) state that the students returned to their homes to participate in the fieldwork; for the circular from the Council of Moscow Diocesan Schools (November 3, 1908), see *ibid.*, d. 15955, ll. 23-23ob; it is unclear whether or not agronomy was added to the parish school curriculum.

<sup>37</sup> See RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5474 for details.

operated by monks, who also served as teachers. Antonii administered the rest of the complex with a supervisor and an aristocratic woman, both appointed by the monastery. Unlike the Lavra's philanthropic institutions directed toward men, where the brothers themselves served the people, the monks did not minister to women directly except in a spiritual capacity as confessors and priests.<sup>38</sup>

In 1867, shortly after Metropolitan Filaret's death, Archimandrite Antonii opened an orphanage and school for girls in the Home for the Poor. He later explained to Filaret's successor, Metropolitan Innokentii (Veniaminov, 1797-1879) that "women who come on pilgrimage, falling ill, enter the hospital of the Home for the Poor built and supported by the Community of Saint Sergius. Some of the poor who arrive with young children also die from [their] illnesses, leaving orphaned poor and homeless children. By order of the supervisor of the Home for the Poor, some — after contact with relatives — return to their families, but others have no one to turn to and hence, for humanitarian reasons, must remain in the Home."<sup>39</sup> Antonii claimed that Filaret himself blessed the project and had donated 1000 rubles in support. As earlier with the school for boys, this was the first school for girls in Sergiev Posad and local demand caused Antonii to expand his original project to include daughters of the town's residents. When the school opened, it included 17 girls who lived in the Home and another 16 pupils who lived at home. The girls were taught reading and writing, basic mathematics, religious subjects, as well as practical skills in handicrafts and needlework.<sup>40</sup>

In establishing a school for girls in the 1860s, as in establishing a school for ordinary boys in the 1830s, Trinity-Sergius was ahead of its time. Although Antonii's initiatives in philanthropy eventually won Filaret's support, Innokentii strongly objected to the girls' school.

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<sup>38</sup> *Aleksandro-Mariinskii dom prizreniia pri Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi lavre: istoricheskii ocherk* (Moscow, 1892); RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, dd. 12283, 12735. Files such as d. 11838 include information about all the permanent residents of the Home.

<sup>39</sup> Report of Archimandrite Antonii to Metropolitan Innokentii, January 27, 1869, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 10892, l. 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 1-3.



In a memorandum to the Holy Synod written after Antonii's death in 1877, Innokentii asserted that, despite Antonii's claim, there was in fact no evidence that Filaret had given his permission for the school's establishment. Further, Innokentii wrote that he himself allowed Antonii to continue the school in 1869, when Antonii first reported to him about it, but that he told Antonii that it was inappropriate for a men's monastery to continue to operate a school for girls. Antonii evidently ignored this advice and the school continued.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the school expanded dramatically, so that it educated 400 girls between 1870 and 1875, about one-quarter of whom lived in the orphanage and were supported by monastery.<sup>42</sup>

In March 1876, with his health declining, Antonii decided to transfer the Home for the Poor from the domain of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra and place it under the guardianship of the empress.<sup>43</sup> The transfer took place after his death in 1877, and the institution was renamed the Aleksandro-Mariinskii Home for the Poor. Evidently, Antonii made this decision without consulting Metropolitan Innokentii, who was clearly unhappy with the move and perhaps even wished to reverse it, although this was prevented by his death in 1879. Indeed, it is possible that Antonii initiated this transfer precisely because he knew that Innokentii would close the girls' school, and perhaps even feared that Innokentii would close or curb the entire institution.<sup>44</sup> The charter for the Home was drawn up by the chief procurator of the Holy Synod, D. A. Tolstoy, and was confirmed by the Holy Synod in 1879. Although no longer directly subordinate to Trinity-Sergius, the monastery continued to support the Home financially, donating 21,387 rubles annually (still covering most of its expenses of approximately 27,500 rubles in the 1890s). Moreover, new buildings were added and most divisions of the Home (except for

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<sup>41</sup> Memorandum about the Home for the Poor, RGIA f. 797, op. 96, d. 57, ll. 9-21, esp. ll. 11-12. This document is without date and attribution of authorship, but it is clear it came from Metropolitan Innokentii at some point between Antonii's death and Innokentii's (1877-1879). See also RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, ll. 107-20.

