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Aleksey Khomyakov's *Sobornost'* and Islamic *Ummah/Shura*: Parallels in Communal Unity and Global Theological Discourse

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Abstract
This study explores the intellectual legacy of Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov (1804–1860), a foundational thinker in 19th-century Russian Orthodox theology whose concept of *sobornost'*—communal unity in freedom and love—critiqued Western rationalism and individualism. The background highlights the historical tensions between Eastern Orthodox communal spirituality and Western individualistic traditions amid Russia's modernization. The objective is to analyze how Khomyakov's lay theology, rooted in Orthodox bogoslovie, reinterprets patristic sources to address modern fragmentation and proposes Russia as a messianic Third Rome. Employing hermeneutic and comparative textual analysis of Khomyakov's primary works (e.g., "The Church is One") alongside their reception in 20th–21st century scholarship (Lossky, Berdyaev, Florovsky, Zenkovsky), the study demonstrates that his synthesis of vita contemplativa and activa democratized religious discourse. The findings reveal *sobornost'* as a blueprint for societal wholeness through love-driven unity, offering insights for contemporary interdisciplinary religious studies. In conclusion, Khomyakov's thought provides a valuable corrective to modern social alienation and fragmentation. This study contributes to enriching the study of communal theology by presenting a conceptual reinterpretation of *sobornost* as an alternative paradigm to modern individualism through an examination of Khomyakov's thought in interpreting the contemporary crisis of social solidarity. Furthermore, this study offers a new conceptual framework for global religious studies in understanding the relationship between spirituality, community, and collective identity in the modern era.
Keywords: *Khomyakov, sobornost', Orthodox theology, Russian messianism, Integral cognition*

Abstrak
Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi warisan intelektual Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov (1804–1860), seorang pemikir dasar dalam teologi Ortodoks Rusia abad ke-19 yang konsep *sobornost'*-nya—persatuan komunal dalam kebebasan dan cinta—mengkritik rasionalisme dan individualisme Barat. Studi ini dilatarbelakangi oleh ketegangan historis antara spiritualitas komunal Ortodoks Timur dan tradisi individualis Barat di tengah modernisasi Rusia. Oleh karena itu, studi ini menganalisis bagaimana teologi awam Khomyakov, berakar pada bogoslovie Ortodoks, dan menafsir ulang sumber-sumber patristik untuk menghadapi fragmentasi modern dan mengusulkan Rusia sebagai Roma Ketiga yang mesianik. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan analisis teks hermeneutik dan komparatif terhadap karya-karya primer Khomyakov (misalnya, "The Church is One") serta resepsinya dalam keilmuan abad ke-20 dan ke-21 (Lossky, Berdyaev, Florovsky, Zenkovsky), studi ini menunjukkan bahwa sintesis vita contemplativa dan activa-nya mendemokratisasi wacana agama. Temuan mengungkap *sobornost'* sebagai cetak biru untuk keutuhan masyarakat melalui persatuan yang didorong cinta, menawarkan wawasan bagi studi agama interdisipliner kontemporer. Kesimpulannya, pemikiran Khomyakov memberikan koreksi berharga terhadap alienasi sosial dan fragmentasi modern. Studi ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya kajian teologi komunal dengan menghadirkan reinterpretasi konseptual *sobornost'* sebagai paradigma

alternatif terhadap individualisme modern melalui kajian pemikiran Khomyakov dalam membaca krisis solidaritas sosial kontemporer. Selain itu, studi ini menawarkan kerangka konseptual baru bagi studi agama global dalam memahami hubungan antara spiritualitas, komunitas, dan identitas kolektif di era modern.
Kata kunci: *Khomyakov, Sobornost', Teologi Ortodoks, Mesianisme Rusia, Kognisi integral*

Introdcution

Before delving into the historical discussion of the emergence of Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov, it is important to first understand how his figure was understood not only as an intellectual figure but also as a spiritual symbol in the Russian tradition of thought. Khomyakov's figure is often remembered through literary representations and cultural reflections that position him as a thinker who sought to unite faith, freedom, and communal life amidst the crisis of 19th-century modernity. In this context, the following poem depicts an idealized image of Khomyakov as a theologian and visionary who presented the concept of *sobornost'* as an alternative to Western individualistic rationalism.

A philosopher, theologian, poet, and knight,
In labors for great Rus', untiring, bright,
He soothed our spirit with conciliar grace,
And crowned our minds with freedom's fierce embrace.
To Western thought, so cold and reason-bound,
He showed the loving spirit, profound,
In sobornost' he sought the truth's own art—
A theologian, pure in mind and heart.
So let us toast, dear friends, this noble sage,
Who forged our good in truth's enduring age,
That our torn world may heal its deep divisions,
And form a church of free, divine visions.

The development of Russian religious thought in the nineteenth century must be analyzed within the framework of the profound socio-economic contradictions of the Russian Empire: the persistence of late-feudal structures alongside accelerating capitalist modernization imported from the West. The Slavophile movement, and particularly the theological-philosophical thought of Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov, constituted one of the most significant intellectual responses to these tensions.

The central research question of this article is formulated as follows: In what manner does Khomyakov's bogoslovie, through the category of *sobornost'*, function as a dialectical theological response to the alienation generated by modern capitalist production relations, and how does this socio-economic dimension distinguish the present analysis from the predominantly ecclesiological interpretations that dominate classical and contemporary scholarship on Khomyakov and Slavophilism?

Classical studies (Berdyaev 1912; Florovsky 1937; Zenkovsky 1948–1950; Lossky 1951; Christoff 1961) have primarily concentrated on Khomyakov's doctrine of the Church

as an organic divine-human unity, his critique of Western Christian schisms (Roman Catholic papal infallibility and Protestant subjective individualism), and the patristic foundations of *sobornost'*. While these works established the theological and philosophical significance of Khomyakov's thought, they devoted significantly less attention to the material-historical context of his ideas—specifically, the emergence of capitalist relations and the resulting social alienation. This tendency largely continues in post-1990s scholarship, where *sobornost'* is frequently treated as a purely theological or cultural-conservative principle, with limited systematic exploration of its implications for the critique of modernity's disintegrative effects.

The present study proposes to fill this gap by interpreting Khomyakov's theology as a dialectical response to the specific historical conjuncture of the reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855): autocratic repression following the Decembrist uprising of 1825, the maintenance of serfdom in parallel with the penetration of Western bourgeois economic forms, and the consequent spiritual and social estrangement of individuals. In this context, *sobornost'* — understood as free communal unity grounded in love and divine grace — emerges not merely as an ecclesiological ideal but as a theological counter-project to the atomization and commodification of human relations under early capitalism.

