

THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE ECUMENICAL PROJECT OF VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

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With good reason Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900) is regarded as a forerunner of the ecumenical movement in the 19th century. His project had already been widely discussed during his lifetime and continues to attract the attention of researchers from all over the world to this day. In view of his Catholic sympathies and his conviction about the historical development of dogmas, the French Jesuit Michel d'Herbigny called him 'a Russian Newman'.¹ Later on, George L. Kline called Solovyov "perhaps the most important proponent of ecumenical principles in Europe after Leibniz".² In turn, in 2003, John Paul II expressed the following desire: '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'.³

In this paper I will consider the question of whether Solovyov's ecumenical project was connected with his metaphysical investigations. I will argue that his aspiration to bridge the gap between the Western and the Eastern churches

¹ M. d'Herbigny, *Un Newman russe: Vladimir Soloviev 1853-1900* (Paris, 1909); English translation: *Vladimir Soloviev: a Russian Newman 1853-1900*, trans. A.M. Buchanan (London, 1918). See also L. Brophy, 'Vladimir Soloviev: a Russian Newman', *The Irish Monthly*, 75 (1947), pp. 478-483; A. Paplauskas-Ramunas, 'Vladimir Soloviev au delà de l'Est et de l'Ouest', *Études Slaves et Est-Européennes/Slavic and East-European Studies*, 3 (1958), pp. 25-31; J. Likoudis, 'Vladimir Soloviev ("The Russian Newman") on Christian Politics and Ecumenism', *The Catholic Social Science Review*, 16 (2011), pp. 195-211.

² G.L. Kline, 'Russian Religious Thought', in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, eds. N. Smart et al., vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1985), p. 213. Quotation after: B. Jakim, 'Editor's Introduction', in V. Solovyov, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, trans. P. Zouboff, rev. and ed. B. Jakim (New York, 1995), p. vii.

³ *Message of John Paul II to the Participants in the Conference on the Theme: "Vladimir Solov'ev, Russia and the Universal Church,"* http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2003/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20031028_vladimir-soloviev_en.html. See also P. de Laubier, 'Vladimir Soloviev, Léon XIII et Jean Paul II', *Solov'evskie issledovaniya*, 8 (2004), pp. 128-134.

is not detached from his philosophy when taken as a whole. On the contrary, it is an integral part of his philosophical or, more precisely, metaphysical thought.

1. AN OUTLINE OF THE ECUMENICAL PROJECT OF SOLOVYOV

The career of Solovyov is often divided into three phases: (1) 1874-1882 – purely philosophical studies (especially metaphysics and epistemology), (2) 1882-1894 – literary and theological (including ecumenical) activity, and (3) 1895-1900 – the return to philosophical research and an attempt at a critical revision of his early concepts.⁴ This scheme allows us to better understand the relevant aspects of his multiform heritage. Nevertheless, all of the aforementioned themes existed simultaneously and permeated each other. In particular, throughout his life Solovyov was concerned with metaphysical issues. Evidence of this would be his ecumenical project, which itself was rooted in a number of ontological presuppositions.

The keystone of the philosophical system of Solovyov was a tendency for the integration of the various subjects of human life. This inclination manifested itself in a number of ways: in the sphere of cognition – as a project of so-called *integral knowledge* (*tsel'noe znanie*) or *free theosophy* (*svobodnaya teosofiya*), which should include philosophy, theology and science;⁵ in the domain of creation – as *free theurgy*, comprising mysticism, fine art and technical activity; finally, in the area of social life – as *free theocracy* which was supposed to be the unity of the Church, government and economic society.⁶ The last realm, in turn, assumed the integration within the one Christian Church of all its denominations, that is, of all the Eastern and the Western churches. Solovyov had no doubt that this would not only be possible in the future, but that the Church was in fact one, undivided, divine-human organism. An ardent defender of the reconciliation of the West and East, he did not support the notion of ‘s’unir ou périr’ (‘unite or perish’), because for him the Church was already united in its common foundation.

