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Alexei Stepanovich Khomiakov. The Fascination of the Russian Village and the Idea of Sobornost in Ecclesiology

Abstract

This article attempts to convey an appreciation for the person of Count Alexei Khomiakov and the ideas he advanced. He stands at the beginning of Russian Orthodox theology. A Renaissance gentleman and pious Orthodox believer, he contributed in a multitude of ways to the betterment of society and the advancement of the sciences in general. The article examines his contribution to what only after his untimely death will be called *Sobornost*. Khomiakov introduced the term *sobornyi* to ecclesiology. Thus one may predicate him “The Father of Sobornost.” While inspired also by the Evangelist John, his understanding of the Christian community is influenced by German Idealism and – perhaps – by the Tübingen School of Theology (Johann Adam Möhler). However, it is an incontrovertible fact that his ecclesiology is much indebted to a rather romantically idealized picture of the early Russian village and attempts to offer it as a model to Orthodoxy. Significantly, his ecclesiology will inform the reorganization of the Orthodox Churches in the early 20th century.