Iranian Principle	**Kushite Principle**	**Russian/Orthodox Synthesis**	
Core Principle	Freedom (*svoboda*) → egoism, exploitation	Necessity (*neobkhodimost'*) → despotism, suppression of the person	Synthesis of freedom and necessity in love and grace
Civilization Examples	Western Europe (Protestantism, capitalism)	Ancient East (Egypt, Babylon, despotisms)	Russia as the Third Rome
Consequences	Atomization, individualism, fragmentation	Coercion, lack of personal initiative	*Sobornost'*: unity in freedom and love
Critique	Rationalism, alienation	Violence, materialism	Overcoming both extremes through the Church

Table 1. A Diagram of Khomyakov's Typology of Civilizations

Khomyakov's historical typology of civilizations further underscores this dimension. He distinguished between the "Iranian" principle, dominant in Western Europe, which, through excessive emphasis on individual freedom, fostered egoism, exploitation, and social disintegration, and the "Kushite" principle, characteristic of ancient Eastern

despotisms, which suppressed personal initiative through rigid necessity and coercion.[1] According to Khomyakov, Russia, through its Orthodox tradition, possessed the potential to synthesize these opposing principles, offering a path toward universal redemption. This vision positioned Russia as the Third Rome heir to Byzantium's catholic ethos and reflected not mere romantic nationalism but a reasoned response to Russia's long-standing geopolitical isolation between Asiatic nomadism and European imperialism (from the Tatar yoke of 1237–1480 to subsequent territorial expansions).

The intellectual milieu in which these ideas developed is illustrated by the debates within Slavophile circles of the 1840s, where Khomyakov and his associates engaged in sharp polemics with Westernizers, most notably Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky (1811–1848). These exchanges highlighted the fundamental antagonism between organic communalism rooted in Orthodox tradition and the individualistic liberalism inspired by Western Enlightenment models. The originality of the proposed approach consists in three interrelated aspects: *first,* the systematic integration of patristic sources — Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–395) on unity in diversity and John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) on social justice — with a critique of modern production relations and alienation. *Second,* the emphasis on Khomyakov as a lay theologian who bridged vita contemplativa and activa, thereby contributing to the democratization of religious discourse under conditions of clerical monopoly and autocratic control. *Third,* the reading of *sobornost'* as a theological resource capable of addressing not only nineteenth-century but also contemporary forms of social fragmentation and anomie in globalized modernity.

This perspective enables a reevaluation of Khomyakov's thought beyond nostalgic conservatism or anti-Western polemic, presenting it as a constructive theological proposal relevant to the crises of both past and present societies.

This study adopts a qualitative research design centered on historical-theological and philosophical analysis. The investigation focuses on key historical figures and intellectual traditions, primarily Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov vand associated Slavophile thinkers, as documented in primary archival and published literary sources. Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature review encompassing both primary and secondary materials. Primary sources include Khomyakov's original theological writings, most notably "The Church is One" (1848) and his collected works (Polnoe sobranie sochineniy, vols. 1–2). Secondary sources comprise major scholarly interpretations by Berdyaev (1912), Lossky (1951), Florovsky (1937), Zenkovsky (1948–1950), and selected contemporary works from the last five years (post-2000 editions, commentaries and interdisciplinary studies).

The analytical techniques employed are predominantly qualitative and interpretive. They include: close textual analysis of Khomyakov's corpus and patristic texts (e.g.,

[1] Basil Lourié, "Aleksei Khomyakov, the Slavophiles, and the Origins of Sobornost", in Irina Paert, Andrey Shishkov, Alison R. Kolosova (ed), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Conciliarity in Modern Orthodox Christianity* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2025), 203-2018.

Gregory of Nyssa on unity-in-diversity; John Chrysostom on social justice); hermeneutic interpretation, guided by the principles of historical-contextual reading and the Orthodox tradition of experiential theology; comparative analysis, juxtaposing Khomyakov's thought with Western philosophical traditions (Hegelian dialectics, Cartesian rationalism) and modern communitarian discourses; philosophical-analytical scrutiny, particularly of the concepts of *sobornost'*, integral cognition, and the critique of capitalist alienation; thematic synthesis, which identifies and traces recurring motifs (*sobornost'*, freedom-in-unity, lay theology) across primary and secondary texts.

While the study is exclusively qualitative and hermeneutic in nature, it incorporates elements of historical-critical method to situate Khomyakov's ideas within the socio-economic conjuncture of Nicholas I's reign. No quantitative methods (statistical analysis, content counting) are applied, as the research objective is interpretive depth rather than numerical generalization. This multi-layered qualitative approach—combining hermeneutic, philosophical-analytical, comparative, and historical-contextual techniques—ensures a rigorous and comprehensive reconstruction of Khomyakov's intellectual legacy.

Results and Discussion

Brief Profile of Subulussalam Islamic Boarding School

Aleksey Khomyakov's concept of *sobornost'*—communal unity in freedom and love—emerged as a cornerstone of Slavophile thought, offering a critique of Western rationalism and individualism. His theology, rooted in Orthodox bogoslovie, emphasized the Church as a divine-human organism, where grace unifies believers without suppressing individuality. This principle of Khomyakov's contrasts with Catholicism's hierarchical absolutism and Protestantism's fragmented subjectivity, positioning Orthodoxy as the preserver of patristic unity.[2] A.S. Khomyakov's integral cognition, blending intellect, will and emotion, challenged Cartesian dualism, advocating that true knowledge arises through communal faith.[3]

His historical sociology classified civilizations into "Iranian" (freedom-based) and "Kushite" (necessity-bound), with Russia synthesizing both via Orthodoxy, embodying a messianic role as the Third Rome.[4] These findings align with Lossky's view of Khomyakov's rejection of Western abstractions, though Zenkovsky notes a weakness in his anthropology's lack of a coherent doctrine of evil.[5] Compared to other scholars, like Florovsky, who praised Khomyakov's experiential theology, his ideas remain consistent with patristic traditions, offering a unique response to modernity's alienation. This

[2] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea, trans. R. M. French* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946; repr., Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1992), 46-52.

[3] Vasily V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy, trans. George L. Kline,* 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 2014; orig. pub. Paris: YMCA-Press, 1948), 182.

[4] Peter K. Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism: A Study in Ideas,* vol. 1, A. S. Xomjakov (The Hague: Mouton, 1961), 25-30.

[5] Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, 178.

synthesis underscores *sobornost'* as a timeless antidote to social and spiritual fragmentation, relevant to contemporary interdisciplinary studies.

Building upon, yet extending beyond, traditional receptions (Berdyaev, Florovsky, Lossky), this article explores Khomyakov's integration of patristic thought with a dialectical critique of modern production relations, positioning his *sobornost'* as a potential bridge for interreligious dialogue—particularly with Islamic concepts of communal unity (umma and *shura*)—in addressing global societal fragmentation.

Theological Foundations: *Sobornost'* and Ecclesiology

As a co-founder of the Slavophile movement, Aleksey Khomyakov's religious views were deeply rooted in the Byzantine heritage of Eastern Christianity, emphasizing "*sobornost'*"—a concept of communal unity in freedom and love that echoed the conciliar traditions of the early Church Councils. Khomyakov's influence permeated Russian intellectual circles, particularly through the Slavophile salons in Moscow during the 1840s and 1850s.[6]

The concept of *sobornost'* (*соборность*), central to Russian religious philosophy, has been subject to two opposing interpretations. On one end of the spectrum, *sobornost'* is seen as the antithesis of individualism (particularly Western individualism) and is nearly equated with a "we-consciousness," effectively making it synonymous with collectivism. In this view, the communal worldview (*obshchinnoemiroponimanie*) and conciliar unity (*sobornayaobshchnost'*) are treated as interchangeable. This interpretation is widespread, especially in popular discourse.

