

VLADIMIR SOLOVIEV (“THE RUSSIAN NEWMAN”) ON CHRISTIAN POLITICS AND ECUMENISM

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Regarded as the greatest of Russian philosophers, Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) was praised by Pope John Paul II for establishing “a fruitful relationship between philosophy and the word of God.” As the Christian philosopher of Godmanhood and critic of naturalism and atheistic humanism, he saw the urgency of ending the tragic schism between Russian Orthodoxy and Rome. His ecclesiological masterpiece, Russia and the Universal Church was an unequivocal profession of faith in the Catholic doctrine of the Roman primacy. French Jesuit Michel d’Herbigny’s seminal book Vladimir Soloviev: a Russian Newman influenced many writers who similarly saw certain resemblances between two of the pioneers of nineteenth-century ecumenical thought, Soloviev and the Blessed John Henry Newman. Soloviev’s theocratic theology of politics and development of the social gospel remain of particular interest to students of Catholic social doctrine.

The greatest of Russian philosophers and an acclaimed spiritual genius, Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900), died at the country home of his friend, Prince Troubetzkoy, after receiving the Last Sacraments from a Russian Orthodox priest. Soloviev would be called, not without reason, by his English, American, and French admirers, “the Russian Newman.” The reference is to Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, who as one of the intellectual leaders of the Church of England gave impetus to the Oxford Movement, which saw Protestants begin to reconsider the nature of the Church and the need to end the divisions among Christians that impeded the mission of the Church in a rapidly de-Christianizing Europe.

French Jesuit Michel d’Herbigny’s *Vladimir Soloviev: A Russian Newman* (which would appear in six editions, translated into English in 1918) did much to establish certain resemblances between two of the giants of nineteenth-century thought, one an English priest and the other a Russian layman whose studies led him to believe that he had never been completely outside the fold of the Catholic Church. Soloviev’s view of Russian Orthodoxy was not unlike Newman’s view of Anglicanism. Soloviev held that “the Slavonic nations were never absolutely cut off from the Catholic Church, because the historic excommunication [of 1054] affected Constantinople and not Russia.”¹

As historic changes take place in the relationship between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church (namely, the establishment by Pope Benedict XVI of personal ordinariates for Anglicans seeking communion with Rome), it may be instructive and supportive of ecumenical progress with Orthodoxy to look more closely at the life and thought of Vladimir Soloviev.

The Significance of Soloviev

Leonard Walton furnishes an interesting description of the famous Russian philosopher and thinker in the *Dublin Review*:

[His] most striking feature was the melancholy, penetrating, grey-blue eyes peering from beneath jet-black brows. ‘Such faces,’ wrote the Frenchman de Vogue who met him in Cairo, ‘must have inspired the monastic painters of the past who sought a model for Christ of their icons. It was the face of Christ as seen by the Slavic people. It is the face of a dreamer, visionary or prophet—noble, idealistic, full of latent, subdued fires.’ Soloviev was noted for his personal asceticism, goodness and charity. He would often give beggars whatever money he possessed as well as items of his own clothing to those in need. He was poor, had no home of his own, ate sparsely (mostly vegetables and tea), and had resolved to lead a single life at the age of 20, living (as the philosopher Rozanov noted) the life of “an unconsecrated priest.”²

Noted as the first systematic Russian philosopher and a creative genius, Soloviev would be acclaimed by the distinguished Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar as “perhaps second only to Thomas Aquinas as the greatest artist of order and organization in the history of thought.”³ He was admired by Pope John Paul II, who observed that “philosophy in the Fathers [of the Church] ends up in theology (as in the case, for example, in modern times) of Vladimir Soloviev.”⁴ In *Fides et Ratio*, Soloviev is heralded among those “recent thinkers” who established a “fruitful relationship between philosophy and the word of God.”⁵

In a 2003 address, Pope John Paul the Great declared “the Church’s need to breathe with both her lungs: the Eastern Tradition and the Western Tradition.” He continued:

