Thinking Orthodox in Modern Russia

*Culture, History, Context*

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Oliver Smith

in memoriam
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Kant and the Kingdom of Ends in Russian Religious Thought (Vladimir Solov'ev)

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Perhaps more than most of the world's great religious philosophers, Vladimir Solov'ev was concerned to reconcile faith and reason. As he put it in one of his better-known statements, his aim was "to justify the faith of our fathers by raising it to a new level of rational consciousness." His first major effort to construct a synthesis of faith and reason was Principles of Integral Knowledge (Filosofske nachala tselinogo znania, 1877), which proceeds from Ivan Kireevskii's concept of "believing reason." In Solov'ev's view, the contemporary state of religion in Russia and elsewhere in Europe was very far from the integration of faith and reason that he sought. In Lectures on Godmanhood (Chteniia o bogocheloveches'tve, 1877-81), he deplores it as a "pitiful thing." Faith had become irrational and blind. His task in Lectures on Godmanhood and in his subsequent works was to justify and modernize religion, to show that it is reasonable, in two related senses: first, that the divine principle (God or the absolute), since it is known primarily through inner moral-religious experience or consciousness, is a truth of reason and not merely one of revelation; and, second, that reason (in addition to its "theoretical" task) has the practical task of conforming and perfecting human and earthly nature to the divine principle. Solov'ev's reconciliation of faith and reason, his effort to make religion modern and progressive, places him squarely within the tradition of nineteenth-century liberal theology. In a way that has not been fully appreciated, his project took shape under the decisive influence of Immanuel Kant, whose moral religion or religion of pure reason laid the foundations of liberal theology.
Solovev knew Kant's philosophy very well. It was a fundamental frame of reference for him; he argued for and against it in many places in his works. As a student at Moscow University he translated Kant's *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*. In *Principles of Integral Knowledge*, he called Kant's theory of space and time "truthful and sublime," his "eternal merit." He devoted many pages of his doctoral dissertation (soon recognized as a fundamental work), *Critique of Abstract Principles* (*Kritika otvelchenykh nachal*, 1880), to the defense of Kant's rational ethics, which he regarded as normative. There he adopted Kant's conception of human dignity and of personhood (namely, that they consist in self-determination or autonomy), which conception he retained for the rest of his life and which forms the "human principle" of his mature philosophical system. In his great work of moral philosophy, *Justification of the Good* (*Opravdanie dobra*, 1897), Solovev extolled Kant's principle of autonomy and his formulation of the moral law as "one of the greatest achievements of the human mind." He also wrote the standard encyclopedia article on the German philosopher. In it he appraised Kant as one of the truly pivotal figures in the history of human thought, whose life divides that history into two periods, pre-Kantian and post-Kantian. Clearly Kant made a very deep impression on Solovev.

The Russian philosopher accepted the premise of Kant's moral religion, namely, that the primary grounds of faith are in morality (or in moral-religious experience). He understood morality in wholly Kantian terms as the human capacity for self-determination and perfectibility according to the moral law. For Kant the moral law was a basic and irreducible fact of reason (PrR 164/5:31). Theism followed from it—or more precisely from infinite human perfectibility toward the ideal of "holiness," the complete conformity of the will with the moral law—in the form of the postulates of immortality and the existence of God (PrR 243–44/5:129). Solovev's approach was more straightforward. He identified the moral law with human consciousness of the absolute or with the "image" of God, but the image had precisely the same role as Kant's moral law: it was the ideal driving human perfectibility toward it (perfectibility being our "likeness" to God). This dynamic formed the central concept of his religious philosophy, Godmanhood, which strikingly combines patristic ideas of the "image and likeness" and of *thesis* with Kant's theology of moral perfectibility (as I shall call it here). Godmanhood was Solovev's version of the kingdom of God. He followed Kant in thinking that the kingdom of God could come only through the kingdom of ends, Kant's famous ideal of a moral order whose members recognize each other as persons or ends-in-themselves. Kant conceived the kingdom of ends as an ethical community of "a people of God" (the Church)
(R 134/6:99). As this chapter will show, it was the model for Solov'ev's social ideal of "free theocracy."

**FAITH AND REASON:**

**SOLOV'EV'S DIVINE AND HUMAN PRINCIPLES**

In 1878 Solov'ev delivered his soon famous *Lectures on Godmanhood* to packed audiences in Saint Petersburg. They were a vastly impressive effort to "justify the faith of our fathers" and to defend his philosophical approach to religion. His subject, he tells us, is the philosophy of religion. His method, which followed directly from his philosophical idealism, was a type of natural theology that proceeded from analysis of human consciousness. He believed that basic religious ideas, beginning with the idea of the absolute, were intrinsic or natural to human consciousness and that their further development also took place largely by reason. He spoke of "religious consciousness" in a way that gave it primacy over revelation. Such consciousness includes two sources of faith: ordinary moral-religious experience or religious feeling, and extraordinary mystical experience (such as his own visions of Sophia). He called human consciousness of the absolute (in one form or another) the divine, religious, or mystical principle in man. The divine principle is the "object" of faith, but Solov'ev emphasized that true faith comes from within and that we become aware of its object through inner moral-religious experience, rather than primarily through external media such as revelation in any traditional sense. His insistence on the inner nature of faith, that the "object" of faith can be only an ideal intrinsic to consciousness, not something extrinsic to it or positively given, is closely tied to his Kantian conception of self-determination and personhood.

