

D'HERBIGNY'S SOLOVIEV¹ THE LURES OF UNIVERSAL HERMENEUTICS

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A discussion of Michel d'Herbigny, SJ's interpretation of Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) may seem trite and even inopportune. For one thing, it may be argued, d'Herbigny is a second-rate, if not third-rate, figure with a tragic finale who has never been really rehabilitated. It may thus not be quite so clear, after all, what he stands for, not to say anything of the fact that his perspective itself, as it may be recovered from his writings, is questionable and has been challenged on several important counts. All in all, there seem to be more valid viewpoints than d'Herbigny's which have a claim on our attention. Besides, his interpretation has been laid to rest and, in the long run, certainly has found no great favour among critics. Of late, it has been demolished, for example, by L. Tretjakewitch's work,²

1. Abbreviations:

1. *Un Newman russe* = M. d'Herbigny, *Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900): Un Newman russe*, (Paris 1934).
2. SAINT GEORGES - AAVV, *Saint-Georges: De Constantinople à Meudon (1921-1992)*, (Bibliothèque Slave de Paris, Collection Simvol No 4; Meudon 1993).
3. TRETJAKEWITSCH - L. Tretjakewitsch, *Bischof Michel d'Herbigny SJ and Russia: A Pre-Ecumenical Approach to Christian Unity*, (Augustinus Verlag; Würzburg 1990).
4. WW = *Deutsche Gesamtaufgabe der Werke von Wladimir Solowiew I-XV* (Hrsg. v. W. Syzlkarski) (Erich Wewel Verlag; München 1978-1980).
2. TRETJAKEWITSCH, pp. 36-39, Tretjakewitsch's judgement may be summarized as follows. Written in a lively style, *Un Newman russe* had the merit of being the first general treatment of the life and thought of Soloviev in any language other than Russian. It thus handsomely contributed to making the great Russian thinker known in the West, as testified by the various translations of d'Herbigny's work that followed. Though generally favourably received by Catholic and Jesuit journals in Western Europe, critical voices were not lacking. On a number of points d'Herbigny was unfair, as with Dostoevsky and with the Slavophiles. Most of all, however, the comparison with Newman misses the point of Soloviev's original approach: as an Orthodox he considered

only as part of the more englobing project of overhauling d'Herbigny's outdated ecclesiological viewpoint. So, runs the argument, why bother to repeat already-known second rate facts.

Leaving the case outlined above at that, at least for the sake of the argument,³ it would still be useful to review the case once more, and this for the following reason. Not primarily with an eye to rehabilitations - neither of the controversial figure d'Herbigny was, nor of the questionable interpretations he gave taken by themselves - but rather with a view of the temptation which Soloviev presents for his interpreters and of which d'Herbigny's interpretation affords an excellent example. Therefore, the accent of our considerations lies all along on VI. Soloviev, at least as the negative norm of the interpretations given his thought.

The theme falls into two sections: (1) first, a brief critical review of d'Herbigny's interpretation; and (2) secondly, the kind of temptation that Soloviev presents for many would-be interpreters of his, and whose general pattern may be elicited from the Jesuit's attempt at understanding the Russian thinker.

1. D'Herbigny's Interpretation Re-Visited

Michel d'Herbigny's rise in Rome was spectacular, and so was his downfall. Remarkably enough, his career may be said to be spanned by the first edition of *Newman russe*, which first appeared in 1911, before he started his last year of

himself member of the universal Church and consequently in union with Rome; the schism was never consummated anyhow, it was at most a juridical issue. As Tretjakewitsch could have added, Soloviev's example served as example for Vjaceslav I. Ivanov (1866-1949); See B. Schultze, *Russische Denker*, (Wien 1950) 430-432; M.I. Rupnik, *L'arte: memoria della comunione*, (Roma 1994) 19-50; and for Fr Lev Gillet (1893-1980); cf O. Rousseau, "Le moine de l'Église d'Orient," *Irénikon* 53 (1980) 174-194.

3. V. Poggi, SJ, however, who has undertaken extensive research on the history of the Institute, including the d'Herbigny case, has subjected Tretjakewitch's interpretation to a sustained criticism. Poggi claims that one cannot try to interpret everything in terms of d'Herbigny's unionistic ecclesiology; see Poggi's review of Tretjakewitsch in *OCP* 57 (1991) 446-449; idem, *La Civiltà Cattolica* 1993, II, 405-407.

formation as a Jesuit,⁴ and the sixth and last edition of it in 1934, when d'Herbigny's career was by now prematurely but definitely doomed.⁵ Born in 1880, his ideas about Russia and the Christian East seem to have been formed on models of Russian converts, in the nineteenth century, who became Jesuits, such as Prince Ivan Gagarin (1814-1882), Ivan Martynov (1821-1894)⁶ and Evgenij Balabin (1815-1895), and on that of other experts on Russia such as Paul Pierling SJ⁷ (1840-1922), whom d'Herbigny had known personally.⁸

Within a short time of his arrival in Rome he managed to concentrate in his hands unparalleled powers, being at the end responsible directly to the Pope, at that time Pius XI, for the "Commissio Pro-Russia." He has been rightly described as the one responsible for shaping Rome's new politics towards nascent Soviet Russia.⁹ Becoming president of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in 1922,¹⁰ d'Herbigny resigned shortly before Christmas 1931, and was replaced at the beginning of 1932.