The unity of the Church was one of the main aspirations of Vladimir Soloviev, who was very familiar with the prayer that Christ addressed to his Father during the Last Supper (cf. Jn 17:20-23). Raised in deep Orthodox spirituality from his earliest years, he lived through various cultural periods during which he had the opportunity to become acquainted with Western philosophical thought. Disappointed, however, by the incomplete responses that human reflection offered to the anguish that tormented his heart, in 1872 he returned to the Christian faith of his childhood. His thought, based on God's wisdom and on the spiritual foundations of life, like his insight concerning moral philosophy and the meaning of human history, influenced the rich flourishing of contemporary Russian thought and also made an impact on European culture by fostering a fertile and enriching dialogue concerning the fundamental issues of theology and spirituality.... The study of his thought on the universal nature of Christ's Church will highlight once again the duty of Christian communities of East and West to listen to Christ's desire with regard to the unity of his disciples. Soloviev was convinced that it is only in the Church that humanity will be able to coexist in full solidarity. May the rediscovery of the treasures of his thought foster a better understanding between East and West and, in particular, hasten the progress of all Christians towards full unity in the one fold of Christ (cf. Jn 10: 16.).⁶

Soloviev as Philosopher of Godmanhood and Critic of Naturalism

Soloviev is regarded as nineteenth-century Russia's foremost spiritual philosopher, "the philosopher of Godmanhood" (i.e., the union of God with man and man with God), and "perhaps the most profound and searching apostle of Christian unity in the nineteenth century world."⁷ He was the most formidable critic of the atheistic materialism that had been imported into "Holy Russia." The son of Sergei Mikhailovich Soloviev, who had written a monumental history of Russia, Vladimir at the age of 13 became an atheist. By the age of 20, however, he had rediscovered Christianity and became a "God-seeker" who would be the friend and intimate of Dostoyevsky and even of Tolstoy, who would reject all organized Christianity. Of a poetic and mystical temperament and gifted with remarkable intellectual powers, Soloviev's commitment to historical Christianity reflected his regained belief in God and the supernatural. For Soloviev, "Secular humanism

cannot survive on a philosophic base which contends in effect that ‘*man is a hairless monkey and therefore must lay down his life for his friends.*’”⁸ In his rejection of all philosophic naturalism, he would declare: “Not only do I believe in everything supernatural but strictly speaking I believe in nothing else.”⁹ His ruling passion in the last years of his life was to familiarize his fellow Russians and Slavs with the idea of *Godmanhood*, the unity of mankind in a universal Church centered in the Roman Chair of Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and the vision of a theocratic Christian society achieving the ideal union of church and state that would bring about the social reign of Christ the King.

In his works one can view the development of his thought on Godmanhood. Soloviev stood in the tradition of the Greek Fathers, which emphasized ‘deification’ or ‘divinization’ of the Christian. It declared that God became man in order that men would become “partakers of the divine nature,” that is, sons of God, sharing in the divine life of God by the sanctifying grace given in Baptism. This union of divinity with humanity was the goal of creation and was accomplished individually in one Person, Christ true God and true man, uniting perfectly two natures without confusion or division.

After the Incarnation, the historical work of God had entered a new phase. It is not concerned any longer with a physical and individual unity but with a moral and social unity wherein the whole human race is to be united with God. According to Soloviev, this realization of the Kingdom of God is to be established on earth by a theocracy. Not for Soloviev was the ideology of secular liberal democracy nor that of proletarian socialism, but rather what he termed “free theocracy.” His notion of theocracy, which stemmed from his organic view of Christianity, he defined thus: “Free theocracy is that society in which all three spheres—the Church, the State, and the local authority—each maintaining its relative independence, are not externally or mechanically separated, but mutually penetrate each other as integral parts of a single organic being, indispensable to each other and united in a common goal and a common life.”¹⁰ This free theocracy, he came to believe, was embodied in the Church Christ founded; but it was a Church regarded not only as a spiritual hierarchy or an invisible society of souls but as the whole organism of a theocratic Christian society united with Christ under one spiritual and visible head. This theocratic society of the universal Church involved a union of church and state wherein the temporal power of the Christian state had the mission to help the Church to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Soloviev’s theocratic vision was that of a Russian nation reintegrated into the Catholic Church and seen as an imperial power genuinely Christian and Catholic and

dedicated to enabling the Church to establish political and social peace and justice in Europe. A Catholic Russia could thus fulfill the Church's universal vocation to inaugurate a new Christian civilization through the great, uniting force of love.