The first wave of Russian émigrés, who were deeply rooted in Christian thought, vehemently opposed the conflation of the Russian worldview with Soviet collectivism. However, their objections went unheard, as acknowledging their perspective would have meant recognizing the anti-historical nature of the new Soviet regime.

On the opposite extreme, *sobornost'* is confined strictly to the realm of ecclesiology, divorced entirely from social structures or empirical existence. This sterile, purely theological approach implies that all Russian philosophers from Semyon Ludvigovich Frank (1877–1950) and Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov (1871–1944) to Aleksei Fedorovich Losev (1893–1988)—misinterpreted Aleksei Khomyakov'sidea of *sobornost'*.

The idea of *sobornost'* is inextricably linked to Khomyakov, though not because he invented it. Rather, he was the first to articulate—albeit not in a fully systematic philosophical form—what had always been present in Christian spiritual life. For Khomyakov, *sobornost'* is "unity by the grace of God, not by human institution". This definition distinguishes *sobornost'* from both collectivism and individualism. Unlike collectivism, which imposes unity through external authority, *sobornost'* arises organically

[6] Zenkovsky, 171-189.

from divine grace. Unlike individualism, which assumes the self-sufficiency of the person, *sobornost'* presupposes that true personhood is realized only in communion.

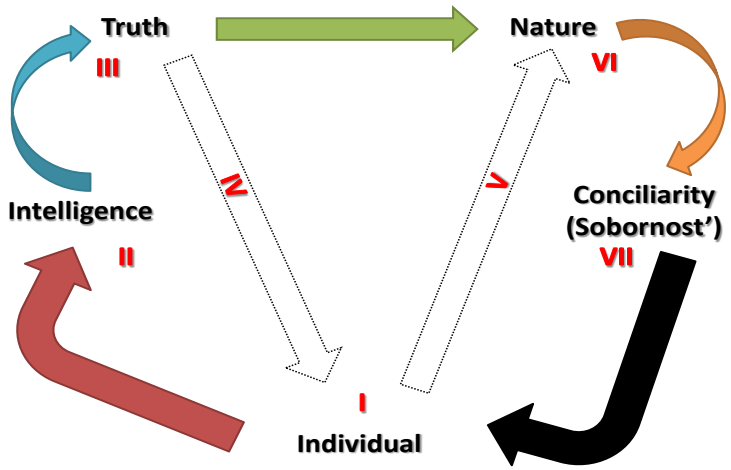

Figure 1. Khomyakov's philosophical and analytical research method

In the contemporary global theological discourse, Khomyakov's concept of *sobornost'* finds unexpected parallels and points of dialogue. Among Orthodox authors, Metropolitan John Zizioulas (1931-2023) developed in his eucharistic ecclesiology the idea of personhood as being-in-communion, where the unity of the Church is realized through reciprocity and freedom, closely resembling Khomyakov's synthesis of liberty and love without hierarchical coercion.[7] Recent studies emphasize that *sobornost'* anticipates the communitarian critique of liberal individualism articulated by Charles M. Taylor (b. 1931)[8] and Michael J. Sandel (b. 1953)[9], offering an alternative both to the atomized "I" and to totalitarian "we."

In the Islamic tradition, similar motifs of unity in freedom and mutual responsibility are found in the concepts of *ummah* and *shura*. The contemporary thinker Tariq Ramadan (b. 1962) interprets the *ummah* in his works of the 2010s as a dynamic community in which consensus (*shura*) emerges from tawhid and fraternity rather than external authority, a parallel to Khomyakov's organic unity grounded in divine grace[10,11]. The Iranian reformer Abdulkarim Soroush (b. 1945), in his post-2000 writings, stresses pluralism within the

[7] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 49-69, 105-119.

[8] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 473–504, 542–545.

[9] Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 200-205, 261-263.

[10] Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 145-162, 278-285.

[11] Tariq Ramadan, *Islam and the Arab Awakening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 112–128.

ummah and freedom of interpretation, rejecting authoritarian collectivism, which echoes Khomyakov's criticism of both individualism and imposed unity[12].

In the eschatological dimension, Khomyakov's *sobornost'* (as an anticipation of the Kingdom in love) finds resonances in Islamic notions of the *ummah* as a sign of the end times (in Ramadan's interpretation[13]) and in Zizioulas's pneumatological ecclesiology, where the Church is understood as an eschatological reality[14].

The characteristic of the Eastern Orthodox theological method is fundamentally distinct from modern academic approaches. Its central characteristic is the inextricable link between the knowledge of God and the existential and spiritual state of the person seeking that knowledge. It posits that true theology is not a neutral, objective science but a transformative process of participation and initiation into the divine mysteries. This perspective inherently rejects the notion that theology can be reduced to a purely intellectual or rational exercise conducted from a detached, academic standpoint.

Consequently, this path is not universally accessible through intellectual effort or scholarly aptitude alone. It operates on the foundational presupposition that the human faculty for perceiving God: what the Fathers of Church called the *voῦς*—must be purified and healed from the passions that cloud it. Therefore, the seeker is required to actively cultivate specific moral and spiritual virtues such as humility, repentance, prayer, and obedience, as essential prerequisites. These practices are not supplementary but are integral to the epistemological method itself; they purify the instrument of knowledge (the human heart), making the individual capable of receiving and authentically understanding divine revelation. In this framework, a pure heart is not a metaphorical ideal but the essential organ of theological perception[15].

Individualism rests on an increasingly untenable premise: the self-sufficient, autonomous subject. Dividuation represents the complete erosion of personal identity, reducing the individual to a fragmented, interchangeable unit within mass society. Against this process, *sobornost'* properly understood in Khomyakov's sense—offers a counterforce. It is neither the oppressive "we" of Soviet collectivism nor the illusory "I" of bourgeois individualism, but a transcendent unity that preserves personal uniqueness within a divine-human communion.

Individualism, as the dominant cultural vector of modernity, appears to be reaching its endpoint. The self-sufficient personality can no longer sustain itself: it either dissolves into the faceless "we" (a phenomenon well-known in Soviet experience but poorly

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12 Abdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush,* ed. and trans. Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 92–107, 139–145.

13 Ramadan, *Radical Reform*, 300-315.

14 Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 163–172.

15 Philip Kariatlis, "A Forgotten Method of Theology for Today: Insights from an Eastern Orthodox Perspective," *Colloquium* 47, no. 1 (2015): 26-31, https://www.academia.edu/24094820/A_Forgotten_Method_Of_Theology_Insights_From_An_Eastern_Orthodox_Perspective.

understood in the so-called "free world") or seeks a higher principle what the early Aleksei Losev called the "Absolute Personality." In the Russian tradition, this principle is *sobornost'*.

In the substantialist view, personality is an autonomous, primary substance that precedes and transcends natural characteristics. This means personality cannot be defined or measured through natural properties. God is the Absolute Personality, as He is entirely free in relation to His own being and is not determined by any internal or external necessity. These attributes align most closely with the medieval patristic conception of the Absolute (God). Central to Losev's conception of myth is his emphasis on the personal character of mythological consciousness. For Losev, myth represents not merely a primitive narrative or symbolic construct, but rather a living, personal encounter with absolute reality[16]. Contrast Losev with Carl Jung (myth as archetype) and Mircea Eliade (myth as sacred hisory).