But aside from such factors as Aristotle would have included under the *alagon ti*, that is, factors not readily amenable to a rational explanation, d'Herbigny's rise to power was handsomely abetted by his interpretation of Soloviev, later crowned, as a book, with the prize of the Academie Française (1912). In effect, it established him in the eyes of many as an authority on Russian thought. Writing years after d'Herbigny's downfall, F. Muckermann could still describe the former's work as

4. TRETJAKEWITSCH, 40. Actually, the idea of the book was found in nuce in an article with the same title he published in 1909: "Un Newman russe - Vladimir Soloviev (1953-1900)" *Études* 120 (1909) 767-786; 121 (1909) 51-75; TRETJAKEWITSCH, 36.
5. TRETJAKEWITSCH, 277. 1933 marked d'Herbigny's fall from favour, but he was confined to barracks in a sort of house arrest only in 1937.
6. *Un Newman Russe*, p. v.
7. *Ibid.*, p. ix; SAINT-GEORGES, 79.
8. TRETJAKEWITSCH, 32.
9. A. Tamborra, *Chiesa cattolica e ortodossia russa*, (Ed. Paoline; Milano 1992) 428-429.
10. A. Raes, "Pour les cinquante premières années de l'Institut Pontifical Oriental," in: E.G. Farrugia (ed.), *The Pontifical Oriental Institute: the First Seventy-Five Years (1917-1992)*, (Pontifical Oriental Institute; Rome 1993) 112. D'Herbigny was president of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, which at the time had its premises at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, until 1926, when his title was changed to that of rector.

the best biography of Soloviev to date.¹¹ And, putting together the old evidence with the new, H. Falk, while deepening some of the juridical aspects of the case¹² found himself in a basic agreement with d'Herbigny.¹³ If Soloviev received the sacraments, on his deathbed, from an Orthodox, this was in tune with the Catholic Church's position on the moribund.

1.2 The Interpretation itself

The one point of Vladimir Soloviev's "conversion to Catholicism," as the main thesis of the work, though central to d'Herbigny's work, has absorbed so much the critical attention that its place within the architectonic of the book is not infrequently ignored. And yet, what d'Herbigny says and what he leaves unsaid is of paramount importance to understand his interpretation of Soloviev. So, in order to do justice to both d'Herbigny and Soloviev, we have to look into how d'Herbigny goes on to thematize (a) Soloviev's life, (b) his conversion and (c) his thought.

(a) *Soloviev's Life*. D'Herbigny offers us a detailed version of Soloviev's life. He made extensive use of archives, especially of the Jesuit-run *Bibliothèque Slave* in Bruxelles.¹⁴ Thus, he was able to use Soloviev's own marginal notes as found in a manuscript of his brochure *Le judaïsme et la question chrétienne*, found in that library,¹⁵ published for the first time the whole text of the letter of Mgr Strossmayer¹⁶

11. F. Muckermann, *Wladimir Solowjew: Zur Begegnung zwischen Rußland und dem Abendland*, (Olten 1945) 202.

12. Another Catholic scholar who basically agreed with H. Falk was B. Scultze S.J., "Die Papstakklamationen auf dem 4. und 6. ökumenischen Konzil und Vladimir Soloviev," *OCP* 41 (1975) 224-225.

13. H. Falk, "Wladimir Solowjows Stellung zur katholischen Kirche," *Stimmen der Zeit* 144 (1949) 421-435, especially 421, 430 and 434-435.

14. R. Marichal and F. Rouleau, "La Bibliothèque Slave," *SAINT-GEORGES*, 77-84. As Jesuits had been expelled from France in 1901 the Bibliothèque Slave was moved to Bruxelles, only to return to Paris in 1923; *ibid.*, 79.

15. *Un Newman Russe*, 186-188.

16. On J.J. Strossmayer see A. Suljak, "I meriti di Strossmayer per il culto e lo studio dei SS. Cirillo e Metodio," in: E.G. Farrugia, G.K. Piovesanna and R. Taft (ed.s), *Christianity among the Slavs*, (Pontifical Oriental Institute; Rome 1988) 305-313.

to P. Pierling,¹⁷ and exploited the fresh material which Nicholas Tolstói, a Catholic priest of the Eastern rite, who had given Soloviev communion on February 18, 1896, when Soloviev pronounced his profession of faith in favour of the Church of Rome,¹⁸ published in 1910. All this makes d'Herbigny's biography readable, and, in spite of lacunae, still somewhat useful. Even then, d'Herbigny offers no in-depth analysis of the text of the profession of faith pronounced by Soloviev.¹⁹ And yet Soloviev's recognition of the Pope as "the supreme judge" is intriguing. The title as such was used without any special reference to the pope for an imperial committee in Byzantium.²⁰ But, could it not be an allusion to the Synod of Serdica,²¹ held in 343-344, and the famous right of appeal to the Pope?²² If so, this would

17. *Un Newman russe*, 221-222

18. *Un Newman russe*, 314-315

19. *Un Newman russe*, 260.