Soloviev's Theology of Politics and his Social Gospel

Soloviev's theology of Christian politics and exposition of a social gospel resulted from a remarkable event in his life that occurred on March 28, 1881 when he was 28 years old and lecturing on Slavophile themes in St. Petersburg. The young philosopher made a plea on behalf of the six members of the terrorist organization (The Will of the People) who were on trial for the assassination of Czar Alexander II. He told his audience that the new Czar had "the unprecedented opportunity to affirm the Christian principle of all-forgiveness" by pardoning the assassins of his father. When greeted by bravos and angry shouts, he returned to the podium to explain that he was not agreeing with the assassins but that a Christian state should not employ the death penalty. A few days later, five of the defendants were hanged, and the sixth, who was pregnant, was commuted to life imprisonment. Czar Alexander III, whom Soloviev had urged to become the "new Charlemagne," proceeded to reprimand Soloviev for "inappropriate opinions" and halted his public lecturing. Because the young philosopher was considered a rising star among conservative nationalists and the son of a deceased historian who had been a tutor to the Czar, the sentence was regarded as a lenient one.

"This was the great turning point in the life of Vladimir Soloviev," writes Soloviev scholar Greg Gaut.

Not long after this event, he resigned his university post, and began a career as an independent scholar and publicist. The lecture also marked the beginning of his break with the Slavophile and conservative nationalist circles and his crossing over to the liberal milieu. Finally, the speech represented his first public stand in favor of what he later called 'Christian politics'. This term referred to his belief that all Christians, even the Czar, were called to apply Christian moral precepts in both private and public life (e.g., to domestic policy, economics, even foreign affairs), and that when they responded to this call, they contributed to humanity's salvation by building the Kingdom of God on earth.¹¹

In the second volume of *The National Question in Russia* (1888), Soloviev explained his idea of Christian politics:

The true good for Russia consists in the development of Christian politics, in applying the principles of true religion to all social and international relationships, and in resolving all existing problems of social and political life in a Christian way. Christianity, if we really accept it as an absolute truth, must be put into practice in all affairs and relationships of life. There cannot be two supreme principles of life. This is the religious and moral axiom: one cannot serve two masters.¹²

He rejected any “complete separation between morality and politics” and insisted that his view calling for a Christian politics was not at all unrealistic and utopian. “Such politics are not utopian in the derogatory sense of that term, i.e., as not wanting to face evil reality and trying to realize ideals in a void. On the contrary, Christian politics proceed from reality and first and foremost want to be a remedy against actual evil.”¹³

It was Soloviev’s theology of Godmanhood which was at the heart of his philosophy of history and his understanding of the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God wherein Christians must support a political/social/economic/cultural order that is consistent with God’s will for human society and reject what is against it. The Christian’s task is to regenerate and transform social institutions and make them as compatible with the Kingdom of God (which he declared to be the central idea of the Gospels) as possible. Soloviev emphasized that building the Kingdom of God was an earthly and “theandric” task—that is, shared equally by a divinized (graced) humanity and by God. “The idea of the Kingdom of God,” he wrote, “necessarily leads us (that is, every sincere and conscientious Christian) to the duty of doing what we can to realize Christian principles in the collective life of mankind and transform all our social institutions in the spirit of a higher truth. In other words, it leads to Christian politics.”¹⁴

As Gaut explains, Soloviev’s view of Christian politics changed over the course of the 1880s and 1890s. Although he at first conceived of the Kingdom of God being realized through a theocracy united under the spiritual headship of the pope and the temporal authority of the czar, he later regarded this notion as “fantastic.” Pope Leo XIII is said to have commented on Soloviev’s idealistic scheme: “a beautiful idea, but, short of a miracle, impossible to carry out.” Disappointed, Soloviev thereafter thought of “Christian politics as the responsibility of Christian nations, Christian governments, and individual Christians.”¹⁵