*Lectures on Godmanhood* is an awe-inspiring presentation of the core concepts, main arguments, and overall approach of Solov'ev's mature religious philosophy. He starts with the assertion that "religion is the connection of humanity and the world with the absolute principle and focus of all that exists" (1). Contemporary humanity had largely lost this connection, but Solov'ev believed that it could be restored—and restored on a higher metaphysical level. With this hope he slightly modifies his definition: "Religion is the reunification of humanity and the world with the absolute, integral principle" (10). By "integral" he means that the absolute is the "unity of all" (*vseedinstvo*), but a unity that fully respects the autonomy of its constituent parts, each of which must freely enter into it. So conceived, the absolute is "all-one" and its essence is "all-unity," the term that designates Solov'ev's metaphysics. His tenth lecture provides a succinct statement of his overall conception. "The divine principle,"
Solov'ëv says, "is the eternal all-one." From it emerges the cosmic process, the meaning and goal of which is the gradual realization in itself of all-unity, the incarnation of the divine idea in the world, "the deification (theosis) of all that exists" (135-37). "Why," Solov'ëv asks, "is the realization of the divine idea in the world a gradual and complex process, and not a single simple act?" He answers in one word: "freedom" (138). He means, ultimately, that an achieved state of all-unity and deification is higher than one given in a simple act of divine fiat or grace. That is the meaning of Godmanhood: the free human realization of the divine idea in the world.

Clearly it is humanity that has the task of freely achieving the reunification or reintegration of everything in absolute all-unity, in which all will be one in God. Our task is to "consciously and freely turn to the divine principle and enter into a perfectly free and deliberate union with it" (17). Such a divine-human union is possible because human beings themselves have an absolute, divine significance (equality being a condition of genuine, free union). Solov'ëv locates this absolute significance (he calls it "negative absoluteness") in the human ability "to transcend every finite, limited content, not to be limited by it . . . but to demand something greater" (17). He regarded this capacity for "infinite development" (or for perfectibility, as he will refer to it in later works) as the distinctive human property: he called it the human principle. He recognized it as the source of absolute human value, human dignity, and human rights. His understanding of it is based on Kant's conception of morality as self-determination (see below), and it is central to his whole system.18 Infinite human striving implies an ideal end giving direction to the whole process, which ideal was for him, in the final instance, the positive absolute of all-unity, the perfect 'fullness of being' that is to be achieved by humanity (23). In his tenth lecture Solov'ëv calls this ideal (i.e., human consciousness of the all-one absolute) the image of God in us; our likeness to God is the "formal limitlessness of the human I" (our capacity for self-determination, infinite development, and perfectibility) by which we can "spontaneously will to be like God" (142).19 But by the end of the second lecture Solov'ëv already had arrived at his momentous conclusion: when belief in God (as the positive absolute of perfection) and belief in humanity (as the negative absolute of perfectibility) "are carried consistently to the end and actualized in full, they meet in the one, complete, integral truth of Godmanhood" (24).

Solov'ëv's argument is that the divine principle is a genuine reality "that is asserted by the infinite striving of the human I" (23-24). Though its reality is "asserted" by infinite human striving toward it, the divine principle remains only an object of faith. Solov'ëv was concerned to keep it that way, for otherwise
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(i.e., were it positively given or revealed in the manner of empirical objects) it could not be the *ideal* that motivates—indeed makes possible—human striving and perfectibility, which is the very condition of Godliness and the free human realization of the divine. Obviously relying on Kant (though without referring to him), he writes that the reality of God (and of the external world in general) "cannot be deduced from pure reason," because we know only phenomena, not things in themselves. Their reality can be taken only on faith (30–31). Such faith (at least in God, ourselves, and other persons) is justified, however, by inner moral-religious experience. "That God is, we believe, but what God is, we experience and try to know," Solovyev writes. "Of course, without belief in the reality of their object, the facts of inner religious experience are only fantasy and hallucination." But with faith, they "are known as the actions of the divine principle upon us, as its revelation in us" (31–33). Note that Solovyev’s understanding of faith required him to redefine revelation as the content of inner religious experience, as the gradual development of the divine principle in human consciousness, in contrast to traditional notions of revelation as an external miracle in which God suddenly reveals himself to a passive humanity. His overall approach to faith is well conveyed by Hebrews 11:1: ("the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen").