20. A. Khazdan explains "universal judges" (*kritai katholikoi*) as follows: "a college of judges, secular and ecclesiastical, which served as a supreme court in the Palaiologan period. In 1296 Andronikos II created a tribunal of 12 members consisting of ecclesiastics and senators; its decisions could not be appealed. In 1329 Andronikos III replaced this tribunal with the college of four judges called *kritai katholikai*; one of them was supposed to be a bishop;" A. Khazdan, "Kritai "katholikoi," in A. Khazdan (ed. in chief), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* II, (Oxford 1991) 1158; P. Lemerle, "Le juge général des Grecs et le réforme judiciaire d'Andronic III," in: AAVV, *Mémorial Louis Petit*, (Bucharest 1948) 292-316.

21. It is interesting to note that Soloviev, in his *Rußland und die universelle Kirche* speaks at length of the Council of Chalcedon, but nowhere mentions the Council of Serdica; see "Das Konzil von Chalkedon. Folgerungen aus dem Zweiten Buch," *WW*, II, (1954) pp. 319-324. For the original of this work which Soloviev wrote in French see idem, "Le Russie et l'Église universelle," in: *Vladimir Soloviev, La Sophia et les autres écrits français*, (édités et présentés par F. Rouleau (SJ) (La Cité - L'Age d'Homme; Lausanne 1978) 235-239.

22. Leslie W. Bernard, *The council of Serdica 343 AD*, (Synodal Publishing House; Sofia 1983) 97-118. See, however, the three theses of the second book of *La Russie et l'Église Universelle*, pp. 194. 208. 214, which d'Herbigny summarizes in the following way: '1. La primauté de Pierre comme institution permanente;" *Un Newman russe*, 267; "2. Le magistère irréfutable de Pierre;" *ibid.*, 268; and "3. L'assistance divine pour que ce magistère soit infaillible;" *ibid.* However, one needs only make a comparison with Soloviev's original text to see the difference. Thus, Soloviev argues by examining the procedure of the early Church councils, Ephesus, Chalcedon, and what not, therefore in a historical way, before he reaches conclusions; see "La Russie et l'Église russe", in F. Rouleau, *La Sophia*, 235-239. D'Herbigny, on the contrary, not only does not analyse critically these interpretations by Soloviev, but he does not even mention them. And yet, Soloviev's position is thoroughly open to criticism of monophysites, he nowhere mentions the role of Basil of Seleucia (+c. 459) in the formulation of the dyophysite formula of Chalcedon, but gives all the credit to Leo; *ibid.*, 236. For the results of modern research, see A. de Halleux, "Le concile de Chalcédoine,"

nuance the import of Soloviev's creed: with an eye to the spontaneous union of faith in early patristic times. Soloviev would be offering an ecumenical formula which might become once more at the centre of modern-day ecumenism.

A careful look at the structure of d'Herbigny's book shows that its main divisions are conceived of in terms of the various chores Soloviev was supposed to perform, from the time he was in formation (chapter 3),²³ to his duties as university professor (chapter 4),²⁴ as a writer (chapter 5),²⁵ as a philosopher (chapters 6: a. the logician²⁶ and 7:b. the moralist²⁷), and as a theologian (chapters 8: beginnings,²⁸ 9: evolution²⁹ and 10: conclusions³⁰), with a last chapter on the ascete³¹ to round off Soloviev's image and draws some conclusions about his spirituality.³² Now, it is true that these divisions follow largely chronological lines, but the very absence of a more methodic periodization hinders d'Herbigny somewhat from being able to perceive changes, dovetailing of interests and certain recurrent patterns in Soloviev's life. Instead, he takes everything as if it were one big lump, a life without development, linear or otherwise. For example, he dismisses shifts of emphasis in his position on Church union merely as "a tactic" due to censorship,³³ without bringing this in line

Patrologie et oecuménisme, (Leuven (Belgium) 1990) 467-470; G. A. Martzelou, "The Contribution of Basil of Seleucia to the Formation of Christological Dogma," *Orthodox Dogma and Theological Problematics* (Modern Greek), (Ek. P. Pournara-Thessaloniki 1993) 155-218.

23. *Un Newman russe*, 32-58.

24. *Ibid.*, 59-87

25. *Ibid.*, 88-103.

26. *Ibid.*, 104-130

27. *Ibid.*, 131-155

28. *Ibid.*, 156-193

29. *Ibid.*, 194-220

30. *Ibid.*, 221-284

31. *Ibid.*, 285-334.

