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HERETICS AND COLONIZERS

Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus

Nicholas B. Breyfogle

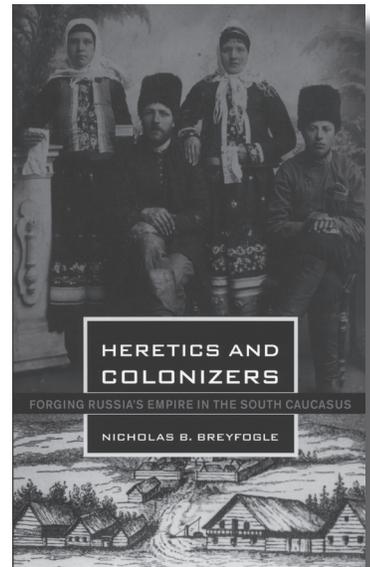
In *Heretics and Colonizers*, Nicholas B. Breyfogle explores the dynamic intersection of Russian borderland colonization and popular religious culture. He reconstructs the story of the religious sectarians (Dukhobors, Molokans, and Subbotniks) who settled, either voluntarily or by force, in the newly conquered lands of Transcaucasia in the nineteenth century. By ordering this migration in 1830, Nicholas I attempted at once to cleanse Russian Orthodoxy of heresies and to populate the newly annexed lands with ethnic Slavs who would shoulder the burden of imperial construction.

Breyfogle focuses throughout on the lives of the peasant settlers, their interactions with the peoples and environment of the South Caucasus, and their evolving relations with Russian state power. He draws on a wide variety of archival sources, including a large collection of previously unexamined letters, memoirs, and other documents produced by the sectarians that allow him unprecedented insight into the experiences of colonization and religious life. Although the settlers suffered greatly in their early years in hostile surroundings, they in time proved to be not only model Russian colonists but also among the most prosperous of the Empire's peasants. Banished to the empire's periphery, the sectarians ironically came to play indispensable roles in the tsarist imperial agenda.

The book culminates with the dramatic events of the Dukhobor pacifist rebellion, a movement that shocked the tsarist government and received international attention. In the early twentieth century, as the Russian state sought to replace the sectarians with Orthodox settlers, thousands of Molokans and Dukhobors immigrated to North America, where their descendants remain to this day.

NICHOLAS B. BREYFOGLE is Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University.

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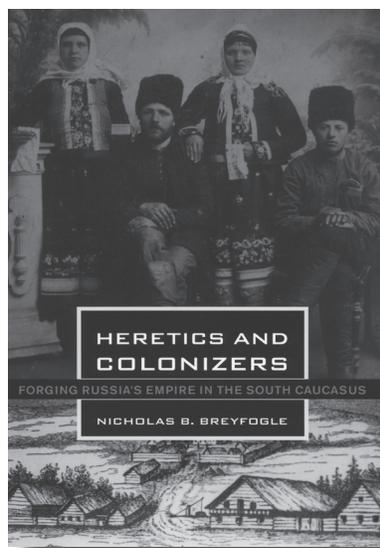
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PRAISE FOR *Heretics and Colonizers*

"*Heretics and Colonizers* is a rich, expansively argued, and panoramic book that will transform the way in which historians of late imperial Russia conceptualize its polity and society. Nicholas B. Breyfogle tells his story in great detail, skillfully referring to European, African, and North American history and incorporating stunning archival research from a panoply of central and local government archives. Breyfogle's meditations on the proactive and community-based character of Russian peasant behavior and voice are fascinating. This remarkable book about the sectarian Russian peasants who made an empire will be required reading in the field."

—Frank Wcislo, Vanderbilt University

"In the growing literature on the Russian Empire, Nicholas B. Breyfogle's book on the tsarist colonization of Transcaucasia stands out as an exemplary account of how the changing attitudes of the autocracy toward its imperial peripheries, and the activities of exiled dissenters, shaped the nature of Russian colonialism. From a place to send religious heretics, the South Caucasus became a region to be integrated into the empire and colonized by hardworking 'Russians.' This rich work opens up the southern borderlands for readers interested in Russia's imperial history, the story of empires, and the unique experience of the faithful as they struggled to survive on the frontier."

—Ronald Grigor Suny, The University of Chicago

"*Heretics and Colonizers* is a methodologically rich, historiographically sophisticated, and exhaustively researched story of how religious exiles became, up to a point, unwitting agents of empire in the Transcaucasus. Nicholas B. Breyfogle has written a model history of the tense and tentative meeting point of colonization, empire building, and popular religiosity."

—Thomas M. Barrett, St. Mary's College of Maryland

"An outstanding work of scholarship, *Heretics and Colonizers* offers fresh insight into the subtle and complex relationships between religious sectarianism, tsarist nation-building, and frontier identity. By delving into the lives of Dukhobors, Molokans, and Subbotniks in the Caucasus, Nicholas B. Breyfogle reveals the rich tapestry of Russia's sectarian past. It is the most comprehensive, the most reliable, and the most readable book on this subject and period that I have encountered."

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