



2004

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Recommended Citation

"The Modernity of Khomiakov." A.S. Khomiakov: Poet, Philosopher, Theologian, ed. Vladimir Tsurikov (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2004), pp. 129-144.

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The Modernity of Khomiakov

Paul Valliere

When considering a theologian from the past, one inevitably faces the challenge of distinguishing between the enduring and the ephemeral in his or her work. The Gospel is eternal; but theologians are not, nor are theologies. In an Orthodox theological context the search for the eternal typically focuses on sacred tradition. One looks for those moments when the theologian speaks not in his own voice, but in the voice of the fathers, the voice of the church.

In the case of Khomiakov and the other Russian religious philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, identifying the traditional element is a difficult task for a reason which becomes more obvious as one becomes better acquainted with their work: Khomiakov and the other Russian religious philosophers were not traditional thinkers. They were modern thinkers, and modern concepts profoundly conditioned the traditional element in their thought. At first inspection, indeed, the passing appears to outweigh the eternal in them, for is not the "modern" by definition the *modus*, the way or fashion of the moment, "now" as opposed to "always and forever?"

To pursue a discussion of Khomiakov in these terms, of course, one must substantiate the premise that Khomiakov was a modern, not a traditional thinker. Or if this is too adversative a way of putting it—since a person can be modern and traditional at the same time—one must at least demonstrate that Khomiakov's theology

was unprecedented in important respects, whatever traditional features it might also have manifested.

The first evidence of the modernity of Khomiakov is so obvious that many observers look right past it. It is the fact that he engaged in theology at all. One can appreciate this point by considering Khomiakov as a social and historical type. In most respects he conformed to a traditional pattern. He was a prosperous Russian nobleman, devoted to tsar and country, trained in arms, indeed distinguished in the armed service of his country, absorbed in the management of his estates, passionately devoted to hunting, to his family and to the Orthodox Church, which he viewed as the one true church of God on earth. Ever since the Middle Ages one could find men like this in Russia. To be sure, Khomiakov's personal gifts were exceptional and set him apart from the generality of his class. But his pursuits were not untypical, except for the one with which this paper is concerned, namely, his theological project. The latter was unprecedented because before modern times—or for that matter before Khomiakov's own generation—Russian Orthodox noblemen did not busy themselves with theology and certainly did not produce it. This fact should not lead us to question their piety, of course. Pious Orthodox noblemen could be found all over Russia in every generation, but they did not express their faith by reading or writing theology. For that matter, even the secular clergy was scarcely active in the theological sphere. Theology was the business of hierarchs and monks, the latter in particular when one considers that the most important idiom for theology in Russia was not verbal theology, and certainly not scholarly theology, but iconography, *umozrenie v kraskakh* (contemplation in colors) in Evgeny Trubetskoi's immortal characterization; and iconographers were for the most part monastics.

What changed this situation? Why did Khomiakov and a few other Orthodox laymen of his time decide to assume theological responsibilities? The cause was as much external as internal to their piety. Khomiakov's theology was not the natural, organic and harmonious unfolding of his Orthodox spirituality. It was a response to

an external challenge, a crisis. His theology was prompted by the same basic concern as his broader intellectual project, usually called Slavophilism. The concern was to define Russia's and Orthodoxy's place, and Russia's and Orthodoxy's mission, in the rapidly changing, aggressively expanding European civilization of his time. As Khomiakov and his fellows saw it, modern European civilization was on a collision course with the values which they and their Orthodox countrymen held dear. Khomiakov's theology was modern in the first instance because it was a response to modernity.

The responsive character of Khomiakov's theologizing is evident in the texts he left us. Except for the celebrated essay, "The Church is One"—more about that in a moment—most of Khomiakov's theological writings take the form of letters or other kinds of replies to Western European interlocutors, Catholic or Protestant. Very little of Khomiakov's theology represents a conversation with Orthodox partners, past or present. This is the reason—not counting censorship—why so many of his theological writings were written in French or English, and why Russian theologians to this day quarrel over the adequacy of the Russian editions of his works. When one reads Khomiakov's theological essays in Russian, one is generally not reading Khomiakov at all, but Iurii Samarin or Giliarov-Platonov or Vasilii Lur'e or others. This leads to many problems because of the tendentiousness of the editors and translators. How much simpler it would be if Khomiakov had just been a Russian addressing Russians, an Orthodox addressing Orthodox. But he was not just that. His theological voice was directed also to a world outside his own. He pursued a conversation beyond the boundaries of historic Orthodox tradition.

