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Title	Saving the Selves or Saving the Others? Responses to Old Catholicism in Late Imperial Russia
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Citation	Acta Slavica Iaponica, 41, 91-109
Issue Date	2020
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/ASI.41.91
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/84158
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	41_05_pp.91-109.pdf

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Acta Slavica Iaponica, Tomus 41, pp. 91–109

Saving the Selves or Saving the Others? Responses to Old Catholicism in Late Imperial Russia

Mikhail Suslov

Introduction

This paper examines Messianic thought in Russia through political and theological debates on the Old Catholic movement. The Old Catholic Church emerged as a reaction to the first Vatican Council (1870) with the program of reconnecting with the Lutheran, Anglican and Orthodox Churches on the theological foundation, laid out by the Church fathers and Church councils of the first ten centuries of Christianity. The Old Catholic question, which initially appeared as one of purely ecclesiological and perhaps theological interest, was broadly aired and discussed by literally every significant Russian public figure in the 1870s–1900s. Although Old Catholicism per se and its relations with the Russian Orthodox Christianity have not been successful to date,[1] it induced the crystallization of a network of sympathizers in the Russian Empire. For them, Old Catholicism was a means to voice their discontent with the official Church and to shape their alternative visions about Russian Orthodoxy in world history. The Old Catholic movement stirred up religious and geopolitical hopes and initiated important ideological and theological discussions, which revolved around such questions as, what is Russia's role in the world, and how can religious principles be implemented in everyday life.[2]

1 In 1987 the Orthodox-Old Catholic dialogue resulted in a principal agreement on theological grounds. However, palpable practical consequences did not follow. The process stalled also because the Old Catholics adopted the female priesthood, and thereby alienated themselves from the Russian Orthodox Church. As Vsevolod Chaplin puts it, "in their lifestyle and morals, today's Old Catholics are closer to the Protestants rather than to the Catholics" (Vsevolod Chaplin, "Protoierei Vsevolod Chaplin ob ekumenizme..." (15 July, 2011), Pravmir.ru, https://www.pravmir.ru/protoierej-vsevolod-chaplin-ob-ekumenizme-plate-za-treby-i-konfliktax-s-rodstvennikami/ (accessed 10 July, 2019)). See also: Peter-Ben Smit, "A Dialogue of Paradoxes: Orthodox—Old Catholic Dialogue," in Katya Tolstaya, ed., *Orthodox Paradoxes: Heterogeneities and Complexities in Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 356–367.

2 On the attempts to reform the Russian Orthodox Church and re-interpret its role in society see: Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); Sergei Firsov, *Tserkov' v Imperii: Ocherki iz tserkovnoi istorii epokhi Imperatora Nikolaia II* (St. Petersburg, 2007).

This article argues that the thread of these debates was the issue of Messianism. First, the article gives a brief overview of the Old Catholic question and responses to it in Russia; second, it examines two versions of Messianism: "saving the other" and "saving the self," which reflect on the different attitudes to the Old Catholics; and finally it looks into two specific issues, connected with the Old Catholic question: debates on an ideal religious society, and debates on pan-Slavic union. This article does not reconstruct the debates on Old Catholicism chronologically, it analyzes Old Catholicism as an episode in the conceptual history of Russian Messianism. Writings by General Aleksandr Kireev (1833–1910) are central to this article; they are examined in the context of the polemical articles on Old Catholicism, published mostly in the religious journals in the 1870s–1900s.

After the defeat in the Crimean war, the Russian educated class and leadership had to negotiate three predicaments: inability to modernize structurally and to become a "normal" European country; inability to scale down Russia's ambition as a "great power"; and inability to prove its high status by armed forces. In this context, Messianism emerged as a powerful ideological "software," which solved the problem of recognition, while, at the same time, avoided both domestic reforms and international confrontation. Messianism pointed at some hidden, non-transparent and non-this-worldly but providential mission, which a given community is fated to play on the global scale, and this mission sets this community apart from the rest of the world, makes it "special," "like no other," and "unique." Messianism taps into some already available theological constructions, such as the doctrine of Moscow as the "Third Rome," but the article emphatically stresses that Messianism should not be taken as a monolithic system of values and believes, which provides a universal interpretation of Russian cultural phenomena and historical events.[3] The paper argues that Messianism is a situational and relational ideology, which recurrently resurfaces in Russia due to Russia's specific position in the world and structural specificities of its society.