<sup>42</sup> Antonii's report, March 3, 1876, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, l. 156 ob.

<sup>43</sup> RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735 on the transfer, esp. Antonii's proposal to the Governing Council, l. 136.

<sup>44</sup> There are hints of this in Innokentii's report: RGIA f. 797, op. 96, d. 57, l. 14 ob-15.

the boys' school) continued to expand. In 1892, for example, the Home consisted of the girls' school with 35 girls who lived in the orphanage and an additional 92 girls from the town; the boys' school with 50 boys who lived in the orphanage and an additional 75 from the town; the hospital had received 96 women and distributed free medicine to 3,419 women and children; the almshouse sheltered 65 elderly women; and the pilgrims' hostel took in nearly 63,000 women.<sup>45</sup> In short, Trinity-Sergius sought to address the needs of poor female pilgrims who came to the monastery by offering them shelter, medical assistance, and caring for their orphaned children, but as it established philanthropic institutions to meet these needs, such institutions broadened their vision to include the needs of local poor as well.

## Conclusions

The charitable activities of Trinity-Sergius not only provided services to those who came to the monastery itself or the local community, they also extended beyond to include financial support for poor churches and victims of war and disaster both locally and throughout Russia. Far from being so “otherworldly” and unresponsive to events affecting the nation, the monastery assisted those affected by the social turmoil of the 1905 Revolution, helping those affected by the railway strike (since the town received fewer visitors), and providing 23,735 lunches and 14,350 dinners to poor residents over two months in the winter of 1905-1906.<sup>46</sup> According to a report of 1906, Trinity-Sergius and its dependency Gethsemane Skete spent 81,810 rubles on charity that year, a substantial proportion of the monastery's budget.<sup>47</sup> During World War I, Trinity-Sergius established an infirmary for wounded soldiers, gave shelter and support to refugees from the occupied territories, and donated large sums of money to assist victims of war.<sup>48</sup> On the whole, therefore, Trinity-Sergius actively engaged in

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<sup>45</sup> *Otchet o sostoianii nakhodiashchegosia pod vysochaishim eia imperatorskago velichestva gosudaryni imperatrity Marii Feodorovny pokrovitel'stvom Aleksandro-Mariinskago Doma Prizreniia za 1891 god* (Sergiev Posad, 1892).

<sup>46</sup> RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 16739.

<sup>47</sup> Report on expenses for philanthropy in 1906, *ibid.*, d. 25108, ll. 2-3. The report estimated twenty-three percent for expenses on philanthropy. See also Kenworthy, *Heart of Russia*, 261.

<sup>48</sup> Scott M. Kenworthy, “The Mobilization of Piety: Monasticism and the Great War in Russia, 1914-

a wide array of philanthropic activities, providing services such as an almshouse for the elderly poor both of Sergiev Posad and other regions as well as a hospital for both local residents and pilgrims, a hostel for pilgrims, and educational institutions for both orphans who lived in the monastery and poor children of the surrounding region.

Trinity-Sergius was certainly on the leading edge of expanding monasteries' charitable involvement in nineteenth-century Russia. Particularly in the post-Reform period, other monasteries also began to operate charitable institutions. The number of hospitals and almshouses operated by monasteries increased from 56 in 1840 to 295 in 1900, with the most intensive growth coming after 1880. Such institutions continued to proliferate, reaching 403 by 1914 — about 40 percent of all monastic institutions. Moreover, in 1840 private individuals or societies supported half of the hospitals and almshouses located on monastery property; by 1914, these non-monastic sources accounted for a mere 6.9 percent of the funding. Whereas earlier some authorities, both monastic and diocesan, regarded charitable institutions as an undue burden, after mid-century both the government and the Holy Synod encouraged monastic charitable activities, although it is clear that in most cases the initiative came from the individual monasteries themselves.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to hospitals and almshouses, monasteries also operated schools both for children of the clerical estate and the general public. Unfortunately, the data on these monastic schools are fragmentary and incomplete. In 1870, out of the 71 monasteries in the Moscow diocese, 8 operated almshouses which supported 84 men and 226 women; Trinity-Sergius apparently operated the only monastic school in the diocese. In 1910, the monasteries in the diocese operated 15 almshouses (7 for men, 8 for women) and 12 hospitals (4 for men, 8 for women), which served a total of 593 people. The Moscow monasteries also ran 46 schools (25 operated by men's monasteries, 21 by women's), with

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1916," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 52 (2004): 388-401.