However, Soloviev's legacy is a rich social doctrine—regarding the mission of the Church toward the world—that remains of value today, and which would complement his outstanding work for Christian unity. His more mature thought indicates that he would have been delighted with Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* and the manner in which it spoke of how “the earthly and heavenly city penetrate one another,” with the Church “communicating divine life over all the earth, notably in the way it heals and elevates the dignity of the human person, in the way it consolidates society.”¹⁶ His writings condemning anti-Semitism and promoting religious liberty may be said to prefigure Vatican II's documents dealing with those important subjects.

Soloviev, the Russian Newman

Like Cardinal Newman, who was led to the Catholic Church from Anglicanism by a profound study of the fifth-century Donatist Schism in North Africa so vigorously opposed by St. Augustine, Soloviev was led to a repudiation of the separation of the Byzantine Orthodox Churches from Rome that was set into motion by the regrettable excommunications of 1054 A.D.

“The anguish of mind that preceded Soloviev's profession of faith, and the ostracism that followed it, were not unlike Newman's,” D'Herbigny observes. “Both felt at first a strong prejudice against the Papacy, and in the case of each this prejudice was overcome by loyalty to religion, fervor in prayer, desire to see the light, and resolution to do God's will. Both suffered keenly when they felt it to be their duty to give up the instruction of others. Newman ceased his sermons in St. Mary's of Oxford, and Soloviev was removed from his lectureship in St. Petersburg.”¹⁷

Moreover, when Soloviev published *The Great Debate and Christian Politics* (1883), expressing a certain sympathy for Catholic teaching on the papacy, it produced in Russia the same widespread and sensational impact and controversy that Newman's famous *Tract 90* had in the Church of England.

D'Herbigny noted yet other similarities between Newman and Soloviev:

... Each possessed the soul of a philosopher; each was an intuitive theologian, an artist and a scholar; each had deep affections and perfect purity. Their tastes seem to have been identical; they both loved Holy Scripture and the Fathers,

especially St. Augustine; both studied ecclesiastical history and the philosophy of religious development; both strove to raise human knowledge to God, and to inculcate the daily duties of religion... Both were impelled to sacrifice earthly friendships that they might follow Christ; both were so passionately enamoured of their country and the Catholic Church as to offer themselves to undergo any suffering, if only a reconciliation could be effected between these objects of their love.¹⁸

However, the Swiss Catholic theologian von Balthasar noted that in some ways Soloviev was different from Newman, whose background lay in an Anglicanism that had a strong Calvinist flavor. Soloviev was “aware of already possessing the entire catholicity of the faith of the Creed and of bringing with him to the Latin Church the rich treasure of Eastern wisdom and speculative trinitarian sophiology.” Though he had “a triumphal way of showing his Orthodox brothers the plain necessity of a concrete center in Rome and of mercilessly unveiling the sins, delusions and cowardice of the Eastern Church [with respect to its enslavement by the State], yet he loved the Church of his origin no less than Newman did his own; both were noble hearts, but Newman spoke more softly.”¹⁹

Led to engage in a profound study of Church history and the origins of dissidence between Russia and Rome, Soloviev, an acute critic of the Russian and Slav religious scene yet possessing a passionate love for the land of his birth, had come by 1888 to the personal belief that, “Russia is not formally and regularly separated from the Catholic Church. It occupies in this respect an abnormal and undecided position, eminently favorable to reunion. The false and anti-Catholic doctrines, taught in our seminaries and theological colleges are not binding upon the Russian Church as a whole, nor do they in any way affect the faith of the people.”²⁰

Von Balthasar captured well the view of Soloviev concerning the schisms that disgraced the history of the Church:

The great schisms, both Eastern and Protestant, are pure scandal; they cannot be justified from a Christian point in any way at all...Before the separation of the Churches, the Byzantine Church, out of loveless political envy and the lust for honour, had surrendered to the service of the Emperor and so deprived itself of its Catholic, supranational liberty.²¹