The case involves more than the purely formal characteristics of Khomiakov's theology. Khomiakov's confrontation with Western Christianity affected the substance of his thought. The pronounced Pauline features of his theology are an example of this. Khomiakov's abiding attachment to the writings of Paul has long been recognized. One of his later projects was to make a complete Russian translation

of Paul's letters, a project cut short by his untimely death. Khomiakov's Paulinism cannot be explained simply as an "elective affinity" between him and the apostle, although a spiritual kinship certainly existed. One must reckon also with the Pauline spirituality of the modern German Protestant theologians whom Khomiakov read so carefully. The exegetical note which Khomiakov wrote on Phil. 2:6 provides solid evidence for this claim. Besides the connection with German Protestant exegetes (F. C. Baur and others), the text also provides early evidence of the "kenotic" theme in Russian theology, a distinctively modern theme introduced by Protestant theologians and developed in distinctive ways by the Russians. The note on Philippians is also the place where Khomiakov offers his translation (i.e., exegesis) of Paul "absolutely apart from any authority," as he puts it—a protestantizing declaration of exegetical independence which we should not exaggerate, but not ignore, either.¹

Modern influences figure also in "The Church is One." While we may never know exactly what prompted Khomiakov to write his famous essay, we do know that it owes a debt to the Roman Catholic theologian Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), a contemporary of Khomiakov's who lectured at the University of Tübingen and later at Munich. Möhler's most important work appeared in 1825 when the author was only twenty-nine years old: *The Unity of the Church, or, the Principle of Catholicism Presented in the Spirit of the Church Fathers of the First Three Centuries*. The book was one of the first attempts to develop a more experiential, Spirit-filled understanding of the church in modern Roman Catholicism, an understanding of the church not just as a historical and juridical institution but in terms of spiritual fellowship, or communion.²

¹ See "Zametka na tekst poslaniia Apostola Pavla k filippiitsam," in A. S. Khomiakov, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Moskovskii filosofskii fond, Izdatel'stvo "Medium", 1994), 2:328-29, 448-49. "Elective affinity" is S. S. Khoruzhii's characterization in "Khomiakov i printsip sobornosti," *Posle pereryva: puti russkoi filosofii* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo "Aleteiia", 1994), 23.

² See Johann Adam Möhler, *Unity in the Church or The Principle of Catholicism, Presented in the Spirit of the Church Fathers of the First Three Centuries*, ed. and trans. by Peter C. Erb (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996); and Serge Bolshakoff, *The Doctrine of the Unity of the Church in the Works of Khomyakov and Moehler* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1946).

The notion of communion (*koinonia*) as the being of the church is associated today with John Zizioulas' now-classic work, *Being as Communion*. In it Zizioulas cites Khomiakov's concept of *sobornost'* as one of the harbingers of his own ecclesiology.³ Arguably, the admiration for Khomiakov in the Orthodox theological world of our day rests in the main on this feature of his thought. It is tempting to suppose that Khomiakov's ecclesiological insight—the germ of *koinonia* ecclesiology—merely expressed what every Orthodox person knows and experiences as the church. However, this explanation does not account for the perceived novelty of Khomiakov's ecclesiology in its time, its status as a conceptual break-through. Once again, therefore, one must consider the role of factors external to Orthodoxy which, when combined with the internal determinants, account for the synthesis of elements found in Khomiakov.

The unprecedented prominence of the Holy Spirit in Khomiakov's discourse about the church in "The Church is One" is the fact that demands explanation. The dogma itself was there for Khomiakov to work with, of course. But what energized it? Möhler's pneumatology is not a sufficient cause, since one also wants to know what energized pneumatology in Möhler. Or to put the question more broadly, what led a significant number of European theologians in the first half of the nineteenth century to recover—and in some sense to discover—the promise of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit for theology in general and ecclesiology in particular? Who put "Spirit" on the agenda of European thought and sensibility in Khomiakov's century, and why?