⁴ Cf. E. Trubetskoy, *Mirosozertsanie V.I. Solov'eva*, vol. 1 (Moskva, 1913), pp. 85-93.

⁵ See I. Mod'oroši, ‘Theosophy as the Highest Science for Vladimir Solov'ev’, *Journal of Humanities. Philosophica*, 1 (2011), pp. 148-156.

⁶ See V. Solovyov, *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, trans. V.Z. Nollan (Cambridge, 2008), p. 34.

Semyon Frank remarked that Solovyov did not perceive the universal Church as 'an idea', but as a 'living, sensible reality'. He was 'a Platonist because he had seen the ideal world and lived in it'.⁷

We will return to the Platonic motifs in the thought of Solovyov later on; for now let us consider his theoretical and practical proposals concerning the unification of the churches. The son of the outstanding Russian historian and professor of Moscow University, Sergey Solovyov, he was strongly convinced that the study of the past allowed one to explain the current situation of mankind. His careful examination of the history of the Church brought about a belief that all of the external divisions of Christianity had a temporary character, which itself was a result of human errors and sin. As he put it,

'The (...) struggle between the Christian East and the Christian West follows not from their church principles as such, but only from their temporal negative attitude which has to do merely with historical manifestations of the Church and not with its true religious essence. (...) The problem is not to create one universal Church which already exists in reality, but simply to make the visible manifestation of the Church conform to its real nature. (...) The essential unity of the universal Church, hidden from our eyes, must become manifest through the visible reunion of the two ecclesiastical communities divided in history, though indivisible in Christ'.⁸

In what way did Solovyov want to overcome such a pitiful, observable division of the Christian world? According to him,

'the development of the Church is a process of unification within an ideally constant, but actually variable, relationship between *de jure* unity and *de facto* plurality, a process which involves two main operations: the progressive centralization of the given ecclesiastical body, and the unifying and synthetic action of the centralized Church which aims at the incorporation of the whole of mankind into itself'.⁹

⁷ Cf. S. Frank, 'Introduction', in *A Solov'ev Anthology*, trans. N. Duddington, ed. S. Frank (London, 1950), p. 10.

⁸ V. Solovyov, 'The Great Dispute and Christian Politics', in *A Solov'ev Anthology*, pp. 98, 100.

⁹ V. Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, trans. H. Rees (London, 1948), p. 187.

The solution Solovyov proposed was quite straightforward on a theoretical level, although its practical realisation produced many difficulties. Inasmuch as he was convinced about the inward unity of the churches, he merely suggested bringing them back together in a unified body ruled by the Pope as a spiritual authority and the Tsar as a secular, political power.¹⁰ As a result, the universal, ecumenical Church would have only one source of its government, in conformity with the theocratic ambition of Solovyov: ‘the Russian Tsar and the Pope must become the instruments of the genuine and the free theocracy’.¹¹

As we can see, Solovyov attributed a very special role to Russia in the process of the reconciliation of the West and the East, believing that his fatherland had realised a perfect balance between the two and transcended all ethnic and cultural conditions.¹² Here we will not discuss the unambiguous Messianic dimension of the work of Solovyov in detail.¹³ Suffice it to say that his main book, which is dedicated to ecumenical reflection and is entitled *La Russie et l'Église universelle* (*Russia and the Universal Church*, 1889), contains the following statement:

‘The profoundly religious and monarchic instinct of the Russian people, certain prophetic events in its past history, the enormous and compact bulk of its Empire, the great latent strength of the national spirit in contrast to the poverty and emptiness of its actual existence – all this seems to indicate that it is the historic destiny of Russia to provide the Universal Church with the political power which it requires for the salvation and regeneration of Europe and of the world’.¹⁴

¹⁰ See V. Solovyov, *Russkaya ideya*, trans. G.A. Rachinskiy (Brussels, 1987), pp. 29-31.

¹¹ T. Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia. Studies in History, Literature and Philosophy*, trans. E. and C. Paul, vol. 2 (London – New York, 1919), p. 238.