Soloviev would be profoundly affected by what the Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church had so urgently insisted upon with regard to the sin of schism: namely, that as St. Irenaeus of Lyons noted in the third century, no good to the Church results from schism that outweighs the immense harm done to it and its faithful members as well as to the dissenters themselves. It was in the third phase of his intellectual life (after 1880) as a renowned professor of philosophy (but continually harassed by czarist bureaucrats and censors who sought to ban his writings) that Soloviev was to occupy himself fully with the split between west and east and the tragic results of Russia's separation from Rome. A leading Russian Orthodox theologian, Georges Florovsky, notes that Soloviev "formally raised" the "problem of Christian Reunion" in Russia. "His main concern was with the 'Great Controversy', that is, with the schism between East and West."²² Soloviev pursued that passion in a series of remarkable articles, pamphlets, and books, including: "Schism in the Russian People and Society" (1881); *The Great Debate and Christian Politics* (1883); *Dogmatic Development of the Church and the Union of the Church* (1886); "The Russian Idea" (1888); and "St. Vladimir and the Christian State" (1888).

Soloviev's French Masterpiece, *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*

It was in 1889 that his remarkable work, *Russia and the Universal Church*, was published. It revealed his increasingly certain conviction that the Orthodox were in desperate need of the Petrine primacy to perfect the earthly unity of the Church, to preserve the freedom and independence of the Church, and to overcome the evils of the exaggerated nationalisms that crippled the apostolic and missionary energies of the autocephalous Eastern churches. Written in French, it had to be published in France due to his constant battle with the censors in Czarist Russia who were anti-Catholic nationalists and imperialists eager to expand the Russian Empire to dominate all the Slav peoples. They were fiercely opposed to any rapprochement with the West, and especially with Catholicism. As von Balthasar wrote, "Soloviev's *Russia and the Universal Church* is a brilliant apologia.... In its clarity, verve and subtlety it belongs among the masterpieces of ecclesiology."²³ It was in that brilliant work that Soloviev wrote:

Jesus Christ, in revealing to men the Kingdom of God which is not of this world, gave them all the necessary means of realizing this Kingdom in the world. Having affirmed in his

High Priestly Prayer that the final aim of his work was the perfect unity of all, Our Lord desired to provide an actual organic basis for this work by founding His visible Church and by giving it a single head in the person of St. Peter as the guarantee of its unity. If there is in the Gospels any delegation of authority, it is this. Jesus Christ gave no sanction or promise whatsoever to any temporal power. He founded only the Church, and He founded it on the monarchial power of Peter: 'Thou art Peter, and on this Rock I will build My Church.'²⁴

Soloviev struck at the very root of the caesaropapism (i.e., the emperor or any temporal power controlling the administration and external affairs of the church) then afflicting the Eastern churches, leaving them enslaved or dominated by their respective governments. He realized only too well with respect to the theoretical "symphonia" (i.e., one of collaboration of church and state that Byzantine theologians traditionally professed) that that symphonia had actually masked the subordination of the church to the emperor or to the modern state. The Byzantine Church in its Greek or Russian form had never been able to liberate itself from the emperors, the Ottoman sultans, the czars, or, later, from the petty rulers of the other Slav nation-states. In contrast, Soloviev wrote:

The Christian State ... must be dependent upon the Church founded by Christ, and the Church itself is dependent upon the head which Christ has given it. In a word, it is through Peter that the Christian Caesar must share in the kingship of Christ. He can possess no authority apart from him who has received the fullness of all authority; he cannot reign apart from him who holds the Keys of the Kingdom. The State, if it is to be Christian, must be subject to the Church of Christ; but if this subjection is to be genuine, the Church must be independent of the State, it must possess a centre of unity outside and above the State, it must be in truth the Universal Church.²⁵