The answer, it seems to me, is: the German Romantic philosophers did. It was the Romantics who resurrected *Geist* in the human and religious sciences and reconceived these disciplines as *Geisteswissenschaften*. Moreover, the Romantic philosophers were prompted to undertake their project by exactly the same historical and cultural crisis that captured Khomiakov's attention: the secularizing and globalizing challenge to revealed truths and historic institutions in

³ See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 124.

modern times. During the Enlightenment and especially with the rise of industrial civilization, the security of the established churches began to be undermined, as did the scientific veracity of the Christian religion. Neither objectivist apologetics nor the argument from the political utility of established religion were very successful apologetic tools, not least because they lacked vital theological resonance. The Romantics broke with these approaches by setting out the case for the experiential truth of the Christian religion. Romantic apologetics proclaimed the relevance of Christian doctrine to human subjectivity or, as we usually say today, personhood. "The Church is One" is an early example of this kind of apologetics in Orthodox theology.

That the Spirit is an experiential principle in "The Church is One" can be sensed in a phrase in the essay which adumbrates an important development in twentieth-century Orthodox theology. Discussing faith, hope and charity as gifts of the Spirit and emphasizing their interrelatedness, Khomiakov speaks of the *zhivoe Predanie* and *zhivoe edinstvo* of the church—the "living Tradition" and "living unity" of the church.⁴ If in "The Church is One" Khomiakov had simply affirmed the "tradition" and "unity" of the church, there would be nothing special about the essay. After eighteen hundred years of Christianity, the world did not have to be told that the Church is one and that it preserves a sacred tradition. Khomiakov's originality lay in his application of the adjective "living" to the categories of unity and tradition, hence also in the implication that unity and tradition may be "dead". To be sure, the Holy Spirit had always been confessed in the Creed as *zhivotvoriashchii*, "life-giving." What Khomiakov did was to take this vitalistic descriptor seriously in practical terms and use it to energize the being—the tradition and unity—of the church. An experientialization of ecclesiology was the result. In this way Khomiakov anticipated Zizioulas' insight into the difference between the "institution" and the "constitution" of the church:

⁴ "Tserkov' odna," *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, 2:9.

Christ in-stitutes and the Spirit con-stitutes [the church]. The difference between these two prepositions: in- and con- can be enormous ecclesialogically. The "institution" is something presented to us as a fact, more or less a fait-accompli. As such, it is a provocation to our freedom. The "con-stitution" is something that involves us in its very being, something we accept freely, because we take part in its very emergence.⁵

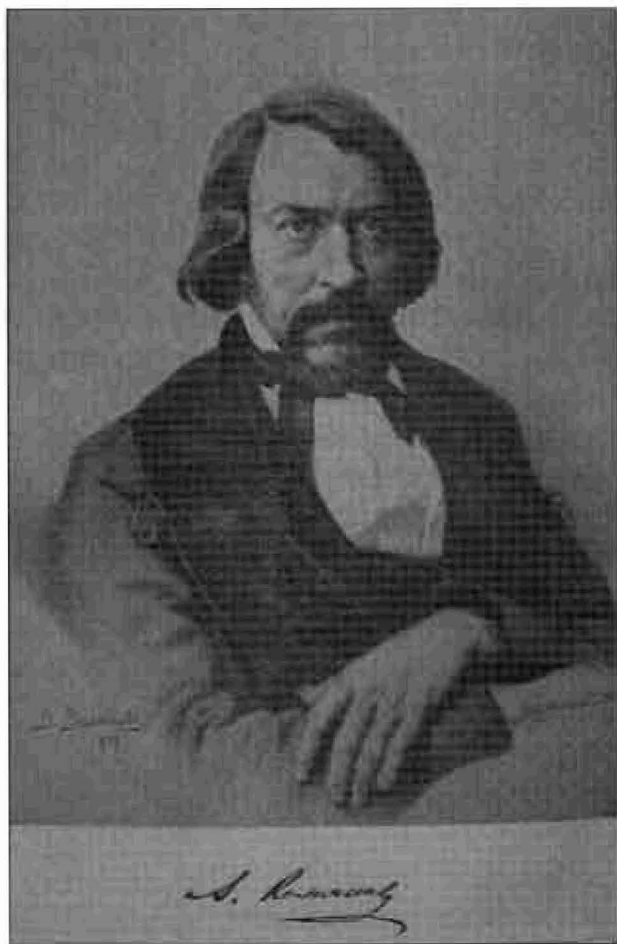
While not formulated as clearly as it is in Zizioulas, this distinction is implicit in Khomiakov's paradoxical statement in "The Church is One" that "the visible church is visible only to the believer."⁶ With this formulation Khomiakov rejects the conflation of the visible church with the empirical church. The empirical church is the institution with its organization, rituals, history and tradition; the visible church is this institution when it is constituted by the Spirit through faith—something that happens anew whenever and wherever it occurs.