In the context of monotheistic religions, the providential mission, incumbent upon a Messianic nation, implies that this community plays or will play a special role in implementing the divine design of the world. This could be saving the world from Antichrist in some Christian traditions, but the meaning of this special role could also be concealed from us mortal humans, because we are unable to fully comprehend God's plans. In the latter case, all we can say is that "we" are chosen but we do not know why or for what purpose. Still, this means that "we" have to maintain this status of "chosenness," "our" special relation to the deity. Messianism, thus, has two faces: saving others, or saving the selves. Anthony Smith came up with the distinction between missionary and covenant Messianisms, which reflects on this distinction between the "ex-

3 Ana Siljak, "Nikolai Berdiaev and the Origin of Russian Messianism," *The Journal of Modern History* 88, no. 4 (2016), pp. 737–763.

trovert" (saving others by spreading the word of truth) and the "introvert" (remaining faithful to the covenant with God) versions of the transcendental mission.[4] This distinction should not be absolutized, of course. Instead, covenant and expansionist Messianisms are dialectically interconnected and fluid: saving the Other could be seen as a necessary precondition for saving the self, whereas a program of concentration on saving the self can be interpreted as a mission of importance for the rest of the world. The intellectual tension of the debates on Old Catholics encapsulates this Messianic double impulse to preserve the authenticity of the self as the chosen people and to save the Other.

OLD CATHOLICISM AND RUSSIA: BACKGROUND

Old Catholicism emerged in 1870 as a reaction to the first Vatican Council and particularly to its decision to establish the dogma of Papal infallibility in issues of religion and ethics. Some Catholic pundits from Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Italy did not accept this dogma and in the course of the next few years they were institutionalized as a separate Church. This Church retained the Roman-Catholic rites but it acknowledged only decisions of the Universal Church, made before the Great Schism of 1054, i.e. it dogmatically drew closer to the East Orthodox Church. The leaders of Old Catholicism, as this movement was soon christened, sought for rapprochement with Orthodox Christianity from the very beginning of this new schism; they wanted recognition as the autocephalous Western Orthodox Church, because this status would strengthen their position vis-à-vis Vatican.[5] Old Catholicism was also backed by Bismarck's policy of *Kulturkampf* and enjoyed relative leniency from the Prussian government. At the same time, Old Catholicism evolved in the Habsburg Empire as an ideological component of pan-Germanism and ultra-nationalistic "*Los-von-Rom Bewegung*."[6]

The man who ignited the interest of the Russian Church in Old Catholicism was Joseph Overbeck, a German scholar who converted into the Orthodox Church. He was arguably the first who recognized the importance of Old Catholicism for the Orthodox world and started correspondence with its leader Ignaz Döllinger.[7] In 1867 Overbeck petitioned to the Russian Holy Synod to establish the Orthodox Church of the Western Rite. His project of creating the French, Anglican, Italian, Hispanic and German autocephalous churches tried

4 Anthony Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 49.

5 E.g., Friedrich von Schulte, *Der Altkatolicismus: Geschichte seiner Entwicklung, inneren Gestaltung und rechtlichen Stellung in Deutschland* (Giessen, 1887).

6 Christian Halama, *Altkatholiken in Österreich: Geschichte und Bestandsaufnahme* (Wien: Böhlau, 2004).

7 E.g., David Abramtsov, *The Western Rite and the Eastern Church: Dr. J. J. Overbeck and His Scheme for the Re-Establishment of the Orthodox Church in the West* (MA diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1961), p. 16.

to strike a balance between authenticity, autonomy and self-sufficiency in questions of rites and traditions of national churches, and unanimity and unity in dogmatic fundamentals.[8] In parallel to the Synodic commission which worked on his petition, Overbeck's "case" was promoted at the court and elsewhere by Aleksandr Kireev, the adjutant of Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, and by Aleksandr's sister Olga Novikova (Novikoff). Using the name of the Grand Duke as a cover, Kireev corresponded with the Holy Synod in order to stir its interest in Old Catholicism and institutionalize its dialogue with the Russian Church. Among other things, Kireev suggested that Professor Osinin be informally appointed as the representative of the Russian Church (this was done), and wrote that according to the Grand Duke, it was the most opportune moment for "resurrection of Orthodoxy in the West." He also mentioned that if Orthodoxy had been better known in the West, the movement of Jan Hus and Luther would have turned towards it, but "the present moment is even better."[9]