<sup>49</sup> Zyrianov, *Russkie monastyri*, 132–37; 208–10; the Synod, for example, issued circular decrees encouraging the formation of schools for girls (especially girls of the clerical estate) in convents in 1867-68 (RGIA f. 796, op. 148, d. 1556).

1,234 boys and 807 girls.<sup>50</sup> Although convents and women's religious communities were generally more active in philanthropic work, it should be noted that men's monasteries in Moscow diocese operated nearly as many almshouses and educated even more children.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the example of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra in the nineteenth century. To begin with, it is evident that the monastery was actively engaged in philanthropic activities, and that these activities touched hundreds of thousands of poor pilgrims that came to the monastery every year and also made a significant contribution to the local community. It is therefore clear that Russian Orthodoxy cannot simply be described as "otherworldly," ignoring the earthly problems of its flock. One should therefore be very cautious about making any essentialist, generalized statements about the Orthodox Church's reputed 'otherworldliness' and non-engagement with the world. Rather, one should look to particular historical circumstances to understand the Church's relationship to the world in any given age. In the case of the Orthodox Church in Imperial Russia (1700-1917), it was at least partially state policy that resulted in the Orthodox Church adopting a passive attitude toward social action. Although Peter the Great wanted the Church to be "useful" and did not discourage philanthropy, the more important impact of his reforms was to remove the Church from engagement with the world because that, in his view, was "secular," and therefore the domain of the state. This tendency was reinforced by Catherine's reforms. The result was that from roughly the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Church leaders themselves had come to accept this notion of the Church's 'otherworldly' sphere of activity.

But it is equally clear that engagement in social action was a tradition that had been broken at least since the time of Peter the Great and that had to be recovered through effort and experimentation — much as the

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<sup>50</sup> RGIA f. 796, op. 442, d. 380, ll. 6-8 (annual report for 1870), and d. 2399, l. 11 (annual report for 1910). In 1895, there were 18 almshouses (7 for men, 11 for women) that supported 305 people (76 men and 229 women), and 14 hospitals (2 for men, 12 for women) that supported 185 people, out of a total of 73 monasteries (46 men's, 27 women's); there were 17 schools (13 for boys, 4 for girls), with a total of 654 participants (d. 1569, ll. 8-9).

Russian Church is endeavoring to recover such traditions in the post-Soviet era. This process in the modern age (either in the nineteenth century or the twenty-first) inevitably entails the transformation of those traditions and differences of opinion as to how to actualize them, as the tensions between Antonii and Filaret or Antonii and Innokentii demonstrate. Although the reforms of Peter I and Catherine II did have an effect on the structure of the Church and the mentalities of its leadership, they did not simply turn the Church into a department of state, as is usually assumed. The usual narrative of the Church in Imperial Russia maintains that the state initiated and the Church merely implemented. But the case of Trinity-Sergius demonstrates that the figures such as Archimandrite Antonii were able to move and act as independent agents in pursuit of their own vision of social engagement. The state's restrictiveness, especially in the era of Nicholas I, acted more to deter such initiative rather than create or direct it. Nevertheless, Antonii was able to bring his vision to fruition, and in the process change attitudes within the hierarchy (at least of Metropolitan Filaret) and have an impact even at the level of the Holy Synod.

Thus, by the mid-nineteenth century, attitudes within the Church were beginning to change, which coincided with major changes in the Russian state and its relationship to society that opened the door for much greater social involvement by the Church. The charitable efforts of Trinity-Sergius were not only insular, directed toward those who belonged to or came to the monastery, but were responsive enough to the needs of the local community to expand its philanthropic institutions to address those needs. Moreover, the monastery was attuned not only to the local community but also to the national one. In fact, throughout the long nineteenth century, the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, as other local monastic and church communities, actively contributed to the fledgling development of civil society in late Imperial Russia by such charitable activities that were initiated from below rather dictated from above, whether from the Church or state bureaucracy. Far more research is needed before a more complete understanding of the role of the Orthodox Church in pre-revolutionary Russian society can be reached.