Reason has two different roles in Solovyev’s religious philosophy, both closely tied to his idea of faith. The first is rational analysis of the data of moral-religious experience. As he says in *Lectures on Godliness*, reason has the role of "organizing religious experience into an integral, logically connected system," ultimately into a philosophy of religion (33). The second role is essential to his system. It is conveyed by Kant’s concept of "practical reason," that is, the capacity of reason to determine the will by its own ideals such as (for Kant himself) the moral law and (for Solovyev) the absolute or the image of God. Practical reason is the power of self-determination or, as Kant also calls it, autonomy. It is what he understood by morality. His most influential account of morality as self-determination or as rational autonomy is *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). In *Critique of Abstract Principles*, Solovyev explicates Kant’s work at length and embraces its main ideas as his own. He regarded rational autonomy as the distinctive human quality, indeed as the quality that makes us persons. In his view (as in Kant’s), it is the peculiar nature of human (and other rational) beings that they are capable of acting according to ideals of pure reason (rather than only by natural inclination), of self-determination according to these ideals, and of infinite development or perfectibility toward them.

Reason, in this sense of what might be called "ideal self-determination," is the middle, properly human principle in Solovyev’s tripartite conception of human
nature. The other two are the material and divine principles.\textsuperscript{27} "Human beings are not limited to a single principle," Solov'ev writes. "They have in themselves both the elements of material being that unite them with the natural world, and an ideal consciousness of all-unity that unites them with God. Moreover, they are not confined to either; human beings are, as free I's, capable of determining themselves in one manner or another with respect to the two sides of their essence."\textsuperscript{28} The human principle is the capacity to "become" more (or less) than we presently are, to infinitely perfect (or degrade) ourselves. Solov'ev calls this the "essentially human attribute."\textsuperscript{29}

It bears emphasizing that the middle, human principle of self-determination is deeply indebted to Kant's ethics. This is most obvious in Critique of Abstract Principles, but it is evident in other works as well. For example, in "The Meaning of Love" ("Smysl ljubvi," 1892–94) Solov'ev wrote that rational human consciousness is formed by "universal ideal norms" and a "sense of truth" by which we evaluate the phenomena and facts of life. "Considering his actions with this higher consciousness, man can infinitely perfect his life and nature without leaving the boundaries of human form. And therefore, he is indeed the supreme being of the natural world and the effective end of the world-creative process."\textsuperscript{30} Though Solov'ev does not refer to him here, Kant as well declared, on the basis of our perfectibility, that the "human being is the final end of creation,"\textsuperscript{31} "God's final end in creating the world" (PrPr 245/5:130). To the extent that the core of Solov'ev's system is self-determination and human perfectibility according to the ideals of pure reason, then that core is Kantian. The Russian philosopher also followed his German predecessor in thinking that practical reason (rational autonomy) is the source of human dignity and of personhood itself. It is what makes human beings ends-in-themselves. "Kant better than any other philosopher established the principle of the moral person," he wrote.\textsuperscript{32}

Solov'ev incorporated Kantian autonomy within a religious metaphysics that has often been seen (ever since E. N. Trubetskoï's 1913 study) as strongly influenced by Schelling (to whom, however, Solov'ev seldom refers), in particular by the German philosopher's conception of the cosmos as a theogony of the suffering God in the process of becoming.\textsuperscript{33} In Lectures on Godmanhood, as we have seen, Solov'ev elaborates a similar idea of the self-realization of the divine absolute (all-unity) in cosmic and human history. Trubetskoï held that Schelling's "pantheism" and "gnosticism" were the main sources of Solov'ev's "metaphysical utopianism," which caused him to displace human freedom and responsibility for evil to the theogonic world-process.\textsuperscript{34} I would maintain that Solov'ev's Kantian focus on human autonomy mitigates his "metaphysical utopianism."\textsuperscript{35}
Solovyov's Kantianism enables him to achieve the reconciliation of faith and reason that is the very heart of his project. As "ideal self-determination," the human principle of (practical) reason depends on ideals such as the moral law or the divine principle: without them, genuine self-determination and perfectibility cannot take place. Reason alone, not anything external, can give the ideals that make possible self-determination or autonomy (and therefore also, for Kant and Solovyov, personhood itself). Ideals, by their nature, cannot be positively given in the manner of empirical objects. They are a matter of faith. This is the intricate relationship between faith and reason, between the divine and human principles, in Solovyov's religious thought.

Godmanhood

Solovyov's concept of Godmanhood is a further development of his philosophical anthropology; it projects the ever fuller realization of the divine principle by the human one. Godmanhood is the autonomous, progressive realization of the divine principle by and in humanity and, through humanity, in nature. It describes both the ongoing process of human perfectibility (in which sense Godmanhood is already underway) and the culmination of the process in theosis. In Critique of Abstract Principles, Solovyov wrote that rational autonomy is the necessary formal means for the realization of the divine idea, which "must enter into the process of rational consciousness and be recognized by human reason." The divine principle must be humanly realized. The material principle, too, has an integral part: "If the form of freedom and rationality in the realization of the divine idea is given by the human principle, then the material basis for this realization is nature, first of all the natural element of every human being. . . . As the source of the real force behind the [divine] idea, our material being must not be suppressed; it must be developed and cultivated as necessary means of the higher end. This end is the realization, i.e., the full embodiment, of the divine principle, the mutual spiritualization of matter and materialization of spirit." Here Solovyov formulates a succinct definition of the human being (in union with the rest of humanity): a being containing in itself the divine idea (all-unity or the absolute plenitude of being) and realizing this idea by means of rational freedom in material nature.