The experientialism of Khomiakov's ecclesiology is made all the more apparent by the absence of patristic discourse in "The Church is One." Tradition may be present in his essay, but the fathers are not. This contrasts, incidentally, with Möhler's method, announced already in the subtitle of his book: *The Principle of Catholicism Presented in the Spirit of the Church Fathers of the First Three Centuries*. Möhler can be linked to the revival of patristic studies which began in the nineteenth century in several confessions. Khomiakov's connection to the patristic revival was much more tenuous.⁷

⁵ *Being as Communion*, 140.

⁶ "Tserkov' odna," *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, 2:12.

⁷ Even Ivan Kireevskii, who through his association with Optina Hermitage was linked to one of the early centers of the patristic revival in Russia, incorporates little patristic discourse into his writings and for this reason is excoriated along with Khomiakov by critics such as John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Khomiakov (1804-1860)," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 2 (1956):71. Romanides takes strong exception to Kireevskii's view that "il est impossible de renouveler la philosophie des saints Pères sous l'aspect qu'elle avait de leur temps. . . Elle répondait aux questions de son temps et de la culture parmi laquelle elle se développait" (Kireevskii as rendered by A. Gratieux, *A.S. Khomiakov et le mouvement slavophile*, 2 vols. [Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1939], 2:214-15).



A. S. Khomiakov. From *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii Alekseia Stepanovicha Khomiakova*. (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografia, 1900). Rare and Illustrated Collections, Slavic & Baltic Division, NYPL. Courtesy of Hee-Gwone Yoo and Edward Kasinec.

This does not mean that Khomiakov was uninterested in the history of the church. He was very interested in it, but in a different way than most Orthodox theologians in our own day. Contemporary Orthodox theologians, benefiting from the profound patristic scholarship of the twentieth century, view the church as a historic tradition. Khomiakov was less interested in the church as a historic tradition—something which he took for granted—than in the church as a historical *force*: a force not just in personal life, but in society, politics and culture as well. Orthodoxy played a crucial role in Khomiakov's philosophy of history or, as the Russians say, *historiosophy*—the search for the *sophia*, the inner meaning and design, of the historical process.

One does not hear much about *historiosophy* in Orthodox theology these days. The greatest Orthodox voices of the last sixty or seventy years—Florovsky, Lossky, Meyendorff, Ware and most others—were not concerned with it and in some cases were actively hostile to it. They were historians, not philosophers of history. The historical *discipline* of patristics displaced speculation about the historical *process* in their work.

Things were very different with Khomiakov. He lived during the apogee of philosophy of history in European thought and was bound to the project also through his connection with Romantic Idealism, the fountainhead of all the great nineteenth-century philosophies of history. Moreover, the Romantics' fascination with history was integrally connected with their religious interests. One of the most besetting sins of religion in the eyes of Enlightenment rationalists was its particularism. The creeds and rituals to which the historic churches held fast seemed hopelessly arbitrary and obscure to them. The Romantics by contrast, discerning and in a sense discovering the historical and contingent character of human experience, gave the religious attachment to particulars a new lease on life. Historicist apologetics reinforced experientialist apologetics. In both cases, the relevance of faith to human life as it was actually lived was demonstrated in a powerful new way.