In early 1871 Döllinger published an open letter to the Russian public in which he called for reunification of the Churches.[10] This call revitalized Messianic hopes among the Russian religious intellectuals and prompted reconsideration of Messianism in a way that turned vague sentiments into a step by step political and church program of reunification. Russia's mission was now reinterpreted not as merely "keeping the true faith" after the fall of Constantinople, but as an active "sharing our spiritual treasures with the West."[11] Kireev's initiatives and propagation found receptive soil both among the Holy Synod's officials (e.g. vice Ober Procurator Iurii Tolstoi), and among professors of the St Petersburg Spiritual Academy (e.g. Ivan Osinin, and the rector of the Academy Ioann Ianyshev). Osinin was sent to the Munich conference with instructions from the Synod but with no formal responsibilities, as a private person. In conversation with Döllinger, Osinin had to respond to the criticism of "caesaro-papism," i.e. the state control over the Church in Russia. His published report emphasized that the state control embodied the ancient principle of the unity of laymen and clergymen in a religious commune.[12] His real answer was probably far more complacent to Old Catholics and critical of the Russian policy; we know at least that in Russia he was censored by the conservatives and praised

8 E.g., Iosif Overbek [Josef Overbeck], "Edinstvennyi vernyi iskhod dlia liberal'nykh katolikov," *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, no. 1 (1871), pp. 25–26.

9 Aleksandr Kireev, "Diary, September 1871," Manuscript Branch of the Russian State Library (thereafter MB RSL), f. 126, k. 6, l. 40–41.

10 John Basil, "The Russian Theological Academies and the Old Catholics, 1870–1905," in C. E. Timberlake, ed., *Religious and Secular Forces in Late Tsarist Russia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), p. 90.

11 Aleksandr Kireev, "Vvedenie k stat'iam politicheskogo soderzhaniia," in Kireev, *Sochineniia* (St. Petersburg, 1911), vol. 2, p. ix; Aleksandr Kireev, "Religioznye zadachi Rossii na pravoslavnom Vostoke," [1896] in Kireev, *Sochineniia,* vol. 2, p. 467.

12 Ivan Osinin, "Staro-katolicheskoe dvizhenie i miunkhenskii tserkovnyi kongress," *Khristianskoe chtenie,* no. 11 (1871), p. 782.

for "liberalism" in the opposite camp. Osinin himself was quite convinced of the possibility of reunification of the Orthodox East with the Western Church represented by Old Catholics.

At the same time in Russia, Kireev bustled up Konstantin, Holy Synod and professional theologians to savor the moment and bring Old Catholics closer to the Russian Orthodoxy. In the autumn 1871, Kireev and his patron probed ways to establish a society, which would promote relations with Old Catholicism. Kireev's idea was to open it as a branch of the Slavic Benevolent Society, but the Grand Duke was afraid that it would display the political bias of the organization. In political terms, Kireev saw Old Catholicism as an instrument of drawing the Catholic Slavs in and outside of the Empire closer to Orthodox Russia. Finally, it was decided to find a more politically neutral platform in the framework of the Society of Lovers of Spiritual Instruction (*Obshchestvo liubitelei dukhovnogo prosveshcheniia*) in Moscow. On 26 March 1872 this society was formally opened as its St Petersburg Branch, which among others included Ober Procurator Dmitry Tolstoi, Senator Konstantin Pobedonostsev, some prominent Slavophiles and activists of pan-Slavism and Aleksandr Kireev as its secretary.[13]

Aleksander II, Aleksander III and especially Nicholas II sympathized with the Old Catholic movement. Kireev mentioned at least five meetings with Nicholas II during which they discussed Old Catholicism, and the tsar was quite enthusiastic about it.[14] For example, in May 1897 Kireev admonished the tsar to support this movement: "If the reunification takes place during Your reign, this will secure You a glorious place in the Russian history, even if You would do nothing else"... The tsar paused two seconds and then said abruptly: "Yes!"[15] However, voices of the conservative opponents of Old Catholicism in Russia were also strong, and as time passed, their choir started to set the tone in Russian—Old Catholics relations.[16]

Efforts of the Russian supporters of Old Catholicism did not lead either to intercommunion or to recognition of the Old Catholic Church as an equal autocephalous Orthodox Church of the West. By the end of 1870s the Old Catholic

13 Kireev, "Diary, 21 October 1871 – 26 March 1872," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 6, l. 43–55ob.; E. Kopylova, "Uchastie Sankt-Peterburgskogo otdela Obshchestva liubitelei dukhovnogo prosveshcheniia v peregovorakh predstavitelei starokatolikov s Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkov'iu," *Vestnik Pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta II. Istoriia* 40, no. 3 (2011), pp. 7–16.

14 According to Kireev's diary, he met Nicholas II on 7 December 1896, 19 February 1897, 17 May 1897, 9 January 1898, and 10 February 1899.