In November 1880, seven months after the defense of Critique of Abstract Principles, Solovyov delivered his inaugural lecture in philosophy at Saint Petersburg University, "The Historical Tasks of Philosophy" ("Istoricheskie dela filosofii"). It frames the value of philosophy in terms of his conception of human nature. The new professor declared the true principle of Christianity to be
Godmanhood: "the inner union and interaction of the divine with man, the inner birth of the divine in man." He then specifies that "the divine content must be appropriated by a human being from within himself, consciously and freely," through the fullest development of human rationality. Philosophy has served this purpose, "the development of a human being as a free and rational person." It has also served to illuminate the higher meaning of the material principle in human nature. Above all "it has liberated the human person from external violence and given it inner content." What is the source of the liberating process of philosophy? It is the essential property of human consciousness that Solovev identified in Lectures on Godmanhood as "negative absoluteness," on account of which it, consciousness, is not satisfied with any limit, external determination or content, "so that all the goods and blessings on earth and in heaven have no value, if they have not been acquired by it on its own and do not comprise what is its own. And this inability to be satisfied with any outward content of life, this striving toward the ever more inward fullness of being, this force that is destructive of all alien gods, this force already contains, in possibility, that toward which it strives—the absolute fullness and perfection of life." This process—what I have called "ideal self-determination"—is the essence of philosophy and also of human personhood itself. Philosophy, Solovev says, makes a person more human. "Philosophy, realizing the properly human principle in man, for that very reason also serves both the divine and material principles, bringing one and the other into the form of free humanness." The Russian philosopher S. I. Frank wrote that with the concept of Godmanhood, Solovev extended the Chalcedonian dogma of Christ the God-man's two natures to all of existence. Indeed Solovev often does employ, in a range of contexts, the Council of Chalcedon's formula that Christ's divine and human natures abide in him "without division or confusion." These pervasive references make clear the impact that Chalcedon had on his thought. Solovev drew on other patristic sources as well, in particular on the doctrine of theosis. His concept of Godmanhood combines Chalcedonian Christology with the doctrine of theosis and gives them a modern philosophical development, specifically a Kantian one (I would argue) that emphasizes the autonomy of the human principle relative to the divine.

Gustafson and other scholars have argued persuasively that Solovev's understanding of Chalcedon owed a lot to Maximus the Confessor. Gustafson recalls that Maximus "was the major intellectual force behind the resolution of the heresy of monothelitism. He shaped the central arguments for the two natures and the two wills—divine and human—in Christ, the Godman, which thereby
preserved in the face of the divine the human freedom so important to Solov’ev. The Russian philosopher’s appreciation of Maximus’s dyotheletism and of Kantian autonomy go hand-in-hand. Gustafson himself writes that Solov’ev fitted Maximus into “a nineteenth-century philosophical theology, expressed in the language not of Greek patristics but of German idealism,” though Gustafson has Schelling in mind more than Kant.44

Solov’ev’s emphasis on human autonomy is evident even in his Christology per se. Certainly he thought that the divine nature of Christ was an ontological reality and not just an ideal, but nonetheless he emphasized that even Christ’s divinity had to be autonomously realized by his humanity. The self-limitation of the Godhead in the incarnation (kenosis) enabled Christ to attain to theosis (which took the form of resurrection) by perfectly submitting or conforming his rational human will to his divine will.45 As Oliver Smith puts it, “The humanity of Christ is ‘spiritualized’ or divinized not despite his humanity but because of it.”46 In view of his emphasis on the need for the autonomous exercise of Christ’s rational human will (which need would seem to preclude foreknowledge of his divine nature), Solov’ev may well have been among those who have thought that no one was more surprised at the resurrection than Jesus himself.

Solov’ev and Kant’s Theology of Moral Perfectibility

Godmanhood might be construed as a process theology of human perfectibility and of its transcendent culmination in theosis. It is Solov’ev’s version of the kingdom of God, which, he always stressed, will not come in its full glory until human beings have prepared it through their own perfectibility. It will come, Solov’ev says, only through what Kant called the kingdom of ends. In Justification of the Good—the very concept of which is infinite human perfectibility toward the kingdom of God—he wrote that the kingdom of God cannot be expected by the immediate action of God, for “God has never acted immediately”—a striking comment meant to reinforce the necessity of free human participation in God’s work. “In man’s consciousness and in his freedom is the inner possibility for each human being to stand in an independent relation to God,” Solov’ev continues, “and therefore to be His direct end [self], to be a citizen possessed of full rights in the kingdom of ends” (149–50).

