

Vladimir S. Soloviev: Moral Philosopher of Unity

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The intellectual legacy of Vladimir Sergeievich Soloviev (1853–1900) defies easy description or definition.¹ The range of his influence even while he was alive may be gauged from the categories mentioned upon his induction into the Russian Academy of Sciences: philosophy, commentary on current affairs, and poetry.²

By the time Soloviev reached the age of twenty, he had already begun to draw the contours of what would become a lifelong project to bring to light true and false unities in philosophy, religion, and politics. At that young age, he published an article that began to bring into focus the “absolute unity” of divinity, an idea that would later undergo slight transformation into “all-unity” (*vseedinstvo*)—Soloviev’s signature term for Divinity penetrating and unifying all of reality through the God-man Christ. Both of these concepts—absolute unity and all-unity—should have some resonance among Christians, principally because

¹ While his surname has been transliterated from the Cyrillic in numerous ways—Solovyov, Solovyof, Solovyoff, Solov’ev, Solovioff, Solovieff, among them—I employ the spelling that he used in his French and English correspondence.

² Son of the well-regarded historian Sergei M. Soloviev and grandson of an Orthodox priest, he was also related to the eighteenth-century Ukrainian philosopher Hrihoriy Skovoroda. Posthumously, he became the inspirational figure for the so-called second generation of Russian Symbolist poets, among them Andrei Bely and Viacheslav Ivanov. For an intellectual and biographical background, see Konstantin Mochul’skii, *Vladimir Soloviev: zhizn’ i uchenie* [Life and Teaching] (Paris: YMCA Press, 1951); also see the introduction to *Politics, Law, and Morality: Essays by V. S. Soloviev*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), xix–xxix.

a basis for both these concepts may be found within the New Testament itself, in Paul's proclamation that in the end "God will be all in all."³

The context of Soloviev's youthful study of divine unity was not, however, Christianity but rather primitive religion, as its title indicates: "The Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism" (1873).⁴ In this piece, the philosopher in the making was searching for the origins of a process that he understood to have been the fragmentation or atomization of an original divine unity and along with it the moral implications of the political and spiritual organizations that human beings had created for themselves since the dawn of civilization. A few years later, he essentially laid out the entire future program for his moral philosophy in his doctoral thesis, "Critique of Abstract Principles" (1880). Much later, in the author's preface to the second edition of what is perhaps his best-known work, *Justification of the Good: Moral Philosophy*, he encapsulated the purpose of the greater portion of his life's work for his readers, seemingly almost as an afterthought: "to establish in absolute moral principle the intrinsic and multilateral connection between true religion and sound [or 'sensible'] politics."⁵

For many in both East and West, Soloviev remains less well-known for his moral reasoning about the relations of church to state—the proper ordering of life's higher spiritual and more mundane material concerns—than for his friendship with the novelist Fedor Dostoevsky. His association with Dostoevsky at the time that he was working on his thesis would certainly suggest some cross-fertilization of ideas. It is widely believed that Soloviev provided the model for at least one of Dostoevsky's fictional characters, the monastic novice Alyosha in the novel, *Brothers Karamazov* (1879–1880), his last before he died in February 1881. Soloviev first eulogized Dostoevsky at his grave site but then also remembered his friend's legacy in three addresses over the course of the next two years.⁶ The great writer's affect on the young philosopher's thinking may

³ See 1 Corinthians 15:28. See also Ephesians 1:10; 4:6 and Colossians 3:11.

⁴ V. S. Soloviev, "The Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism," in *Enemies from the East? V. S. Soloviev on Paganism, Asian Civilizations, and Islam*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 3–23.

⁵ Appearing in Russian as *Opravdanie dobra, npravstvennaia filosofia* (St. Petersburg: 1897/1899), first translated and published in English by Natalie Duddington under the title *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy* (London: Constable, 1918).

⁶ See V. S. Soloviev, "Three Addresses in Memory of Dostoevsky," in *The Heart of Reality: Essays on Beauty, Love, and Ethics by V. S. Soloviev*, ed. and trans. by Vladimir Wozniuk (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 1–28.

be found in these addresses, just not entirely as one might have expected. Yes, Soloviev praised Dostoevsky as a man of Christian faith and as the great artist that the world now knew. At the end of the last of these three addresses, though, Soloviev also indirectly brought into question the moral contradictions inherent in a Russian Orthodoxy and a Russian nationalism that were characterized less by Christian universalism and unity—as put forward in the Nicene Creed—and more by anti-Catholicism, anti-Westernism, and anti-Semitism. Of course, by bringing the issue up Soloviev was also implying Dostoevsky's views, for such contradictions may be found in various places throughout the latter's writings.⁷

Then, some two months after Dostoevsky's funeral, Soloviev famously appealed for Christian mercy upon the assassins who had just taken the life of Tsar Alexander II.⁸ This first public protest of the death penalty as immoral, however, came with a price. Banned from giving public lectures and now under close scrutiny by the authorities, Soloviev resigned his university post and embarked on a new vocation, as an independent, progressive, Russian voice of liberal religious conscience, attempting to mediate between the hard right and the extreme left wing of his day. He became a tireless advocate for human rights, for religious toleration, for fair treatment of Russia's many minorities, as well as for the defense of the oppressed and vulnerable more generally; and he continued to work as well for Christian reconciliation, the restoration of a truly *catholic* unity among the churches, East and West. However, he would labor until the end of his days for all these just causes under what he once referred to directly as the "censorship's terror."⁹

Soloviev has commonly been regarded in both East and West as a well-meaning idealist and mystic, and his life's work as consisting of the pursuit of utopian goals, with the restoration of unity among the churches perhaps the most fantastic one among them. As if in anticipation of such dismissive attitudes, Soloviev argued early on that Thomas More's work *Utopia* had been largely misunderstood:

More, naming his imaginary island Utopia, that is, no place or not a place, had in mind that, just as this island does not have a place on the actual earth, the ideal existence of its inhabitants also does not have a place in actual society. In this sense, every ideal, while it still is not realized, can be called utopia. But in society, as consciousness in motion, that which does not have a place today can have a place tomorrow, [something] which is usually forgotten when one

⁷ Soloviev, "Three Addresses," 27–28.

⁸ See Wozniuk, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, introduction, 301–2.

⁹ Wozniuk, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 302.

thinks to evade every idea of the future with the single word utopia. It is possible to say boldly that utopias and utopians have always ruled humanity and so-called practical people have always been only their unconscious instruments.¹⁰

In asserting such a close connection between the empirical and normative realms, Soloviev may have stood apart from most of his contemporaries, but he was clearly in line with the great Christian writers who had preceded him in defending and promoting universal norms of political and economic justice.

At essence, the Christian utopianism that Soloviev elucidated had little in common with collectivistic or individualistic materialist philosophies. Soloviev would continually have in view the process of perfecting the moral individual on the one hand and the enlargement of the common good on the other: “true community” must be “indissolubly linked with true individualism.”¹¹ Neither collectivistic socialism nor plutocratic capitalism could pass the “truth” test of unity, as it were, because these *-isms* acknowledged the goal of human life to be material prosperity alone. Both these materialist perspectives appeared to him early on to work on the assumption that religion, morality, church, and state all amounted to mere “props” and “defensive instruments of the existing economic order,” which could hardly qualify either of them as promoting human freedom or a moral order.¹² With respect to “true individualism” he would some years later announce to a wider European audience that

moral individuality appertains without distinction to each human being. Hence, it follows that no human being can be considered as the instrumental means for the achievement of anything whatsoever (the production of wealth, for example); rather each human being represents intrinsic value, possessing an inalienable right to an existence corresponding to one’s human dignity. The *raison d’être* of society in relation to its members is to assure for each not solely a material livelihood, but moreover a *dignified* livelihood.¹³

The moral philosopher was profoundly concerned that an acceleration of European progress toward material prosperity at the expense of moral content would lead

¹⁰ Cited in Vladimir Wozniuk, “In the Shadow of the Anthill: Religious Faith, Individual Freedom, and the Common Good in the Thought of V. S. Solov’ev,” *Russian Review* 67, no. 4 (October 2008): 627.

¹¹ Wozniuk, “In the Shadow of the Anthill,” 628.

¹² Wozniuk, “In the Shadow of the Anthill,” 629–30. Italics in original.

¹³ V. S. Soloviev, “The Social Question in Europe” [1892], in *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 32–33.

to what he referred to in another place as an eventual “Sinicization” of Christian values.¹⁴

In Soloviev’s lifetime, Westerners had only begun to imagine with some trepidation a future China on the rise, recovering from its subjugation by the West and positioning itself to turn the tables. Soloviev examined traditional Chinese culture for the political, economic, and spiritual foundations of such fears in an article titled “China and Europe.” His conclusions might be understood as carrying a cautionary message for us today, directed as they were not at China, but at a Europe in the process of abandoning its spiritual foundations in exchange for a material prosperity disconnected from a moral context. For Soloviev, the “pernicious effects” of this Sinicization process had already become visible, as European nations adopted the idea “that it is necessary to love only one’s own, to value only yours,” a frame of reference in which “the ideal of a universal Christianity [was] already denied as an empty utopia.” Europeans had rejected the twin notions of universal love and Christian equality in the name of “practical materialism and the cult of force-in-fact,” both of these positions being “theoretical falsehood[s]” that were also dangerous in practice.¹⁵ Even so, Soloviev would continue to harbor hope that even the falsehoods of modern nationalism would eventually be overcome by true unity and love.¹⁶

If the staggering human costs of radical, nondemocratic socialism in the twentieth century seem to echo Soloviev’s prophetic warnings about the false unity of materially based collectivistic norms, the twenty-first century still awaits a reckoning of the costs associated with the false unity of plutocratic norms, now applied on a global scale. Because the East has become the indispensable component of all the economic and political processes that appear today under the rubric of “globalization,” we in the West should perhaps reexamine Soloviev’s reflections on the substance of true unity, not only within humanity but also between human beings and their environment.

¹⁴ V. S. Soloviev, “China and Europe” [1890], in *Enemies from the East?*, 77–79.

¹⁵ Soloviev, “China and Europe,” 79.

¹⁶ See, for example, V. S. Soloviev, “Nationality from a Moral Point of View” [1895], in *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 53.

At the same time that Soloviev stressed that material progress must include a dignified living for people, Europe had only just begun to face the challenges of a natural environment under relentless assault by industrialization and urbanization. As a proponent of both faithful ecological and economic stewardship, Soloviev deplored the fact that scientific and technological progress—which he understood positively as Christian and European in origin, helping to unify humanity—also carried the threat of environmental destruction that might not be reversible.¹⁷ How had this sad state of affairs come about? Although Christians and unbelievers shared culpability, Soloviev asserted that it was Christians in the medieval period who fell victim to “anti-Christian dogmatism, individualism, and spiritualism,” which laid the foundation for future catastrophe by propagating a false view of the natural world and the human place in it. In rejecting nature as an essentially “evil principle,” they had unintentionally allowed for the “unbelieving engines of modern science” to later build another false view upon this foundation: that nature was merely “dead substance, a soul-less machine.”¹⁸ Soloviev’s evaluation should be read in context of the all-unity principle and the “spiritual corporeality” of the universe itself as a reflection of Divinity.¹⁹

The following excerpt from *The Justification of the Good*, subtitled “The Moral Organization of Humanity as a Whole,” either iterates or assumes the principles of unity that Soloviev had distilled much earlier in his career, with the ultimate purpose of elucidating the multilateral linkage between “true religion and sensible politics.”²⁰ The questions raised and the issues addressed throughout his writings at the end of the nineteenth century have resurfaced in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in even sharper relief against the backdrop of what appears to be accelerating globalization, the presumptive aim of which is, of course, material prosperity. While the enormous material benefits that accrue to elites who manage the processes associated with globalization seem to unite them, the circumstances of the vast majority—most particularly “the

¹⁷ V. S. Soloviev, “The Jews and the Christian Question” [1884] and “On the Decline of the Medieval Worldview” [1891], both in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma: Essays by V. S. Soloviev on Christianity and Judaism*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 80–83 and 169–70; also see “The Social Question in Europe,” in *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 35–36.

¹⁸ Soloviev, “On the Decline of the Medieval Worldview,” in *Freedom, Faith and Dogma*, 169.

¹⁹ V. S. Soloviev, “The Meaning of Love” [1892–1894], in *The Heart of Reality*, 128–33.

²⁰ In Natalie Duddington’s translation, the excerpt is chapter 10 of part 3, 409–69 (chapter 19 in the Russian version).

least of these”—along with the natural world upon which all depend become more fragmented and uncertain. It is true that humanity does not live by bread alone, but Soloviev reminds us in the excerpt below that neither can humanity live without bread, or for that matter the natural environment from which it is obtained. It is not difficult to imagine the moral philosopher Soloviev questioning the underlying assumptions upon which the globalization processes of today are based, and especially the premise that a human being amounts to little more than homo economicus: What *kind* of human unity could possibly result from such an assumption?

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A few points are in order with respect to my corrected version of Natalie Duddington’s translation (1918) as well as about my annotations to the excerpt. I have added a number of supplementary editorial notes in hopes of clarifying what would have been more readily apparent to both Soloviev’s and Duddington’s audiences but has no doubt become obscure to many modern readers. Additionally, while Soloviev provided summaries for the enumerated sections of each chapter in the book’s table of contents, the editors of the *Journal of Markets & Morality* suggested that these section outlines might be helpful to readers of this excerpt, and so they have been added here but set apart from the main text with reduced font size and margins with a subtitle that I have created for each (in bold above). Soloviev’s biblical citations appeared variously either in an older Slavonic form or in more contemporary Russian, both of which I have replaced with the English of the New King James Version (NKJV), again at the suggestion of this journal’s editors. Moreover, because he routinely left many of his biblical citations or allusions without attribution, I have appended these within brackets as well (at times with a very brief comment) wherever appropriate in the text. All italics in the text are in the original Russian. Finally, both Soloviev’s and Duddington’s explanatory notes may be found at the bottom of the page, as well as mine, which are indicated by “Ed. note:” as a preface.

The Moral Organization of Humanity as a Whole (1899)*

Vladimir S. Soloviev

I

Human Solidarity, the All-Uniting Good, and the Process of Perfection

The differences between natural solidarity and humanity's moral solidarity, which is set by Christianity as the historical task of a conscious and voluntary process—the perfection of all in the one Good. — The true subject of perfection—the *individual human being together with and indivisibly from the collective human being*. — The three abiding embodiments of the subject being perfected, or the three natural groups that actually complement a person's life: family, fatherland, humanity, to which in historical order correspond stages—the clan, the national-political, and the spiritual-universal. The last one may be practically realized only under condition of the spiritualization of the first two. — The real elements and forms of life as conditional givens for the solution of the absolute problem. — The given natural bond of three generations (grandparents, parents, children) must be converted into an unconditional moral bond through the spiritualization of family religion, marriage, and education.

The *natural* organization of humanity means different human units and groups are placed in need of cooperation according to nature so that their requirements and activities balance out in outcomes of general significance, leading to the

* *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Constable, 1918), pt. 3, chap. 10, 409–69.

relative perfection of the whole.¹ Thus from ancient times, the needs of shepherds and farmers, the warlike spirit of the people's leaders, and the self-interested enterprise of merchants produced an everyday education for living and also drove universal history. Such a natural arrangement of human affairs, thanks to which private aspirations lead to general success, expresses a certain actual unity of humanity. For those units and groups that are entering into it, this unity is imperfect both outwardly and inwardly: outwardly by its factual incompleteness, and inwardly because it does not constitute the subject matter of their own consciousness and their own will. Such a solidarity of beings apart from their intention and will is already given in the prehuman world—in the unity of genus and the development of organic species. To remain at this point of solidarity is unworthy of the human being, in whom objective and generic reason—the general *predicate* of nature—becomes the individual *subject*. A moral, conscious, and voluntary organization of humanity is required in the name of, and by virtue of, an all-uniting good. From the time that this good with all its unconditionalness and fullness is discovered at the central moment of history, it becomes the direct goal and task of thought and life.² Unification in the good is not just the combining and the factual balancing of private aspirations and actions in a general outcome but a direct community of persons and groups in unanimous activity for the attainment of a universal goal: absolute perfection, which is understood and taken up as their *own* goal.

Having as its task the realization of the unconditional norms of the good, or active (practical) perfection, the moral organization of human life is generally defined as *the process of becoming perfect*. First of all a question arises with logical necessity: “Who is becoming perfect?” is the question of the subject of moral organization. We know that *persons* taken *individually* do not exist and, therefore, do not become perfect. The actual subject of “becoming perfect,” or moral progress (as well as of historical progress in general), is the individual human being *together with and indivisibly from the collective human being*, or

¹ Ed. note: Soloviev had already discussed the perfection of humanity as a historical process (in a Hegelian sense, broadly speaking) in the context of morality as unconditional principle in chapter 2 of part 2. The most proximate origins of that discussion as well as of this chapter appear in an article titled “The Moral Norm of Society” [*Nravstvennaia norma obshchestvennosti*, 1894].

² Ed. note: A biblical basis for this reasoning might be found in Ephesians 3:19; 4:13; and Colossians 3:14.

society.³ Just as not every combination of molecules forms an organic cell and not every accumulation of cells constitutes a living being, precisely in the same way not every collection of individual people and groups forms an actual and living bearer of moral organization. In order to have such significance, that is, in order to organically complement moral personality, the collective whole must be not less real than it, and in this sense equivalent and enjoying equal rights to it. It must be a given and not created by it.

The *natural* groups that specifically broaden the life of a person are: family, nation, humanity—the three abiding degrees of the embodiment of the collective human being, to which correspond stages: in historical order, the blood-kin, the national-political, and the spiritual-universal. The final one can be revealed only under condition of the spiritualization of the first two.

