

Amsterdam Lectures 2012-13 by Revd. Prof. Andrew Louth:

## The Ways of Modern Orthodox Theology: Part I

### Handout Lecture II: Vladimir Solov'ev

Vladimir Solov'ev is a seminal figure in the development of Russian theology, as much as he is a seminal figure in the development of symbolist poetry in the so-called Silver Age of Russian Culture.

Born 1853, died 1900, he was a philosopher, social and literary critic, theologian and poet. He studied in Moscow, and took up his first university post there; then moved to St Petersburg, where he spent most of the rest of his life. He is a complex figure and thinker; one sometimes feels that in his thinking he was trying to advance Russian thought through the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism—a development that had taken centuries in the West—in a few decades. His ideas are constantly developing. This constant development, his vast learning, his huge range of interests, his insistence that thought is rooted in experience, sometimes quite bizarre experiences: all this makes it difficult to present his ideas briefly without distortion.

Major works:

*The Crisis of Western Philosophy* (1873)

*The Philosophical Foundation of Integral Knowledge*

*Treatise on Godmanhood*

*The Criticism of Abstract Principles* (all before 1880)

*Three Addresses on Dostoevsky*

*Beauty in Nature*

*The Universal Meaning of Art*

*The Meaning of Love* (early 1880s)

*The History and Future of Theocracy*

*Russia and the Universal Church* (published in French, 1889)

*The Justification of the Good*

*Three Dialogues on War, Progress and the End of History*

*The Story of the Anti-Christ*

Also: volumes of poetry, literary essays, short stories and plays.

Central notions in his theology:

- Godmanhood
- Sophia, the Divine wisdom

Roots of the Sophia found in:

- Wisdom in the Bible
- Greek Wisdom, Love and the World Soul

- Wisdom in Patristics and the Liturgy
- Mother Moist Earth and Russian Images of Wisdom
- Wisdom in Gnosticism and Kabbalah
- Christian Mystics and the *Jungfrau* of Jakob Boehme

#### Bibliography:

There are two recent collections of translations of works by Solov'ev with important introductions:

*The Heart of Reality. Essays on Beauty, Love and Ethics by V.S. Soloviev*, ed. and trans, by Vladimir Wozniuk (Notre Dame IN, 2003)

Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, *Divine Sophia. The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* (Ithaca & London, 2009). Kornblatt's introduction, nearly 100 pages long, is one of the best recent essays on Solov'ev's notion of Sophia.

There are some older selections, as well.

Many of Solov'ev's works are available in English, French and German (a complete collection in German); many of his works in English have been republished recently in slightly revised translations, mostly by Boris Jakim.

For the cultural background, I would recommend:

Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (Cambridge, 1994)