Khomiakov was deeply invested in the philosophy of history along Romantic lines and "had apparently formulated his historical views before he turned to theology."⁸ The sprawling compendium of essays on mythology, religion, language and folklore on which he worked for over fifteen years, *Semiramida*, places him clearly in the Romantic and specifically Schellingian project of "philosophy of mythology" — mythology being the bridge between history and religion as the Romantics construed them. *Semiramida*, or *Notes on Universal History* as Khomiakov called it, is a work one does not hear about in contemporary Orthodox appreciations of Khomiakov, and with good reason. There is little in it to warm the hearts of patristically-schooled theologians. The speculative heart of the work, the distinction between the "Iranian" (free, spiritual) and "Cushite" (authoritarian, materialistic) forces of world history, does not appear to engage Orthodox theological values except in a very general way. Are we not therefore dealing with arbitrary and passing features of Khomiakov's thought, interesting in terms of his time and place perhaps, but irrelevant to the tradition of the church? Who, indeed, does not wish that *Semiramida* was only 18 pages long like "The Church is One," and that "The Church is One" was hundreds of pages long like *Semiramida*!

Most of *Semiramida* is indeed negligible today, however important it seemed to Khomiakov. Yet the distinction between the passing and the enduring in this instance is not as clear-cut as one might suppose. The sticking point is Khomiakov's Slavophilism, a stumbling block which must be reckoned with. Integrally connected to Khomiakov's historiosophy, Slavophilism cannot by any stretch of the imagination be construed as a traditional or patristic enterprise. It was a modern invention. For this reason Orthodox

⁸ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "A. S. Khomiakov's Religious Thought," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1979), 98. Note also Suttner's observation as he begins his exposition of Khomiakov's thought: "Das Geschichtswerk ist der Niederschlag von allem geistigen Schaffen A. S. Chomjakovs in seiner ersten Periode; in keiner Disziplin lässt sich seine Position aufweisen, wenn man nicht von diesen Aufzeichnungen ausgeht." Ernst Christoph Suttner, *Offenbarung, Gnade und Kirche bei A. S. Chomjakov, Das östliche Christentum* (Neue Folge), vol. 20 (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1967), 27.

theologians might decide to ignore it just as they ignore the other cultural-philosophical musings in *Semiramida*. But in doing so they would err. The reason is that Slavophilism stands at the heart of Khomiakov's religious vision and personal theological pathos. Khomiakov regarded Slavdom—for all practical purposes, Russia—as the venue by which Orthodoxy was to become a world-historical force, a force which would reveal the inner meaning and destiny of the historical process. Obviously there are many reasons to reject this speculative-historical proposition. Historical experience has not borne it out, and the prospects for its fulfillment in our own time are remote at best. But Slavophilism was not just as a speculative, historiosophical proposition. It was also a missionary project, that is to say, as a means of sharing Orthodoxy outside the fold, a vehicle for carrying the Orthodox Gospel into the world. And Slavophilism was an ethical project, an attempt to ground society—his own but also world society—on the principles of the Gospel (*sobornost'*). Construed in these terms the Slavophile project cannot be ignored in a theological assessment of Khomiakov's legacy.

Andrzej Walicki's discussion of Khomiakov in his classic work on Slavophilism is pertinent here. "The content and history of dogmas," Walicki writes, "interested Khomyakov only in so far as he thought them a symbolic expression of the essence of the Church, which for him was above all an ideal social organism, an antidote to the social atomization and spiritual disintegration of the contemporary world."⁹ While this statement as it stands is a bit extreme—because there is no reason to restrict Khomiakov's interest in dogma in this way—Walicki nevertheless makes an extremely important point. For Khomiakov, dogma had ethical and social content; it implied an ethical and social project, not just an ecclesiastical project. Hence, "Slavophile ecclesiology cannot

⁹ Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 188.

be discussed in isolation from Slavophile social philosophy—there are in fact very close analogies between the Slavophiles' reflections on the church and their conception of the secular norms governing social life."¹⁰ Nikolai Berdiaev called attention to the same facet of Slavophile theology. "The Slavophiles were, to use a contemporary expression, pragmatists in theology. In a certain sense, their religious philosophy was a philosophy of action; it was directed against intellectualism in theology."¹¹ And I would add, against contemplationism, that is to say, against a purely contemplative appropriation of the Gospel.