32. The same lines of interpretation appear in d'Herbigny's "Lettre adressée au traducteur," published in *Les fondements spirituels de la Vie*, (Casterman; Tournai-Paris 1930) 7-11. On p. 8 Soloviev is described as "ce Russe extraordinaire, qui, avant même d'être devenu catholique, rappelle souvent Joseph de Maistre."

33. *Un Newman Russe*, 275: "La réserve des derniers ouvrages de Soloviev ne signifie donc aucunement que ses convictions aient changé. Il modifiait seulement sa tactique."

with other major shifts in Soloviev's last period. Thus, after the failure of the dream of Church union, Soloviev turned more and more to philosophy and, in his final phase, to an apocalyptic worldview,³⁴ and this reflects itself in the final setup of his system.³⁵

Even then, besides the absence of a clear periodisation, the data culled by d'Herbigny are somewhat selective. Thus, we hear of a vow of chastity, but we hear nothing of Soloviev's having been several times close to marriage.³⁶ One cannot help thinking that all was grist for d'Herbigny's mill: whatever did not fit into the preconceived picture of Soloviev, greatest Russian philosopher, a convert to Catholicism and a holy man,³⁷ was simply ignored, an impression which is all the more strengthened when it comes to d'Herbigny's additions to his sixth edition, which shows how little he had learnt from what scholarship had brought to light in the meantime.³⁸

(b) *Soloviev's "conversion" to Catholicism.* This part of d'Herbigny's work is perhaps the most debatable. The apologetic horizon of the time has come to dominate.

34. On the apocalyptic meaning of *Drei Gespräche* see the notes supplied by the editors WW, vol. VIII, pp. 586-587: 1. The Historical process cannot overcome evil. 2. If the apocalyptic dimension means that God intervenes into History's mess, this in itself goes to show that the ways of history do not lead directly to the kingdom of God. 3. It is not only impossible to overcome all evil, but this may even have a more primordial force than the good, something symbolised by Christ's being overwhelmed on the Cross. - All these elements are not simply a change of tactic on the part of Soloviev, but also a substantial change of position.

35. There is much in favour of the argument that Soloviev's *Three Talks on War, Progress and the End of World History. With an Appendix on the Antichrist* (1899-1900) represent a kind of "retractions;" see "Vorwort," in WW, VIII, 117-128, especially p. 128: "Wird mir noch Zeit für neue Arbeiten geschenkt, so auch für die Vervollkommnung der früheren."

36. TRETJAKIEWITSCH, 36. 38; thus L. Wenzler, *Die Freiheit und das Böse nach Vladimir Soloviev*, (Freiburg i. Br./München 1978) 369, speaks of the deep love Soloviev felt for Katja Romanova, his cousin, with whom he carried on a correspondence (1871-1873). See Serge M. Solowiew, *Vie de Vladimir Soloviev par son neveu*. Preface, notes et traduction de J. Rupp, (Paris 1982) 76-89.

37. D'Herbigny describes him as "le plus grand penseur de la Russie," *Un Newman russe*, I, and quotes approvingly L.M. Lopatin's judgement of Soloviev as "le plus grand philosophe de l'Europe au dernier quart du dix-neuvième siècle, le plus original, et le créateur du premier système véritablement russe" *Ibid.*, 57; and the description of Soloviev which Mgr Strossmayer sent to Cardinal Vannutelli: "Soloviev anima candida, pia ac vere sancta est;" *ibid.*, 286.

38. *Un Newman russe*, i-iv.

One needs only reflect on a point of d'Herbigny's procedure, all the more outstanding because he must have been familiar with it at close quarters. Nowhere does he draw comparisons with other converts, neither from such among the *intelligentsia* of the Russian diaspora who returned to the Orthodox Church³⁹ such as S. Bulgakov⁴⁰ and P. Florenskij,⁴¹ nor among those Russians who became Catholics.

The case of Ivan Kologrivov (1891-1955) is particularly embarrassing, since he not only became a Jesuit,⁴² in 1921, shortly after his conversion, but was also to become, in 1947, the first holder of the chair of Russian spirituality at the Pontifical Oriental Institute.⁴³ Precisely the comparison with Kologrivov would have helped d'Herbigny to see the difference. Soloviev wanted, in his awareness of being a Catholic as a member of the universal Church, to retain at all costs the Slavic rite, whereas Kologrivov adamantly refused to ask to celebrate in the Slavic rite, since he believed in the isomorphism of Eastern and Western spiritual realities, namely the saints (*sancti*) and the rites (*sancta*).⁴⁴ Soloviev was eager to retain his culture, because precisely that would be a betrayal of his beliefs, Kologrivov was eager to show that what he did in Rome was exactly the same as if he still were in Russia.

39. Depicted so vividly in N. Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century*, (Harper & Row; N. York and Evanston 1963).