Can family constitute a part of final and universal moral organization? Is not this only a transitory limitation in the development of human life? Personality too in its *given condition* and in its egoistic aspiration to exclusive isolation is also a transitory limitation, just as is the family, and even humanity itself. It is not a matter of idealizing and perpetuating this smoldering aspect in one or another of

³ Ed. note: Soloviev had earlier discussed the individual and society in chapter 1 of part 3. His reasoning seems to resonate with the premise of Thomas Hobbes in his introduction to *Leviathan* (1651): “For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE (in Latin, CIVITAS), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body.” Interestingly, Hobbes also asserted in chapter 15 of that work that “Morall Philosophy is nothing else but the Science of what is Good ... the true doctrine of the Lawes of Nature is the true Morall philosophic.” Soloviev took issue with Hobbes and his presuppositions both directly and indirectly a number of times in various other essays. He found Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) to be more inspirational on such matters. Spinoza’s influence on Soloviev can be seen in the latter’s admission that the Jewish philosopher was “my first love in the sphere of philosophy.” See *Enemies from the East? V. S. Soloviev on Paganism, Asian Civilizations, and Islam*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 219–20. Spinoza’s “concept of the state as an individual” is suggested in different ways in both his *Ethics* and his *Tractatus Politicus*. See Justin Steinberg, “Spinoza’s Political Philosophy,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2009 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/spinoza-political/> and Amy M. Schmitter, “17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2010 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/emotions-17th18th/>.

life's subjects but of revealing and kindling the spark of divinity hidden under this smolder. It is a matter of finding within conditional and transitory form the unconditional and eternal significance inherent to it and affirming it not only as a fixed idea but also as the beginning of fulfillment as an advance on perfection. The positive elements of life in their relative and temporal manifestations must be understood and received by us as *conditional givens for the solution of an unconditional problem*. In family, these natural givens are the three generations successively bound together by birth: grandparents, parents, and grandchildren. The continuity and relativity of this bond do not abolish its tripartite constitution as an abiding norm: The members of the series protruding on either side of it—*great-grandparents* and *great-grandchildren*—do not represent any special aspect in the idea of family correlation. The higher task consists of spiritualizing the relative, natural bond of the three generations and making it unconditionally moral. This is attained in three ways: through family religion, marriage, and education.

II

Family Religion and Its Transformation in Christianity

The worship of forefathers. — Its eternal significance, which has been well preserved even in primitive facts. — Christian transformation of the ancient cult in its main characteristics.

Family religion is the most ancient, fundamental, and durable institution in humanity.⁴ It has survived the patriarchal way of life, and it has survived and continues to survive all changes—religious and political. The object of family religion is the older generation, departed fathers or forefathers. According to the most ancient conceptions, forefathers must without fail be dead; this was so necessary that, by a natural turn of thought, all the dead, independently of their age or sex, were called forefathers (Lithuanian-Polish: *dziady*, a profoundly archaic remnant or vestige).⁵ If natural grandfathers accidentally lived too long, then

⁴ Ed. note: Soloviev had earlier discussed *pietas erga parentes* and the filial relationship as the original basis of the religious principle in morality. See chapter 4 of part 1.

⁵ Ed. note: “Forefathers”: *dziady*, Latin letters in the original. It seems likely that Soloviev had in mind the complex, poetic drama “Dziady” (1828/32) by the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), whom he held in high esteem. At about the same time that Soloviev wrote the preface for the second edition of *Justification of the Good*, he also gave a speech in honor of the 100th anniversary of Mickiewicz’s

this was an outrage, a violation of the religious-moral norm that, however, was easily restored through a voluntary sacrificial offering of the old man. Under this primitive fact, there was in essence a faithful idea, or more precisely two ideas. First, the authentic *object* of reverence and worship for human beings cannot be a being found in a condition identical to them, with the same requirements and capabilities. Second, for the powerful and salutary *action* that is characteristic of a higher being in the earthly domain, it must itself *depart* from that domain and sever its direct physical bond with it. In order that family esteem shown to the older generation could be maintained in an epoch of predominant force, it was impossible to allow it to be bound together with the spectacle of senility and impotence. The old men themselves understood it and with grateful wisdom gave up in good time their enfeebled life for another, powerful existence in kind.

“The evening steals upon me,” King Bele said,
“The helmet now is heavy, and stale the mead”;
...
“But lay us now, ye children, in two mound-graves.
Close where the blue gulf tosses its ceaseless waves”;
...
“When the moon’s pale beams the mountains and valleys fill,
And midnight’s dew is falling on grove and hill;
Then will we sit, O Thorstein, above our pillows,
And talk about the future across the billows.”⁶

As early as the pagan worship of ancestors, the natural bond of patriarchal succession aspires to acquire spiritually moral significance. Through the revelation of life’s unconditional meaning in Christianity, the possibility of full realization for this religious bond with ancestors is acquired as well. Instead of a material sacrificial feeding of “forefathers,” who help from their side with interior matters, a spiritual cooperation in prayer and sacrament is established. Both sides have

birth. See V. S. Soloviev, “Mickiewicz,” in *The Heart of Reality: Essays on Beauty, Love, and Ethics by V. S. Soloviev*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 171–78.

⁶ Tegner’s *Fritiof*, trans. Ia. K. Grot. [Ed. note: Instead of translating the Russian in Soloviev’s text or using Duddington’s rendition, I have borrowed English lines from what may be the most coherent translation-in-verse of Esaias Tegner’s saga, published under the title *Fridthjof’s Saga: A Norse Romance*, trans. Thomas and Martha Holcomb, 2nd ed. (Chicago: S. Griggs, 1888), 2.13. The sense of the penultimate line might also be conveyed by “We from the hills, O Thorsten, the waters will behold.”]

their prayer books in one another, both help one another in attaining an *eternal good*. It is a matter of unconditional interest—salvation of the soul. Eternal Memory, at rest with the saints, the universal resurrection of life—here is what the present generation desires and helps attain for the departed—*for them*.⁷ From the departed it expects help in the same thing—*for itself*. The reciprocal attitude, crossing over into the domain of absolute good, ceases being self-interested and becomes purely moral and is understood and realized as the perfect Good.

Eternal memory—this does not mean, of course, that people on earth will eternally remember a dead person as something that was but is no more. First, for the dead one it would now not be so important; and second, it is impossible because earthly humanity itself should in no way count on the *eternal* continuation of its *temporal* existence if there is any meaning in the world. Eternal memory, for which we turn to God and not to people, signifies abidance in the eternal mind of God. To create an eternal memory for anyone means to establish them in conformity to their eternal idea—to the eternal intention of God for them and to affirm them in the domain of unconditional and invariable existence.⁸ With respect to life's anxiety, this is eternal *rest*. Death in itself is not rest, and those dying in natural humanity can sooner be called the restless (French: *revenants*; German: *Poltergeister*) than those at rest. The rest about which we pray for our departed depends upon God's eternal memory of them. Affirmed in their unconditional idea, they have in it the firm, inviolable guarantee of an approaching final realization of perfect good in the world and therefore cannot be troubled. Although the distinction between present and future still exists for them, in this future there is nothing doubtful or anxious. It is separated from them only by a necessary postponement, and they can already look at everything “under the aspect of eternity.”⁹ Whereas for the dead in natural humanity, the future, although it becomes their main interest, still remains a formidable riddle and mystery.

⁷ The prayer for granting eternal memory to the departed forms an important part of the funeral and the requiem services in the Orthodox Church [Ed. Duddington's note].

⁸ Ed. note: “Eternal idea”: a suggestion of Plato's perfect forms of things, the significance of which Soloviev discussed elsewhere. See, for example, V. S. Soloviev, “Beauty in Nature” [1889] in *The Heart of Reality*, 34–41.

⁹ Ed. note: “Under the aspect of eternity”: the Latin phrase *sub specie aeternitatis* is associated with Baruch Spinoza. See Steven Nadler, “Baruch Spinoza,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2012 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/spinoza/>.

Then will we sit, O Thorstein, above our pillows,
And talk about the future across the billows.

Eternal rest is not inactivity. Activity also remains among the dead, only its character essentially changes. It now does not come about from anxious aspiration toward a distant and uncertain goal but is perfected on the basis and by virtue of an attained and invariable abiding bond with the unconditional Good, and therefore activity here is compatible with a calm and sorrow-less rest. Just as the departed's moral bond with *neighbors according to nature*, with living posterity, is expressed in one's salutary activity, so, too, in blessed rest one is inseparable from *neighbors according to God and eternity*—this is rest with the saints.

Such is the norm for everyone. If not everyone attains it, if not all those who have died are really at rest and not all to whom eternal memory is sung turn out to be worthy before God, then from this a religious attitude to forefathers—the family foundation—and through it every morality changes not in the least. First, the actual fate of every dead person still remains for us conjectural. Second, even in facing the great probability of an unfavorable supposition, a religious attitude to the fact only takes on another shade, and in such a case a rising complementary sense of pity motivates one to more intensive action. Third and final, each human being has, if not a majority then probably at least some of his or her forefathers who correspond to the requirements of “eternal memory” and “at rest with the saints.” Consequently, apart from all other bonds, each human being also has without fail a generic, blood bond with the world of God's eternity. From this fundamental aspect, family can have unconditional significance for each can be a true complement (through the abiding past) to one's moral personality.

On the other hand, the fullness of the life of ancestors, even eternally commemorated by God, even at rest with the saints, is conditional on the activity of descendants. They create the earthly conditions in which the end of the world process can advance and, consequently, also the corporeal resurrection of the departed, in which each departed is naturally bound to the future final humanity by means of the successive line of blood kinship.¹⁰ By acting on one's corporeality and on exterior material nature in the sense of actually spiritualizing it, each one fulfills an obligation with respect to one's ancestors, pays them one's moral

¹⁰ I cannot expand on the most proximate circumstances of this bond, and on other questions that relate here, without crossing over into the sphere of metaphysics and mystical aesthetics. However the general necessity of resurrection as the fullness of spiritual-corporeal being is clear enough from the point of view of unconditional moral principle and of the reality of the moral order. [Ed. note: Soloviev had earlier discussed the reality of the moral order in history in chapter 3 of part 2.]

debt.¹¹ Having acquired from them physical existence and the entire legacy of preceding history, the new generation conducts further work, at the end of which the conditions of life's fullness are created for the departed as well. Even from this new point of view the natural bond with previous generations, or the family religion of the past, acquires unconditional significance, becomes an expression of the perfect Good.

The work of human beings on spiritualizing their corporeality, and on earthly nature in general, will render their salutary action *backward*, into the past, only when the goal is attained. The past will acquire the fullness of its reality only in the future. Not until the matter is brought to an end and perfection of life attained—until spiritual and corporeal existence completely interpenetrate one another—will the abyss between the visible and invisible world be fully abolished and death become an impossibility not only for the living but also for the dead. Until then, the necessary condition for that future perfection and the moral task of the present must be taken as a struggle of spirit with flesh, its concentration and strengthening. The *present* means for corporeal resurrection is subjugation of the flesh, and the indispensable condition for life's fullness is suppression of the immensity of life, or asceticism. True asceticism, that is, spiritual command of the flesh leading to the resurrection of life, has two paths: monasticism and marriage. About the first, the main and exclusive one, we have spoken in another place,¹² explanation of the second belongs to the present discourse.

III

Marriage and Childbearing

Marriage. — It unites the human being with God through the present, just as the religion of forefathers does—through the past. — In true marriage the natural sexual bond is not abolished but is transmuted. — The natural elements of the sexual relation serve as necessary givens for the moral problem of this transmutation: (1) carnal attraction, (2) amorousness, (3) childbearing. — Marriage remains as satisfaction of the sexual requirement, but this very requirement now applies not to replenishment of the animal organism but to restoration of the image of God in the human being. — Matrimony as a form of asceticism, as exploit and martyrdom. — Mundane childbearing, unneeded and impossible in perfect marriage,

¹¹ Ed. note: For an in-depth discussion of "spiritual corporeality," see V. S. Soloviev, "The Meaning of Love," in *The Heart of Reality*, 128–33.

¹² See above, the second chapter [chap. 2 of pt. 1], "The Ascetic Principle in Morality."

is necessary and desirable in marriage that is in process of being perfected—first as the necessary consequence of perfection not attained at present, then as the natural path for its future attainment.

It is not for nothing that such an apparently simple relation, the physical basis of which already appears in the animal and even the plant kingdom, is called “a great mystery.” It is taken as a permanent, consecrated image by the word of God, signifying the union of the Lord of Israel with the people, Christ crucified with the earthly church, and Christ, the prince of glory, with the New Jerusalem.¹³ If worship of ancestors and religious cooperation with them binds the human being with the perfect Good through the past, then true marriage has the same significance for the present, central moment of life. This is realization of the unconditional moral norm in the actual midst of human existence. Sexual opposition, which in the world of prehuman organisms expresses only the general cooperation of life as a giving and receptive form—the active and passive principle—acquires for the human being more definite and profound significance. Woman is not, like female animals, only the embodiment of the passively receptive aspect of natural existence—she is the concentrated essence of the whole of nature, the final expression of the material world in its *inner* passivity, as ready to cross over into a new, higher kingdom—to moral spiritualization. Man here does not represent only the active principle in general, but is the bearer of a particularly human activity, defined by the unconditional meaning of life, to which through him woman also becomes joined. He in his turn is obligated to her by the possibility of the most proximate, direct realization of this meaning, or of absolute good.

Supreme morality, proceeding from unconditional principle and defined by it (that which in theology is called *grace*) is not a destruction of nature, but a communication of actual perfection to it.¹⁴ The natural attitude between male and female displays three aspects: (1) the *material*—in physical attraction, conditional upon the nature of the organism; (2) the *ideal*—in that exaltation of the soul’s feeling, which is called being in love; and (3) the natural sexual attitude is determined from its *expedience*, or its final result, that is, giving birth to children.

In true marriage, the natural sexual bond is not destroyed but is transmuted. Yet until this transmutation becomes fact it is a moral problem, and the elements of the natural sexual relation are the givens of this problem. Major significance

¹³ Ed. note: The several allusions seem to rely on Pauline images, as in Ephesians 5:32, as well as Hosea 3:1; John 3:29; and Revelation 21:2.

¹⁴ Ed. note: This appears to be a reference to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia q. 1 a. 8 ad 2.

belongs in this respect to the central element—loving exaltation, or the pathos of love. Man sees his natural supplement, his material other—woman—not as she appears to outward observation or how others, strangers, view her. Rather, he perceives in her the true essence or idea of that which she was originally designated to be, as God saw her for ages, and as she finally must become. Material nature in its supreme individual expression, the woman is also acknowledged here for her unconditional significance; she is affirmed as a moral person, as an end in herself, or as a being capable of being spiritualized and “deified.”¹⁵ The moral obligation to act flows from such an acknowledgment, in the sense of realizing in this actual woman and in her life that which she should be. Corresponding to this is the special character of the supreme loving feeling in woman as well. She sees in the one she has chosen an actual savior who must reveal and realize for her the meaning of her life.

Marriage remains as satisfaction of the sexual requirement; only that very requirement now relates not to the outward nature of an animal organism but to a nature that is humanized and awaiting deification. A huge *task* appears, solved only through continuous *exploit*. In the struggle with hostile reality, it is possible to conquer only by passing through martyrdom.¹⁶ From this point of view the fullness of life’s satisfaction, embracing corporeal sensibility as well, is connected not to the preceding lust but to the subsequent joy of attained perfection.

It goes without saying that in *perfect* marriage, in which the inner completeness of the human being is finally realized through its unification with spiritualized

¹⁵ Ed. note: The concept of *theosis* or deification—by grace but not by nature—is central to traditional Christian anthropology and soteriology and remains such in the Christian East. (See, e.g., Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 54.) Since Soloviev had just referenced Thomas Aquinas, he may particularly have had in mind *Summa Theologica* I-II q. 112 a. 1: “For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness....” The New Testament basis of the doctrine can be found, e.g., in 2 Peter 1:3–4 and John 10:34–36.

¹⁶ The late Professor of Philosophy P. D. Yurkevitch related to me that a young scholar, son of an evangelical pastor in Moscow who was present once at a marriage in a Russian church, was struck by the fact that in a sacred anthem bridal crowns are compared to the crowns of martyrs. This profoundly thoughtful view so touched his soul that it called forth a complete revolution, ending with the young philologist giving up secular learning and the university chair destined for him and, to the distress of his relatives, going into a monastery. This was the well-known Father Clement Sederholm, about whom an excellent characterization and biography were afterward provided by the late K. N. Leontiev. (See K. N. Leontiev, *Father Clement Sederholm* [Moscow, 1882].)

material essence, the mundane bearing of children becomes both unnecessary and impossible. It is unnecessary because the higher task is fulfilled, the final goal attained. It is just as impossible as two equal geometrical figures being placed one upon the other and yielding an incongruent remainder. Perfect marriage is the beginning of a new process, not reiterating life in time but renewing it for eternity. Yet one should not forget that perfect marriage is not of necessity the primary condition, but only the final result of the moral union of man and woman. One should not assume this higher task beforehand, just as one should not begin to build a roof, and then maintain that such a roof is an actual house.

True human marriage is that which is consciously *directed* at the perfect union of man and woman and creation of the whole human being. Yet it is only directed at, and has not realized in itself, the idea as actual completeness, has not freed itself yet from the duality between it and the material empirical reality opposed to it. Until then mundane physical childbearing appears both as *the natural result of perfection not at present attained* and as *the inevitable path for its future attainment*.¹⁷ It is clear that the union of man and woman has not yet become completely spiritualized. As long as the completeness of this union remains a subjective idea, and in objective reality the union continues as formerly to be mundane and superficial according to the image of animals, its result *cannot* have another character. Just as clear is the higher expediency of this result *in the given imperfection*; for that which parents have not perfected will be done by children. The mundane temporal succession of generations exists *for the reason* that marriage has not attained its perfection, that the union of individual men and women is insufficiently spiritual and complete in order to inwardly regenerate within them a whole human being resembling, and according to, the image of God. But the words *for this reason* also turn out to go along with the words *so that*—precisely so that—the task which turned out to be beyond the strength of this individual human being (man and woman), may still be realized for them obliquely, through a series of future generations proceeding through it. In this way, inward fullness is restored, as well as the family as an end in itself. Unconditional significance remains for the human being, even if imperfect, and the bond of solidarity between the temporal members of the vital series proceeding into eternity abides unbroken.