In contemporary Orthodox evaluations there is a tendency to value Khomiakov's ecclesiological vision while ignoring his social and political vision. This one-sidedness distorts Khomiakov's project, for his vision of *sobornost'* was as much a recipe for the regeneration of society as it was an ecclesiological doctrine. In fact, he regarded these two projects—the social and the ecclesial—as mutually relevant, indeed as necessary to each other. Both were concerned to effectuate the same norm of life, namely, the reconciliation of freedom and unity through love. Khomiakov was sure that, without the church, no earthly society would ever approximate this norm. But he was also convinced that without a social and historical mission, the church falls short of being what it called to be. Unlike many later Orthodox theologians, Khomiakov did not see a tragic break between church and society, or between church and world. He saw a practical continuum grounded in the ethical imperative of the Gospel to "love one another."

This theological pragmatism, as Berdiaev called it, is another token of the modernity of Khomiakov. The nineteenth century prided

¹⁰ Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, 197.

¹¹ "From *Aleksei Stepanovich Khomiakov* [by Nikolai Berdiaev]," *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, trans. and ed. Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), 332. In his introduction to *On Spiritual Unity* Bird makes a similar point about concreteness—or at least the aspiration to it—in Slavophilism when he observes: "While Slavophile philosophical thought largely took German Idealism as its point of departure, the demand for realism and historicism provoked a search for the roots of Russian distinctiveness" (p. 11). Likewise Khoruzhii, who writes of "the concrete-experiential, not abstract-speculative character of Khomiakov's thought," *Posle pereryva*, 19.

itself on being a practical age, an age of action, not just speculation or contemplation. With his ethical seriousness and interest in the reform, Khomiakov shared this *Zeitgeist*. For this reason, one does not do justice to his legacy by construing it solely in terms of the timeless communion of the church and disregarding its author's historical projects. Or to put it another way, one does not do justice to Khomiakov by focusing on communion and forgetting about community.¹² Khomiakov's Slavophilism was an attempt to work out the implications of communion for community in his time and place. We may reject ninety-nine per cent of it as irrelevant to our time and place; but if we reject one hundred per cent of it—that is to say, if we reject the *type* of project Khomiakov envisioned—we will miss something fundamental in his theology: the vocation of Christian action in the world and for the world. The form in which he articulates this vocation, in effect a kind of social Gospel, is yet another feature of the modernity of Khomiakov.

The deflection of theological attention toward communion and away from community leads to an overly spiritualized and overly ecclesialized view of *sobornost'*. To be sure, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Khomiakov's theology was distorted by the opposite tendency. In that period, as Sergei Khoruzhii has written, "the social aspect, the treatment of *sobornost'* as a principle of social existence, over time came to the fore, leaving the original ecclesiological meaning of the concept marginalized and even forgotten."¹³ In

¹² The distinction is taken from John H. Erickson, "The Orthodox Canonical Tradition," in *The Challenge of Our Past: Studies in Orthodox Canon Law and Church History* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 20, where he writes that "Orthodox Christians today desperately need to rediscover the implications of communion for community, lest our much-vaunted 'spirituality' and 'mystical theology' degenerate into dilettantish escapism, and our church community into that caricature idolized by the legalist and scorned by the anarchist."

¹³ *Posle pereryva*, 27. One might add that the case was even more complicated than Khoruzhii indicates in that the treatment of *sobornost'* as a principle of social existence occurred not only in discussions about social and political life as such but *within* the ecclesiological discussion of the concept, namely, in the elaboration of *sobornost'* as a "democratic" principle in the life of the church. The latter view was popular among liberal and radical advocates of church reform in Russia in the early twentieth century. A similar development occurred in connection with the related Roman Catholic concept of *sensus fidelium* following its rehabilitation at Vatican II. For an interesting discussion of the problem with some reference to Khomiakov see Matthew Lawrence O'Leary, "Sensus fidelium. *Sobornost'* and Opportunities for Roman Catholic and Orthodox Understanding," Licentiate Thesis, University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Mundelein Seminary, 2003.