40. One need only peruse S. Bulgakov's *The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul: Two leading Apostles* (Russian), (Paris 1926) to persuade oneself of what a revulsion Bulgakov had for d'Herbigny's apologetical approach; *ibid.*, 6. 8. 11. 22-23. 29. 31-34. 36. 46. (where Bulgakov challenges d'Herbigny's interpretation of Soloviev; see also pp. 86-87. 73. 84. 85. However, Bulgakov and others have insufficiently appreciated the fact that, through his recurrent appeal to Scriptures and the Fathers, besides Russian authors, d'Herbigny's ecclesiology, though unitist in inspiration, i.e. operating on the basis of the wayward's return to the fold of Peter, represented something new for the theology of his day; see E.G. Farrugia, SJ, "La dogmatica al Pontificio Istituto Orientale," in R.F. Taft SJ and J.L. Dugan (ed. s), *Il 75° anniversario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, (PIO; Roma 1994) 100.

41. D'Herbigny's inadequate appreciation of F. M. Dostoevskij prevented him from gaining access to the important strand of Russian thinking represented by S. Bulgakov and P. Florenskij: see TRETJAKEWITCH, 180. 181.

42. Kologrivov had been received in the Catholic Church already in 1918.

43. I. Kologrivov, *Santi russi*, (La Casa di Matrona; Milano 1977) 467-469.

44. *Un Newman russe*, 312-314. On I. Kologrivov see D. Kets' doctoral thesis, *Ivan Kologrivov S.J. Témoin du Verbe incarné et de la Sainte Russie*, (Pontificio Istituto Orientale; Roma 1994) (not yet published).

And this brings us to the whole delicate issue of Soloviev's conversion. H. Falk is quite right when he denies that Soloviev believe in a kind of "überkonfessionelle Kirche".⁴⁵ This would be tantamount to a Church without clear doctrinal contours, what K. Rahner has pillorized as "dritte Konfession."⁴⁶ But to call Soloviev's move "conversion to Catholicism" (in this Falk agrees with d'Herbigny)⁴⁷ is to do some violence to the facts. What Soloviev believed was, on the contrary, that, since the schism between Rome and Russia had never been consummated, he could, in good conscience as an Orthodox, also consider himself united with the Church of Rome.⁴⁸ As the wording of Soloviev's confession says, he, as an Orthodox, sees no difficulty in recognising the authority of the Pope. That is to say, d'Herbigny made that heavy weather out of Soloviev's conversion which F. Coplestone has expressly condemned.⁴⁹

The comparison with J.H. Newman (1801-90) limps completely.⁵⁰ Newman

45. H. Falk, "Wladimir Solowjews Stellung zur katholischen Kirche," *Stimmen der Zeit* 74 (1949) 435.
46. K. Rahner, "Dritte Konfession?", *Schriften zur Theologie* XII, (Benzinger; Einsiedeln 1975) 568-581. Rahner defines it this way: "Menschen, die in ihrem christlichen Bewußtsein, in Lebensstil und Selbstinterpretation kaum Unterschiede erkennen lassen und die auch gar nicht voneinander unterscheiden wollen trotz ihrer religionsgeschichtlich, 'standesamtlich' verschiedener Zugehörigkeit zu dieser oder jener Konfessionskirche;" *ibid.*, 571. Whereas for Soloviev, "(c) C'est le sens de l'Église indivise qui est retrouvé: sens plénier de l'orthodoxie et du catholicisme," F. Rouleau, "Vladimir Soloviev," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 14 pp.1026, 1027.
47. With reference to *Un Newman russe*, Falk, in "Wladimir Solowjews Stellung zur katholischen Kirche," p. 430 sums up the circumstances of death as follows with regards to a document of which N.A. Tolstoi was one of the signatories: "Unfortunately, we possess no detailed account, but it may be taken as certain that reception of the sacraments was included in it, especially those foreseen for the moment of death" (translation my own). One must add, however, that Falk's own presentation is somewhat vitiated by the apologetic trend at the time he wrote.
48. This transpires clearly from the credo Soloviev pronounced for the occasion. See, besides, Serge M. Solowiew, *Vie de Wladimir Solowiew par son neveu*, 383-394, especially pp. 388-389.
49. F. Copleston, *Philosophy in Russia* I, (Search Press, University of Notre Dame; Notre Dame, Indiana 1986) 209-210.
50. In his *Message ecclésial de Solowiew: Présage et illustration de Vatican II*, (Lethielleux; Paris 1974) 110, Mgr J. Rupp says: "Nous ne consacrerons pas un paragraphe spécial à Mgr Michel d'Herbigny parce que nous l'avons appelé au secours plusieurs fois dans le corps de notre exposé. Il le mériterait cependant car son livre de 1911 réédité chez Beauchesne (Paris) en 1934 est un petit chef-d'oeuvre dont je regrette seulement le titre (*Un Newman russe*). Il y a un abîme entre ces deux hommes de génie."