It was in this same work that Soloviev uttered his personal profession of the Catholic faith from which he never swerved, despite his receiving on his deathbed Holy Communion from a Russian Orthodox priest. The latter event has been interpreted by various Russian Orthodox writers as constituting a repudiation of Soloviev's "papist" convictions, but it is explained easily enough considering the difficulties of obtaining the services of a Catholic priest of either Latin or Byzantine rite and

Soloviev's conviction that the great Reunion Council of Florence (1439) had never been fully abrogated by the separated Greco-Russian Churches.²⁶ He was aware, too, that any Catholic *in extremis* could receive the Last Rites from any validly ordained priest if access to a Catholic priest was not possible. Then, too, there is the fact that four years before his death, on February 18, 1896, he had made a profession of the Catholic faith in the presence of Father Nicholas Tolstoy in the chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes in Moscow.²⁷

It is important to stress, however, an aspect of Soloviev's ecclesiology that was peculiar to him and would set him apart from the conversion experience of Newman, namely Soloviev's settled conviction that he was both Russian Orthodox and Catholic (which stemmed from his view of the Council of Florence). "By the 1880s," Leon Tretjakewitsch explains, Soloviev "had become persuaded that both the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches were parts of the Universal Church, Christ's Mystical Body, their historical separation never having destroyed their mystical unity." He continues:

Coming to recognize the papacy as the legitimate centre of ecclesiastical unity, Soloviev believed the external union of the two Churches should be restored. Even as an Orthodox he considered himself a member of the Universal Church. He regarded his act of 1896 [receiving Holy Communion in the Moscow Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes after confessing the Tridentine Symbol of faith] as an external affirmation of a unity already existing within himself and not as a 'passing over' from one Church to another.²⁸

Thus, Soloviev was not an advocate of individual conversion; he considered it unnecessary since the churches were already mystically one. He never recanted his views on the necessity of the papacy as the divinely instituted centre of unity, and upheld the primacy of Peter and the pope to the very end of his life. In his writings will be found some remarkable defenses of Catholic teaching on the Filioque and the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God. Like Newman, the author of a classic study on the subject, the Russian philosopher taught that there had indeed occurred a development of Christian doctrine in the first millennium of the Church's history—a teaching opposed by some Russian Orthodox theologians. In *The Great Debate and Christian Politics*, he reminded the Russian people, "Some enigmatic words of the Gospel plus a tomb in Rome—that is the true foundation of all the Pope's rights and privileges."²⁹

In *Russia and the Universal Church* Soloviev summed up most powerfully his profound religious convictions concerning the Roman primacy (obtained from his study of the schism between East and West as well as the history of the papacy that he had begun in 1881):

As a member of the true and venerable Eastern or Greco-Russian Orthodox Church which does not speak through an anti-canonical synod nor through the employees of the secular power, but through the utterances of her great Fathers and Doctors. I recognize as supreme judge in matters of religion him who has been recognized by such as St. Irenaeus, St. Dionysius the Great, St. Athanasius the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril, St. Flavian, the Blessed Theodoret, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Theodore of the Studium, St. Ignatius, etc., etc.—namely the Apostle Peter, who lives in his successors and who has not heard in vain Our Lord’s words: “Thou art Peter and upon this Rock I will build My Church”; “Strengthen thy brethren”; “Feed My Sheep”; “Feed My lambs”. . .

Your word, O peoples of the world, is free and universal Theocracy, the true solidarity of all nations and classes, the application of Christianity to public life, the Christianizing of politics, freedom for all the oppressed, protection for all the weak; social justice and good Christian peace. Open to them therefore, thou Keybearer of Christ, and may the gate of history be for them and for the whole world the gate of the Kingdom of God.³⁰

Shortly before his death at the age of forty-seven, Soloviev wrote his apocalyptic *The Three Conversations*, which included his famous “The Short History of the Antichrist,” in which he declared, “I have written it to express my final view of the church problem.” In this fascinating work, Soloviev depicts the final union of the Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic churches, which he places as occurring at the end of the world. This happens with the appearance of the Antichrist during the reign of the anti-pope Apollonius, by which time only a few remaining Christians have not succumbed to the Great Apostasy. These few faithful Christians, led by the Protestant Professor Ernst Pauli and the Orthodox Elder John, make their submission to Pope Peter II.