For the moral organization of humanity, the single fact of heredity, that is, descent from a given series of ancestors, is insufficient with respect to the past. The establishment of an abiding moral bond with these ancestors is required,

¹⁷ Ed. note: Soloviev had discussed childbearing and procreation in more detail in chapter 1 of part 2.

something that is also fulfilled in family religion. Further, in the present, the natural fact of the sexual bond is also insufficient, but raising this bond to the level of spiritual exploit is required, which also takes place in true marriage. Just as it is with respect to heredity in the past and the sexual bond in the present, so it is, too, for the moral organization of the collective human being with respect to the future. Without limiting itself to the significance of children as the *new* generation, to which an uncertain future belongs, that collective also requires an intrinsic moral succession beyond the actual extrinsic succession. It is not satisfied by the fact that parents produce children for the future but imposes an obligation *to educate* these bearers and engines of the future for their definitive universal historical task.

IV

Educating a New Generation to the Eternal Good

The goal of education in a spiritually organized family consists in the binding of the new generation's temporal life to eternal good, which is common for all generations and which restores their essential unity.

The natural moral sense of pity, which does not allow us to hurt our neighbors and compels us to help them, is naturally concentrated upon those neighbors who are most closely bound to us and at the same time most in need of our help, that is, children.¹⁸ Already having a moral character in the family as an element of

¹⁸ Ed. note: The subject of pity was introduced in chapters 1 and 3 of part 1 (The Primary Data of Morality; Pity and Altruism) as one of the three moral relations or attitudes of a human being to things below and above, the others being piety, or reverence, and shame, which originated as sexual modesty. It may be possible to understand Soloviev's return to pity as a frame of reference here toward the end of the book in part as a response to assertions made by Hobbes in "Of Human Nature" (1650) chapter 9:10:

Pity is imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of another man's calamity. But when it lighteth on such as we think have not deserved the same, the compassion is greater, because then there appeareth more probability that the same may happen to us: for, the evil that happeneth to an innocent man, may happen to every man. But when we see a man suffer for great crimes, which we cannot easily think will fall upon ourselves, the pity is the less. And therefore men are apt to pity those whom they love: for, whom they love, they think worthy of good, and therefore not worthy of calamity. Thence it is also, that men pity the vices of some persons at the first sight only, out of love to their

naturally human life, this bond attains unconditional significance in the family as the primary basis of new, spiritually organized life.

The moral significance of marriage consists in the fact that woman ceases being an instrument of natural inclinations, and is acknowledged as a being absolutely worthy in herself, as the necessary complement to the individual man for his true wholeness. Failure or insufficient success of marriage to realize this unconditional significance of human individuality compels the transfer of the task forward—to children as representatives of the future. A simple, natural pity toward this weak and suffering neighboring being is here associated with a worldwide sorrow concerning evil and the calamities of life; and then hope that these new beings will succeed in easing the universal burden; and finally, the obligation to preserve them for this work, and prepare them for it.

In a spiritually organized family the relation of parents to children has in view mainly the unconditional destination of human beings. The goal of education here consists in binding the temporal life of this future generation to the supreme and eternal good, which is common to all generations and in which the forefathers, fathers, and children are indivisibly of one being among themselves. For the kingdom of God can become manifest and the resurrection of life can be perfected only through abolition of the temporal break up of humankind into generations that are exclusive to each other, one ousting the other from life.¹⁹ Meanwhile, on the path to this perfection, the moral bond of generations and the unconditional, supertemporal unity of humankind is supported through reverence of ancestors in one direction and through education of children—in the other.

A great dispute goes on between time and eternity in humankind about which is stronger: the Good or death?

aspect. The contrary of pity is hardness of heart, proceeding either from slowness of imagination, or some extreme great opinion of their own exemption from the like calamity, or from hatred of all or most men.

Soloviev's discussion of pity also suggests aspects of Spinoza's discussion of the subject as found in part 3 of his *Ethics*, "On the Origin and Nature of the Affects." See Michael LeBuffe, "Spinoza's Psychological Theory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2010 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/spinoza-psychological/>.

¹⁹ Ed. note: "Kingdom of God": For Soloviev, this concept encapsulated the central Gospel message. See V. S. Soloviev, "On Counterfeits" [1891], in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma: Essays by V. S. Soloviev on Christianity and Judaism*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 150.

“Your fathers,” says the Prince of this world to humankind, “those through whom you received everything that you have, are those who were, are not, and will not be evermore, and if this is so, then where is the Good? You reconcile yourself to the death of your fathers, affirm it with your consent, *you live and enjoy, but those to whom you are obliged, have disappeared forever and always.*²⁰ Where then is good, where is the very source of piety—gratitude, where is pity, where is shame? Are they not perfectly conquered by selfishness, self-seeking, sensuality? But do not despair: such condemnation of your life has meaning only from the point of view of the Good, only with the presupposition that the Good exists. But it is precisely this presupposition that constitutes a fundamental error: there is no Good at all. If there were, either your fathers would not have died, or you would not have been able to be reconciled to their death. And now it is clear that the Good, with its fictitious demands and standards of piety, shame, and pity, is no more than an empty claim. If you want to live, live having forgotten about the Good, since it has been swallowed up by death with nothing remaining, it is no more, and will not be.”

“Your fathers died but they have not ceased to exist, for *I have* the keys of existence,” says Eternity. “Do not believe that they have disappeared, and in order to see them, bind yourself to the unseen with the secure bond of the Good: revere them, pity them, be ashamed to forget them.”

“Illusion!” says the Prince of the age again. “Believe, if it pleases you, in their hidden, subjective existence. But if you are not content with such a counterfeit of existence for yourself, but hold to the fullness of manifest, objective life, then you should also demand it for your fathers, if only the Good exists.²¹ But manifest, objective existence—the only kind that it is worth talking about—has been lost by your fathers and will not return to them evermore: give up the powerless Good, the exhausted struggle with specters, and live a full life.”

But the final word belongs to Eternity, which, without renouncing the past, appeals the more boldly to the future:

“The Good does not depend on the degree of your power, and your weakness is not the powerlessness of the Good. And you yourself are only powerless when you stop at your own self. The incompleteness of your life is of your own making. In truth all is open for you. Live in everything, be a unity of yourself and

²⁰ Ed. note: This may carry an allusion to Revelation 1:18.

²¹ Ed. note: This “counterfeit” existence would seem to invert the sense of what Soloviev proclaimed earlier in another place. See, for example, “On Counterfeits,” in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma*, 147–57.

your other, not only in the direction of the past, with respect to your ancestors, but also going forward. Affirm yourself in new generations in order that with your present help they bring the world to that final condition in which God will resurrect the fullness of life for all—for them themselves, for you, and for fathers and forefathers. By this you can in fact at the present moment show the absolute power of the Good over time and death, not idly denying them, but using them for the fullest manifestation of immortal life. Use the death of your ancestors, in order to preserve in the religion of the departed a lasting pledge of their resurrection. Use your temporal existence, in order that, in giving it away to posterity, in transferring the center of your moral gravity into the future, you anticipate and bring nearer the final revelation of the Kingdom of God in this world.”

V

True Education as Both Traditional and Progressive

True education must be at once and indivisibly both *traditional and progressive*. In handing over to the new generation all the spiritual heritage of the past, it must at the same time develop in it the desire and the capacity to make use of this heritage as a living and moving force for new advancement to the higher goal. — Pernicious consequences of the division of the two aspects. — The moral basis of education is—to instill in descendants a lively interest in *the future of ancestors*. — Explanation. — Moral progress can consist only in the further and better fulfillment of those obligations that flow from tradition. — The highest principle for pedagogy: a bond indissoluble by death, a bond of generations that support one another in the progressive fulfillment of one common matter—preparation for the manifestation of the kingdom of God and for the resurrection of all.

Conventional everyday morality already demands of human beings that they hand down as a legacy to their children not only the goods that they have gained but also the capacity to work for the further ensuring of their life. Higher, unconditional morality also obligates the present generation to hand down to the next a twofold legacy: first, everything practical that has been procured by humanity’s past, all the results of historical economy; and, second, the capacity and the readiness to use this fundamental capital for the common good, for new advancement to the higher goal. Such is the essential assignment of true education, which must be at once both indivisibly *traditional and progressive*. Division and opposition between these two producers of true life—between the foundation and that which

is founded upon it, between the root and that which must grow out of it—is identically absurd and identically murderous for both sides. If something old and good suffices in itself and is no longer an actual foundation for the new and the better, then this means that the old has lost its vital force. Acknowledging it as something *finished* and worshiping it in this form as an extrinsic object, we make out of *religion* only a *relic*—dead but not miracle working. This is the fundamental sin of current conservatism, which aspires to replace the living fruits of the spirit with artificial preserves. Insofar as it finds expression in education, this false conservatism propagates people indifferent and hostile to religion.²² Faith cannot be *in consequence* of such education, when it [faith] is now not in the cause. It is clear, in fact, that exclusive zeal about the preservation of faith can derive only from a lack of faith of zealots themselves: there would be no point to, or time for, their being so distressed and making such efforts on behalf of faith if they *lived by faith*.

Where *tradition* is put in place of the *faithful* (where, for example, regular tradition of the concept of Christ is preserved unconditionally, but the presence of Christ himself and of his spirit is not felt) religious life is impossible, and any efforts to artificially summon it only more clearly expose the fatal loss.²³

Can the life of the future grow out of a past that is really dead? If the bonds of time have disintegrated, then what does progress mean? *Who* is progressing? Could a tree really grow if its roots and trunk existed only in thought, and only the branches and leaves availed themselves of reality? Without dwelling for the time being on the logical incompatibilities of such a point of view, we will limit ourselves to the ethical aspect of the matter. As moral beings, humans have unconditional significance. Their present reality, taken separately, does not correspond (is not adequate) to this significance. Hence, a moral problem arises—to separate oneself, one’s personality and presence, from the unconditional good,

²² Ed. note: Soloviev engaged in meaningful wordplay in the preceding sentences: The Russian word for “finished,” *pokoncheno*, suggests “dead” somewhat more clearly than its English equivalent. Both “religion” and “relic” have their counterparts in Russian as well (*religiia*, *relikviia*). But the juxtaposition of “conservatism” and “preserves” in English does not quite capture the Russian: *konservatizm*, *konservy*. Moreover, the wordplay between “fruits of the spirit” and “propagates” does not come through at all, for “fruits” are *plody* and what is translated here as “propagates” is *plodit* in Russian.

²³ Ed. note: Wordplay again: “tradition” and “faithful”—in Russian *predanie* and *predannogo*—may also subtly suggest something much more sinister, for the verbal infinitive *predat*’ means “to betray.”

abiding as one in all. Insofar as a moral being is internally bound to *all*, it actually has unconditional significance, or its dignity is satisfied. In the order of time, that “all,” from which we must not separate ourselves, with which we must become united intrinsically, appears from two sides, most proximately as our past and our future, as ancestors and descendants. In order to realize our moral dignity in time, we must spiritually become that which we already appear physically as—a link of union and of mediation between ancestors and descendants. For this we must acknowledge on account of the departed an abiding reality and acknowledge on account of ancestors an unconditional future. We must not regard those who have passed on as deceased—they are bearers of the unconditional principle, which must also have a completeness of realization. The departed, the ancestors, together with their objective existence in memory of the past, have a clandestine existence in the present and will attain one manifestly in the future: *they possess both a valid reality and a future.*

Only upon this foundation is true education possible. If we are indifferent to the future of our ancestors, then what will make us care about the future of the new generation? If we can have no unconditional moral solidarity with those who *have died*, then where will such solidarity come from with those who without fail *will die*? Insofar as education essentially consists in transferring moral obligation from one generation to another, it would be desirable to know: *What* is the obligation communicated by us to our successors and with respect *to whom* if our own bond with our ancestors is severed? The obligation to move humanity forward? This is only a play of words, for neither “forward” nor “humanity” have any real meaning here. “Forward” must mean to the good, but where will it come from, when an evil is placed at the foundation—the most elementary and inarguable evil of ingratitude to fathers, reconciliation with their disappearance, calm separation and alienation from them? Where exactly is that humanity that our pupils and successors must move forward? Can last year’s leaves, scattered by the wind and rotten on the ground, constitute together with new leaves a single tree? From this point of view, no humanity of any kind exists at all, but there are only separate generations of people, replacing one another.

If we must replace this superficial and constantly disappearing bond with an essential and abiding moral bond, then evidently this must be done in both directions. The form of time, morally indifferent in itself, cannot in essence determine our moral relations. Any bargain here is impossible—there cannot be two unconditional principles of life. We must finally and irrevocably resolve for ourselves the question: Will we acknowledge unconditional significance for the temporal order of phenomena or for the moral order for the intrinsic bond between beings? In the first resolution: with the disappearance of actual unity in

humanity, as not getting better and broken up in time, there can be no common task, and consequently, neither can there be an obligation to educate future generations for the further fulfillment of such a task. In the second resolution: education is indissolubly bound with reverence for the past, and constitutes its natural complement. The progressive element is conditioned by this traditional element in education, since *moral progress can only consist in the further and better fulfillment of those obligations that flow from tradition.*²⁴

The same unconditional significance of the human being (its capacity of being the bearer of eternal life and participant of the divine completeness of existence) that we religiously revere in the departed, we morally educate in the coming generation, affirming its bond with the departed as manifested through triumph over time and death. Particular problems, the technique of education, belong to a special domain, which we are not going into. But if pedagogy desires to have a common positive principle, indisputable in moral meaning and imparting unconditional dignity to its aspirations, then it will find this only in one thing: *the indissoluble bond of generations, supporting one another in the progressive fulfillment of one common matter—preparation for the manifest kingdom of God and for the resurrection of all.*

VI

Family, Nation, and Language

A normal *family* is the most proximate restoration of the human being's wholeness in one fundamental respect—succession of generations (order of temporal sequence). This wholeness must be restored in the broader order of coexistence as well—first of all within the boundaries of *nation*, or fatherland. — In accordance with the nature of moral organization, the nation absorbs neither family nor person, but fills them with vital content in definite national form, stipulated by language. — This form must be special but not exclusive: a normal multiplicity of different languages does not require their disconnection and alienation. — The Babylonian origin of humanity's disintegration through a unity of confusion and the Zion origin of gathering through unanimity in distinctness. — True unilingualism is communication and understandability of many distinct, divided, but not divisive languages.

²⁴ Ed. note: Soloviev had earlier discussed moral progress as corresponding to social progress in chapter 2 of part 3.

Both the reverence of ancestors and the family education founded upon it conquer immoral discord and restore the moral solidarity of people in the order of time or in *the succession of existence*. This is a victory of good over individual egoism—affirmation of personality as a positive element in the abiding family union, notwithstanding death and time. In order to be the foundation of moral, and consequently, universal organization, in order to be the initial form of unconditional and, consequently, universal good, this union cannot be self-sufficing, closed off, and exclusive. The family is the most proximate restoration of moral wholeness in one fundamental respect—in the succession of generations. But this wholeness must be restored as well in an order of *coexistence*.

The *linear* infinity of the family can only find its moral fullness in another broader whole, just as a geometrical line is realized only as the boundary of a surface, which is the same for a line as a line itself is for a point. If a moral point—the individual person—has true reality only as the bearer of generic succession, then the whole line of this succession receives the real content of existence most proximately only in a bond with a multitude of collectively co-existing families, constituting a *nation*. If we have received all our physical and moral property from our fathers, then the *fathers* had it only through a *fatherland*.²⁵ Family traditions are a fraction of a nation's traditions; and the future of the family is indivisible from the future of the nation. Therefore, reverence for fathers necessarily crosses over into reverence for fatherland, or patriotism, and family education is joined to national education. The good, which according to its essence is inexhaustible and not covetous, imparts to each subject of moral relations, to the individual as well as to the collective, its own intrinsic dignity and unconditional significance. Therefore a moral bond and a moral organization essentially differ from every other by the fact that here every subject of a lower or, more precisely, of a narrower order becomes a subordinate member of a higher or a broader whole. In becoming a subordinate member, it not only is not swallowed up by it, not only preserves its particularity, but finds in this its subordination both the intrinsic conditions and the extrinsic environment for the realization of its higher dignity. Just as the family does not abolish its individual members but gives them, within a certain sphere, fullness of life and lives not only by them but also in them and for them, so, too, precisely the nation neither swallows up the individual nor the family, but *fills* them with vital content in definite national form. This definite form, which constitutes the particular significance or positive quality of a people, is represented first of all *by language*.

²⁵ Ed. note: This element of family-nation was introduced in discussion of the individual and society in chapter 1 of part 3.

Language as a definite expression, as a special qualification of universal reason, unites those who speak *this* language. However, in so doing, it does not alienate them from those who speak another language, since all languages are only special qualifications of the *all-uniting word*, all are commensurable in it among themselves, or understandable one to another.

The multiplicity of languages in itself is something positive and normal, not less than the multiplicity of grammatical elements and forms in each of these languages. What is abnormal is mutual incomprehension and the alienation that derives from it. In the sacred story of the Tower of Babel the heavenly punishment for (and at the same time the natural consequence of) aspiration to a superficial and godless unity represents a loss of intrinsic unity and solidarity, expressed in mutually incomprehensible speech (which is possible even with the lexical composition of that time). If intrinsic moral unity had not been lost, then the difference of languages would not have been a misfortune: they could have been able to learn, and there would have been no point to a scattering over the face of the earth. Yet the point was not in a creative origin of languages but in their *confusion*.

Let us go down, and there confound (*nabla*) their language (*safatam*), that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Gen. 11:7–9 KJV)

It is clear that this story does not at all relate to the derivation of the multiplicity of languages, since in order that they might be confused, they already must have existed.