¹² See H. Iswolsky, ‘Vladimir Soloviev and the Western World’, *Russian Review*, 7 (1947), p. 16; G. Nivat, ‘Solov’ev européen’, *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 42 (2001), p. 181. Cf. N. Zernov, *Three Russian Prophets* (London, 1944), p. 123; *Reading in Philosophical Thought*, ed. L.J. Shein (The Hague, 1968), p. 29.

¹³ See N. Berdyaev, *The Problem of East and West within the Religious Consciousness of Vl. Solov’ev*, trans. S. Janas, http://www.krotov.info/library/02_b/berdyaev/1911_053_eng.html; D. Strémoukhoff, *Vladimir Soloviev et son oeuvre messianique* (Paris, 1935); English translation: *Vladimir Soloviev and His Messianic Work*, trans. E. Meyendorff (Belmont, 1980); P. Rojek, ‘Mesjańska teologia polityczna Włodzimierza Sołowjowa’, *Pressje*, 28 (2012), pp. 160-170.

¹⁴ Solovyov, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 30.

In order to achieve the reunion of the Western and the Eastern Christendom, Solovyov contacted both Orthodox and Catholic (Roman and Greek) churchmen.¹⁵ Whereas his project did not meet with understanding on the part of the Orthodox clergy, the Croatian Catholic priest Francis Rački, the Bishop of Zagreb Josip Strossmayer,¹⁶ and some Russian (Ivan Martynov and Paul Pirling from the Paris community), French (Eugène Tavernier) and Polish (Marian Morawski) Jesuits supported (at least initially) his enterprise. In 1888, thanks to Bishop Strossmayer, Solovyov presented his project (expressed at first in his *Pro Memoria* from 1886 and later on in *The Russian Idea*, both written in French) to Pope Leo XIII who said: ‘Bella idea, ma fuor d’un miracolo, è cosa impossibile’ (‘Beautiful idea, but impossible without a miracle’).¹⁷ Indeed, the organisation of the Church as depicted by Solovyov was obviously utopian. Scholars have conducted heated debates on whether Solovyov later on (see his *Three Discussions*, 1899) gave up this

¹⁵ We do not enter into the highly controversial question of whether Solovyov converted to Catholicism. See N.I. Nikol’skiy, *Vozzreniya V.S. Solov’eva na katolichestvo* (Khar’kov, 1914); M. d’Herbigny, *Vladimir Soloviev*, pp. 29-34, 135-231; Ch. Frank, ‘The Problem of Church Unity’, pp. 206-210; A. Okolo-Kulak, ‘Vladimir Solov’ev i katolichestvo’, *Simvol*, 38 (1997), pp. 165-175; M.N. Gavrillov, ‘Byl li Solov’ev katolikom ili pravoslavnyym?’, *Simvol*, 41 (1999), pp. 286-316; L. Vasilenko, ‘Vl. Solov’ev: pravoslavnyy ili katolik?’, *Vestnik russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniya*, 3 (2000), pp. 133-145; A.F. Losev, *Vladimir Solov’ev i ego vremya* (Moskva, 2009), pp. 302-325.

Solovyov thought of himself as being beyond the external divisions of the churches. He considered himself as a member of the one indivisible “Orthodox-Catholic” Church in the broad (“ecumenical”) sense of the word (see ‘Was Solov’ev a convert to Roman Catholicism?’, in *A Solov’ev Anthology*, p. 252), or – as he wrote in a letter to Vasily Rozanov (1892) – as a member of the “religion of the Holy Spirit” (see *Pis’ma Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov’eva*, vol. 3 (Sankt-Peterburg, 1911), p. 44). Cf. also A.P. Kozyrev, ‘Soedinenie ili primirenje? V. Solov’ev i V. Rozanov o razdelenii tserkvey’, in *Rossiya i vselenskaya Tserkov’. V.S. Solov’ev i problema religioznogo i kul’turnogo edineniya chelovechestva*, ed. V. Porus (Moskva, 2004), pp. 37-45.