Czech historian and philosopher Tomáš Masaryk understandably described Soloviev as a “secular monk,” and Walton

declared him a “fool for Christ’s sake to the end.” It is commonly believed that the “third” brother in Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, the saintly Alyosha, constituted a portrait of his friend Soloviev. Given that he is claimed today by Eastern Orthodox and Catholics alike, it was fitting that at Soloviev’s grave in Moscow an unknown admirer placed two icons. One was a Greek image with the inscription, “Christ is Risen from the dead!” The other was a Catholic icon of Our Lady of Ostrabrama with the Latin words, “In memoria aeterna erit Justus” [“The just man will be eternally remembered”].³¹

Much could be said concerning the theological, psychological, and cultural difficulties besetting the present ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, including the formidable obstacle of a vigorous ecclesiastical nationalism causing conflict among the Orthodox themselves. It may be well to conclude with the comments of the English Dominican, Aidan Nichols, O.P., who ended his book, *Rome and the Eastern Churches* (1992), with the following observations, with which Soloviev would have heartily agreed. After all, it was Soloviev who early saw that “the split between East and West could be overcome if each recognized that it had something to learn from the other.” The East, the Russian philosopher lamented, tended to “believe in God but not humanity; the West tended to believe in a humanity without God. Each needs to believe in both.”³²

Nichols wrote:

Rome looks at the [obstacles posed] by contemporary Orthodoxy with such dismay because she not only desires but needs reunion with the Orthodox East. In the face of her own numerous theological liberals and the innovationist tendencies of churchmen (and churchwomen) in various portions of her far-flung ‘Western’ regions, from Santiago de Chile to Manila, from Melbourne to Detroit, Catholicism’s grasp of the historic Christian tradition can only be strengthened by the accession of Orthodoxy to communion with Rome. In such matters as: the upholding of the transcendentality of Revelation vis-à-vis human understanding, the defence of the Trinitarian and Christological doctrine of the first Seven Councils, a perception of the nature of salvation as more than temporal alone, the maintenance of a classical liturgical life, the nourishment of group and personal devotion to Mary and the saints, the preservation of the threefold apostolic ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons (in that same gender in which the Incarnate Word exercised his own high priesthood), the

encouragement of the consecrated life, especially in its most basic form, monasticism, and the preservation of the ascetic dimension in spirituality—in all of these the present struggle of the papacy to uphold Catholic faith and practice in a worldwide communion exposed to a variety of intellectual and cultural influences often baleful, if sometimes also beneficent, can only benefit from Orthodox aid. The energies of authentic Catholicism can only be increased by the inflow of Orthodox faith and holiness: the precious liquid contained with the not seldom unattractive phial of Orthodoxy's canonical form. Can this greatest of all ecclesiastical reunions be brought off? The auguries are not good, yet the Christian lives from hope in the unseen.³³

Soloviev's disciples continue to work for the restoration of visible unity between the Eastern Orthodox autocephalous churches and the Catholic Church. One of them was Pope John Paul II, and another is Pope Benedict XVI.

Notes

1. Michel D'Herbigny, *Vladimir Soloviev: A Russian Newman, 1853-1900* (London: R&T Washbourne, 1918), 29.
2. Leonard Walton, "Vladimir Soloviev," *Dublin Review* 225 (1951): 27.
3. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1986), 284.
4. Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 9.
5. No. 73.
6. Address to Conference, "Vladimir Soloviev, Russia and the Universal Church," Lviv, Ukraine, October 28, 2003, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. edition (12/10/03).
7. James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretative History of Russian Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 468.
8. *Ibid.*, 467.
9. *Ibid.*, 465.
10. Konstantin Mochulsky, "The Idea of Social Philosophy in Russia," *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 12 (1968), 163.
11. Greg Gaut, "Christian Politics: Vladimir Solovyov's Social Gospel Theology," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, vol. 10/11(1994/1995), p. 1.
12. *Ibid.*, 2.
13. *Ibid.*, 2–3.
14. *Ibid.*, 4.
15. *Ibid.*, 5.
16. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 40.
17. D'Herbigny, *Russian Newman*, 31.
18. *Ibid.*, 31–32.
19. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1986), 277.
20. D'Herbigny, *Russian Newman*, 29.
21. Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, vol. 3, 334.
22. Georges Florovsky, "The Problem of Ecumenical Encounter," in *Rediscovering Eastern Christendom: Essays in Commemoration of Dom Bede Winslow*. Eds. E.J.B. Fry and A.H. Armstrong (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1963), 69.
23. *Ibid.*, 334.
24. Vladimir Soloviev, *The Russian Church and the Papacy: An Abridgement of "Russia and the Universal Church"* (San Diego: Catholic Answers 2001), 92–93.
25. *Ibid.*, 93.