The kingdom of ends is Kant’s ideal of a moral community of persons who recognize each other as ends-in-themselves. The concept is at the very center of his philosophy and figures in various ways in his major works that deal with
morality and religion. It refers not only to persons as ends-in-themselves but also to the moral ends that they pursue (G 83/4:433). In it, persons strive toward a perfection in which their will would be wholly determined by (or be in complete conformity with) the moral law, a state that Kant calls "holiness of will" (G 88/4:439; PrR 238/5:122). This is the deepest sense in which the kingdom is "admittedly only an ideal" (G 83/4:433). The kingdom of ends is headed by a sovereign, who from what Kant says can only be God (G 83–84/4:434). Like Solov’ev after him, Kant held that the kingdom’s sovereign respects the autonomy of its other members: "It now follows of itself that in the order of ends the human being (and with him every rational being) is an end in itself, that is, can never be used as a means by anyone (not even by God) without being at the same time himself an end" (PrR 245/5:131).

Solov’ev embraced Kant’s ideal of the kingdom of ends as his own. He explicated the concept at several points in Critique of Abstract Principles. "If every subject is a moral agent," he writes, "and everyone else as an end-in-itself is the object of its action, then the general result of the moral activity of all subjects will be their organic unity in the kingdom of ends." He describes his own vision of the ideal society ("free theocracy") as the practical unity of all, "by virtue of which all are the end . . . for each and each for all" (viii). In Justification of the Good, as we have seen, he says that the kingdom of God can be achieved only through the kingdom of ends: "Universal history is the realization of this possibility for everyone. Those who take part in it attain to actual perfection through their own experience, through their interaction with other human beings. This perfection attained by oneself, this full, conscious, and free union with the Divine, is precisely what God ultimately wants—the unconditional good" (150). Here as well Solov’ev seems to draw directly on Kant, who wrote in The Metaphysics of Morals: "It is a contradiction for me to make another’s perfection my end and consider myself under obligation to promote this. For the perfection of another human being, as a person, consists just in this: that he himself is able to set his end in accordance with his own concepts of duty" (MM 518/6:386). In Solov’ev’s words, "Perfection is not a thing which one person can make a gift of to another" (150–51).

According to Kant, the perfectibility of persons in the kingdom of ends consists in their pursuit of perfect virtue or "holiness," that is, the complete conformity of the will with the moral law (PrR 238/5:122). He says that this is a state, however, that human beings can never achieve, not even in the afterlife. We are capable only of what Kant calls “endless progress” toward holiness. Because it is endless so must persons be to pursue it; hence Kant’s postulate of
immortality (PrR 238/5:122). The moral law always remains as an ideal, it drives endless progress toward it, and therefore it always enables the "ideal self-determination" that is a condition of morality and of personhood itself. Kant's theology of moral perfectibility—"endless progress" toward holiness and the postulates therefrom of immortality and of the existence of God—seems to have made quite an impression on Solovev, who advanced his own concept of infinite perfectibility in Justification of the Good. He preferred to speak of the divine principle or divine image in us, which he thought was a more robust version of Kant's moral law. Moreover, he sharply criticized Kant for merely postulating the soul's immortality and the existence of God instead of recognizing that they are immediate realities of moral-religious experience (134–39). But for Solovev the "image" of God functions as the ideal just like Kant's moral law, while the human "likeness" to God is our capacity for self-determination and infinite perfectibility according to the image or ideal (145, 152). In one passage he calls the image of God the power of representation (of absolute perfection) and the likeness of God the power of striving (to achieve it). This "double infinity" belongs to everyone. "It is in this that the absolute significance, dignity, and worth of human personhood consist, and this is the basis of its inalienable rights" (176). In another passage, perhaps the most capacious in Justification of the Good, he wrote: "The absolute value of man is based, as we know, upon the possibility inherent in his reason and his will of infinitely approaching perfection or, according to the patristic expression, the possibility of becoming divine (theosis)" (296).

Solovev's type of dynamic, synergetic interpretation of the "image and likeness" had been advanced by Christian humanists since the Eastern Church fathers. He drew widely on this tradition but modernized it with Kant. The modern elements are three. First is the emphasis itself on infinite perfectibility or "endless progress." Second is the idea that perfectibility is achieved not through mystical, monastic, or ascetic withdrawal from society but through the full, integral development of society. Solovev closely followed Kant's social philosophy (see below), which culminates in the kingdom of ends, where human development becomes ready for the advent of the kingdom of God. Third is the link to human rights. In these ways Solovev was a full-fledged modern liberal, even a "new liberal."45

Like Solovev after him, Kant specifies that the end of creation is "[h]umanity . . . in its full moral perfection" (R 103/6:60). This ideal humanity is personified in Jesus Christ, whom Kant evokes through a number of biblical phrases (R 104/6:60–61). For Kant, Christ is both ideal humanity, in God, and also the
ideal that we are to realize in ourselves: "Now it is our universal duty to elevate ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection," which is given by pure reason and which therefore does not need revelation or miracles for validation.\(^5\) Both Kant and Solovyev found powerful biblical expression of their ideal in Matthew 5:48: "Be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."\(^6\) They gave the verse the same meaning, namely, infinite perfectibility toward the ideal of holiness.