¹⁶ Strossmayer “opposed both the latinization of Slavic Christians and the promulgation of the dogma of Papal Infallibility at the 1870 Vatican Council, and hoped that Rome would eventually give wider autonomy to the Slavic Churches if they all accepted papal authority”; see Ch. Frank, ‘The Problem of Church Unity in the Life and Thought of Vladimir Soloviev’, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 36 (1992), p. 191. See also J. Urban, ‘Włodzimierz Sołowiew i biskup Strossmayer’, *Przegląd Powszechny*, 51 (1909), pp. 159-172.

¹⁷ S. Solovyov, *Vladimir Solov’ev: His Life and Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Gibson (Faifax, 2000), p. 349.

conception and became pretty sceptical of the ecumenical approach in general.¹⁸ Despite these and other answers to this question, his initial optimism about the close reconciliation of the East and the West inspired many generations of philosophers and theologians. In Berdyaev's view, Solovyov 'went beyond the limits of historical Christianity and in this lies his religious significance'.¹⁹

2. ECUMENISM AND METHAPHYSICS

As already mentioned, Solovyov elaborated his ecumenical project mostly in the 1880s, after he had written *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* (1877), *Critique of the Abstract Principles* (1877-1880), and *Lectures on Divine Humanity* (1880), devoted to the metaphysical and epistemological questions. Yet also in these books he had already touched on some aspects of the unity of the Church. By contrast, his ecumenical programme presented in *The Great Dispute and Christian Politics*, *Russia and the Universal Church*, *The Russian Idea* and other works, was based on a metaphysical foundation. Both research areas were bound together by the crucial concept of unity. In the case of the ontological reflection of Solovyov, this connection was manifested in the teaching of the principle of all-unity, Divine humanity (or 'God-manhood') and Sophia-Wisdom; in the field of ecumenism – in the idea of the reconciliation of the churches. Moreover, 'the reunion of the Churches was to be part of the cosmic movement towards oneness'.²⁰

One can distinguish several aspects of the connection between his metaphysical and ecumenical approaches.

(1) First of all, Solovyov treated the East and the West as 'abstract' entities without any context. His philosophical system was essentially holistic; he considered the different levels of human life and culture against the background of the whole and sought the integration of the separated elements:

¹⁸ See V. Solovyov, *War, Progress, and the End of History including a Short Story of the Anti-Christ. Three Discussions*, trans. A. Bakshy (London, 1915).

¹⁹ N. Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, trans. R.M. French (New York, 1948), p. 178.

²⁰ Iswolsky, 'Vladimir Soloviev and the Western World', p. 19.

‘The East, with all the forces of its spirit, is attached to the divine principle and preserves it, developing in itself the necessary conservative and ascetic attitude. The West applies all its energy to the development of the human principle (...). Both of these historical trends, far from excluding each other, are absolutely necessary for each other and for the fullness of Christ’s stature in all humankind’.²¹

The East represents the divine dimension, whereas the West – the human principle. In the course of history, the primordial balance between them was disturbed: ‘in the East, in favour of the static divine basis of the Church, in the West in favour of its human element on both its poles: first, of power (‘Papism’), and then of freedom (Protestantism)’.²² As a consequence,

‘in the East the Church was understood and preserved mainly as holiness abiding in tradition (...). That was in keeping with the general spiritual character of the East which always had a leaning for the absolute alone and was sceptical and indifferent with regard to the relative movement of life and practical historical tasks’.²³

On the different levels a tension between the Eastern and the Western civilisation manifests itself as an opposition between theology and philosophy, faith and reason, theism and humanism, mysticism and rationalism, eschatology and temporality, passive asceticism and active service, etc. In Solovyov’s opinion, only a synthesis of the aforementioned spheres allows one to overcome the split between religion and culture that was so typical for his (and our own contemporary) time. All areas of human life and activity ‘must be brought into harmonious divine-human unity, entering into that free theocracy in which the Universal Church will reach the full measure of Christ’s stature’.²⁴ The Eastern and the Western churches represent complementary ontological principles (the divine and the human respectively) of the process of the realisation of the Kingdom of God.