had become convinced that the Anglican Church, like the monophysites of Chalcedon (451), had chosen *the middle way* between Rome and the followers of Eutyches, whose position corresponded to that of the Protestants, whereas Rome remained where it always was, and that, consequently, the *via media*, backbone of the apologetics of the Anglican Church, was untenable. So he decided to leave his Church and become a Catholic.⁵¹ One could not, in the same breath, accept Chalcedon and reject Trent. At the same time, this move implied the complete rejection of the three-branch theory of Christianity (Anglicanism, Catholicism and Orthodoxy) as exposed by the Oxford Movement.⁵²

(c) *Soloviev's thought*. Again, d'Herbigny gives a one-sided interpretation of Soloviev's thought.⁵³ Everything contributes to the one theme of conversion, or rather, of having become a Catholic, understood in the unilateral way just described. That d'Herbigny's summation of Soloviev's shifting of accents at the end as a change of tactics, not of convictions⁵⁴ is inadequate may be gathered from the fact that Soloviev seems to be living *diesseits des Guten und des Bösen*, i.e., has abandoned utopia for a more realistic appraisal of Church reality. This is heartily ignored, because it would have entailed a painful reinterpretation of d'Herbigny's main thesis.

It would be hard, in this compact space, to do justice to Soloviev's thought. So we may resort to a favourite and wise stratagem of Eastern theology: apophaticism, i.e. negative theology, and try to delineate what Soloviev's thought is not. For all its vaunted attempt at synthesis, in itself something highly laudable, Soloviev did

51. J.H. Newman, *Apologia pro vita ipsius*, chapter 3; H. Fries, "Die Dogmengeschichte des 5. Jahrhunderts und J. H. Newman," *Das Konzil von Chalkedon III*, (Echter; Würzburg 1954) 428-429; O. Karrer, "Newmans Weg in die Kirche und sein Weg in der Kirche," J. Daniélou u. H. Vorgrimler (eds), *Sentire ecclesiam*, (Herder; Freiburg i. Br. 1961) especially pp. 704-717.

52. See O. Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: The Idea of Doctrinal Development*, (University Press; Cambridge 1957); A. Nichols, *From Newman to Congar: The idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council*, (T&T Clark; Edinburgh 1990) 17-70.

53. For example, there is no mention, in the part on Soloviev's life, of the three visions he claimed to have had of Sophia, *Un Newman russe*, 66-70, and scarcely any discussion of his so important sophiology as such, *ibid.*, 113. 116, not even, in the context where he speaks of Mary, the Mother of God, *ibid.*, 147. 202-203, although much more recently H.U.v. Balthasar could still raise the question whether Soloviev's visions were not actually visions of Our Lady; H.U.v. Balthasar "Soloviejew," *Herrlichkeit* 2, (Johannes; Einsiedeln 1962) 659.

54. *Un Newman russe*, 275-276.

not succeed except very partially, and he knew it. For example, his aesthetics, which was meant to cap the whole system, actually remained unfinished if not in some golden fragments such as "Art in Nature".⁵⁵ The disappointment which characterized the last period of his life came from precisely this source. His reverting to a more apocalyptic vision was initially occasioned by his clash with K. Leontiev,⁵⁶ but it went far deeper. Paradoxically, it led Soloviev to abandon that cavalier *Fortschrittsglaube* which had led to the clash in the first place. Whatever his thought amounts to, it is so much characterized by the tension between apocalyptic thought and *Fortschrittsglaube* in a would-be synthesis, that no Soloviev study could do justice to him unless it considers this point. All this, however, is lost on d'Herbigny, who seems to be pointing to the culmination in Soloviev the ascete.

Most of all, however, hardly a word falls about Newman's theology,⁵⁷ although precisely here the comparison would have been interesting and revelatory. Even if the first chapter is entitled "Newman et Soloviev: Contrastes et analogies",⁵⁸ everything rotates on the one theme of conversion, except for such differences as that Newman was a churchman whereas Soloviev a layman. Otherwise, no comparison is made between the different epistemologies, intuition in Soloviev⁵⁹ and illative sense in Newman,⁶⁰ the different approaches to Church Fathers, their various appraisals of councils, the different ways they approached their respective

55. In WW, VII we find "Schönheit als Offenbarung der All-Einheit," pp. 117-189. I: "Die Schönheit in der Natur," pp. 119-167, and "Der allgemeine Sinn der Kunst," pp. 168-169.

56. I. v Kologrivov, *Vom Hellas zum Mönchtum: Leben und Denken Konstantin Leontjews (1831-1891)*, (Regensburg 1948) 284-286, Cf *Un Newman Russe*, 168-169.

57. See *ibid.*, 170. 182 and 305.

58. *Ibid.*, 1-9

59. "...in the *Philosophical Principles* ... under the obvious influence of Schelling (and his doctrine of 'intellektuelle Anschauung'), Solovyov still holds that 'ideal intuition' - direct 'intuition of an idea'. 'more precisely, direct intuition of the Absolute in its 'essence' - is real and accessible to all men. It appears that what is 'given to this 'ideal intuition' comprises the 'true primary form of *integral knowledge*:'" V.V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, II, (Columbia University Press; New York 1967) 489-490.