While human perfectibility rests on self-determination and is in that sense an individual responsibility, it cannot take place outside of human society and community. For both Kant and Solovyev, moral perfectibility is the path to the kingdom of God, but for neither is at an individualistic path. The kingdom of God is to come through the ethical community of the kingdom of ends, which both philosophers thought of as the Church. Solovyev called it "free theocracy."

Given his understanding of the path to the kingdom of God, Kant's conception of religion falls within his social philosophy.\(^5\) His exposition can be found in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. He argues that law and the state are the necessary foundations of any ethical community for they make possible civilization and thus all higher moral and spiritual development (R 130–31/694–95). This advance to civilization is made by people subjecting themselves to juridical laws, which limit, by coercion if necessary, "the freedom of each to the conditions under which it can coexist with the freedom of everyone else" (R 133/698).\(^9\) By contrast, the pure laws of the kingdom of ends are those of virtue; they are freely and inwardly accepted, which is what distinguishes an ethical from a political community. Laws of virtue, though inwardly given by pure practical reason, are also recognized as divine commands. This enables members of the kingdom of ends autonomously to do God's will and autonomously to follow his commands. "Hence an ethical community is conceivable only as a people under divine commands, i.e., as a people of God" (R 134/699). A people of God does not, Kant cautions, form a theocracy, which historically refers not to an ethical community but to a political one based on external clerical power (R 134/699–100). But surely the concept of a people of God under the laws of virtue suggests a type of pure, free theocracy.\(^9\)

The ethical community of a people of God, the kingdom of ends, is a "never fully attainable idea." Though ultimately it is the transcendent kingdom of God, we must work toward it as though its realization depended on our efforts (R 135/6100). Kant called it the Church: as transcendent ideal it is the *Church invisible* and as "the actual union of human beings into a whole that accords with this ideal" it is the *Church visible*. Existing historical churches are poor approximations even to the Church visible; they must be transformed into the
“true (visible) church . . . that displays the (moral) kingdom of God on earth inasmuch as the latter can be realized through human beings” (R 135/6:101).

According to Kant, the true visible Church would be: (1) universal, one, and united in its essential purpose; (2) morally pure (“of the nonsense of superstition and the madness of enthusiasm” or fanaticism); (3) free both in the internal relations of its members (i.e., without a hierarchy) and in its external political relations; (4) unchangeable in its constitution of secure a priori principles (in the idea of its end); and (5) centered not in the historical, ecclesiastical faiths of revelation but in pure religious faith embraced by all (R 135–37/6:101–3).

The kingdom of God will come when “the very form of a church is dissolved; the vicar on earth enters the same class as the human beings who are now elevated to him as citizens of Heaven, and so God is all in all” (R 162/6:135, italics added).

Solov’ev first presented his social philosophy in comprehensive form in Critique of Abstract Principles. From its foundations in external right to the kingdom of ends, it closely follows (though without acknowledgement) Kant’s in structure and logic. Solov’ev’s ideal of free theocracy surely recalls Kant’s notion of a “people of God.” In advancing the ideal, no doubt the Russian philosopher drew on Kant’s statement of the distinction between the Church invisible (as transcendent ideal) and the Church visible (as its approximation), and on his enumeration of the qualities of the true visible Church.

Of those qualities, Kant devoted particular care to elucidating the idea of “pure religious faith,” which is essentially the same as his concept of moral religion or religion of pure reason, all based on his view that the moral law and infinite human perfectibility toward that ideal entail theism. He thought that Christianity was in its “true first purpose” a pure religious faith (R 159/6:131; 181/6:158). Its founder, the teacher of the Gospel, “announced himself as one sent from heaven while at the same time declaring, as one worthy of this mission, that servile faith . . . is inherently null; that moral faith, which alone makes human beings holy ‘as my father in heaven in holy’ and proves its genuineness by a good life-conduct, is on the contrary the only one which sanctifies” (R 156/6:128). Despite these foundations, Christianity soon veered off in another direction. Salvation was sought not in moral perfectibility according to the ideal of holiness, but in various “counterfeits” or surrogates for pure religious faith. Kant devotes the fourth part of his treatise to unmasking these counterfeits, which seek to replace self-determination with “dependence on the historical and statutory part of the church’s faith as alone salvific” (R 176/6:153). These counterfeits for pure moral faith include miracles, revelation, dogma, orthodoxy,
hierarchy, "priestcraft," and all the other external forms of "ecclesiastical, statutory faith" that together amount to a "delusion of religion" (R 188/6:168). Kant describes the counterfeit service of God as fetishism, idolatry, and coercion over conscience (R 197/6:179; 192/6:185). Nonetheless he believed that "in the end religion will gradually be freed of all empirical grounds of determination. . . . Thus at last the pure religion of reason will rule over all, 'so that God may be all in all'" (R 151/6:121, italics added).