The full sense of this ancient revelation, remarkable in its profundity, is understandable only in a comparison of the book of Genesis with the New Testament book of the Acts of the Apostles.

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all *with one accord in one place*. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began to speak with other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and

marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” (Acts 2:1–11)

Unity in a true sense is realized in the many, not abolishing it but freeing it from the boundaries of exclusivity. Unilingualism by the activity of the Spirit of God is communication and understandability of many *distinct, divided, but not divisive languages*. Yet the inventors and adherents of various Volapuks and Esperantos, who are conscious or unconscious imitators of the Babylonian tower-builders, understand the matter in this way.²⁶

The normal relation among languages is at the same time the normal relation among nations (in Slavonic both concepts are expressed by one word). Just as a unity of languages is not *unilingualism* but *all-lingualism*, that is, communication and understandability, a mutual penetration of all languages with preservation of the particulars of each, so, too, a true unity of nations is not one nation but all nations, that is, the interaction and solidarity of them all for the independent, full life of each.

VII

Human Unity, National Identity, and Nationalism

The unity of humanity. — All the bases upon which the unity of a nation is strengthened have still greater force in application to humanity. — Unity of descendancy; unity of language, not abolishing the multiplicity of languages; unity of universal history, outside of which there is no national history. — Proofs and explanations. — The indivisibility of the moral good. — The evil of exclusive patriotism. — Humanity as the whole *subject* of moral organization. — Transition to the question of the universal *forms* of moral order.

When we, having learned another language, understand foreigners speaking in this their native, but what is for us an alien, language—we understand not only

²⁶ The intrinsic bond and contrast between the Babylonian tower-building of the pagans and the Zion assembly of the apostles, as violation and restoration of the norm, are clearly indicated in Church anthems sung at Pentecost.

the significance of the words being pronounced by them but with the help of this speech enter with them into a real communication of feelings, thoughts, and aspirations. By the same token, we now clearly show that a people's real unity is not exhausted by unity of nationality. To deny this fact—a fact of interlingual and international, and consequently, of universally human communication—is impossible. Perhaps this communication is only a superficial relation, not having any real unity in itself? Many think this way, maintaining that the nation is a real whole, whereas humanity is only a generic concept, abstracted from interactions, into which enter separate nations who are in essence foreign to one another. We leave to metaphysics the question as to what extent *any* interaction supposes an essential unity of those who are interacting. For the time being, we will note, however, that the property of precisely *those* interactions into which different nations, or people belonging to different nations enter, among themselves, requires independently of any metaphysics whatsoever that they assume among themselves at least the same real unity that is assumed within each nation among persons and groups that constitute it.

On what foundations do we acknowledge nationality as a real force and a nation as something actually united, and not a simple accumulation of many human units? A similar question with regard to family is resolved by indicating the *evident* physical bond. In relation to a nation, three foundations are indicated.

1. *A supposed physical bond*, or a unity of descent. This *supposition* has not only equal but also incomparably greater force in application to humanity than in relation to nationalities. An original unity of humankind is not only a dogma of faith of the three monotheistic religions, but also the predominant opinion among philosophers and naturalists, whereas the most proximate unity of physical descent within the boundaries of nationality is in the vast majority of cases a notorious fiction.

2. *Language*. Unity of language binds those who speak it, but we know that difference of language does not hamper people from unanimity, like-mindedness, or even using the same words, for in this difference, a single intrinsic language is not abolished but becomes manifest. It is undoubtedly common to all people because everyone under certain conditions can understand one another in whatever language they might speak. And this is not a superficial result of extrinsic interaction, for that which here is mutually understood does not relate only to incidental objects but embraces the innermost content of the human soul. Consequently, a real bond and unity of all people already consists in this most profound and most real basis of life. Difference of languages is a difference of essential forms of mental life, and this is important insofar as each of these forms represents a special aspect of the soul. However, still more important is the content that each

of them receives in its own way and that, received by all, is not exhausted by any and does not exclude any. It is a positive and independent principle of hidden unity and of manifest unification for all.

Language is the most profound and fundamental expression of national character. But just as the difference of individual characteristics does not hamper the real unity of a nation, which includes in itself all these people of various characteristics, so, too, the differences of national characters cannot hamper the real unity of all the nations in humanity, which is also a “character.”

3. *History.* If national history is the basis of national unity, then universal or world-history is the foundation of a broader, but not less solid, all-human unity. Moreover, national history is quite unthinkable other than as an indivisible part of world-history. Try to imagine Russian history in the sense of exclusively national originality. Even if one were successful by hook or by crook in eliminating the Scandinavian descent of our state, then in no way is it possible to deny that the Christianizing of Russia by the Greeks immediately introduces our nation into the sphere of supranational, universal history. According to its own content, Christianity in itself is absolute truth. Consequently, it is superhuman and, what is more, supranational. Even from a purely historical point of view, it is impossible to date it to any separate nationality. How can one here separate the Jewish seed from the Chaldean and Iranian, Egyptian and Phoenician, Greek and Roman membranes? Yet at the same time without this national seed and without these national membranes there would not have been a Christianity as positive revelation and, consequently, there would not have been a foundation laid for the universal kingdom of God. Whatever the significance of national elements in the historical formation of universal religion may have been, new nations such as Russia, having appeared after the affirmation of Christianity and having accepted it in its prepared form as the final revelation of a higher unconditional good, cannot now search in themselves for an authentic source of their life. Their history can have meaning only as a more or less perfect adoption of a given, a more or less successful preparation for fulfillment of the task already supplied by Christianity. It is understood that in this preparatory process one Christian nation cannot and must not remain in isolation, alienation, and hostility to others. Such an attitude is opposed to the very essence of Christianity, and it is impossible to prepare for the fulfillment of a certain task while affirming oneself in direct contradiction to its intrinsic meaning. Russia resolutely affirmed its confession of Christian universalism when it finally left national seclusion and showed itself as a living member of the international whole in the most important and glorious epoch of its modern history. Only then did the national power of Russia reveal itself in what is up to this time more significant and precious than anything we have, not

only for us alone but also for other nations: the beautiful flower of our profound, pensive, and tender poetry grew on the powerful stem of a Europeanized Petrine state. Russian universalism—which is just as different from cosmopolitanism as the language of the apostles is from Volapuk—is bound to the names of Peter the Great and Pushkin. Let anyone identify other national Russian names equal to these!

Just as individual human beings have meaning in their personal existence only through family, through their bond with ancestors and posterity, and just as family has abiding vital content amidst the nation and national tradition—so precisely nationality also lives, moves and exists, only borne by the supranational and international environment. Just as within and through an individual human being lives an entire series of successive generations, and just as in the aggregate of those families an individual nation lives and acts through them, so in the fullness of nations a single humanity lives and perfects its history.

If the nation is an actual fact and not an abstract generic concept, and if the intrinsic, organic character of the bond that connects nations with one another in universal history is also an actual fact, then humanity, too, in its wholeness must be acknowledged as just such a fact, for actual and living organs can only be organs of an actual living body, and in no way of an abstract concept. And the same unconditional moral solidarity in the good that binds human beings to ancestors and descendants—forming a normal family—also binds them through these primary and most proximate liberating ties to the universal whole that is concentrated in humanity. Humanity is the full collective subject, or “recipient,” of the perfect good, the full image and likeness of divinity, or the bearer of actual moral order (the kingdom of God). As has already been said, according to the very essence of moral order, or of moral organization, all the parts or all the members of the great collective human being are participating in the absolute fullness of the whole because they are necessary to that fullness no less than it is for them.²⁷

The moral bond is a bond that is perfectly reciprocal. Just as humanity is unthinkable apart from the nations that constitute it, and a nation apart from families, and a family apart from individual persons, it is precisely the same in reverse. An individual human being is impossible (not only physically, but morally as well) outside the generic succession of generations, the moral life of the family is impossible outside the nation and the life of the nation—outside of humanity. This truism was willingly accepted in its full force by everyone until very recently. Even more recently (for reasons that are still obscure for existing systems of the

²⁷ Ed. note: The word here translated as “participating,” *prichasten*, also clearly suggests “communion”—*prichastie* in Russian.

philosophy of history), it has become customary, contrary to any logic, to separate from this elementary truth its necessary summit and to declare the intrinsic dependence of a nation upon humanity a fantasy and a chimera. They agree that a bad son and a bad father—a man who does not revere his ancestors and does not worry about the education of his (physical or spiritual) descendants—cannot be a good patriot, and that a bad patriot cannot be a true servant of the common good.²⁸ They also admit, in reverse order, that a bad patriot cannot be a normal family man, and a bad family man—a normal human being. But they do not want to acknowledge that the very same solidarity between different degrees of moral organization does not allow such a human being—one who is indifferent to the single higher good of all nations together—to be a real and good patriot (and in consequence of that, a normal bearer of family, and finally, personal life as well). Meanwhile, it is perfectly clear that if someone sets as a higher goal the good of one's nation, separately taken, not relative to others, then first one takes away from the good the essential sign of universality and, consequently, distorts the goal itself. Second, in separating the good of one nation from the good of others, while they are in actuality connected in solidarity, one distorts the idea of one's nation. Out of this double distortion it follows, third, that such a human being can serve only a distorted nation, communicating to it a distorted good, that is, can serve only evil, and, bringing only harm to one's fatherland, must be acknowledged as a bad patriot.

The good embraces all the particulars of life, but is itself *indivisible*. Patriotism as a virtue is part of a generally proper attitude to everything, and this part in the moral order cannot be separated from the whole and set in opposition to it. In moral organization, one nation cannot prosper *at the expense* of others, cannot affirm itself as a positive model to the detriment or harm of others. Just as the positive moral dignity of particular persons comes to be known from the fact that their prosperity is truly useful to all others, so, too, the prosperity of nations true to moral principle is necessarily bound with universal good. This logical and moral axiom is crudely perverted in a current sophism: we must think only of our own nation because it is good, and consequently, its prosperity is useful to all. An evident truth is overlooked here with striking thoughtlessness, or put aside with striking impudence. It is an evident truth that this very alienation of

²⁸ Ed. note: In an 1883 letter, Soloviev criticized Russian nationalists for ignoring the indispensable theological foundation needed for any clear understanding of nationalism, wryly adding that in this case “‘patriot’ rhymes with ‘idiot.’” See *Politics, Law, and Morality: Essays by V. S. Soloviev*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 303.

one's nation from others, this *exclusive* acknowledgment of it as good is already principally evil and that on this evil foundation nothing besides evil can take place. It is one of two things. Either it is necessary to renounce Christianity and monotheism in general, according to which "No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God" [Mark 10:18] and to recognize one's nationality *in itself* as good (i.e., as the supreme good) that is to set it in place of God, or one must admit that a nation becomes good not by virtue of the simple fact of given nationality, but only in conforming and becoming a participant in the absolute Good. Evidently, this is possible only with a good attitude to everything but in the present case first of all with a good attitude to other nations. A nation cannot actually be good while it has anger for or is alienated from others, while it does not acknowledge its neighbors in them, [while it] does not love them as its own self.

The moral obligation of a true patriot is also defined by this—to serve the nation in the Good, or the true good of the nation, indivisible from the good of all, or—what is the same thing—to *serve the nation in humanity and humanity in the nation*. Such a patriot will find the positive, good side in any foreign race and nationality, and through it will bind this race and this nation to his or her own—for the good of the one and the other.

When they speak about a rapprochement of nations, international agreements, friendships and alliances, before rejoicing or becoming sad in this regard, it is necessary to know *in what* is the rapprochement or the uniting taking place: in good or evil.²⁹ The fact of uniting does not itself resolve anything. If hatred unites two against a third—whether these are two individual human beings or two nations—their uniting is evil and a source of new evil. If it is mutual interest or common good uniting them—the question is not resolved by this, for interest can be unworthy, good can be imaginary. Then a uniting of nations, just as of individual people in this unworthy interest, in this imaginary good, even if there is directly no evil, cannot be a good desirable for its own sake. Any uniting of people and nations can be positively approved only insofar as it assists the moral organization of humanity, or the organization in it of the unconditional Good. We have found that the ultimate *subject* of this organization—the real essence of *moral order*—is the collective human being, or humanity, successively partitioned into its organs and elements—nations, families, and persons. Knowing now *who* it is that is organizing morally, we must resolve *in what* it is that they are organizing—by considering the question about *the universal forms of moral order*.

²⁹ Ed. note: Soloviev had just discussed war's significance in the context of modern European international relations in the previous chapter (chap. 9, pt. 3).

VIII

The Universal Church, Its Unity and Wholeness

The universal church as the organization of piety. — Explanation. — The essence of the Church is—the unity and holiness of Deity, insofar as it is abiding and acting in a positive manner in the world through humanity (or—what is the same thing—the church is creation gathered together in God). — The *unity* and *holiness* of the church in the order of coexistence are its *catholicity*, or wholeness, and in the order of sequence—the *apostolic* succession. — Catholicity abolishes all divisions and disconnections, preserving all differences and particular qualities.

A proper or fitting relation to the higher world, to other people, and to lower nature is organized collectively in the forms of church, state, and economic society, or *zemstvo*.³⁰

Individual religious sentiment attains its objective development and realization in the Church (universal), which is, in this manner, *organized piety*.

From the point of view of religious morality, human beings live in three different environments: the secular, or the conditional (“this world” [1 Cor. 1:20]), the divine, or the unconditional (the kingdom of God), and that which mediates between the two, or binds them, the specifically religious (the Church).

To stop definitively at a direct opposition between world and Deity, between earth and heaven, is contrary to sound religious sentiment. Even if we are frankly ready to look upon the whole world as upon useless dust, this dust does not fear our contemptuous gaze—it *remains*. But *upon whom?* If we say upon the Deity, then this would be manifestly impious. If we acknowledge secular dust only as a phantom of our imagination, then our own *I*, subject to the tormenting nightmare of phenomena, and powerless before the phantoms created by it, turns out itself to be a useless speck of dust that had gotten into the eye of eternity from somewhere, and hopelessly confounded its cleanliness. This second gaze will be even more impious than the first. Insofar as everything in the final analysis amounts to God, the more contemptuously we relate to secular existence, the

³⁰ Ed. note: *Zemstvo*: the form of local government organization in Russia’s countryside. From the time of its inception, about three years after Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom in 1864, the *zemstvo* was responsible for public services and infrastructure, such as the building of schools, hospitals, and roads. Soloviev had raised the three interlocking issues of church, state, and economy together much earlier in context of Russia’s treatment of the Jews. See V. S. Soloviev, “The Jews and the Christian Question” [1884], in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma*, 77–82.

more unworthy are our concepts of the absolute essence. When we declare that the world is pure nothing, then we fall into utter blasphemy, since all the bad aspects of existence, which are not abolished by verbal denial, we must then frankly and directly ascribe to God himself. This dialectic cannot be avoided while only two opposing terms are admitted. But there is a third, mediating term; there exists a historical environment, in which the useless dust of the earth is regenerated through a skillful system of fertilization, into the salutary soil of the future kingdom of God.³¹

Sound religious sentiment demands from us not a denial and abolition of the world but only that we not accept the world as an unconditionally independent principle of our life. Being *in the world*, we must not only become *not of the world* [John 17:12, 14], but in this capacity must also still act upon the world so that it, too, stops being on its own behalf and becomes more and more on behalf of God. The essence of piety at the higher stage of universal consciousness consists in acknowledging unconditional worth for the Deity and to value all the rest as capable of having absolute value only in association with him, not in itself and on its own behalf but in God and on behalf of God. *Everything becomes more worthy through establishment of its positive correlation with the one and only worth.*

If all people and nations were truly pious, that is, considered the one absolute blessedness and good, that is God, as their own good, then they would evidently be united among themselves. Being united or in solidarity with one another in God, they would evidently live according to God's way—their unity would at the same time also be holiness. Actual humanity, however, is not directed and not elevated by one absolute interest in God but is scattered of its own will among a multitude of relative and unconnected interests. Hence, the disintegration and the discord in fact. Acts of good cannot take place on the basis of bad fact, and so the activity of a disintegrated humanity *in itself* can lead only to sin. Therefore the moral organization of humanity must begin with the unification of it in essence and with the consecration of its activity.

Perfect unity and holiness are in God; in secular humanity are discord and sin. Unification and holiness are in the church, which reconciles and brings the

³¹ Ed. note: "Dust": *prakh*, this Russian word for dust also means "ashes." The combination of that word with the emphasis on "soil" could be understood as suggesting Saint Paul's Letter to the Hebrews: "Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned" (Heb. 6:7–8 NIV).

disintegrated and sinful world into concord with God. But in order to unite and consecrate, the church itself must be *one* and *holy*, that is, must have its foundation in God independently of broken and sinful people, *who are in need of* union and consecration and, consequently, are not capable of getting this from themselves alone. So then, *the Church in essence is the unity and holiness of Deity*, yet not in itself, but *insofar as it abides and acts in the world*. This is Deity in its *other*, or the actual essence of divine humanity. The *unity* and *holiness* of the Church manifest themselves in space as its universality or *catholicity*, and in time as the apostolic succession. Catholicity (*καθ ὅλον*—according to or in conformity with the whole) consists in the fact that all ecclesiastical forms and activities bind separate people and separate nations with the whole of divine humanity. This is true in both its individual concentration—Christ—and in its collective circles—in the world of incorporeal powers, of saints departed and living in God, and of the faithful struggling on earth. Insofar as everything in the church conforms to the absolute whole, everything is catholic, within it all exclusiveness of racial and personal characteristics and social position falls away, all *divisions* or estrangements fall away. But all *differences* remain, for piety requires accepting unity in God not as empty indifference and meager uniformity but as the unconditional fullness of every life. There is no division, but the distinction between the invisible and the visible church is preserved, for the former is the hidden acting force of the latter, and the latter is the growing visibility of the former. They are one in essence and different according to condition. There is no division, but a distinction is preserved in the visible church between the many races and nations, in the unanimity of which the one Spirit testifies with various languages about one truth, and the one Good imparts different gifts and callings. There is, finally, no division, but distinction is preserved by the church of those teaching and of those being taught, between the clergy and the people, between the mind and the body of the church, similar to how the distinction between husband and wife is not an obstacle, but the foundation for their perfect union.