A polymath, Khomyakov was deeply versed in theology, history, linguistics, economics, and even engineering. Like many Slavophiles, he was exceptionally well-educated, fluent in multiple languages, and wrote theological treatises in French. His intellectual pursuits ranged from designing agricultural reforms and steam engines to engaging in theological polemics against Western rationalism.

A poetic tribute captures his polymathic "brilliance" Aleksey Khomyakov:

Poet, mechanic, linguist sage,
Physician, artist, theologian's gaze,
Russia's voice in polemic fires,
As the serpent wise, as the dove pure.
Through fields and labs, through ink and prayer,
You sought God's truth everywhere.
Not in cold reason's hollow light,
But where love shines, radiant, bright.
O champion of the Church's grace,
Your words still call our age to face:
"Without love's flame, all thought is vain"—
In Christ alone, the Truth remains.

In his seminal work, Nicholas Onufrievich Lossky (1870-1965) portrays Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakovas, a co-founder of Slavophilism, and a profound lay theologian whose ideas bridged Orthodox Christianity with philosophy. Lossky dedicates a substantial section to Khomyakov in Chapter II on Slavophils, emphasizing his rejection of Western rationalism and individualism in favor of an organic, communal worldview rooted in Eastern patristic traditions. Khomyakov, a poet, historian, and engineer by training, is depicted as a multifaceted thinker who critiqued the fragmentation of Western Christianity—Protestantism's subjective freedom and Catholicism's papal authority—while

[16] Alexey F. Losev, *Dialektika mifa* (Moscow: Akademicheskiy Proekt, 2008; orig. pub. 1930), 176.

advocating for Orthodoxy's "*sobornost*'" (conciliarity), a concept of free unity in love and truth within the Church.

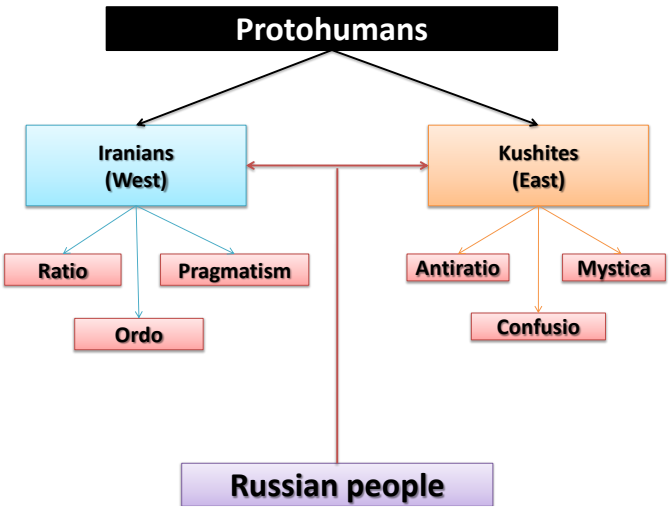

Figure 2. Khomyakov's historical and philosophical views on world history

Lossky highlights Khomyakov's epistemology, where true knowledge arises not from isolated reason but from "integral cognition," integrating intellect, emotion, and will in a living faith. This "believing reason" draws from the collective experience of the Church, contrasting with Kantian or Hegelian abstractions. In philosophy of history, Khomyakov classifies civilizations by foundational principles: "Iranian" (freedom, as in Western Europe) versus "Kushite" (necessity, as in ancient Eastern cultures). Russia, for Khomyakov, synthesizes these through Orthodoxy, preserving communal harmony via the peasant "mir" (commune) and avoiding Western egoism or Eastern despotism. Lossky notes Khomyakov's optimism about Russia's messianic role to spiritualize the world, though he critiques his occasional nationalism, like anti-Polish sentiments.

Theologically, Lossky underscores Khomyakov's ecclesiology in works like "The Church Is One," where the Church is an organic body animated by the Holy Spirit, invisible yet manifest in *sobornost*'. Khomyakov's Trinitarian focus—unity in diversity mirrors divine life, influencing his views on society and knowledge. Lossky praises Khomyakov's originality in reinterpreting patristic sources (by Gregory of Nyssa) for modern contexts, while noting his non-systematic style due to censorship and early death from cholera while aiding peasants.

Aleksey Khomyakov's line was pioneered alongside Ivan Vasilyevich Kireyevsky (1806-1856), who shared his emphasis on integral knowledge and Orthodox critique of Western secularism. This tradition continued through Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov (1853-1900), who systematized Christian philosophy with "*Godmanhood*"; Prince Sergey Nikolayevich Trubetskoy (1862-1905) and Prince Evgeny Nikolayevich Trubetskoy (1863-1920), exploring metaphysics and ethics; Nikolay Fyodorovich Fyodorov (1829-1903), with

resurrection via science; Father Pavel Aleksandrovich Florensky (1882-1937), integrating symbolism and theology; Father Sergius Nikolaevich Bulgakov, developing Sophiology; Nicolas Aleksandrovich Berdyaev (1874-1948), emphasizing freedom and creativity; Nikolay OnufrievichLossky (1870-1965), advancing intuitivism; Lev Platonovich Karsavin (1882-1952), on all-unity; Semyon Lyudvigovich Frank, with ontological realism; Ivan Aleksandrovich Ilyin (1883-1954), on law and state; Father Vassily Ivanovich Zenkovsky, synthesizing pedagogy and theology; Father George Vasilevich Florovsky (1893-1979), reviving patristics; Vladimir Nikolaevich Lossky (1903-1958), on mystical theology; and Boris Petrovich Vysheslavtsev (1877-1954), exploring sublimation and ethics. These thinkers extended Khomyakov's Christian worldview, emphasizing *sobornost'* amid modernity.[17]

Nikolay Aleksandrovich Berdyaev, a prominent Russian philosopher and exile, authored Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov in 1912 as a critical and systematic exploration of Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov's thought, positioning him as a foundational figure in Russian religious philosophy.

Republished in 1997 as part of Berdyaev's collected works, the book spans eight chapters, preceded by a preface, and serves as part of Berdyaev's "Puti" series on Russian religious thinkers. Berdyaev's work is not a conventional historical biography but a philosophical and psychological analysis, aiming to capture Khomyakov's "whole image" and evaluate Slavophilism's relevance for contemporary Russian self-consciousness.[18] While the book addresses Khomyakov's philosophy, history, and social theory, its core lies in theology, particularly Chapter III, where Berdyaev delves into Khomyakov's ecclesiology.

The requested phrase appears in this chapter: "Although Vladimir Solovyov harbored a personal dislike for Khomyakov and often criticized Slavophilism—especially after his early intellectual period he nevertheless recognized Khomyakov's and Samarin's pivotal role in articulating the essence of the Church. Fundamentally, Khomyakov and the Slavophiles pioneered the Orthodox East's first genuine exercise in ecclesiastical self-consciousness. Prior to them, Russian religious thought—or, more accurately, theological reflection—had oscillated between Protestant and Catholic influences. A philosophically and theologically grounded Orthodox ecclesial identity had yet to emerge".[19] This passage underscores Khomyakov's pioneering role in Orthodox self-awareness, a theme central to Berdyaev's theological appraisal.