15 Kireev, "Diary, 17 May 1897," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 6, l. 122ob.

16 Father Eugene Smirnov, who was reported to voice ideas of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, was likewise critical of the Old Catholics' relations with the German state (Smirnov, "K starokatolicheskomu voprosu," *Vera i razum* 21, no. 11 (1893), p. 538; Anonymous [Smirnov?], "Prichiny malouspeshnosti starokatolicheskogo dvizheniia v Germanii," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 30 (1875), pp. 2–4).

question almost disappeared from the pages of the Russian press for a decade and resurfaced only in 1889 when the hierarchy of Old Catholicism was institutionalized according to the decisions of the Utrecht union. Russian supporters of Old Catholicism came forward as a united front at the Pre-Sobor Commission in 1906.[17] The conservative backlash buried their hopes once again, and the Old Catholic question was shelved for the decades to come. Only in 1960s the reformist Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) raised this question and drew on the same arguments as the Slavophile sympathizers of Old Catholicism almost one century before.[18] Like in the past, Old Catholicism was heavily instrumentalized for the purpose of branding the Soviet power as liberal and ecumenically minded. Contemporary Russian philosopher Sergei Khoruzhii argues that the Old Catholic reception in Russia shows the reluctance of the Russian Orthodox Church to forsake its dogmas in order to obtain obvious political advantages.[19] As this paper shows, the Old Catholic debates are not only about the Church's fidelity to its principles, but they also raised the issue of Messianism in the late imperial public sphere.

SAVING THE OTHER?

The central debates, exposed by the Old Catholicism controversy, came down to the question, whether Russia's mission consisted in *preservation* of its "treasure"—Orthodox faith, or in *spreading* Orthodoxy in the world at the expense of Russia's national and religious authenticity. The latter, the idea of a universal mission, is visible, for example, in Messianism of Dostoevsky's "Pushkin speech" (1880).[20] Religious iterations of this universalist Messianism often call for a return to the shared dogmatic fundament.[21] To an extent, this kind of Messianism is characteristic for George Florovsky's so-called "neo-patristic syn-

17 E.g., James Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905–1906* (Chestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981).

18 Nikodim Rotov, "Na putiakh k khristianskomu edinstvu," *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii,* no. 11 (1965), pp. 40–46; Nikodim Rotov, "Predanie i sovremennost'," *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii,* no. 12 (1972), p. 58.

19 Sergei Khoruzhii, *Sovremennye problemy pravoslavnogo mirosozertsaniia* (Moscow, 2002), p. 52.

20 Peter Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (London: Routledge, 2002).

21 There is a certain overlap between religious Messianism and fundamentalism. Graeme Lang and V. Wee, "Fundamentalist Ideology, Institutions, and the State: A Formal Analysis," in Santosh C. Saha, ed., *Religious Fundamentalism in the Contemporary World: Critical Social and Political Issues* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), p. 60. Konstsantin Kostjuk, *Der Begriff des Politischen in der russisch-orthodoxen Tradition. Zum Verhältnis von Kirche, Staat und Gesellschaft in Rußland* (Padeborn: Schöningh, 2005); Martin Marty, R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed (The Fundamentalism Project, vol. 1)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

thesis," which implied a decisive turn towards the Church fathers of the first centuries of Christianity. Aleksandr Kireev put this idea in a powerful way:

> I was sure that Russia had been called to fulfill a great universal role, to show an example to all peoples of Europe... But in order to do so, we ourselves had to return to our ancient order, and to improve it.[22]

Kireev related Messianism of the universalist mission to the Old Catholic movement in two aspects.[23] First, he argued that the Orthodox faith was not Russia's national religion, but something, which Russia had to give out to other peoples. For Kireev, Russia's lofty mission did not mean Russia's infallibility and perfection. He saw the universal Orthodoxy as something higher than Russia, and for him, Russia was important only for as long as it had been chosen as God's instrument.[24] Kireev caustically responded to the critics of Old Catholicism by saying that Christ promised that the "gates of hell would not prevail against the church" (Matthew 16: 18), which means that humanity would never lose its lodestar, but "did Christ say that its light would necessarily be lit on the Senate square in St. Petersburg, or in the Kremlin in Moscow?"[25] In a meeting with tsar Nicholas II, Kireev baroquely spoke of the "wall" (here: the state protection), which had surrounded the Orthodox Church and gave it certain security. However, this security "turned into a slumber, and the wall became a Chinese Wall, while its defenders converted into policemen, and the wall was covered with mold." So let this "wall" fall, he admonished the emperor, because the Church had nothing to fear.[26] Old Catholicism, in his account, gave Russia a historically unique chance to breach the "wall" and to implement Russia's religious mission of spreading the true faith in the West.[27]