IX

Freedom and Equality, Brotherhood and Fatherhood

Participation in the absolute content of life through the universal church positively *frees* and *equalizes* all, makes out of them a perfect *brotherhood*, presupposing a perfect *fatherhood*.

The catholicity of the church—the fundamental form of the moral organization of humanity—is the conscious and deliberate solidarity of all the universal body's

members in the one unconditional goal of existence under the fullest “division of spiritual labor”—the gifts and services expressing and realizing this goal. This moral solidarity is in its conscious and voluntary character intrinsically different from natural solidarity. We find not only natural solidarity among different members of a physical organism but also among different groups of natural beings, but moral solidarity forms true *brotherhood*, which for human beings consists in positive *freedom* and positive equality.

Human beings do not make use of true freedom when their social environment weighs upon them as extrinsic and alien. Such alienation is abolished in essence only by the principle of the universal church, where each should have in the social whole not an outer boundary, but the intrinsic fullness of its freedom. From the aspect of the “other,” human beings are *in any case* in need of a complement, because from the aspect of their natural limitations and according to necessity humans are dependent beings and cannot be the sufficient foundation of their existence by themselves. Take away from any human beings everything for which they are obliged to others, beginning with their parents and ending with the state and universal history, and nothing at all will remain not only of their freedom, but also of their very existence. It would be madness to deny this fact of inevitable dependency.³²

Not having sufficient *power* in themselves, human beings are in need of *help* in order that their freedom might be actual and not just a verbal claim.³³ The help that human beings receive *from the world* is only casual, temporal, and partial, while faithful, eternal, and wholly complete help is promised to them from God through the universal church. Only with such help can one be truly free, that is, have strength sufficient for the satisfaction of one’s will. Actual human freedom is evidently incompatible with the necessity of what one desires and with the impossibility of what is required of one’s will.³⁴ For human beings every object of desire, every possible good is only under condition that they themselves are alive, and those whom they love are also alive. Consequently, there is one fun-

³² Ed. note: The line of reasoning in the next pages suggests religion as a feeling of absolute dependency, an idea closely associated with the German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). The fact that Soloviev read Schleiermacher carefully is beyond doubt, for he took issue directly with the German philosopher on another subject: the order of appearance of Plato’s dialogues and the reasons for their subsequent arrangement. See V. S. Soloviev, “Plato’s Life-Drama” [1898], in *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 214–16.

³³ Ed. note: “Power ... help”: a slight play on words, *moshchi ... pomoshchi*.

³⁴ Ed. note: See Paul’s Letter to the Romans 7:19.

damental object desired—the continuation of life, and one fundamental object not desired—death. It is precisely in the face of this that all worldly help turns out to be untenable. The calamity of all calamities—death, turns out to be an unconditional necessity, and the good of all goods—immortality—an unconditional impossibility. This means that human beings cannot receive any actual freedom from the world. Only divine humanity, or the Church, is founded on intrinsic unity and a comprehensive combination of manifest and hidden life in the order of the kingdom of God. Only the Church, which affirms the essential primacy of spirit and that promises final resurrection of the flesh, discloses to human beings the domain of their freedom's positive realization, or the satisfaction of their will. To believe in this or not does not depend on philosophical discourse. If the most perfect philosophy can neither give nor take away faith, then the simplest act of logical thought is sufficient in order to acknowledge that human beings, who want to live but are sentenced to death, cannot, seriously speaking, be considered as free. From a worldly, or natural, point of view, all humanity and every human being no doubt find themselves in such a situation. Consequently, only in another, supra-worldly order, represented by the universal Church, can human beings have positive freedom. Nowhere else but there is positive equality possible for them either.

The natural dissimilarity of people is as inevitable as it is desirable. It would be very sad if all people were spiritually and physically of one countenance. The very multiplicity of people then would not have any meaning. A direct equality among them in their particularity or separateness is not at all possible. They can be equal not in themselves, but only through their identical correlation with something else common, higher. Such is the equality of all before the law, or the equality of civil rights. With all its importance in the order of secular existence, this equality of rights by its nature remains only formal and negative. The law affirms certain general boundaries of human activity, equally obligatory for each and every one, but it does not go into the content of anyone's life. It ensures life's essential goods for no one, but indifferently reserves for some their helpless insignificance, and for others a surplus of every advantage. Secular society can acknowledge for each human being an unconditional significance in the sense of abstract possibility, or right in principal. The realization of this possibility and of this right is given only by the Church, which, by specifically introducing each into divinely human wholeness, imparts to each an absolute content of life, and by this equalizes all, just as all finite quantities are equal to one another in relation to infinity. If, as the apostle says, in Christ lives the fullness of divinity corporeally [Col. 2:9], and Christ lives in every believer, then where is there any room for inequality? In a positive way, liberating and equalizing all, joining to

the absolute content of life through the universal Church makes out of them one unconditional whole in solidarity, or a perfect brotherhood.

Insofar as this brotherhood is perfect in essence but originally conditional, having been established and having matured in time, it requires a corresponding form for its divinely human bond with the past as such. It requires religious succession, or *spiritual fatherhood*. This requirement is satisfied by the final definition of the church as *apostolic*.

X

Spiritual Fatherhood and Filial Piety

The religious principle of fatherhood—the origin of spiritual life is *not from oneself*. — Hence, messenger-ship or *apostleship* as opposition to imposture. — Christ, “sent from the Father,” and doing the will of He who sent him, and not his own, as the absolute archetype of apostleship. — Its continuation in the church: “As my Father sent me, so I send you” [John 20:21]. Since a filial attitude is the archetype of piety, then the only-begotten Son of God—a Son preeminently—as embodied piety, is the way, the truth, and the life of his church as of the organization of piety in the world. — The way of piety is a hierarchical way—from above (the meaning of laying on of hands [ordination] and consecration). — The truth of the church at its base and in essence is neither scientific nor philosophical, nor even theological, but contains *dogmas of piety*. The general meaning of the seven ecumenical councils. — The life of piety; the meaning of the seven sacraments.

Because we live in time, then it is also in time and through it that the bond of our dependence on the divine principle in its historical manifestation must be preserved and handed down. It is precisely by virtue of such a bond that our present spiritual life initiates *not from itself* but from earlier, or older, bearers of divinely human grace.

The one, holy, synodic (catholic) church is necessarily an *apostolic* church. Apostleship, or messenger-ship, is the opposite of impersonation. Apostleship is a religious foundation for activity; impersonation is an antireligious one. It is precisely in this very point that Christ indicates the sign of opposition between himself and the lawless man [2 Thess. 2:3–9] (antichrist): “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes *in his own name*, him you will receive” [John 5:43]. In Christianity, the initial basis of religion finds its perfect expression—pious acknowledgment of one’s dependency upon the patriarch. “The Father sent Me.” “I do the will of the one who sent me” [John

5:36, 30].³⁵ The only begotten Son is preeminently a messenger, an apostle of God according to essence, and to him properly relates the most profound and eternal meaning of the definition of the church as apostolic (upon which depends another, more proximate meaning—historical). “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” [John 20:21]—born of the word and spirit of Christ, the apostles are sent by him for the spiritual birth of new generations, in order that the eternal bond between the Father and the Son, the one who is sending and the one who is being sent, be continually handed down in time.³⁶

A filial attitude is the archetype of piety, and the only begotten Son of God—*preeminently a son*—is piety itself individually incarnate, and the church as a collective organization of piety must be determined entirely by him in its social structure, and its teaching, and its holy rites. Christ as incarnate piety is the way, the truth, and the life of his church.

The *way* of piety for all things (of course, apart from the First Principle and the First Object of any piety) consists in proceeding not from oneself and not from the lower, but from the higher, the older, what has been put in place previously. This is the hierarchical way, the way of holy succession and tradition. By virtue of this, whatever external forms the order of church administration takes under the influence of historical conditions, the ecclesiastical religious form properly—succession through the laying on of hands—always proceeds in hierarchical order, from the top down. Not only may the laity not confer orders upon their spiritual fathers, but also in the ranks of the clergy itself an order of degrees is necessary, so that only the higher—*bishops*—represent the *active* principle, transmitting consecration to the two others.

The *truth* of the church is conditional on the same piety—although from another aspect, or in another relation, a theoretical one. The truth of the church, transmitting to us the mind of Christ, is neither scientific nor philosophical, nor theological—it comprises only *dogmas of piety*. In this fact is contained the key to understanding Christian dogmatism and the synods that were engaged with its formulation. In the domain of religious teaching, the interest of piety evidently consists in the fact that in our representations of deity nothing detracts in any way from the fullness of our religious relation to it, given from the beginning in Christ as the Son of God and the Son of Man. All “heresies” against which the church protected itself with its religious definitions in one way or another denied this religious fullness, or the entirety and the multifaceted nature of our

³⁵ Ed. note: The second citation seems to be imprecise, amounting to a paraphrase of John 5:30. Compare with 1 John 2:18; 4:3.

³⁶ Ed. note: See Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, chapters 1–4.

adoption by God through the perfect God-man. Some acknowledged Christ as demigod, others as demi-man. They first assumed some dual personality in place of a single God-man, then they restricted his divinely human combination to the intelligible aspect, acknowledging deity not as a subject of sensible expression, and so forth.³⁷

The rightful *way* of hierarchical order, just as the *truth* of faith, has its fulfillment and justification in the life of *the church*. Human life must be inwardly gathered, united, and consecrated by action of God and converted in this way into divinely human life. Both the essence of the matter and the principle of piety require in this that the process of regeneration begin from above, from God, that its foundation be the action of grace and not the natural human will taken separately. It requires that the process be *divinely human* and not humanly divine. In this is the significance of *sacraments* as the special foundation of new life. The moral significance (from the aspect of religious morality, or piety) that pertains to sacraments in general consists precisely in the fact that here human beings take their proper position of unconditional dependency upon a perfectly real, but at the same time perfectly mysterious, sensually unknowable good, which is given to them and not created by them.³⁸ In the face of the sacrament, a human being will renounce all that is its own, remain in perfect potentiality, or purity, and through this become capable, as pure form, of taking on superhuman content.³⁹ Through sacraments the one and holy essence, which is the Church in itself (the *Ding an sich*, or *noumenon* of the church, according to philosophical

³⁷ The profound and important meaning of the dogmatic disputes, in which the question concerned the very essence of the Christian religion, or piety, has been indicated by me more definitively in other works. See, “The Great Dispute and Christian Politics” [*Velikii spor i khristianskaia politika*] (1883), “The Dogmatic Development of the Church” [*Dogmaticheskoe razvitie tserkvi*] (1886), “La Russie et l’Eglise Universelle” (1889). The dogmatic development of the church entered into the first part of the work. Ibid. “Russia and the Universal Church,” Paris: 1889. This meaning is particularly clear in the iconoclast dispute with which the circle of dogmatic development concluded in the Christian East.

³⁸ Ed. note: Again, religion as a feeling of absolute dependency, suggesting Schleiermacher (see n. 32 above).

³⁹ Ed. note: “Superhuman”: Soloviev asserted a Christian “superhuman” idea in contrast to Friedrich Nietzsche’s notion of a “superman” in two essays: “Literature or Truth?” [1897] and “The Idea of a Superman” [1899]. See *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 87–90 and 255–63.

terminology), specifically unites with itself or absorbs into itself the intrinsic essence of a human being and makes its life divinely human.⁴⁰

While this life is supernatural to other kingdoms of nature (ending with the rationally human), it is perfectly natural for the kingdom of God. It has its regular cycle of development, the major moments of which are signified by the church principally in the seven so-called sacraments. This life is conceived (in baptism), receives the principle of right organization, increase and consolidation (in chrismation), is healed from attendant harm (in confession), is nourished for eternity (in the Eucharist), complements or integrates the solitary essence of the human being (in marriage), creates a spiritual fatherhood as a basis of true social order (in priesthood, or laying on of hands), and, finally, consecrates the suffering and dying corporeality for complete wholeness of resurrection to come (in extreme unction).⁴¹

XI

The New Testament on Church and State

The question of the relation of church to state, or of a *Christian state*.
— An important indication in the New Testament (the story of the centurion Cornelius).

The specific mysterious pledges of a higher life, or the kingdom of God, which are received in the sacraments of the church, do not depend in their origin and essence upon the human will. Nevertheless, this higher life, as *divinely human*, cannot be satisfied with our passive participation alone. Its process requires a conscious and voluntary cooperation of human soul with supreme Spirit. Although positive forces for this cooperation proceed at the very beginning from the grace of God (inattentiveness to this truth gives birth to the pernicious errors of semi-Pelagianism), they are assimilated by the human will, which is formally distinguished from the divine will. They manifest in the form of its specific actions (a

⁴⁰ Ed. note: “*Ding an sich*”: German for “thing in itself,” a product of Immanuel Kant’s critique of reason. Soloviev had earlier directly taken issue with Kant’s system as insufficient on religion and ethics at the end of chapter 1 of part 2. However, he also found Kant’s views on free will and absolute guilt to be important enough to translate from *Critique of Pure Reason* and add to another group of his essays. See *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 131.

⁴¹ See for details [the author’s essays] “The Spiritual Bases of Life” [*Dukhovnye osnovy zhizni*] 3rd ed. 1897 and “La Russie et l’Eglise Universelle” (last chapter).

forgetfulness of this second truth, just as important as the first, was expressed in Christology by the Monothelite heresy, and in moral teaching by Quietism).⁴²

Specifically human actions or behavior in conformity with the grace of God (and called forth by its anticipatory influence) must evidently express the normal relation of a person to God, to people, and to one's own material nature, corresponding to the three general bases of morality: piety, pity, and shame. The first concentrated, active expression of religious sentiment, or piety, its *work*, is principally *prayer*; pity has just such work in *alms*; and the work of shame—is abstinence, or *fasting*.⁴³ The beginning and the development of a new life of grace in a human being are conditioned by these three works. This is depicted with astonishing clarity and simplicity in the holy narrative about the pious centurion Cornelius, who “gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.” And further, as he himself relates: “Four days ago I was *fasting* until this hour; and at the ninth hour *I prayed* in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, ‘Cornelius, *your prayer has been heard, and your alms* are remembered in the sight of God’” (here follows the command to call for Simon, called Peter, who possessed the words of salvation—Acts of the Apostles 10[:2, 30–31]). If the hidden anticipatory action of the grace of God, not rejected by Cornelius, induced him to works of human good and upheld him in these works—in prayer, alms, and fasting—then these works themselves, as directly indicated here, called forth new manifest actions of the grace of God. What is more, it is remarkable that just as the appearance of a heavenly angel was only an extraordinary means for observance of an established way of piety—calling for an earthly messenger of God, an earthly mediator of supreme truth and life—so, too, precisely following Peter's preaching at the house of Cornelius an unusual and abundant pouring out of the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon the new catechumens did not make superfluous for them the usual, so to speak, organic method of the specifically mystical beginning of a life of grace—through baptism (ibid, the end of the chapter [Acts 10:47–48]).

⁴² Ed. note: Soloviev wrote an encyclopedia article on seventh-century Monothelism, which asserted the unity of the two wills, while the seventeenth-century contemplative movement of quietism sought perfection through passivity. He thought such heresies important enough to cite in other places. See, for example, “The Fate of Pushkin” [1897], in *The Heart of Reality*, 156. Pelagianism (fourth century) both contradicted the doctrine of original sin and asserted that the beginning of salvation proceeded not from grace but from human free will.

⁴³ These three religiously moral *acts* are examined in detail by me in the first part of “The Spiritual Bases of Life.”

Even more remarkable in this typical narrative is *that which is not in it*. Neither the angel of God nor the apostle Peter, the messenger of *the peace of Christ*, nor the voice of the Holy Spirit himself suddenly revealed in the ones converted, told the centurion of the Italian cohort that which was, according to the latest notions about Christianity, the most important and urgently necessary thing for this Roman warrior. They did not tell him that in becoming a Christian he must *first of all* cast away his weapons and *without fail renounce military service*. There is neither word nor allusion about this ostensibly indispensable condition of Christianity in the whole story, even though the point is precisely about a representative of the army. Renunciation of military service does not at all enter into the New Testament concept of what is required of a secular warrior in order that he become a citizen enjoying full rights in the kingdom of God.

Apart from the conditions that were already being fulfilled by the centurion Cornelius—namely, prayer, alms, and fasting—he has also to “call for Simon, whose surname is Peter . . . who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved” [Acts 10:5–6; 11:22].

When Peter came, Cornelius said to him, “Now, therefore, we are all present before God, to hear *all the things that commanded you by God*” [10:33]. But in this *all* that God commands the apostle to communicate to the Roman warrior for his salvation, there is nothing about military service:

Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. [10:34–44]

We have dwelt on the story of the centurion Cornelius not specifically in order to return to the particular question of military service⁴⁴ but because we find here a clear indication for a resolution of the general question about the relation between church and state, Christianity and Empire, the kingdom of God and the worldly kingdom or what is the same thing, the question of a *Christian state*. If the centurion Cornelius, having fully become a Christian, remained a warrior, and yet could not be divided into two persons alien and not connected to one another, then it is clear that he became a *Christian warrior*. A collection of such warriors forms a Christian army, but an army is both the extreme expression and the first real basis of statehood. Consequently, if there can be a Christian army, then by the same token and even all the more there can be a Christian state. Resolution of the question by historical Christianity precisely in this sense is a fact beyond doubt. Only the question of the intrinsic foundations of this fact are subject to discourse.

XII

Morality, Law, and the Coercive State

The moral necessity of the state. — Elucidations with respect to Christianity.