60. With "Illative sense" Newman does not mean some special faculty, but rather its normal use in matters which call for personal commitment. It thus corresponds to a *real* rather than a *notional*, or purely conceptual, assent.

Churches. There is no discussion of the manner of Newman's conversion and the content of Newman's theology, history and what not, although the comparison of Soloviev with Newman in the title awakened precisely such expectations.

2. D'Herbigny's interpretation as a temptation

The kind of temptation Soloviev presents to his would-be interpreters can perhaps be best gauged if we try to work our way back from d'Herbigny to Soloviev following the three criteria of Soloviev's life, conversion and works.

(a) For somebody whose life was an endless search for truth, it is very easy to leap the process of reaching the conclusions for the sake of the conclusions alone, or at least shorten the distance, as if the labyrinthian ways of soul-searching follows the same route as the crow flies. It is exactly what d'Herbigny does. His underlying assumption seems to be: Soloviev is a Catholic and he should be exploited to the hilt for his immense apologetical potential. Actually, this interpretation falls in line with the kind of monism typical of not a few interpreters of Soloviev. But the monism which besets as a temptation whoever tries to reconstruct his life is to ignore the valuable information that developments, reverses, hesitations, afford. Did not Soloviev say that much of God's plan in the world is carried out also by the evil?⁶¹ Precisely counter-movements on the part of Soloviev are completely absent in d'Herbigny's interpretation.

(b) With regard to his "conversion," if this word is not the right word, what would be right word? It is hard to say. However, we may call it an attempt at synthesis, at personal synthesis in view of the good of the whole. One must actually add a word of caution: synthesis is perhaps too neutral a word. We think that the many values of this change can be grasped only by the word "integration", because the conversion in question was an attempt at unity at various levels, including the search for good and for truth at a personal level. Indeed, the best way to put it is to say that Soloviev felt a member of the universal Church, and it was this awareness that put together his search for truth, good and beauty.

(c) Finally, the works of Soloviev suggest that his attempt at intellectual and

61. See "Kurze Erzählung vom Antichrist," WW, VIII, 285-294.

personal synthesis must be described by the word "plurality".⁶² Not to respect this plurality of pursued but not fully achieved synthesis, cognate, on an intellectual level to moral concupiscence or lack of integration in the one human being, is to succumb to a monism of sorts.

a. The first monism is of a *philosophical* kind. It consists in reducing Soloviev to one line of thought, while forgetting V.V. Zenkonvsky's structures, especially those regarding the several roots and influences of his system. No concern is shown, in this monism, as to growth and changes, various periods in Soloviev's life, various influences. Soloviev's "Russian idea" is to be contextualised in the one period in which it is written, though it may be profitably read from the viewpoint of the other periods as well.

b. The second monism is of a *theological* kind. It consists in reducing Soloviev to a *single theological hermeneutics*, thereby implying that the object of his interpretation was univocal. Not much concern is showed here as to styles, literary genres and differentiated problematics in the theological realm.

c. The third monism is *religious*: it forgets to see that tension is the resultant of an insufficiently harmonised system, and thus takes away from Soloviev the inherent tension between the progress he sees history striving after and the apocalyptically interpreted end of the world. Not much concern with the dialectic of utilitarian progress and non-utilitarian apocalyptic; one need only remember that a work of art is defined as that which anticipates the end.⁶³

Now this brings us to the problem of interpreting Soloviev. Would he not have manifested this healthy pluralism in his conversion?

With Hans Urs von Balthasar I agree that it is the tension between the aesthetical and the apocalyptical aspects in Soloviev which make up the fascination and the

62. It is true that Soloviev repudiated metaphysical pluralism (see V.V. Zenkonvsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy II*, p. 512), but, as the same historian emphasizes, Soloviev's thought cannot be reduced to one root. To borrow S. Bulgakov's well-known saying, "Solovjov's philosophy is the most full-sounding chord..." For an evaluation of Zenkonvsky's book see J. Rupp, *Message ecclésial de Soloviev*, 11-113.

63. See my review of M. Tenace, *La Beauté, Unité spirituelle dans les écrits esthétiques de Vladimir Soloviev* (Fates; Troyes, France 1993) in *OCP* 59 (1993) 591-593.

central logic of the system. Given the unresolved systematic plurality, whose resultant is tension, the temptation to reductionism is great.⁶⁴

3. Conclusion: The Comparison with Newman re-proposed

The criticism we have offered of d'Herbigny's interpretation of Soloviev may seem to be too hard. Of course, one cannot ignore the fact that he was a pioneer, and that in this sense it was no mean achievement to have stimulated a discussion and thus paved the way for others. One can rather blame him, with greater objectivity, for having failed to learn, in his later editions, when his thesis had already been shown to falsify somewhat the state of affairs regarding Soloviev's conversion.⁶⁵ But, even in this criticism, one should not ignore the apologetic times in which he lived, and that this forced him into a model which might not have been his had the times been more auspicious for ecumenism, at least within the Catholic Church.