²¹ Solovyov, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, p. 172. Cf. Id., *The Great Dispute and Christian Politics*, p. 75: ‘The Christian Church in the historical sense is the combination of two constituent principles: the Eastern, consisting in passive devotion to the Deity, and the Western, affirming the independence of man’.

²² Solovyov, *The Great Dispute and Christian Politics*, p. 78.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²⁴ *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, p. 164.

(2) Secondly, for Solovyov the concern for the reunification of the Eastern and Western churches was an integral part of his reflection on true religion as “the connection of humanity and the world with the absolute principle”.²⁵ This principle should embrace particular aspects of life and of individual forces²⁶ and is represented by the Church. Hence, the unity of the Church is an expression of the universal task of religion as such:

‘The perfect religion must be free from all limitation and exclusiveness, not because it is deprived of every positive particularity and individuality (...), but because it contains in itself *all* particularities and, consequently, is not exclusively attached to *any* of them, possesses all of them, and is therefore free from all of them. (...) Religious truth, sprouting from one root, has evolved in humanity into many and varied branches. To cut down all these branches, to leave a bare, dry, and fruitless trunk can be easily sacrificed to complete atheism’.²⁷

Solovyov lamented that contemporary religion ‘was not what it ought to be’; the atheists were somehow right.²⁸ True religion cannot ‘exclude, suppress or subdue by force any elements neither of man or the world’.²⁹ On the contrary, it should be all-inclusive; otherwise it would be a pseudo-religion, another specimen of ‘detached’ or ‘abstract’ principles.³⁰ On the one hand, religion demands the multiplicity of its content and its external manifestation; on the other, the inner unity of these different components. It is connected with the meaning of the term ‘absolute’ (Latin *absolutum*): “that which is detached,” that is, detached from all particular determinations, and second, “that which is fulfilled, accomplished, completed,” that is, which possesses all and contains all in itself’.³¹

²⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

²⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 1; ‘Chteniya po filosofii religii magistra filosofii V.S. Solov’eva (steno-gramma)’, in S. Solovyov, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy i pisem v dvadtsati tomakh*, vol. 4 (Moskva, 2011), p. 351.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 357.

³⁰ Cf. G. Florovsky, ‘Reason and Faith in the Philosophy of Solov’ev’, in *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought*, ed. E.J. Simmons (Cambridge, MA, 1955), p. 287.

³¹ Solovyov, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, p. 45.

Solovyov also described the relation between wholeness and particularity, universal and individual, common root and specific elements by the term of *vseedinstvo* (Greek ἐν καὶ πᾶν) – ‘all-unity’ or (in some English translations of his works) ‘total-unity’, which is a synonym of the ‘absolute’. All-unity has two poles or centres: the first is identical with God-in-himself who remains completely unknowable, the second (called *materia prima* or κόσμος νοητός) contains the aggregation of ideas of the whole of reality.³² The East and the West represent the principle of wholeness and individuality respectively:

‘The contemplative East cognized that which is truly existent only in its first attribute of absolute singularity, excluding everything else (...). But the absolute super-existent is along with this one origin of all being: as the sole super-existent – the origin of multiplicity, and as the integral super-existent – the origin of the particular, free from all forms, producing all of them. The absolute first principle is not only ἐν – it is ἐν καὶ πᾶν. For this reason, those who want to know it only as the one who is exclusively solitary know only a detached, lifeless part of it, and their religion, both in theory and in practice, remains incomplete, exclusive, barren, and lifeless, which we see in the East. On the other hand, the constant striving of the West is to sacrifice the absolute inner unity of the multiplicity of forms and individual features, so that its people cannot even understand unity otherwise than as only external order founded on traditional authority (be it the Pope or the Bible) or on the formal power of the law (...) – such is the character of Western religion and the church, of Western philosophy and government, of Western science and society. Genuine universal religion (...) must internally combine both of these impulses, having liberated themselves from their exclusivity, must recognize and realize on earth an authentic ἐν καὶ πᾶν’.³³