When the centurion Cornelius was a pagan, the sentiment of pity that compelled him to “give alms generously” [Acts 10:2] also certainly induced him to protect the weak from any injuries and to force violent aggressors to obey the laws. He knew that law, just as every human utility, is only a relative good and is subject to abuses. Perhaps he had also heard of the revolting abuse of lawful power that the procurator Pontius had tolerated, having sentenced to death a virtuous Rabbi from Nazareth under the influence of the envious and spiteful priesthood of Jerusalem. As a righteous man, Cornelius knew that *abusus non tollit usum* [abuse does not preclude use] and did not draw a conclusion to a general rule from exceptional cases. A genuine Roman (judging by name), he recognized with noble pride his own part in the general calling of the world’s ruling city:

... to rule the nations with thy sway,
To spare the humbled, and to tame in war the proud.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See above, “The Significance of War” (chap. 9 [of pt. 3]).

⁴⁵ Ed. note: Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI:851–53. Soloviev had collaborated with the poet A. A. Fet on a translation of the *Aeneid* into Russian. The quoted excerpt derives from the Latin

This was not an abstract conviction for him. In Palestine, where his cohort was stationed, Roman arms alone checked, if only for a time, fierce internecine wars, dynastic and partisan, which were accompanied by primitive massacres. It was only under protection of that same Roman power that Edomite and Arabic clans around the neighborhood began to emerge little by little from the condition of continual wars and crude barbarism.

So then, Cornelius did not retreat from truth when he respected his service and considered the state and its principal organ, the army, a force necessary for the common good. Having become a Christian, should he have changed his judgment? *Within him* was revealed a new, higher, and purely spiritual life, but did this really abolish the evil *outside of him*? The pity by which his military service was justified—related precisely to those who were suffering from *outer evil*, which remained as it was. Or, perhaps, the higher life that had been revealed within him, while not abolishing outer evil, should [it] have abolished inner good—the same pity or charity that was “a memorial before God” [Acts 10:4] (see above), and replaced it with indifference to the sufferings of others? Such indifference, or soullessness, is the distinctive characteristic of a stone—a lower and not a higher degree of existence. Or, while not renouncing pity, a Christian perhaps also receives, together with new life, special power to conquer any external evil, not resisting it by force—a power to conquer it by spontaneous moral action alone, or by a miracle of grace? The supposition is remarkably unfounded, and possible only with a complete incomprehension both of the essence of grace and of its moral conditions. We know that Christ on earth himself met up with such a human milieu in which his grace could not create miracles “because of their unbelief” [Mark 6:6]. We know that in the very best milieu—in the milieu of his apostles—he found “the son of perdition” [John 17:12]. We also know, finally, that of the two thieves on the cross only one repented. It is uncertain whether he would have yielded to divine power in other circumstances, but it is entirely certain that his comrade turned out to be inaccessible even in circumstances *such as these* [Luke 23:39–43].

lines: “Romane, memento (hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem, parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.” I have not translated Soloviev’s Russian but employed a translation from Duddington’s era. See Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard/Loeb Classical Library, 1916), 566–67. Soloviev liked these words so much that he made use of them more than once. See, for example, V. S. Soloviev, “Nationality from a Moral Point of View” [1895], in *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 41, 304, and 306–7.

Those who affirm that *any* evildoer can at once be turned to good and restrained from crime by direct action of the inner power of grace alone do not at all fathom what it is they are talking about. If it is a matter of the inward, purely spiritual power of good, then it is distinctive by the fact that in this, its quality, it acts not as a mechanical, motive force, fatally producing outward changes in fact, but acts only under condition of its inward adoption by the other, the one upon whom it acts. Consequently, the result of action is never predetermined here by the good will of the one who acts but depends finally on the characteristic of the other side's reaction (a truth that the example of Judas Iscariot should, it would seem, make clear even for the blind).

The power of Christ's grace was acting upon people who were sinful according to the infirmity of the flesh and not according to the firmness of evil will. It acted upon people who were not resting in their sins but who were suffering from them and felt need of a physician. Christ even said about these suffering ones, ready for healing, that they will enter the kingdom of heaven before the self-satisfied righteous. Because of this, they were at enmity against him and reproached him for condescending communication with publicans and harlots. Even his enemies could not find cause to accuse him of indulging bloodthirsty murderers, impious blasphemers, shameless corruptors, and all kind of criminals by occupation, enemies of human society. Did he leave them in peace? And why should he have occupied himself with them, when there existed Jewish and Roman authorities that were intended precisely for standing up to evil by coercion equal to the task.

According to the spirit of the gospel (as well as according to its letter), we must not turn to the authorities for coercion in defense of ourselves against personal and property offenses. We must not drag into court and into prison persons who strike us or take our fur coats from us. With all our soul we must forgive an offender for those offenses that he inflicts upon us and not show him any resistance for our own selves. This is clear and simple. It is also clear that we must not give ourselves over to evil sentiment, even against an offender of our neighbors—we must also forgive him in our soul and not cease seeing in him the same kind of person as we are. What practical obligation does the moral principle impose upon us in this case? Can this obligation be specifically identical in the face of an offense to ourselves and to another? To allow an offense against my own self means to sacrifice myself, and this is a deed of self-sacrifice. To allow an offense to others means to sacrifice others, and this now can in no way be called self-sacrifice. Moral obligation to others, psychologically founded upon pity, must not in practice give rights to violent men and evildoers alone. Peaceful and weak people also have a right to our active pity, or help. Since we cannot continually and sufficiently help all the offended in the capacity of solitary persons, then

we are obligated to do this in the capacity of the collective human being, that is, through the state. Political organization is a naturally human good, as necessary for our life as our physical organism is. Christianity, giving us a higher good, the spiritual one, does not remove from us lower, natural goods, and does not pull out from under our feet the ladder on which we stand.

With the appearance of Christianity, with the proclamation of the kingdom of God, did the animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms really disappear for us? If they are not abolished, then why must the naturally human kingdom embodied in political organization be abolished? Is it not just as necessary in the historical process as these others are in the cosmic process? We cannot stop being animals, but must ostensibly stop being citizens! Is it possible to think up a more glaring absurdity?

From the fact that the goal of Christ's coming to earth could not consist in creating a kingdom from this world, or a state—already created long ago—does a negative attitude by him to the state really follow? The gospel is not concerned with the outward means of protecting humanity from the crudely destructive actions of evil forces. It would be possible to conclude something from that fact only in the event that the gospel had appeared before the foundation of the state, in a lawless, extrajudicial, and anarchic society. Why give anew in the gospel the civic juridical statutes of social intercourse, which many centuries earlier had already been given in the Pentateuch? If Christ did not want to reject them, he could only confirm them, *which is what he did*. “One jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law ... I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” [Matt 5:17–18].⁴⁶

Grace and truth, which had become manifest in Christ, ostensibly abolished the law. When, however, did this occur, *when precisely*? When Judas betrayed his teacher, when Ananias and Sapphira deceived the apostles [Acts 5:1–3], when deacon Nicholas introduced sexual laxity under the pretext of brotherhood [Rev. 2:6, 15], or when a Christian of Corinth indulged in incest [1 Cor. 5:1]? Or when the Spirit wrote through the New Testament prophet to the churches and said to one of its primates as follows: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (Rev. 3:1); and to another as follows: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (15–16).

If grace and truth, from their first appearance and up to this day, have neither taken possession of everyone nor even of the greater part of Christian humanity,

⁴⁶ Ed. note: Soloviev has placed these verses in reverse order.

then it is desirable to know: In what manner and by whom has the law been abolished? Could the law have been abolished by grace in those who hold neither to the law nor to grace? Is it not clear that for them, that is, for the majority of humanity, the law until its fulfillment, according to Christ's word, must remain in its proper force, precisely as the outer boundary of their freedom? In order to actually be such a boundary, the law must have sufficient coercive power, that is, must be embodied in the state organization with its courts, police, and armies. Insofar as Christianity did not abolish the law, it could not abolish the state either. But from this rational and necessary fact—the nonabolition of the state as an outward force—it does not at all follow that the inward relation of people to this force, and through this the very character of its activity as well—in general as well as in the particulars—has remained without any change. Chemical elements have not been abolished in plant and animal bodies but have received in them new particulars, and the whole science of “Organic Chemistry” exists not in vain. There is a similar foundation as well for a *Christian politics*. A Christian state, if only it does not remain an empty name, must have distinct differences from a pagan state, although both of them, as *states*, have an identical basis and a common task.

XIII

The State as Organized Pity

The state as collectively organized pity. — Vladimir Monomakh and Dante. — Explanations.

“A peasant goes out to till the fields, a Polovets falls upon him, kills him, steals his horse; a multitude of Polovtsy then comes out against a village, kills all the peasants, sets fire to the houses, takes the women into captivity, while the princes are at this time occupied with their own internecine strife.”⁴⁷ In order not to be confined to sentimental words alone, *pity* for these peasants had to proceed to

⁴⁷ From the Instruction of Vladimir Monomakh, one of the rulers of Russia in the eleventh century, to his children. [Duddington's note. Editor's addendum: The Polovtsy were also known as Cuman—a nomadic Turkic people; Vladimir Monomakh was Grand Prince (*Velikii kniaz*) of the Kievan Rus' (1053 to 1125). Soloviev thought that the period was important for understanding the development of many Russian religious and social views. See, for example, V. S. Soloviev, “Byzantinism and Russia” (1896), in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma*, 196–97.]

the organization of a firm and united state authority, sufficient for the defense of peasants against princely internecine strife and Polovtsian raids.

When, in another country, the greatest of its poets exclaimed with a profound grief, which he demonstrated not only in words:

Ahi, serva Italia di dolore ostello,
Nave senza nocchiero in gran tempesta.⁴⁸

The same pity directly motivated him to call for a supreme bearer of state authority from beyond the Alps, someone to establish social order, a strong defender against continuous and intolerable small-minded violence. Both this pity for the actual calamities of Italy, which is declared in so many places in the *Divine Comedy*, and the appeal for a fully empowered state as a necessary means of salvation, took the form of a precisely thought out conviction in Dante in the book *On Monarchy* [*De Monarchia*].

The calamities of life without a state or with a weak state, which called forth the pity of Vladimir Monomakh and Dante, are abolished or restricted only by a strong state, but with its disappearance they would without fail only arise again. Purely moral motivations, inwardly restraining people from mutual extermination, were manifestly insufficient in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Perhaps such motivations have developed and strengthened in the present (a debatable question), but to speak of them now as having become fully sufficient in themselves is laughable. If residents of Italian cities do not display their partisan enmity in hourly slaughter, then it is more than clear that for this they are indebted only to the coercive system of the state, with its army and police. With respect to Russia—not speaking now of princely internecine strife and people taking the law into their hands—no doubt more of the primitive foreign elements submitted rather than degenerated as the Muscovite kingdom and the Russian empire gradually and with so much difficulty drove them back further and further to the boundaries of the country. If on the Caucasian, Turkestan, or Siberian borders the lance and the bayonet—God help us—disappeared or weakened, the true

⁴⁸ “Italy, slave and abode of suffering, ship without a pilot amidst terrible storms” [Ed. addendum: Dante, *Divine Comedy, Purgatory* VI:78. Perhaps out of modesty Soloviev refrained from quoting the rest of Dante’s couplet: “non donna di province, ma bordello!” He referred to Dante and Italy’s time of troubles in other places. See, for example, “Nationality from a Moral Point of View” (1895) and “On Conscientious Unbelief” (1897), in *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 46, 97, 310].

essence of these excellent institutions would immediately become comprehensible to any moralist.⁴⁹

Just as the church is collectively organized piety, so the state is collectively organized pity. Therefore, affirming that Christian religion in essence denies the state means affirming that this religion in essence denies pity. In actual fact, the gospel not only insists upon the morally obligatory significance of pity, or humaneness, but resolutely confirms the view, already expressed in the Old Testament, that without humaneness there cannot be true piety either: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" [Matt. 9:13; also Matt 12:7 and Hos. 6:6].

If one is to acknowledge pity in principle, then it is also now logically necessary to allow the historical organization of social forces and affairs that removes pity from the status of a powerless or tightly restricted sentiment and gives to it reality, wide application, and development. If I stand on the point of view of pity, then I cannot deny the institution thanks to which it is possible *to have pity in practice, that is, to give help and protection* to tens and hundreds of millions of people, in place of tens and hundreds of individuals at most.

The definition of the state (with respect to its moral significance) as organized pity can be denied only through misunderstanding. It is necessary for us to consider some such misunderstandings before proceeding to the concept of a *Christian* state.

XIV

Objection against the Definition of a Normal State

Analysis of the general objection against the definition of a normal state.

The harsh and often cruel character of the state is pointed to as evidently contradicting its definition as organized pity. In this case, necessary and expedient severity from useless and arbitrary cruelty are not distinguished. Meanwhile, the first does not contradict pity, and the second, as an abuse, *contradicts the very*

⁴⁹ My father had the good fortune while yet in childhood to hear eyewitness reminiscences about how armed multitudes of foreigners openly engaged in brigandage, carried whole families of Russian travelers into captivity and tortured them in various ways. At the present time this no longer happens on the Volga, but on the Amur, as is known, it happens even now, which means that the perpetual war mission of the state among us has not yet ended, and, if the virtuous centurion Cornelius had lived in our day in Russia, no moral motives could have hampered him from being a Cossack "centurion" in the Ussursky region.

meaning of the state. Consequently, neither the one nor the other says anything against the definition of the state (a normal state, of course) as organized pity. The alleged contradiction here is founded upon the following superficial appearance. It is as if someone pointed to the meaningless cruelty of an unsuccessful surgical operation, but then, incidentally, also to the suffering of a patient in a successful operation as an evident contradiction to the concept of surgery, in the sense of a beneficent art that helps people in certain bodily sufferings. It is more than evident that such representatives of state authority as, for example, Ivan IV ["Ivan the Terrible"] testify just as little against the humane basis of the state as bad surgeons do against the benevolence of surgery itself. I realize that educated readers have a right to feel insulted at the reminder of such an elementary thing, but if they are familiar with recent trends of thought in Russia, then they will not consider me the originator of an insult.

Even in its most normal manifestations, the state inevitably tends to be pitiless. While pitying peaceful people, which it defends against rapacious men of violence, it must treat the latter pitilessly. Such *one-sided* pity does not correspond with the moral ideal. This is indisputable but again says nothing against our definition of the state, for first pity, even if one-sided, is nevertheless pity and not something else. Second, the state, even a normal one, is in no way an expression of a moral ideal attained, but only one of the major organizations necessary for attainment of this ideal. *Once attained*, the ideal condition of humanity, or the kingdom of God realized, is evidently incompatible with the state, but it is also incompatible with pity. Who will it be possible to pity when everything will once again be "very good" [Gen. 1:31]? As long as there are those to be pitied, there are those to be defended, and the moral requirement for an expediently and large-scaled organized system of such a defense, that is, the moral significance of the state, remains in force. The pitilessness of the state to those from whom or against whom it has to defend peaceful society is a fact without doubt. Is this pitilessness really something unconditionally fateful, and is it really something invariable even as a fact? Is it not a historical fact that the attitude of the state to its enemies progresses precisely in the sense of less cruelty and, consequently, greater pity?

First, whole families and clans were tortured and put to death (as is done even now in China). Then each one began to answer for oneself, and moreover, the very character of responsibility changed. Criminals stopped being tortured solely for the sake of torture. Finally, the positive task of rendering moral help to them was now also set. What are the conditions upon which such changes are ultimately founded? The state restricts or abolishes the death penalty, repeals torture and corporal punishment, concerns itself with improvement of prisons and places of exile. When it does so, is it not clear that in pitying and defending the peaceful

people suffering from crimes it begins to extend its pity to the opposing side as well—to the criminals themselves? Consequently, pointing to one-sided pity now begins to lose force in fact. It is precisely only thanks to the state that the organization of pity stops being one-sided. For even now the popular multitude in its attitude to societal enemies is still in the majority of cases guided by the old, pitiless maxims: for a dog, a dog's death; suffering serves a thief right; let this serve as a warning to others.⁵⁰ Such maxims are losing their practical force precisely thanks to the state, which is more free of one-sidedness in this matter in relation to the one and to the other. While authoritatively restraining the vengeful instincts of the multitude, which is ready to tear apart the criminal, the state at the same time will never renounce the obligation of humaneness—to oppose crimes. That is something those strange moralists would like, for they in fact pity only the offenders, the violent, the rapacious, with complete indifference to their victims. Now here is real one-sided pity!⁵¹

XV

Juridical Misunderstandings

Analysis of juridical misunderstandings.

A less crude misunderstanding concerning our concept of the state presents itself from the position of jurist-philosophers who see in the state the embodiment of law as an unconditionally independent principle, separate from morality in general and from motives of mercy in particular. The actual distinction between law and morality was indicated by us earlier.⁵² It does not abolish the bond between them but, on the contrary, is conditional precisely on this bond. In order that separation and opposition be set in place of this distinction, it is necessary to find the unconditional principle that at bottom ultimately determines any legal relation, as such, somewhere outside the moral domain and as far away as possible from it.

⁵⁰ Ed. note: Parts of Soloviev's discussion of the relationship of morality and law here appear as revisions of his earlier work on the subject, first in his academic thesis (1880), then in an essay titled "Morality and Law" (1895). He also examined the questions again in somewhat more detail, providing virtually the same examples of retributive logic as we find here, under separate cover in "Law and Morality: Essays in Applied Ethics" [1897]. See *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 131–212, esp. 131, 168.

⁵¹ See above, "The Penal Question from a Moral Point of View," chap. 9, pt. 3.

⁵² See above, the chapter "Law and Morality."

Such an amoral and even antimoral principle for law appears first of all in *force* or might: *Macht geht vor Recht* [“might makes right”]. The fact that legal relations follow in historical order those based on violence is just as doubtless as the fact that in the history of our planet organic life appeared after and on the basis of inorganic processes. From this, of course, it does not follow that the specific principle of organic forms, as such, is inorganic matter. The play of natural forces in humanity is only the material of legal relations, and in no way their principle, otherwise what would be the distinction between law and lawlessness? Law is the *restriction* of might, but the point is in precisely *what* restricts force. In like manner, morality, too, can be defined as evil being overcome, from which it does not follow that the principle of morality is evil.