In the preface, Berdyaev outlines his approach, emphasizing that the monograph is philosophical-systematic, psychological, and critical rather than exhaustive historical

[17] Nikolai O. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952; orig. pub. New York: International Universities Press, 1951), 6-18.

[18] Nikolai A. Berdyaev, "Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov," in *Sobranie Sochineniy Tom V* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1997; orig. pub. 1912), 3.

[19] Berdyaev, 61.

research[20]. He frames Khomyakov as the central Slavophile, making the book a broader commentary on Slavophilism's fate. Berdyaev argues for a religious and national revival to appreciate Slavophilism, previously marginalized by irreligious consciousness. This sets the stage for theology as the book's unifying thread, linking Khomyakov's faith to his worldview.

> *Berdyaev's monograph is a masterful blend of admiration and critique, celebrating Khomyakov's theological originality while noting limitations like nationalism.*[21] *Theology permeates all chapters, portraying Khomyakov as Orthodoxy's voice against Western schisms. This work remains essential for understanding Russian religious philosophy, urging contemporary readers to reclaim Slavophile insights amid secularism*[22].

In 1937, Protopresbyter Georges Florovsky published The Ways of Russian Theology in Paris, where he characterized Alexei Khomyakov as "the systematizer of Slavophile doctrine", noting that while his writings were "fragmentary, painted in broad strokes," his mind remained "profoundly systematic".[23] Florovsky emphasized Khomyakov's unique strength as a theologian: rather than constructing abstract ecclesiological models, he "described the Church's reality as a true witness, drawing from lived experience within her"[24]. This experiential grounding what Florovsky termed "a return to the forgotten path of experiential knowledge of God" became Khomyakov's enduring legacy for subsequent generations[25].

Florovsky dismissed superficial comparisons between Khomyakov and the Catholic theologian Johann Möhler (1796 -1838), arguing that their similarities reflected not "influences" but "convergent approaches to the same reality from different starting points"[26]. This aligns with Khomyakov's call to revive "the forgotten path of theōsis", a participatory theology rooted in the Church's sacramental life, resisting Western rationalist abstractions.

Vasily Zenkovsky's encyclopedic History of Russian Philosophy (1948–1950) engaged Khomyakov's thought with equal parts admiration and reservation. While praising his "ontological realism" and "rejection of idealism", Zenkovsky noted a critical lacuna: Khomyakov's anthropology lacked "a coherent doctrine of evil", failing to explain how freedom's "axis could tilt toward corruption".[27] Khomyakov's epistemology, though "contradictory in places", advanced three seminal ideas:

1. "The ontological unity of all knowledge" (rejecting Cartesian dualism);

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[20] Berdyaev, 3.
[21] Berdyaev, 165.
[22] Berdyaev, 170.
[23] Georges Florovsky, *Puti Russkogo Bogosloviya* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1937; repr., Vilnius, 1991), 270.
[24] Florovsky, 274.
[25] Florovsky, 274.
[26] Florovsky, 274.
[27] Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, 178.

2. "Primordial acts of cognition ('living knowledge') as acts of faith";
3. "The conciliar (*sobornost'*) nature of truth"[28].

For Zenkovsky, Khomyakov's ecclesiology—"permeated by the spirit of freedom" transcended individualism through its "ontological grounding in the Church's mystical body"[29]. His pursuit of "Christian philosophy in praxis" (not merely theory) made him a bulwark against secularizing trends.

Aleksey Khomyakov's theology centered on the organic unity of the Church, articulated through *sobornost'*, which he derived from the Slavonic term sobor, denoting both "council" and "cathedral." In his seminal work "The Church is One," he posited that true faith resides not in individualistic rationalism or hierarchical authority—hallmarks of Western Christianity, but in the collective, living communion of believers animated by the Holy Spirit. This principle, often translated as "conciliarity" or "togetherness," underscores a harmony where individual freedom coexists with communal consensus, reflecting the Byzantine emphasis on synodal governance as seen in the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon. Khomyakov critiqued Protestantism for its atomized subjectivity and Roman Catholicism for its papal absolutism, arguing that only Orthodoxy preserved the pristine ecclesia universalis of the patristic era.[30] His views thus positioned the Russian Orthodox Church as the custodian of this ancient tradition, untainted by the schisms that fractured Western Christendom.

Khomyakov's theology centers on the concept of the Church as a divine-human organism, not merely a human institution. He defined the Church as: "The Church is not a multitude of persons in their individual separateness, but the unity of God's grace dwelling in a multitude of rational creatures who submit to grace.[31]"

For Aleksey Khomyakov, the Church is not an administrative structure but the living Body of Christ, where divine grace operates through human freedom and love. This understanding aligns with the Orthodox tradition, where the Church speaks with the authority of the Holy Spirit, as seen in the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…" (Acts 15:28).

In Russian religious thought, two terms are often used: "bogoslovie" and "teologia". While both translate as "theology," they carry different connotations:

a. Bogoslovie – Rooted in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, it emphasizes theology as a living experience of God, inseparable from prayer, liturgy, and ascetic struggle. It is not merely academic but a spiritual discipline.
b. Teologia – Often associated with Western scholastic theology, it tends to be more systematic, rational, and philosophical in approach.

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[28] Zenkovsky, 182.

[29] Zenkovsky, 185.

[30] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, 46-52.

[31] Derek Offord and William Leatherbarrow, eds., *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 110.

Khomyakov's work is firmly within bogoslovie, as he rejected the rationalist tendencies of Western theology, arguing that true knowledge of God comes not through abstract reasoning but through love and participation in the Church's life.

Aleksey Khomyakov's approach, often termed "secular theology" (theologiacivilis), does not conform to traditional, purely dogmatic theology (theologia sacra) but rather represents a hybrid genre one that, as Aron Iakovlevich Gurevich (1924 -2006) notes, shares similarities with medieval Western preaching traditions.[32] Unlike purely ecclesiastical discourse, Khomyakov's theology addresses a broader audience, particularly the educated layperson (homo mediocris intellectualis), employing language that bridges sacred and secular realms.

The Western European medieval sermon (praedicatio vulgaris) was a performative, socially engaged genre that combined theological instruction with rhetorical appeal to a mixed audience. However, Khomyakov's "secular theology" in 19th-century Russia could not simply replicate these models. As Aron Gurevich demonstrates in his analysis of medieval exempla, Western preaching was deeply embedded in its cultural and institutional context, whereas Russian religious thought developed its own distinct forms of public theological engagement (theologiarhetorica)[33]. Khomyakov's works, while not sermons in the strict sense, functioned similarly they sought to make Orthodox doctrine accessible to the intelligentsia without diluting its spiritual essence.

Central to Aleksey Khomyakov's theology is the principle that divine truth is not apprehended individually but collectively, through love (per caritatem). As he writes: "The truth inaccessible to individual thought is accessible only to the totality of thoughts bound by love"[34]. This insight emerged from his reflection on the ecumenical Church's conciliar experience (experientiaconciliaris). Khomyakov was the first to elevate this ecclesial practice into a philosophical category—*sobornost'* (conciliarity). Unlike the Western Church, which he accused of external institutionalization (institutio externa), Khomyakov envisioned *sobornost'*, as an organic, spiritual unity (unitasspiritualis) of believers.