26. This point is understandably disputed by many Orthodox, who see Soloviev's Last Rites as proof that his loyalties lay with Orthodoxy rather than Catholicism. One piece of evidence in favor of the interpretation presented here is that Soloviev's latest writings continue to demonstrate his belief in papal primacy. The possibility that Soloviev confessed the "error" of his belief in the papacy in order to receive absolution and communion from a local Orthodox priest, Fr. S.A. Belyayev, is dismissed by authors who have studied the matter. As Soloviev-specialist Gregory Glazov observed, "After his submission to Rome, Solovyov continued to regard himself as both a Catholic and Orthodox according to his view that both constituted one Universal Church. "The 'error' regretted (on his deathbed) is not the error of affirming Rome when this necessitates the loss of communion in the Orthodox rite. This means that d'Herbigny's position is logically defensible and that no denial of Rome need be seen in the confession." Gregory Glazov, "Vladimir Soloviev and the Idea of the Papacy," *Communio* 24 (Spring 1997): 135.

27. Whether Soloviev ever made such a profession of faith is likewise a disputed matter. The evidence, however, seems to be compelling. Hans Urs von Balthasar observed, "The proof that Soloviev actually converted in earnest to Catholicism—a fact ever more strongly contested time and again from the Orthodox side—is to be found in Heinrich Falk, *Vladimir Solowjews's Stellung zur katholischen Kirche*, in *Stimmen der Zeit*, 1949, 421-435." Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Volume III, Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 282, fn 5. According to Gregory Glazov, Soloviev considered his profession to be "the step into a truer and liberated Orthodoxy." Glazov, "Vladimir Soloviev and the Idea of the Papacy," 129. A facsimile of the original testimony of witnesses was published in the Polish magazine KITEZH in December 1927. It was signed by Fr. Nicholas Tolstoy, the Russian Catholic priest who received Soloviev's Tridentine Profession of Faith, Princess Olga Vasilyeva Dolgorukova, and Dimitry Sergejevich Nevsky, and read as follows:

After his confession heard by Fr. Tolstoy, Vladimir Seergejevich in our presence read the Profession of Faith of the Tridentine Council in the church-Slavonic language and then during the liturgy which was performed by Fr. Tolstoy according to the Greek, or Eastern rite but with the mention of His Holiness, our Father, the Pope, he, Solovyev, received the Blessed Sacrament. Besides ourselves, at the memorable event,

there was present also a young Russian girl who was helping about the house in Fr. Tolstoy's family; unfortunately, it has not been possible to ascertain her name.

Chrysostom Frank, "The Problem of Church Unity in the Life and Thought of Vladimir Soloviev," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 36 (no. 3 1992): 194.

28. Leon Tretjakewitsch, *Bishop Michel d'Herbigny, S.J., and Russia: a Pre-ecumenical Approach to Christian Unity* (Wurzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1990), 39.

29. Aidan Nichols, O.P., "Solovyov and the Papacy: A Catholic Evaluation," *Communio* 24 (Spring 1997): 156.

30. Soloviev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, 47.

31. James Likoudis, "Soloviev, Philosopher-convert from Russian Orthodoxy," *Christ to the World* (Jan-Feb 1992): 24.

32. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, 28.

33. Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 381–382.