If we replace the concept of force, taken from the physical domain, with the more human concept of freedom, we will not advance any further in the definition of law. That individual freedom lies at the most profound basis of all legal relations is doubtless, but is it really an unconditional principle of law?⁵³ This is impossible for two reasons: first, because it is in reality *not unconditional*, and second, because it is not at all a determining principle of *law*. On the first point I mean to say not that human freedom is never unconditional but only that it does not have this character in the domain of actual relations, in which and for which law exists. Let’s assume that someone living on earth in the flesh actually possesses unconditional freedom, that is, that one can be the sole act of one’s will, independently of any external conditions and intermediate necessary processes, accomplish everything that one wants. It is clear that such a human being would stand outside the domain of legal relations. If one’s unconditionally free will were enlisted on the side of evil, no one else’s action would be able to restrain it, it would be inaccessible for the law and authority, and if it were enlisted on the side of good, then it would make superfluous any authority and any law.

Now then, because unconditional freedom belongs completely to another sphere of relations, there is nothing to say here about law: It is concerned only with restricted and conditional freedom, but it is desirable to know precisely what kind of restrictions or conditions have a *legal* character. The freedom of one is restricted by the freedom of another. However, not every such restriction expresses law. If the freedom of human beings is to be restricted by the freedom of neighbors who would freely twist their head off or keep them on chains at their discretion, then this is not at all called law, and in any case such a restriction of freedom does not represent any specific features of legal principle, as such. These features must be sought not in the fact of some restriction of freedom, but

⁵³ See above, “Morality and Justice,” chap. 8, pt. 3.

in the uniform and universal character of the restriction. If the freedom of one is restricted in an equal manner to the freedom of another, or if the free activity of each is due to a boundary common for all, only then does the restriction of freedom obtain a legal character.

Therefore the principle of law is freedom within the boundaries of equality, or conditional upon equality and, consequently, a conditional freedom. Even equality, which determines freedom, is not unconditionally an independent principle for law. According to its essential feature, apart from the requirement of *equality*, a legal norm necessarily also satisfies the requirement of *justice*. These two concepts although related are, however, far from being identical to each other. When the Egyptian pharaoh issued a law ordering all Hebrew newborns to be put to death [Ex. 1:22], the injustice of this law, of course, consisted not in the inequality of attitudes to Hebrew and to Egyptian infants alone. Even if Pharaoh had later ordered not just Hebrew, but all newborns in general to be put to death, then although this new law would satisfy the requirement of equality, no one would however resolve to call it just.⁵⁴ Justice is not simple equality, but *equality in fulfillment of that which is due*. A just debtor is not one who equally renounces repayment to all creditors but one who uniformly pays his or her debt. A just father is not, of course, one who is identically indifferent to all his children, but one who shows them all identical love.

This means that there is unjust equality and just equality, and law is determined by the latter, that is, finally by justice. This concept now takes us directly into the moral domain. Here, as we know, each virtue is not a separate cell, but all of them—justice among that number as well—are different modifications of the single or, more precisely, of the triune principle that determines our proper relation to everything. What is more, because justice belongs to the domain of moral mutual relations of human beings with those similar to them, it is only a modification of the basic proper motive of such relations, namely of pity: *justice is pity, uniformly applied*.⁵⁵

Therefore insofar as law is defined by justice, it is at its essence bound to the moral domain. All definitions of law that try to separate it from morality do not get at the essence of the matter. So—apart from the indicated ones—what does the famous definition (Jhering's) mean, according to which "law is protected or

⁵⁴ Ed. note: Soloviev used this precise example as part of the same argument in "Law and Morality." See *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 140–41.

⁵⁵ See above, "On Virtues," chap. 5, pt. 1.

safeguarded interest”⁵⁶ There is no doubt whatsoever that law defends interests; however, not all interests. Which ones precisely? Evidently, only just interests, or, in other words, it defends any interest to the extent of its justice. What is understood here by justice? To say that a just interest is an interest safeguarded by law would evidently mean falling into the crudest logical circle, which it would be possible to avoid only if one were to understand justice here also in its essence, that is, in the moral sense. This does not prevent acknowledging in the moral principle itself different degrees and spheres of action from the position of the inevitable conditions of its existence; that is, discernment of extrinsic, formal, or properly juridical justice from intrinsic, essential, or purely moral justice, in which connection the supreme and final standard of right and wrong remains one and the same principle—the moral one.

A possible clash between extrinsic and intrinsic justice in particular cases in itself says nothing against their homogeneity, since there can also be no less a clash with realization of the simplest and most basic moral motivation, for example, when pity requires of me that I save two who are drowning. Without having a possibility to pull both out, I must choose one or the other. If the fact of a clash between two motivations of pity does not prove that pity itself is a principle that contradicts itself, then cases of a difficult choice between complex applications of law and morality in a narrow sense can be just as unconvincing in their essential and irreducible opposition to unity. Just as unconvincing is also the fact that concepts about justice and morality change historically. This would mean something if rights and laws remained unchanged, but they vary even more according to place and time. So then, what now? Concepts about justice change, rights and laws change, but one thing remains unchanged: the requirement that rights and laws be just. Consequently, independently of any extrinsic conditions, the intrinsic conditionality of law remains morality. In order to avoid this conclusion, it is necessary to go too far: to the country seen by the pilgrim women of Ostrovsky, where lawful requests to Mahmut of Turkey and Mahmut of Persia had to begin with the appeal: “Judge me, *unjust* judge.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ed. note: Most likely, Rudolf. von Jhering, author of *Geist des römischen Rechts auf den verschiedenen Stufen seiner Entwicklung*, 4 vols. (Leipzig: 1852–1865) [The Spirit of Roman Law in Various Periods of its Development]. Soloviev repeated this line of reasoning in “Law and Morality” without, however, explicitly referring to Jhering. See *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 142–44.

⁵⁷ Ed. note: Alexander Ostrovsky, *The Storm* [*Groza*, 1859], Act II, sc. 1. Ostrovsky (1823–1886) was one of the most productive minor Russian dramatists of the nineteenth century, known for depicting middle-class moral conflicts.

Jhering's definition varies in a range within a formula according to which law is the *delimitation* of interests in distinction from morality as *evaluations* of interests.⁵⁸ That law delimits interests—is just as doubtless as the fact that it defends them. This fact in itself still gives no concept about the law's essence, for interests are also delimited on foundations that do not have a juridical character at all and, consequently, the definition is too broad. So, if robbers in the woods leave travelers with their life after attacking them and taking for themselves only property, then this, doubtless, will be a delimitation of interests. Here it is possible to see something in common with law really only in the sense that any violence is an expression of law, namely of the fist, or the law of force. In a serious sense, law is defined not by the facts of a delimitation of interests but by the common and constant *norm* of such a delimitation. In order to have a legal character, a delimitation of interests must be correct, normal, or just. In distinguishing a normal delimitation of interests from an abnormal delimitation of interests, and referring only the former to law, we evidently make an *evaluation* of them, and consequently, the alleged opposition between law and morality falls on its own. When we find some laws to be unjust and strive for their legal repeal, then, without leaving the juridical domain, we first of all occupy ourselves with evaluation of an existing delimitation and not, however, with just any practicable delimitation of interests. In its own time that delimitation, too, was conditional on an evaluation, only on another one, with which we are now not in agreement.

Therefore, if morality is defined as evaluation of interests, then law in essence enters into morality. The fact that the standard of evaluation for law and for morality (in a narrow sense) is not one and the same does not contradict this at all. This very distinction, that is the necessity to allow a domain of juridical relations outside the domain of purely moral relations, has not just any kind of foundation but again a moral one, namely in the requirement that the higher, final good be realized without any outward coercion and, consequently, with a certain range of choice between good and evil. Or, expressed paradoxically, higher morality requires a certain freedom for immorality too. This is realized by law, which obligates an individual will only to the minimal good necessary for community and its safeguarding—in the interests of true moral, that is, free, perfection—from senseless and pernicious experiments in coerced righteousness and forcible holiness.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ed. note: Soloviev had earlier raised the subject of moral evaluations as part of a broader discussion of virtues in chapter 5 of part 1.

⁵⁹ See above, "Morality and Law," chap. 8, pt. 3.

Thus if the state is an objective, complex arrangement of law, then it is precisely thereby inevitably included in the moral, that is, proper, organization of humanity, which is obligatory for good will.

XVI

The State as Both Conservative and Progressive Organization

Over and above the general conservative task of every state: to preserve the bases of community, without which humanity could not exist—a *Christian state* has yet a progressive task: to improve the conditions of this existence, assisting the free development of all human forces, which must become bearers of the coming kingdom of God. — Explanations.

The bond of law with morality yields the possibility of speaking as well about a Christian state. It would be unjust to maintain that before Christianity the state was deprived of a moral basis. It is not necessary to mention the kingdoms of Judea and Israel, upon which the prophets directly placed moral norms and then reproached for their nonfulfillment. Even in the pagan world, it is sufficient to recall the figure of the Athenian king Theseus, who at danger to life freed his fellow citizens from cannibalistic tribute to Crete, in order to acknowledge here as well the fundamental moral motive of the state, namely pity, which requires active help to the offended and the suffering.

This means that the difference between the Christian and the pagan state is not in their natural basis but in other respects. From a Christian point of view, the state is only a part in the organization of the collective human being—a part conditional on another, higher part—on the church, from which it receives its consecration and final significance. It serves in an indirect manner within its secular domain and its means the absolute goal that the church sets directly—the preparation of humanity and all the earth for the kingdom of God. Hence, the two major tasks of the state—conservative and progressive: *to preserve the bases of community, without which humanity could not exist, and after that to improve the conditions of this existence.* It cooperates toward the free development of all human forces, which must become the bearers of a future perfected condition and without which, consequently, the kingdom of God could not be realized in humanity. It is clear that, just as without the conservative activity of the state humanity would disintegrate and there would be *no one* left to enter into the fullness of life, so, too, without its progressive activity humanity would always remain at one stage of the historical process, would never attain the capacity to

finally receive or reject the kingdom of God, and consequently there would be *no reason for* people to live.

In paganism, the conservative task of the state prevailed exclusively. Although it contributed to historical progress, this was only in spite of its will and its awareness. A higher goal of activity was not placed by statesmen themselves. Not having yet heard “the gospel of the kingdom,” there was no goal for them. Therefore, progress itself, although it differed here formally from the gradual perfection of nature’s kingdoms, did not have however at essence a purely human character. It is unworthy of human beings to move involuntarily toward a goal invisible to them. Great pagan monarchies are beautifully represented in the word of God in the guise of powerful and outlandish *beasts*, which quickly appear and just as quickly disappear [Dan. 7:17; Rev. 17:12]. The natural, terrestrial human being does not have final significance, and neither can the state created by such a human being—its collective embodiment—have this significance. But this pagan state, being in essence conditional and transient, affirmed itself as absolute. The pagans began with the deification of individual *bodies* (astral, plant, animal, and especially human) in a multitude of all sorts of gods, and ended with the deification of a collective body—the state (the cult of monarchs in eastern despotisms, the apotheosis of Roman caesars).

The error of pagans does not consist in the fact that they acknowledged a positive significance for the state, but only in the fact that they considered that it had this significance *on behalf of itself*. This was a manifest untruth. Both the individual and the collective body of the human being do not have life on behalf of themselves but receive it from the spirit living within them, which is demonstrated vividly by the decomposition both of individual and collective bodies. A perfect body is one in which the Spirit of God lives. Therefore, Christianity requires from us not that we deny or restrict the absoluteness of the state, but that we fully acknowledge the principle that can give to the state the actual fullness of its significance—its moral solidarity with the matter of the kingdom of God on earth, with the intrinsic subordination of all worldly goals to the one Spirit of Christ.

XVII

Mutually Beneficial Relations of Church and State

The normal relation between church and state. — From the Christian (divinely human) point of view both the independent activity of human beings and their total devotion to the deity are identically necessary.

Combination of both positions is possible only through the clear distinction of two domains of life (religious and political) and of two direct motives (piety and pity)—corresponding to the difference of the most proximate objects of action, with unity as the final goal. — Pernicious consequences of the disconnection and of the mutual usurpations of church and state. — The Christian rule for social progress consists in this: that the state constrain as little as possible the interior moral world of human beings, leaving it to the free spiritual activity of the church, and at the same time that it secure[s] as faithfully and as broadly as possible the exterior conditions for a dignified existence and for the perfection of people.

The question about the relation of church to state that arose with the appearance of Christianity obtains definitive resolution in principle from this point of view. The church, as we know, is a divinely human organization, morally determined by piety. According to the very essence of this motive, the divine principle prevails resolutely over the human principle in the church. The first is predominantly active and the second predominantly passive in the bond connecting them: so it must evidently be in a direct correlation of human will with supreme principle. Active manifestation of this will, required by the deity itself, is possible only in the secular domain, which is collectively represented by the state. This domain had reality prior to the revelation of the divine principle and is beyond any direct dependence upon it. A *Christian* state is bound to the deity. Just as the church, it too, in a certain sense, is a divinely human organization, but now with prevalence of the human principle, which is possible only because this state has a realization of the divine principle *not in itself*, but *before* itself—in the Church, so that the Deity gives here, in the state, complete *free range* to the human principle, and to its *nonclerical* service to the higher goal.

From the moral point of view, the independent action of human beings and their unconditional subordination to deity, as such, are both identically necessary. Resolution of this antinomy, the combination of both positions, is possible only through a distinction of life's two spheres (religious and political) and its two direct motives (piety and pity)—corresponding to the distinction of the most proximate object of action with the unity of a final goal. A pious attitude toward the (perfect) deity requires pity toward people. A Christian church requires a Christian state. Here, as everywhere else as well, *disconnection* instead of *distinction* leads to *confusion*, and confusion leads to discord and ruin. Complete separation of church from state forces a church to do one of two things. Either the church renounces any active service to the good and gives itself up to quietism and indifference, which is contrary to the spirit of Christ, or the church itself, in

the person of its own representatives of power, lays hold of the real instruments of secular action.⁶⁰ In having zeal to actively prepare the world for the coming of the kingdom of God, but not having any methods for realization of its spiritual activity in its disconnection and alienation from the state, it interferes in all earthly matters. For all the doubtless purity and loftiness of its original goal, it more and more forgets about the goal in its concern about means. If such confusion were allowed to become firmly established then the church would lose the very foundation of its existence.

This disconnection turns out to be no less pernicious for the other side as well. Separated from the church, the state does one of two things. Either it renounces spiritual interests entirely, loses its higher consecration and dignity, and right after losing its moral respect, it also loses the material submissiveness of its subjects; or the state makes up its mind to take this concern wholly into its own hands. While realizing the importance of spiritual interests in human life, the state does not have, in the face of its own alienation from the church, a competent and independent channel, at the disposal of which it could place higher care about the spiritual good of its subjects, or educate nations to the kingdom of God. For this it would consequently have to confer upon itself *ex officio* higher spiritual authority, which would be a mad and pernicious usurpation, recalling the “man of lawlessness” of the last days [2 Thess. 2:3].⁶¹ It is clear that the state, in forgetting its filial position relative to the church, would be coming forward in its own name, and not in the name of the Father.

So, the normal relation between church and state consists in the fact that *the state acknowledges the higher spiritual authority belonging to the universal Church, which designates the general direction of the good will of humanity and the final goal of its historical activity. And the church places at the disposal of the state full power for the correspondence of legal secular interests with this higher will, and for the conformity of political relations and matters with the requirements of this final goal. This is in order that the church not have any coercive power, and the coercive power of the state not have any contact with the domain of religion.*

⁶⁰ Ed. note: “Gives itself up to quietism and indifference”: What I have translated here as “gives itself up” is a form of the Russian verb *predat'sia*, which indirectly suggests “betrayal.” (See n. 23 above.)

⁶¹ Ed. note: “Man of lawlessness”: Soloviev referred to this New Testament epithet earlier in this chapter. See also “A Brief Tale about the Antichrist” [1900]. See *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 318.

The state is the intermediate social sphere between the church on the one hand and material society on the other. The unconditional goals of the religious moral order, set by the church and represented by it, could not have been and cannot be realized in the given human material without the formal mediation of lawful state power (in its secular sphere of action). This state power *restrains* the forces of evil within certain relative boundaries until the time that all human wills come into maturity for the decisive choice between absolute good and unconditional evil. The direct and fundamental motive of such restraint is pity, by which all the progress of law and of the state is also determined. This is progress not of principle but of application. The sphere of coercive state action at once both retreats before individual freedom and at the same time goes forward with its help in social calamities. *The rule of true progress consists in the state constraining as little as possible the interior moral life of the human being, placing at his or her disposal the free spiritual action of the church, and at the same time as faithfully and as widely as possible ensuring the exterior conditions for a worthy existence and the perfection of people.*

A state that would want to teach true theology and sound philosophy to its subjects by virtue of its own authority, while allowing them to remain illiterate, to be slaughtered on the highways, or to die of hunger or of disease, would lose its reason for existence. The voice of a true church would be able to say to such a state:

Concern for the spiritual salvation of these people is entrusted to me, and from you it is required only to pity their everyday burdens and infirmities. It is said that man does not live by bread *alone*, but it is not said that he will live without any bread. Pity is obligatory for all, and for me as well. Therefore, if you do not want to be the collective organ of my pity, if you do not want to give to me, through a legal division of labor between us, the moral possibility to give myself over entirely to the matter of piety, I will have to take up the work of pity myself, as in ancient times, when you, the state, did not yet call itself Christian. I myself will become concerned that there be no hunger and excessive work, no contempt for the suffering, satisfaction for the offended, and correction for the offenders. But won't all people then say: Why do we need a state that does not pity us, when we have a church, which pitied not only our souls, but also our bodies?