For Aleksey Khomyakov, *sobornost'* was the earthly manifestation of ideal Christian love (agape), the only form of community capable of preserving divine truth. He rejected the Roman Catholic model of centralized authority (auctoritaspapalis) and the Protestant emphasis on individual interpretation (liberum examen), arguing instead for a free, loving consensus (consensus amoris) within the Church.

This concept extended beyond ecclesiastical boundaries. Khomyakov applied *sobornost'* to all aspects of human life—society, economy and family—positing that each sphere should strive for "living unity" (unitasvitalis). In his view, the fragmentation of

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[32] Aron Ya. Gurevich, *Kul'tura i obshchestvo srednevekovoy Evropy glazami sovremennikov* (Exempla XIII veka) (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1989), 9-10.

[33] Gurevich, 10.

[34] Aleksey S. Khomyakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy,* vol. 1 (Moscow: Universitetskaya Tipografiya, 1900), 283, https://runivers.ru/lib/book3560/18631/.

modern life (dissolutiomoderna) resulted from the West's abandonment of conciliar principles. Russia, by contrast, retained the potential to build a civilization grounded in organic wholeness (integritasorganica). Ultimately, Khomyakov's theology culminated in a vision of national unity (unitasnationalis). He believed that the Russian people (narod), shaped by Orthodoxy, could achieve a harmonious synthesis of faith and culture, a "holy Rus'" (Sancta Russia). This ideal, however, was not ethnic exclusivism but a call for spiritual cohesion (cohesiospiritualis).

Khomyakov's sharpest critiques were directed at Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, which he saw as deviations from the organic unity of the Orthodox Church.

a. Catholicism – He accused it of substituting grace with legalistic authority, creating "unity without freedom." The papacy's claim to exclusive divine inspiration led to spiritual pride and rationalism.
b. Protestantism – While rejecting papal authoritarianism, it fell into the opposite error: "freedom without unity." The fragmentation of Protestant sects demonstrated the failure of individualism in theology.

Khomyakov traced these errors to the Great Schism of 1054, where the West's departure from conciliarity (*sobornost*) led to a loss of love the very foundation of Church unity. For Aleksey Khomyakov, faith was "knowledge and life" inseparable from the Church's sacramental existence. He dismissed individualistic theology, insisting divine truths are revealed "only to mutual Christian love." His critique of Western Christianity traced its errors to replacing grace with legalism (Rome) or private judgment (Reformation). Yuri Fyodorovich Samarin (1819–1876), his peer, noted Khomyakov's unique gift: He lived in the Church from childhood, a living cell of its body. This ecclesial rootedness granted his theology both prophetic depth and practical clarity.

Philosophical Synthesis and Social Vision

Aleksey Khomyakov sought to integrate Hegelian dialectical method with elements of Orthodox mysticism, proposing a distinctive Christian philosophical framework that emphasized intuitive, integral knowledge over empirical rationalism and systematic deduction.[35] He conceptualized history as a divine process in which nations embody specific spiritual principles. In this schema, Russia, as the heir to Byzantium (the Third Rome), was positioned as a potential synthesis of Eastern spirituality and Western intellectualism, thereby offering a path to universal redemption through Orthodox faith.

Khomyakov's historical typology further delineated civilizations according to foundational principles: the "Iranian" type, dominant in Western Europe, prioritized individual freedom but led to egoism and exploitation; the "Kushite" type, characteristic of ancient Eastern despotisms, imposed necessity and suppressed personal initiative. Russia, through its Orthodox tradition, was viewed as capable of reconciling these opposites in a

[35] Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism*, 25-30.

harmonious manner. This perspective informed his support for pan-Slavism, including advocacy for Slavic unity under Russia's guidance as an "elder brother," as evidenced in his writings on Bulgarian ecclesiastical independence.

Aleksey Khomiakov's philosophy integrated faith with history, viewing nations as embodying spiritual principles. Russia, as Byzantium's heir (Third Rome), synthesized Eastern mysticism and Western intellect, promoting pan-Slavism grounded in Orthodoxy. He supported Slavic unity under Russia's "elder brother" guidance, as in his advocacy for Bulgarian Church independence. Socially, he opposed capital punishment, emphasizing mercy and societal guilt in crimes, and championed education aligned with Orthodox values, from peasant schools to universities.

Socially, Khomyakov opposed capital punishment, arguing for mercy and recognition of collective societal guilt in criminal acts. He advocated education rooted in Orthodox values, extending from peasant schools to higher institutions. Although not formally ordained, Khomyakov functioned as a lay theologian, authoring treatises that influenced Orthodox thought. His works published posthumously due to censorship, received attention from Church authorities, yet his role as a "sacerdos in spirit" reflects interpretive rather than institutional authority[36].

This duality is apparent in his biography: raised in a devout Orthodox family, he combined military service (including participation in the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–1829), engineering pursuits, and poetic activity, embodying an integration of contemplative and active life (vita contemplativa et activa) akin to Byzantine monastic ideals.

Khomyakov's attitude toward Islam was shaped by his broader religious tolerance and critique of Western rationalism. He lived in a multi-confessional empire where Muslims constituted a significant minority, and his writings reflect a respectful, if limited, engagement with Islamic tradition. Khomyakov valued the Qur'an as a monotheistic scripture emphasizing divine unity (tawhid) and moral discipline, which he saw as aligned with Orthodox emphasis on spiritual integrity and communal harmony (*sobornost'*). He regarded Islam as a legitimate Abrahamic faith, drawing parallels between the Qur'anic stress on submission to God and Orthodox notions of obedience to divine will. While critiquing certain aspects of Islamic governance as potentially "Kushite" (despotic), he appreciated Islam's resistance to Western secular individualism and its preservation of religious community. This stance was consistent with Slavophile views on Eastern spiritual traditions as counterbalances to Western fragmentation, though Khomyakov's primary focus remained Orthodox renewal rather than systematic comparative theology.

His chivalrous defense of Orthodoxy, noted by contemporaries such as Alexander Herzen (1812–1870), combined humility with polemical rigor. Despite censorship, his theological contributions contributed to Orthodox discourse, as affirmed in the 1848

[36] Murianka (Archimandrite Luke), "Aleksei Khomiakov: A Study of the Interplay of Piety and Theology," in A. S. Khomiakov, *Poet, Philosopher, Theologian, ed. Vladimir Tsurikov* (Jordanville, NY: Printshop of St. Job of Pochaev, 2004), 20-31.

Patriarchal Encyclical. Khomyakov's death from cholera in 1860, contracted while assisting peasants, illustrated his commitment to active charity. His legacy consists in reinterpreting patristic sources for modern contexts, demonstrating the interplay of piety, freedom, and communal truth in religious philosophy.