Hence, for Solovyov ‘the problem of East and West became the problem of the unification of the two one-sided truths into an higher fullness, mutually-fulfilling’.³⁴ He developed the notion of ‘all-unity’ as it relates to the Christian

³² See Solovyov, *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, pp. 115-137. See also G. Przebinda and E.M. Swiderski, ‘Vladimir Solov’ev’s Fundamental Philosophical Ideas’, *Studies in East European Thought*, 54 (2002), pp. 47-51; T. Obolevitch, ‘All-Unity according to V. Solovyov and S. Frank. A Comparative Analysis’, *Forum Philosophicum*, 15 (2010), pp. 413-417.

³³ Solovyov, *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, pp. 100-101.

³⁴ Berdyaev, *The Problem of East and West within the Religious Consciousness of Vl. Solov’ev*.

Church also in his work *The Spiritual Foundation of Life* (1882-1884). He argued that

‘Universal discord is an absurdity (...) and so it follows that the reason of existence is to be found in peace and concord. The meaning of the world is “absolute oneness,” and the “primordial absolute, the fountainhead of all being,” the “complete integrity of all that is, is God.” The “primacy of existence,” therefore, does not belong to parts in isolation, but to the WHOLE; consequently, the world’s meaning can be discovered only in the unity of all.’³⁵

To sum up, Solovyov applied his early metaphysical idea of unification to his late ecumenical approach. A further example of such an inclination can be found in his teaching of Sophia.

(3) According to Solovyov, the whole of humankind belongs to the all-unity or, more precisely, to its second pole, although it originates from the first centre of the absolute (God as such), because ‘in Him we live, and move, and have our being’ (Acts 17:28). ‘Everyone of us, every human being, is essentially and actually rooted in and partakes of the universal, or absolute, human being’, which he called ‘the eternal body of God and the eternal soul of the world’,³⁶ ideal humanity or Sophia (Wisdom of God). The analysis of the different meanings of Sophia is beyond the scope of this paper.³⁷ Here it is noteworthy to mention that one of the aspects of Sophia is the Church – the incarnation of the ‘world soul’ or ‘ideal humanity’, all-humankind, the divine-human organism which also has to realise the inner principle of unity in its external form. Sophia as a mediating principle between God and the world contains perfect unity in plurality, and it is also the task of the Church

³⁵ Frank, ‘The Problem of Church Unity’, p. 200.

³⁶ Solovyov, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, p. 118.

³⁷ See Losev, *Vladimir Solov’ev i ego vremya*, pp. 187-230, 345-347; A. Losev, ‘Filosofsko-poeticheskiy obraz Sofii u Vl. Solov’eva’, in *Vladimir Solov’ev: pro et contra. Lichnost’ i tvorchestvo Vladimira Solov’eva v otsenke russkikh mysliteley i issledovateley*, ed. D.K. Burlaka (Sankt-Peterburg, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 823-871; V. Kravchenko, *Vladimir Solov’ev i Sofiya* (Moskva, 2006); A.M. Karpeev, *Mnogoznachnost’ termina “Sofiya” v filosofii V.S. Solov’eva (Problema smyslovy interpretatsii filosofskogo opredeleniya Sofii)* (Samara, 2007); J.D. Kornblatt, ‘Solov’ev’s Androgynous Sophia and the Jewish Kabbalah’, *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), pp. 487-496; K. Faradzhev, *Vladimir Solov’ev: mifologiya obraza* (Moskva, 2000), pp. 88-109 and the special issues of the journals *Solov’evskie issledovaniya*, 13 (2006) and *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 59/3-4 (2007).

as a 'divinised society' and 'perfect humanity'.³⁸ As Solovyov claimed, 'The Universal Church will appear to us no longer as a lifeless idol or an animate but unconscious body, but as a self-conscious, true bride of God, as creation united to Him in a full and perfect union and completely receptive of the Deity – in short, as the divine Wisdom, Sophia'.³⁹ In this fashion 'the whole course of history can be interpreted as the gradual unification of World Soul with the divine in human society',⁴⁰ that is the Church. Sophia 'appears as the archetype of humanity's social relation which is the same as to speak of the universal Church'.⁴¹ He added to it that the integration of the absolute, eternal, universal foundation and individual, personal principle in every human being is a *conditio sine qua non* for the future harmony of the Christian world and the ultimate fulfilment of the theocracy.