A Christian state worthy of this name is one that acts, without interfering in clerical matters, and within the boundaries of its means, in the *royal* spirit of Christ, who pitied those who hungered and those who suffered, who taught the ignorant, who forcibly curbed abuses (driving out the money-changers), but who

was gracious to Samaritans and Gentiles, and who forbade his disciples to resort to force against unbelievers.

XVIII

The Moral Task of Economic Life and the Alienation of Material Life from It

The special moral task of economic life—to be collectively organized abstinence from evil carnal boundlessness, with the goal of converting material nature—individual and general—into the free form of human spirit. — The existing alienation of economic life from its task and historical explanation of this fact.

The fundamental moral motive of piety, which determines our proper relation to the absolute principle, is organized in the church. The other moral basis of piety, which determines our proper relation to neighbors, is organized in the state. Similar to these, our fundamental moral relation to lower nature (our own as well as outer nature) is organized objectively and collectively in the third common sphere of humanity's life—in society as economic union, or in *zemstvo*.⁶²

The moral obligation of abstinence, which in fact rests upon the feeling of shame inherent in human nature, is the true principle of humanity's economic life, as well as of the social organization corresponding to it with respect to its own special task. The economic task of a state that acts according to the motive of pity consists in forcibly ensuring for each a certain minimal degree of material prosperity as a necessary condition for a worthy human existence. With this, the economic question is being resolved correctly, but only in one respect—in the domain of inter-human relations. For economic activity, as such, the human relation to material nature has essential significance. Because the unconditional character of the moral principle and the fullness of moral order require without fail that this relation also be brought into the norm of the good, or perfection, then humanity must be morally organized not only in the domains of church and state, but also and especially in the domain of economic relations. Just as between church and state, so, too, among all three spheres of collective moral organization there must be *unity without confusion and distinction without separation*.

What form must the good assume in a materially economic society as such? It goes without saying that moral philosophy can indicate only the formative

⁶² Ed. note: See note 30 above. Soloviev had explored aspects of the economic question from the moral point of view in chapter 7 of part 3.

principle and the final goal of this society, what it should be. This principle is abstinence from evil carnal boundlessness, and this goal is the conversion of material nature—our own nature and outer nature—into the free form of human spirit, not restricting it from without but unconditionally complementing its inner and outer existence.

However, what is there in common among such ideas and economic activity? The principle of such activity is the boundless multiplication of demands, and its goal is an equivalent multiplication of things satisfying these demands. The commonality, of course, is between shame and shamelessness, between spiritualization of bodies and materialization of souls, between resurrection of the flesh and death of the spirit. This commonality is only negative, but what of it? The negation of a moral norm in fact does not abolish, but only underscores its inner significance. There are no reasonable grounds to suppose a ready-made correspondence to the ideal in the economic domain that we do not find in the empirical reality of church and state.

There is no doubt a certain contradiction between the feeling of shame and ordinary stock exchange operations. However, this is no greater (and sooner less) than between piety in the spirit of Christ and the politics of the medieval church. There is a discrepancy between the principle of abstinence and monetary speculation, again not greater but sooner less than, between the morally legal principle of the state and the institution of *lettres de cachet*.⁶³ Just as the entire significance of religion and of the church is settled for some by hierarchical ambition and the people's superstitiousness, while others in the political world perceive only the tyranny of rulers and a stupid submissiveness of the multitude, it is possible on the grounds of what has happened and what is happening to see in the entire economic domain only a field of self-interest and greed. Such views exist, but they only express either a reluctance or an incapacity to understand the essential meaning of the subjects.

The following direction is more serious. In giving up the requirement for ideal perfection in human relations as unjust, one must, however, require of these relations two properties in order that moral worth and significance be acknowledged in them: (1) that their assumed moral principle would not be completely alien to them but would become manifest in them, even if in imperfect form; and (2) that in their historical development they would be brought closer to the norm, or become more perfect. However, it is precisely economic life, if it is understood as a certain organization of material relations, that does not thoroughly satisfy these

⁶³ Ed. note: "*Lettres de cachet*": Seventeenth-century French royal edict regarding expulsion or exile without trial and inquest (the Huguenots).

two indispensable requirements. With all the possible abuses in the ecclesiastical domain, it is not possible to seriously deny that the moral principle of piety is inherent in the church. It is not possible to deny, for example, that temples of God in general are created by this sentiment of piety and that a majority of people who gather for services are moved by it. It is not possible to deny, too, that in some if not in all respects ecclesiastical life is improving and that a multitude of old abuses has now become impossible. In like manner, no just person will begin to deny that in state institutions—courts, police, schools, hospitals, and so forth—there is an inherent moral goal: to protect people from offense and suffering and to assist in their welfare, and that the means for attaining this goal by the state are gradually being perfected in the sense of greater altruism. Where in the economic domain is there any institution in which the virtue of abstinence would be made objective and that would serve the spiritualization of material nature? The moral principle, which should determine our material life and transform our external environment, does not have any kind of reality at all in the economic environment and, consequently, there is nothing here to improve.

From our point of view, however, this perfect alienation of economic life from its proper moral task, indisputable in fact, has a satisfactory explanation. The moral organization of humanity, in principle defined in Christianity, could not be *equally* realized in all its parts. A certain historical sequence emerged from the very essence of the matter. The religious task, the organization of piety in the church, had to appear first, at the forefront—not only as a major and basic matter but also in a certain sense as the most simple, the least conditional from the human perspective. In fact, the bond of human beings with the unconditional principle revealed to them as the highest one cannot be determined by anything else. It rests on its own foundation—on that which is given. The second task of moral organization—the task of a Christian state—apart from its own motive of collective pity, is conditioned by a yet higher, religious principle, which frees this secular pity from the restrictions that it had in the pagan state. We see that the political task of historical Christianity, more complex and conditional than the ecclesiastical task, appears after it.

While there was an epoch in the Middle Ages when the church had already assumed stable organic forms, the Christian state represented the same condition of an apparent nonexistence in which Christian economy finds itself today. Does the fist-law of the Middle Ages really correspond to the moral norm of the state more than contemporary banks and stock exchanges do to the moral norm of economic relations? Practical realization of the latter, naturally, appears after all the rest, since this domain is the furthest boundary for the moral principle and its proper organization. That is to say, the arrangement of the moral bond between

human beings and material nature is not simple but especially conditioned, first, by the normal religious situation of humanity as arranged together in the church, and second, by normal inter-human, or altruistic, relations organized in the state. It is no wonder, therefore, that the true economic task, which some socialists of the first half of the nineteenth century only approached gropingly, and from which contemporary socialists are as far as their opponents, has not as yet received a stable and definite expression even in the theoretical consciousness.⁶⁴

Even with the indeterminacy of this final practical task, the change in moral sentiments that predominated in the history of the Christian world now already recommends with sufficient clarity three major epochs. The *epoch of piety* with the prevalent striving to the “divine,” with indifference and distrust of the human principle, with enmity and fear toward the natural principle. This first epoch, with all its tenacity and duration, carried within itself however a seed of destruction. The one-sided exclusive piety of the Middle Ages contradicted the fullness of Christian truth *according to the spirit*, for this truth was confessed as the absolute norm *according to the letter*. When this contradiction found its direct and extreme expression in the inhumanity and pitilessness of “pious” religious persecutions, a reaction began, first of high-principled humanism, and after that also of practical pity and humaneness. This movement of *humane morality*, which characterizes the second epoch of Christian history—from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century inclusive—began in this last century to pass into a third epoch. At this time two preliminary truths appeared in the living consciousness of people: first, that an actual realization of humaneness must seize on the domain of *material life*, and second, that the norm of material life is abstinence. This truth was already clear to the philosophical schools of antiquity, but for common sense it is even now more a glimmering at dawn than a lighting of the way. This glimmering doubtlessly began in the nineteenth century in such phenomena as the ascetic morality of the fashionable [idealist] philosopher [Arthur] Schopenhauer, the advance of vegetarianism, the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism, poorly understood but taken precisely from the ascetic aspect, the success of *The Kreutzer Sonata* [by Leo Tolstoy], the fear of good people, lest the preaching of abstinence lead to a sudden discontinuation of the human race, and so forth.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ed. note: The insufficiency of both socialism and capitalism to deal with economic questions in a moral way was also discussed in chapter 7 of part 3. Soloviev had written on that theme much earlier, both in his thesis (1880) and from another angle somewhat later in “The Social Question in Europe” (1892). See my introduction.

⁶⁵ Ed. note: Soloviev broached the subjects of Buddhism and Hinduism briefly earlier: first, in terms of the demands of asceticism, or abstinence (including nutrition) in

Economism and asceticism: here are two orders of ideas and phenomena, seemingly perfectly alien to one another, which in the nineteenth century were—in a perfectly superficial and crude manner—drawn together in Malthusianism. *Their intrinsic and essential connection consists in the human being's positive obligation—approved by us—to save material nature from the necessity of decay and death, and to prepare it for universal corporeal resurrection.*

XIX

Spiritualizing Humanity's Economic Life

The moral significance of the law of conservation of energy. — The expediency of collectively organized abstinence is conditional upon the successes of the collective organizations of pity and piety. — The unity of the three tasks.

According to current concepts, the goal of economic activity is the increase of wealth. The goal of wealth itself—if only one does not begin from the point of view of a “miserly knight”—is the possession of the fullness of physical existence.⁶⁶ This fullness no doubt depends on the relation of human beings to material nature. Two paths lie ahead of us here. Either we exploit earthly nature selfishly or cultivate it with love.⁶⁷ The first path has already been explored, leaving indirect benefits for human intellectual development and external culture, but the major goal cannot be attained by it. Nature is superficially inferior to the human being, allowing the appearance of supremacy over it. Imaginary treasures procured by violence do not bring happiness; they scatter, like burnt coal. Human beings cannot ensure their material welfare, that is, first of all heal their physical life and give it immortality by way of exploiting earthly forces extrinsically, and they cannot intrinsically possess nature without knowing its

chapter 1 of part 1, then later along with Platonism more directly in chapter 2 of part 3, in tracing the development of moral and social consciousness. It is perhaps relevant to note that Soloviev had little sympathy for western distortions of Buddhist religion and spirituality, which he referred to in 1892 as “a charlatan attempt to suit real Buddhism to the tastes of Europe.” See *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 316.

⁶⁶ Ed. note: “Miserly knight”: *skupoi rytsar'*, the protagonist in one of Alexander Pushkin's “little tragedies.”

⁶⁷ Ed. note: This line of reasoning reprises the argument Soloviev made more forcefully in discussing economic questions with respect to material nature in chapter 7 of part 3. He had also broached it in other contexts. See my introduction.

true essence. However, thanks to their reason and conscience they already know the moral conditions that are found within their own power, conditions that can place them in a proper relation to nature.

Reason reveals to them that every real phenomenon and relation in the world is subject to the inviolable law of the conservation of energy. Carnal inclinations strive to bind the soul with the surface of nature, with material things and processes, and to convert the intrinsic, potential infinity of a human being into the extrinsic evil boundlessness of passions and lusts. Conscience, even in its fundamental elementary form—shame—judges this way as *unworthy*, and reason shows that it is *pernicious* and why it is pernicious. The more the soul is wasted extrinsically, on the surface of things, the less it has left of intrinsic free force to penetrate to the essence of nature and to take possession of it. It is clear that human beings can truly spiritualize nature or arouse and raise within it intrinsic life only from an abundance of their own spirituality. It is equally clear that a proper spiritualization of human beings can be perfected only at the expense of their extrinsic, outwardly directed mental powers and aspirations. The powers and aspirations of the soul must be *absorbed inwardly*, and through this increase in its intensity and reinforced in itself, the mighty and spiritualized essence of human beings will now be correlated not with the material surface of nature but with its intrinsic essence.

What is required is not a human renunciation of outward action upon nature and of civilized labor at all but only a shift of life's goals and of the human will's center of gravity. The majority of people passionately strives after extrinsic objects as goals, and they bind their intrinsic sense of psychic strength and will to these goals and expend this strength and will upon them. These extrinsic objects must entirely become only means and instruments. The intrinsic strength that is gathered and concentrated into the self must be applied as a mighty lever to lift the weight of material existence, which overwhelms both the scattered soul of the human being and the shattered soul of nature.

The normal principle of economic activity is economy, the saving, the collecting of psychical strength through the conversion of one kind of mental energy (extrinsic, or extensive) into another kind (intrinsic, or intensive). A human being either squanders his or her sensual soul or gathers it together. In the first case, one does not attain anything either for oneself or for nature; in the second, one heals and saves oneself and it. Organization, in its most common definition, is the coordination of many means and instruments of a lower order for the attainment of a single common goal of a higher order. Therefore, the principle of economic activity that has predominated up to now—the indefinite multiplication of extrinsic and private demands and the acknowledgment of extrinsic means

for their satisfaction as independent goals—is a principle of disorganization, of social decomposition. The principle of moral philosophy, however—the gathering together or absorbing of all extrinsic material goals into the single intrinsic and psychic goal of full reunification of the human essence with the natural essence—is a principle of organization and universal restoration.

It must be remembered that this is the *third* task in the common matter of the moral organization of humanity and that actual resolution of this third task is conditional on the first two. The methods of personal asceticism can be normal and expedient only under condition of a pious attitude to God and pity toward people; otherwise, the model of the ascetic would turn out to be the devil. So it is, too, with the collective arrangement of humanity's material life, according to the principle of gathering intrinsic strength and abstaining from extrinsic demands. This collective arrangement can be rightly and successfully realized not with isolated actors of the economic sphere in itself but only under condition of acknowledging an absolute goal—the kingdom of God, represented by the church—and with the help of the right means of state organization. Neither the individual nor the collective human being can properly arrange its material, or natural, life if it does not realize the moral norm in its relations, both religious and inter-human.

The moral organization of humanity, or its regeneration into divine humanity, is an indivisible triune task. Its absolute goal is set by the church as organized piety, which collectively takes divine action. Its formal means and instruments are given by the purely human, free principle of just pity or sympathy and collectively organized in the state. Only the final substratum or the material of the divinely human organism is found in the domain of economic life, determined by the principle of abstinence.

XX

Priestly, Royal, and Prophetic Offices

Individual representatives of the moral organization of humanity. — The three supreme offices—priestly, royal, prophetic. — Their distinctive attributes and mutual dependence.

The individual principle is in essence inseparable from the social, or collective, aspect in the moral organization of humanity. Humanity is being perfected, or is being morally organized in different spheres of its existence, not otherwise than through the activity of individual bearers of supreme moral principles. Unity, the fullness and the right course of general moral progress, depends on the concordant

action of these leading or “representative” persons. A normal bond between church and state would find an essential condition and a vivid, real expression for itself in the constant harmony of their supreme representatives, the high priest and king. What is more, the full power of the latter would be consecrated by the authority of the former, and the former would realize his authoritative will not otherwise than through the sovereignty of the latter. The high priest of the church is the direct bearer of the divine principle, the representative of spiritual *fatherhood*, preeminently a father; in the face of any temptation to abuse his authority, to turn it into coercive power, he should remember the words of the gospel, that the Father judges no one but has left all judgment to the Son *because he is the son of man* [see John 5:26–27]. In his turn, the Christian sovereign is preeminently a son of the church; against the temptation to raise his supreme worldly power to the degree of the higher spiritual authority and to allow it into any interference in the matter of faith and conscience whatsoever, he should remember that even the King of Heaven does only *the will of the Father*.

Yet the authority of high priest and state power are both indissolubly bound with extrinsic privileges, subject to temptations that are much too powerful, and the inevitable rivalries, usurpations, and misunderstandings among them evidently cannot finally be left for resolution to one of the interested sides. Any extrinsic obligatory restrictions are in principle, or ideally, incompatible with the supreme dignity of the high priest’s authority and the king’s power. A purely moral control on the part of the free forces of the nation and society is not only possible for them but desirable to the highest degree.

There existed in ancient Israel a third supreme office—the prophetic. Abolished in Christianity by rights, in fact it exited the stage of history, only stepping back onto it in exceptional cases—for the most part in distorted forms. All the anomalies of medieval and modern history arise from here. A restoration of the prophetic office is not a matter for the human will, but to recall its purely moral significance is very timely in our day and appropriate at the end of a moral philosophy.

Just as the high priest of the church is the summit of piety, and the Christian sovereign the summit of mercy and truth, so the true prophet is the summit of shame and conscience. Within this intrinsic essence of the prophetic office consists the foundation of its extrinsic features as well. The true prophet is a public figure, unconditionally independent, fearing nothing extrinsic and submitting to nothing extrinsic. Side by side with the bearers of unconditional authority and unconditional power there must be bearers of unconditional freedom in society. Such freedom cannot belong to the multitude, cannot be an attribute of democracy. Moral freedom, of course, is desirable for everyone, just as supreme power and authority are, perhaps, also desirable for everyone, but here desire

is not enough. Supreme power and authority are given by the grace of God, but human beings must themselves merit real freedom through intrinsic exploit. The *right of freedom* is founded upon the very essence of a human being and must be ensured from without by the state. The degree of *realization* of this right is precisely something that wholly depends on intrinsic conditions, on the degree of moral consciousness attained. A real bearer of full freedom, both intrinsic and extrinsic, can only be one who is not bound internally by any externality, who in the final analysis knows no other standard of judgments and actions besides a good will and a pure conscience.

Just as every high priest is only the summit of the large and complex estate of the clergy, through which he is bound to the full laity, and further, just as royal power also realizes its calling in the nation only through a complex system of civil and military offices with their individual bearers, so, too, free actors of the higher ideal conduct it into the life of the community through a multitude of more or less full participants of their aspirations. The simplest difference of the three offices consists in the fact that the priestly office is mainly a deeply pious devotion to the true traditions of the past, the royal office—a faithful understanding of the true requirements of the present, and the prophetic office—faith in a true image of the future. The difference of a prophet from an idle daydreamer is in the fact that the flowers and fruits of an ideal future do not hang in the air of the prophet's personal imagination, but are held by the manifest stem of present societal requirements and the mysterious roots of religious tradition. In this also is the bond of the prophetic office with the priestly and the royal offices.