Influence on F. Dostoevsky: From Doctrine to Narrative

In the person of Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky encountered a mighty spiritual force. Samarin unhesitatingly called unhesitatingly called Khomyakov`sa "teacher of the Church", [37] which gave impetus to his creative consciousness in a definite direction. The indestructibility, the integrity of belief, which, according to the definition of Ivan Sergeyevich Aksakov (1823-1886), "does not fear to descend into the deepest depths of skepticism".[38]

This profound observation captures the essence of the intellectual and spiritual linkage between these two titans of Russian thought. Where the theology of Aleksey Khomyakovconcludes in a systematic articulation of Orthodox ecclesiology rooted in conciliaritas (*sobornost'*) and the ecclesia una (the one Church) the theology of Fyodor Dostoevsky commences, transforming doctrinal foundations into a dramatic, existential exploration of faith amid human suffering and doubt. Without comprehending Khomyakov, the grand design of the Russian writer's oeuvre remains opaque, for Dostoevsky's novels represent a literary extension of Khomyakov's vision, where fides viva (living faith) confronts the abyss of modern nihilism.

Khomyakov drew from patristic sources, such as Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom, to argue that true cognitio (knowledge) is integralis, uniting ratio (reason), voluntas (will) and affectus (emotion) in a holistic grasp of divine reality. This "believing reason" (fides quaerensintellectum, though Khomyakov inverted Anselm of Canterbury's (c. 1033-1109) formula by prioritizing faith) descends into skepticism without fear.

From Gregory of Nyssa, Khomyakov adopted the notion of the human soul's ascent toward the divine through a dynamic interplay of faculties. Gregory's works, such as On the Making of Man, emphasize the unity of human nature—intellect, will, and emotion—as reflecting the divine image (imago Dei). Khomyakov expanded this by arguing that true knowledge of God emerges only within the communal context of the Church, where these faculties are harmonized through love and prayer. According to Peter K. Christoff (1911-1998) in The Patristic Roots of Slavophile Thought, Khomyakov interpreted Gregory's mystical theology to assert that ratio alone, detached from voluntas and affectus, leads to sterile rationalism, a critique leveled at Western scholasticism.[39] This integration allowed

[37] Yuriy F. Samarin, "Predislovie," in *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy*, by Aleksey S. Khomyakov, vol. 2 (Prague: Izdanie Pravoslavnago obshchestva "Beseda," 1867), XLIX-L.

[38] Vladimir Voropaev, "Katyechizis Neobyknovenno Zamechatel'nyy," *Literaturnaya Ucheba* 3 (1991), 131.

[39] Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism*, 25-30.

Khomyakov to propose that skepticism, rather than a threat, becomes a testing ground for faith, strengthening its resolve through communal discernment.

From John Chrysostom, Khomyakov drew on the homiletic emphasis in Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, where the Church's living body unites voluntas and affectus with doctrine. Chrysostom's focus on the Church as a living body, where love and free will animate doctrine, resonated with Khomyakov's vision of *sobornost'* (conciliarity). Pierre Kovalevsky (1901-1978) further notes that this synthesis reflected Chrysostom's influence on Russian theology, emphasizing emotional devotion as a knowledge conduit.[40] Thus, Khomyakov's patristic reinterpretation offered a resilient epistemology for modernity.

The theological epistemology that redefined divine knowledge through cognitiointegralis—a holistic synthesis of ratio (reason), voluntas (will) and affectus (emotion). This framework, detailed in "The Church is One", inverted Anselm of Canterbury's fides quaerensintellectum by prioritizing fides viva as the active initiator, unafraid to confront skepticism.

It is here that Fyodor Dostoevsky enters, absorbing Khomyakov's ideas through indirect channels Slavophile publications, mutual acquaintances like Ivan Sergeyevich Aksakov, and the broader cultural milieu of post-Crimean War Russia. Dostoevsky, born in Moscow to a modest family, endured Siberian exile (1849-1859) for his involvement with the Petrashevsky Circle, an experience that shattered his early utopian socialism and propelled him toward Orthodox faith. Upon return, he engaged with Slavophilism, editing journals like "Time" (Vremya) and "Epoch" (Epokha) with his brother Mikhail (1820 - 1864). Though not a formal Slavophile—Dostoevsky critiqued their romanticism he internalized Khomyakov's theology, as evidenced in his "Diary of a Writer" (Dnevnik pisatelya, 1873), where he echoes the call for pochvennichestvo (soil-boundness), a concept akin to Khomyakov's emphasis on organic national roots. Khomyakov's fearless descent into dubitatio (doubt) to affirm faith mirrors Dostoevsky's method: polyphonic novels where atheistic arguments are voiced fully, only to be transcended by Christian veritas.

While Aleksey Khomyakov's theology remains largely theoretical, Dostoevsky brings it into literary form. Khomyakov's idea of communal unity appears in Dostoevsky's vision of shared redemption, especially in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). The figure of Elder Zosima teaches active love and collective moral responsibility, reflecting Khomyakov's understanding of the Church as a community united by love rather than individualism.[41] Alyosha Karamazov represents faithful spirituality tested by life's struggles, while Ivan's "Grand Inquisitor" criticizes religious authoritarianism, echoing Khomyakov's concerns about Western Christianity. Dostoevsky expands these ideas by showing that faith must pass through doubt and suffering before affirmation, turning theology into lived human experience.

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[40] Pierre Kovalevsky, *Saint Sergius and Russian Theology*, trans. W. F. J. Ryan (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 115.

[41] James P. Scanlan, *Dostoevsky the Thinker* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 106.

This continuity is evident in themes of Russian messianism. Khomyakov envisioned Russia as bearer of true Christianity, synthesizing East and West. Dostoevsky amplified this in his Pushkin Speech (1880), proclaiming Russia's "*universal responsiveness*" to humanity's woes, a pochvennichestvo rooted in Orthodox humilitas (humility). In "Crime and Punishment" (Prestuplenie i nakazanie, 1866), Raskolnikov's Napoleonic individualism crumbles before Sonya's faith, mirroring Khomyakov's critique of Western rationalism as dissectio animi (dissection of the soul). Dostoevsky's theology is narrative: Khomyakov's abstract integraliscognitio becomes experiential in characters like Prince Myshkin in "The Idiot" (Idiot, 1869), whose Christ-like innocence confronts societal corruption. As Nicholas Berdyaev noted, Dostoevsky's anthropology: man as imago Dei (image of God) yet fallen builds on Khomyakov's optimistic view of human potentia (potential) within the Church.

Critics like Vladimir Solovyov, influenced by both, bridge them: Solovyov's "Godmanhood" (bogochelovechestvo) synthesizes Khomyakov's ecclesiology with Dostoevsky's existentialism. Yet, Dostoevsky diverges by emphasizing suffering's redemptive power—theodicea through crucis (the cross)—beyond Khomyakov's harmonious vision. In "Demons" (Besy, 1872), revolutionary nihilism exposes the perils of faith without *sobornost'*, a direct heir to Khomyakov's warnings against Western fragmentation.

Ultimately, without Aleksey Khomyakov, Fyodor Dostoevsky's project—the literary theology of redemption amid abyss—remains inscrutable. Khomyakov provides the doctrinal scaffolding; Dostoevsky erects the edifice, where theology breathes through human drama. This symbiosis underscores Russian thought's uniqueness: faith as integra persona (whole person), unafraid of profundae dubitationis (depths of doubt), yielding eternal veritas.