Following Nicolas Berdyaev we can say that Solovyov 'justifies and provides a basis for everything, for everything he finds a place'.⁴² The ontological basis of the ecumenical project of Solovyov is of prime importance. First and foremost, it bears witness to the inner coherency of the whole of his thought. Solovyov was strongly convinced that the memory which roots all human beings in God makes it possible to overcome the schism between the churches. Otherwise, all external attempts towards unity would be fruitless. In other words, the reconciliation of the East and the West is only possible due to God, not to human efforts. As Sophia – the ideal humanity 'occupies a mediating position between the multiplicity of living entities, which constitute the real content of its life, and the absolute unity of Divinity, which is the ideal principle and norm of its life',⁴³ as the visible Church demonstrates unity in multiplicity.

³⁸ Cf. W.E. Helleman, 'Solov'ëv's Sophia as a Mediating Principle', *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 59 (2007), p. 206.

³⁹ V. Solovyov, 'The Church as the Universal Organization of the True Life (fragment of The History and the Future of Theocracy)', in *A Solov'ëv Anthology*, p. 104.

⁴⁰ M. de Courten, 'Sophia and the Longing for Unity', *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 59 (2007), p. 250.

⁴¹ K. Breckner, 'A Comparative Study of "Godmanhood" (Bogochelovechestvo) in Russian Philosophy. The Eighth Day in V. Solov'ëv, S. Bulgakov, N. Berdiaev, and S. Frank', *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum*, 19 (2013), p. 125.

⁴² Berdyaev, *The Problem of East and West within the Religious Consciousness of Vl. Solov'ev*.

⁴³ Solovyov, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, p. 131.

Solovyov reflected the project of the reunification of the churches through the prism of his metaphysical concept of all-unity and Sophia. His ecclesiology stemmed from ontology, and this ontology was targeted on the idea of the reconciliation of whole beings with one other and God. In consequence, as reported by Frederick C. Copleston,

He treated extensively topics which would generally described as theological. But his approach was that of a philosopher, of a metaphysician, who was also a devout Christian.⁴⁴

The message of Solovyov of the universal Church as a divine-human entity can be considered as part and parcel of his project of “‘integrality’ which postulated that theoretical philosophy should be organically linked to religion and social life.”⁴⁵ It is one of the most important and vital concepts which the Russian philosopher left us.

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Abstract

Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900) is called ‘the prophet’ of ecumenism. In his later works he developed a view on the reconciliation of the Eastern and Western Churches. However, some presuppositions of this project can already be traced in his early philosophical works, such as *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* (1877), *Critique of the Abstract Principles* (1877-1880), and *Lectures on Godmanhood* (1880).

A major philosophical idea of Solovyov was his view that the entire universe formed an organic unity. Man is not an entity of its own, but part of a whole.

⁴⁴ F.C. Copleston, *Philosophy in Russia: From Herzen to Lenin and Berdyaev* (Notre Dame, 1986), p. 218.

⁴⁵ A. Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. H. Andrews-Rusiecka (Stanford, 1979), p. 371.

Although in this world things seem to be dispersed, everything is somehow held together. This unity would be impossible without God who is the beginning and the purpose of existence. God is also the goal and the guarantee of the unity of human society and of the different religious communities, first and foremost, the Church as a divine-human reality. This paper discusses some of the metaphysical assumptions, such as 'all-unity' and 'God-manhood', Solovyov applied for justifying his ecumenical project.