Solov'ev's conception of religion bears striking similarities to Kant's idea of pure religious faith. The similarities are especially obvious in two essays from 1894, "On the Reasons for the Collapse of the Medieval Worldview" ("O prichi-nakh upadka srednevekovogo mirosozertsania") and "On Counterfeits" ("O poddelkakh"). In the first he remarks "how small is the significance of faith in the Divine as an external supernatural fact"; he castigates those who take an "easy, cheap" approach to salvation "through dead faith and works of piety—works and not work"; and he decries "the monstrous doctrine that the only means to salvation was faith in dogma." The title of the second echoes that of the fourth part of Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, which Solov'ev must have taken to heart. In this short essay he argues that various counterfeits for the "pure morality" of the Christian religion have no salvific value. True Christianity consists in what Jesus taught: that "the Kingdom of God, perfected in the eternal divine idea ('in heaven'), potentially inherent in our nature, is necessarily at the same time something perfectible for us and through us."  

Conclusion

At every level the kingdom of ends is a kingdom of ideals. Therefore it must be taken on faith and realized by reason. With Solov'ev, it became the social ideal of Russian liberalism, as understood by neo-idealist like Pavel Novgorodtsev. In Problems of Idealism (Problemy idealizma, 1902) Novgorodtsev called the kingdom of ends the supreme good of the moral world. He and other Russian neo-idealist understood with Solov'ev that personhood, the foundational liberal value, depends on the ideal—whether the moral law, the divine principle, or the image of God—because it depends on self-determination. Therefore it also depends on faith, for once the ideal is positively given it is no longer an ideal but a fact, and with that true self-determination is no longer possible. This insight informed the Russian neo-idealist critique of every type of positivism, whether of religious fundamentalism, of scientism, or of necessitarian forms of utopianism like orthodox Marxism, all of which undermined personhood at its very foundations. Though they agreed with Solov'ev (and with Kant) on
the ideal structure of personhood, Novgorodtsev and other Russian liberal theorists (notably Boris Chicherin and Evgenii Trubetskoii) criticized "free theocracy" as a dangerous utopia, especially for the threat they thought it posed to freedom of conscience.66 Curiously, they seem to have missed the extent to which the great religious philosopher, in his social ideal, was following Kant in thinking that the earthly form of the kingdom of the ends was the "true (visible) church . . . that displays the (moral) kingdom of God on earth inasmuch as the latter can be realized through human beings" (R 135/6:101).

NOTES
1. Istoria i budushchnost' teokratii (1887), in Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva, ed. S. M. Solov'ev and E. L. Radlov, 2nd ed., 10 vols. (St. Petersburg: Prosvetshchenie, 1921–14), 4:243. As early as 1872, he wrote (in a letter to E. V. Romanova) that his task was "to bring the eternal content of Christianity into a new form suitable to it, i.e., an absolutely rational one." Vladimir Solovev, "Nepovizhdnoe liash' sobstvenne liubvi . . .". Stikhovoreniiia, proza, pis'ma, vospominaniia sovremennikov, ed. Aleksandr Nosov (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1990), 174. According to Oliver Smith, this letter "reads like a manifesto for the philosopher's future activity." By 1877, he had decided to devote himself (in Smith's words) to a philosophical "grounding of the known—whether through mystical, logical, or empirical knowledge—in that most human of principles, reason." From then on, his philosophical works were concerned "with a metaphysics that searches for its basis in rational principles already present, to some degree, in human consciousness." Oliver Smith, Vladimir Solovyov and the Spiritualization of Matter (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), 25, 30.
3. Compare to earlier, Enlightenment projects to find a reasonable faith, such as Father Platon's in Russia. See Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter's chapter in this volume.
7. See note 36 below. He gives his overall evaluation of Kant’s ethics as normative and as the last word in subjective (pure or formal) ethics in chapter 11 of *Critique of Abstract Principles*: Kritika otvlechennikh nachal, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2:110–16.


12. Thus Wood claims that “Kant is fundamentally a religious thinker.” Allen W. Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 318. On the development of philosophical theism in Russia, see Sean Gillen’s chapter in this volume.