recent decades, however, the opposite has occurred: the ecclesiological meaning of *sobornost'* has displaced and virtually swallowed up the social and political message. This appropriation of Khomiakov is as much of a mistake as the earlier one. Khomiakov's Slavophilism challenges this one-sidedness by making it clear that the unity he sought was not just mystical but also social and historical. This is what Slavophile "wholeness" was about: not just wholeness of spirit, and certainly not just wholeness of mind, but wholeness of life, including common life in the secular world. Mother (now Saint) Maria Skobtsova captured the point exactly in her essay on Khomiakov: "Ideally the whole world, on all levels beginning with the simple and guileless level of people's everyday working life and ending with the heights of the religious life of the spirit, should be built on the principle of *sobornost'* which obliterates intellectualism and opens the way for all the capacities and characteristics of the whole person to manifest themselves."¹⁴ That a natural-born activist like Mother Maria was drawn to Khomiakov's thought is indirect evidence of its pragmatism (in Berdiaev's sense of the word).

Many pages in Khomiakov illustrate his passion for action and witness in the everyday world. So, for example, in his "Letter to the Serbs" he advises his fellow Slavs, among other things, to retain their distinctive national costume. "Custom, it seems, consists of little things, but it is not a little thing. What sort of importance could there be in a piece of clothing, for example? Is the manner in which one is dressed and the design of the pieces of cloth with which one covers oneself of any importance? Is it not something quite dead and incapable of affecting life? That is what people say in our country, but do not believe them. Such is the nobility of the human soul that even that which is dead receives a living meaning from it and in turn influences [human] life."¹⁵ More than Slavophile mythology is at work in these lines.

¹⁴ E. Skobtsova, *A. Khomiakov* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1929), 42.

¹⁵ Nicolas Berdiaev, *Khomiakov, suivi de A. S. Khomiakov, Lettre aux serbes*, trans. Valentine and Jean-Claude Marcadé in collaboration with Emma Sebald (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, [1988]), 184.

A realistic ethical intelligence is at work. Khomiakov recognized that the temporal, the passing, can and in some sense must be the vessel of the eternal.

Khomiakov's pragmatism has implications for contemporary Orthodox ecclesiology. In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas identifies as one of the great unfinished tasks of Orthodox ecclesiology the "synthesis between Christology and pneumatology," that is to say, an understanding of how the church as "the body of Christ" can be also "a charismatic society," or how the church as instituted by Christ and preserved in ecclesiastical tradition can also be constituted ever anew by the Holy Spirit. Khomiakov's theology is pertinent to this issue because of the forcefulness of his witness to the charismatic being of the church, a forcefulness which, incidentally, precipitated trenchant and persistent criticisms of him by Florovsky and others for allegedly minimizing the christological, sacramental and institutional dimensions of the church.¹⁶

Zizioulas' call for a synthesis of christology and pneumatology is apt, but one may question how he thinks it is to be achieved. What is needed, Zizioulas writes, "is to push the notion of communion to its ontological conclusions. We need an ontology of communion."¹⁷ But what if the synthesis of ecclesial institution and free inspiration is not something which can be accomplished within the *ecclesia* itself, in the ontological depths of communion, but something which is accomplished through the creative activity of believers--the *laos theou*—in the contexts where they actually live and bear witness to the Gospel, hence not in the *ecclesia* alone, but along the boundary between the

¹⁶ See John S. Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology according to Alexis Khomiakov (1804-1860)," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 2 (1956): 57-73. Riasanovsky has observed that the tension between Khomiakov and his critics in ecclesiology bears a certain resemblance to the quarrel between liberal and traditionalist Catholics in post-Vatican II Catholicism ("A. S. Khomiakov's Religious Thought," 99).

¹⁷ *Being as Communion*, 141.

ecclesia and the world?¹⁸ If so, then the synthesis of christology and pneumatology happens whenever and wherever communion passes over into community. If this is the case, then what Orthodox ecclesiology needs today is not more ontology, but more ethics and more mission. I believe Khomiakov would have found this suggestion congenial.

¹⁸ In passing, as a parenthetical addition to his call for an ontology of communion, Zizioulas acknowledges "the rediscovery of the importance of the *laos* of God and the local Church" as elements which "can help even the Orthodox themselves to be faithful to their identity" (*Being as Communion*, 141). But he does not develop this suggestion; and what *laos* and local church have to do with ontology is not clear, for these are not ontological concepts.