In my opinion, however, d'Herbigny failed to exploit a possible point of comparison, which, though mistaken under the terms in which he proposed it, could prove fruitful for a better understanding of East-West correspondences. It is remarkable, for instance, that d'Herbigny nowhere discusses, in his two-volume ecclesiology, Newman's grammar of assent, both notional and real; indeed, he barely mentions Newman at all. Actually, the comparison of the thought of both authors, Newman and Soloviev, would perhaps help us understand better not only both thinkers, but also the epistemological process of faith assent, and this in terms of that integrity and fullness which so much tantalised Soloviev, without his being able to reach it. A comparison-contrast between Newman and Soloviev could thus be re-proposed with regard to their ways of ordering a plurality of views within a single integrated vision of Christianity.

64. In the study to which we have already referred (*Herrlichkeit* II, 540-615, H.U.v. Balthasar has given us an unusually perceptive account of Soloviev's thought from the viewpoint of theological aesthetics, that is to say, from a theology of divine beauty, or rather splendor, which takes its cue from revelation.

65. For favourable and more critical reviews of d'Herbigny's book see TRETJAKEWITSCH, 37. According to the last mentioned author, "(a)s late as 1921, d'Herbigny saw the problem only in terms of the doubtful antithesis 'Catholic or Orthodox?' and was unable to perceive Soloviev's very original third way, his claim to be a 'Catholic-Orthodox' member of the Universal Church," TRETJAKEWITSCH, 39.

Yet the very possibility of such a comparison-contrast depends heavily on our own view of unity and plurality. To those to whom it may seem unfeasible to understand a philosopher from the outside it may be added that Russia's philosophy has borrowed so much from the West that it would be thoroughly in style to compare an Eastern and a Western thinker. Eastern thinking emphasizes that man is a person, not merely an individual; that he lives in relating, not in isolating himself. Certainly, this lesson could be drawn from Soloviev's writing, without forgetting that the borrowing goes both ways. If this is the case, then purist attempts to identify Russian thinking with "pure non-foreign Slavic elements" is doomed from its inception. When humanity shall have grown up more, as a whole, to appreciate interdependence as being more congenial to the integrative view of the person rather than to the isolated qualities of the individual, then people will rejoice that there was so much commerce between East and West in Russian thinkers, and that precisely this formed an inalienable part of their identity, much to their credit. Of this the universal thinker Soloviev was, and whose universality d'Herbigny failed to appreciate completely, sacrificing it to a somewhat parochial catholicity, is a case in point.

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ERRATE CORRIGE

For E. G. Farrugia S.J. “D’Herbigny’s Soloviev” (1996 no1)

1. On p.61, footnote 10: D’Herbigny was president of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, which at the time had its premises at the Pontifical Biblical Institute Rome, until 1926, when he became rector of the Jesuit community but retained the title of president of the Institute. In the 1964 **Catalogus Domorum Romanorum Interprovincialium Societatis Iesu** (ineunte anno MCMLXIV) the latter title becomes that of rector of the Institute.

- 2. p.60, footnote 2: Soloviev’s example served as model (NOT: example)
- 3. p.60, footnote 3: history of the Institute: ADD: of the Pontifical Oriental Institute
- 4. p.62, footnote 12: NOT: Scultze, Sj; BUT: Schultze, SJ
- 5. p.62, footnote 13: “Wladimir ... katholischen...”
- 6. p.63, footnote 21: présentés
- 7. p.63, footnote 22: part of the sentence is left out: (...open to criticism), at least from the viewpoint of recent research: in his criticism (of monophysites ...)
- 8. p.64, line 2: comma, instead of fullstop
- 9. p.64, Patrologie: instead of: Patrilogie
- 10. p.65, footnote 34: historical & history (lower case)
- 11. p.65, footnote 37: véritablement (NOT: véritablemnet)
- 12. p.65, line 2; believed (NOT: believe)
- 13. p.65, footnote 49: Philosophy (NOT: Philosphy)
- 14. p.69, footnote 56: Friedrich Pustet ((= Verlag))
- 15. p.70, line 10: labyrinthine (NOT: labyrinthian)
- 16. p.69, line 21: (be) the (right word) (ADD: the)
- 17. p.72: Zenkovsky, NOT: Zenkonvsky ((thrice))
- 18. p.72, line 18: (Not much concern) is shown for (the dialectic... ((instead of: with)
- 19. p.72, line 21: interpreting, NOT: intepreting
- 20. p.72, line 6. (...was) a (no mean achievement): ADD: a
- 21. p.72, footnote 64: close bracket: 615)

• Please note that no 2 of 1996 was Vol XLVII and NOT Vol XLVIII as indicated.