Aleksey Khomyakov's ecumenical vision, while not advocating modern interdenominational fusion, promoted a unity grounded in Byzantine *sobornost'*, which Slavophiles adopted as a counter to Western fragmentation. He lamented Russia's self-alienation from its heritage, as captured in his French remark: "*Vous autresRusses, vous me paraissez un singulierpeuple. Enfants de noble race, vous-vousamusez a jouer le role d'enfantstrouves*".[42]

This critique encouraged a return to the conciliar tradition of Byzantium, where the universality of the Church was based on mutual recognition among independent churches rather than centralized authority. Influenced by Khomyakov, the Slavophiles viewed Russia as the heir of Byzantium and the guardian of the "Third Rome" idea, which emphasized spiritual unity within Orthodox Christianity.[43] For them, Byzantium's synodal tradition became the model for *sobornost'*, allowing diverse communities to remain united through shared faith rather than uniform control. Khomyakov applied this principle to promote pan-Slavic unity as an alternative to Western individualism. Consequently, the ecumenical

[42] Khomyakov, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy*, 44.

[43] Peter J. S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (London: Routledge, 2000), 19-25.

outlook of nineteenth-century Slavophile thought reflected a Byzantine spirit, encouraging dialogue with other Christian traditions while maintaining Orthodox identity.

Conclusion

Aleksey Khomyakov's theology, expressed through Orthodox language and patristic tradition, emerged as a response to the historical conditions of his time. As a lay thinker and polymath—active in theology, literature, and social thought—he connected religious reflection with social engagement and broadened theological discussion beyond clerical circles. However, this effort largely remained within the perspective of the noble intelligentsia, criticizing Western social fragmentation while still preserving the communal and patriarchal structures of traditional Russian society. His historical typology — Iranian (freedom → egoism → capitalism) versus Kushite (necessity → despotism → ancient East) versus Russian Orthodox synthesis reveals the class essence: Russia must resist both Western bourgeois atomization and Eastern stagnation, preserving the peasant commune as the material basis for a higher, grace-filled unity.

His historical typology—contrasting the Iranian model (freedom leading to egoism and capitalism), the Kushite model (necessity leading to despotism), and the Russian Orthodox synthesis—reflects his belief that Russia should avoid both Western individualism and Eastern authoritarian stagnation. Instead, he emphasized the peasant commune as the social foundation for a higher spiritual unity grounded in grace. Through the concept of *sobornost'*, Khomyakov rejected both Western individualism and coercive despotism, proposing an organic communal unity rooted in shared faith. Yet this vision did not fully transcend existing social hierarchies; rather, it idealized communal harmony in theological terms, while overlooking the social inequalities present in late-feudal and early capitalist Russia.

Notable parallels exist between Khomyakov's concept of *sobornost'* and key Islamic notions of *ummah* and *shura*. In Islam, the *ummah* represents a transnational religious community of believers united by tawhid (the oneness of God), brotherhood, and mutual responsibility, where each member bears responsibility for the whole (as expressed in the well-known hadith: "*The believers are like a single body*…"). *Shura*, in turn, emphasizes the principle of mutual consultation and consensus in decision-making, which resonates closely with Khomyakov's vision of conciliar reason, in which collective agreement precedes individual judgment.

Aspect	***Sobornost'* (Aleksey Khomyakov)**	***Ummah/shura* (Islamic Tradition)**
Foundation of Unity	Divine grace (charity/agape) + mutual love + free personal consent; unity rooted in the Holy Spirit and Trinitarian communion	Tawhid (absolute oneness of God) + brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*) + mutual responsibility (*takāful*); unity grounded in submission to Allah and the Qur'anic covenant

Aspect	***Sobornost'*** **(Aleksey Khomyakov)**	***Ummah/shura*** **(Islamic Tradition)**
Mechanism of Decision-Making	Conciliar reason (*sobornyi razum*): consensus achieved through free dialogue and love within the Church community, without external coercion	*Shura* (mutual consultation): collective deliberation and consensus among believers, ideally guided by Qur'an, Sunnah, and *ijmaʿ* (scholarly consensus); emphasizes consultation over unilateral authority
Relation to the Individual/Person	True personhood is fully realized only in communion; freedom is not autonomous but relational and fulfilled in the ecclesial body	Individual accountability (*taklīf*) and moral responsibility before Allah coexist with communal belonging; the person retains agency within the *ummah*, but ultimate loyalty is to the divine community
Critique of Extremes	Rejects Western liberal individualism (atomization, egoism) and coercive collectivism (totalitarian "we"); seeks organic synthesis of freedom and unity	Rejects both excessive individualism (that fragments the community) and authoritarian centralism (that suppresses legitimate consultation and plurality); promotes balanced middle path (*wasatiyyah*)
Eschatological Dimension	*Sobornost'* as an anticipation and foretaste of the Kingdom of God in love; the Church is already an eschatological reality here and now	*Ummah* as a sign and precursor of the end times; the ideal *ummah* will be fully realized in the eschaton (Day of Judgment), where true justice and unity prevail under divine rule
Role of Love/Compassion	Central: unity is sustained by active, sacrificial love (caritas/agape), binding free persons in the divine-human organism	Central: *rahmah* (divine mercy) and *muhabbah* (love/brotherhood) are foundational; the Prophet's saying "The believers are like one body" underscores mutual care and compassion within the *ummah*

Table 2. *Sobornost'* (Khomyakov) vs *Ummah/shura* (Islamic Tradition)

Among the Islamic thinkers who developed these ideas, the following key figures stand out:

1. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111) — in his major work *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* ("The Revival of the Religious Sciences"), he stressed the spiritual unity of the *ummah* through purification of the heart and mutual love, closely aligning with Khomyakov's synthesis of personal and communal faith.
2. Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) — emphasized the unity of the *ummah* based on Shari'ah, rejecting divisions and viewing the *ummah* as an organic whole, much like Khomyakov's conception of the Church as a living organism.

3. Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935) — in the era of modernism, he advocated the revival of *shura* as a mechanism for *ummah* unity, rejecting both Western individualism and authoritarian centralism, a position that echoes Khomyakov's critique of rationalistic Western traditions.
4. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926–2022) — in his fatwas and numerous writings, he highlighted the practical unity of the *ummah* through mutual aid, justice, and collective responsibility, proposing a balanced middle path between extremes.

Both *sobornost'* and *ummah/shura* thus represent ideological forms that critique capitalist alienation while remaining anchored in pre- or non-bourgeois communal structures. They reject liberal egoism (bourgeois ideology) and imposed collectivism (deformed state forms), proposing relational personhood realized through love, mercy or compassion.

While profound theological differences remain—most notably the Trinitarian framework of Orthodoxy versus the strict tawhid of Islam—the convergent emphasis on love (agape/*rahmah*), freedom-in-communion, and rejection of dehumanizing extremes offers fertile ground for interreligious dialogue. In the contemporary context of advanced globalization, digital isolation, commodification of relationships, and rising social anomie, both traditions provide powerful alternatives to the dominant paradigms of liberal egoism and bureaucratic coercion.

Sobornost', *ummah*, and *shura* thus serve as complementary resources for rethinking communal belonging in a divided world. They remind us that genuine personhood is not realized in isolation but through active participation in a community sustained by mercy, mutual care, and shared pursuit of justice and truth. Further comparative studies in this direction hold significant promise for fostering mutual understanding across religious traditions and contributing to the search for a more harmonious, human-centered global order.

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