13. Bogocheleovechestvo, also translated as theanthropy, divine humanity, or the humanity of God.


15. Solovyov, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, 33; subsequent page citations are made parenthetically in the text. As Valliere puts it, "Like all the idealists Solov’ev regarded human consciousness as the mysterious fact with which philosophy must begin." *Modern Russian Theology*, 124.
16. Evgenii Trubetskoii gives a good account of Solov’ev’s view that all human thought testifies to and presupposes the absolute as its transcendent and ontological condition. E. N. Trubetskoii, Mirosczertanie V. S. Solov’eva, 2 vols. (Moscow: Put’, 1913), 194–104.
19. Solovyov returns to the “image and likeness of God” in Justification of the Good, where he puts it more simply: the image is our consciousness of divine perfection, and the likeness is our capacity for perfectibility according to the image (145, 152, 176–77).
20. Solovyov soon revised this distinction between positive (divine) and negative (human) absoluteness. In Critique of Abstract Principles, he distinguishes rather between two poles of the absolute. The first is self-subsistent (God), the second is in the process of becoming (man), “and the full truth can be expressed by the word ‘Godmanhood.’” Sobranie sochinenii, 2:315–14, quotation at 323.
21. Solovyov returned to the inner sources of faith in Justification of the Good. In his analysis of moral experience he found three “primary data of morality” (shame, compassion, and reverence) that he believed to be indubitable grounds for accepting the realities experienced through them: ourselves as supramaterial beings, fellow persons, and God, respectively. Reverence is the highest datum, so for him moral experience was really moral-religious experience. “In true religious experience,” he writes, “the reality of that which is experienced is immediately given; we are directly conscious of the real presence of the Deity, and feel its effect upon us” (142).
22. See Valliere, Modern Russian Theology, 150–51.
23. One of the places where Solovyov alludes to this verse is his essay “The Jews and the Christian Problem” (1884), which is recently translated in Freedom, Faith, and Dogma: Essays by V. S. Solovyov on Christianity and Judaism, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 43–88, here 53.
25. He regarded “autonomy of the will” as the supreme principle of morality (G 89/4:432).

27. "The conjunction of these three elements forms the actual human being, and the properly human principle is reason (ratio), the relationship of the two others." Solovyov, Lectures on Divine Humanity, 158. For additional statements of his three principles of human nature, see Sobranie sochinenii, 2:158–60, 172–74, and (in the context of his Christology) Spiritual Foundations of Society (Dukhovnye osnovy zhizni, 1882–84) in Sobranie sochinenii, 3:368–74.

28. Solovyov, Lectures on Divine Humanity, 142.

29. Solovyov, Justification of the Good, lv. Solovyev makes clear here that the choice to degrade ourselves is to "become lower and worse than the animal," since normal human beings cannot simply divest themselves of morality and revert to an animal state. It is still self-determination, but a "diabolical" one. Twenty years later, Evgenii Trubetskoii, writing in the context of the Great War and the Russian Revolution, called this "beast-mankind." See E. N. Trubetskoii, Smysl zhizni (Moscow: Sytin, 1918; Berlin: Slovo, 1922), 246; Randall Poole, "Religion, War, and Revolution: E. N. Trubetskoii's Liberal Construction of Russian National Identity, 1912–20," Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 7, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 195–240.


34. Trubetskoii, Mirozozertsanie VI. S. Solov'eva, 1:89–90. Gaidenko's interpretation of Solov'ev's Schellingianism is similar.


37. Ibid., 173–74.

38. Ibid., 174.


46. Smith, Vladimir Soloviev, 119.

47. Mainly: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (1785), Critique of Practical Reason (1787), Critique of the Power of Judgment (1790), Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason (1793), and Metaphysics of Morals (1797).


49. Solov’ev, Sobranie sochineniia, 2:70 (see also 59–60, 114, 116).

50. The postulate of the existence of God is somewhat more complicated. It follows from Kant’s premise that persons deserve happiness proportionate to their endless progress or perfectibility toward holiness (which can only mean perfect happiness); only God can provide such happiness (Pr 240/5124).


52. The idea of infinite perfectibility can be found in patristic works such as Gregory of Nyssa’s The Life of Moses (for which example I am indebted to T. Allan Smith of the University of Toronto), but Solov’ev’s version has more in common with the Enlightenment idea of progress.


55. Kant says that anyone who asks for “miracles as credentials . . . thereby confesses to his own moral unbelief.” But moral faith “can validate miracles, if need be, as effects coming from the good principle” (R 105/6.62–63). Solov’ev shared these sentiments entirely.


58. Cf. Solov'ev in *Critique of Abstract Principles*: The equality of all before the law actually means that "all are equally limited by law, or all equally limit each other; this means there is no inner or positive unity among them, only their correct division and demarcation" (*Sobranie sobrannii*, 2:167).

59. According to Stephen Palmquist, for Kant the true end of religion "is to bring into being something which might best be called a 'theocracy,' provided we take this term literally rather than in its common meaning." See Palmquist, "'The Kingdom of God Is at Hand!' (Did Kant really say that?)," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (October 1994): 421–37, here 427.

60. See Poole, "Vladimir Solov'ev's Philosophical Anthropology," 143–44.


63. See Vanessa Rampton's chapter in this volume.


65. Chicherin devoted an entire book to criticizing Solov'ev's theocratic project: B. N. Chicherin, *Misitism v nauke* (Moscow: Tip. Martynova, 1880). As a Hegelian, Chicherin maintained that the highest form of human community was the state, not the Church, so his criticism is not surprising. For Trubetskoy's criticism, see his *Myroszhestanii VI. S. Soloveva*, 1:173–78, 531–85. Novgorodtsev directs the brunt of his criticism not at Solovev himself, but at the very idea of theocracy. See his *Ob obshchestvennom ideale*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Slovo, 1921), 17–19, 40.