Second, Kireev believed that Old Catholicism allowed Russia to address the question, what was the fundament of faith, and what was the optional addition. For the Old Catholics, joining the Orthodox Church would not mean, thus, that they should accept all secondary elements of faith, such as theological opinions, rites and mores of the Russian Church. The Old Catholic Church would reunite with the Orthodox Church on the fundament of faith, purified from all later additions, and hence, it would allow the Orthodox believers to

22 Kireev, "Vvedenie," p. ix.

23 Aleksandr Kireev, "Pis'mo k izdateliu *Russkogo Obozreniia*," in Kireev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, p. 93.

24 Cf. "Russia's importance consist in the fact that it is 'Orthodox Russia' and 'Holy Russia', the primary bearer of the endlessly elevated religious idea! If Russia loses this meaning, it would probably remain a very big country, but it would not be a *great* one" (Kireev, "Religioznye zadachi Rossii," p. 458. Original italics).

25 Aleksandr Kireev, *K voprosu o starokatolitsizme. Moi poslednii otvet professoru A. F. Gusevu po etomu voprosu* (St. Petersburg, 1899), p. 40. In private, Kireev's wording was even stronger, when in his diary he rebuked "stupid priests" in "mixing up Pobedonostsev and the Universal Church" (Diary, 30 April 1897, l. 116).

26 Kireev, "Diary, 17 May 1897," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 11, l. 121ob.

27 Kireev, "Religioznye zadachi Rossii," p. 467.

differentiate between the important and the secondary, "obfuscating, unnecessary opinions."[28] Kireev specifically emphasized that the Russian Orthodoxy "had moved away from the principles and ideas of the ancient Church" and accepted some concepts as dogmas, which had not been dogmas in ancient Orthodoxy.[29] Less important religious differences could not hinder the reunification of the Christian Church. Kireev insisted that the Old Catholics "trust our Church fully, [but] if they do not trust... our theologians, this is another thing."[30] In a diary, Kireev penned that the West, of course, could not yet accept "the Russian faith, [because] this is the faith of Pobedonostsev (*pobedonostsevskaia vera*)," but they could well accept the Orthodox faith in the Western cover.[31]

The issue of *filioque* is a case in point here. *Filioque* is the theological formula of the Western Christian Church, which means that the Holy Spirit emanates not only from God the Father but also from God the Son. The Orthodox Church also has a relatively recent modification, the phrase "only from God the Father" in the Creed, which was not in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan formula. These minor differences caused heated discussions, which flared up with a new force in the late 19th century. The essence of these debates was not only about the emanation of the Holy Spirit, but also whether this issue is a dogma, given by God, or a *theologumenon*, i.e. an opinion of a theology scholar. Old Catholicism stood on the latter position, thereby opening the door for reconciliation with the Orthodox Church. Some Russian scholars such as Vasily Bolotov and Dmitry Samarin stood on the same position, arguing that the central theological dispute between the Eastern and the Western branches of Christianity belonged to the sphere of theological *opinion* and could not be an impediment to the dogmatic unity between the churches.[32]

Supporters of the Old Catholic movement in Russia, such as professors Ianyshev and Osinin, claimed that this dogmatic unity had been worked out by the first seven universal councils, whereas all later theological concepts should be considered as less important opinions and local peculiarities.[33] Proponents of this viewpoint established that the Old Catholics had refused to consider

28 Ibid., 41; Kireev, "Vvedenie," p. 1.

29 *Materialy k istorii starokatolicheskogo voprosa* (St. Petersburg, 1912), p. 19.

30 Kireev, *K voprosu*, p. 42.

31 Kireev, "Diary, 7 December 1897," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 11, l. 168. Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the Ober-Procurator of the Most Holy Synod of the Russian Church, became the symbol of stiff conservatism and suffocating bureaucratic rule.

32 John Basil, "The Russian Theological Academies," p. 99; Georgii Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris, 1937), p. 375; Aleksandr Kireev, [Polémique avec Meyrick], *Revue internationale de théologie,* no. 6 (1894), p. 333; Etienne Ostroumoff, "Lettre sur l'Orthodoxie," *Revue internationale de théologie,* no. 17 (1897), p. 121; D. F. Samarin's correspondence, Manuscript Branch of the Russian National Library, f. 349, d. 60.

33 "K voprosu o soedinenii so starokatolikami," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 3 (1897), p. 72; Kireev, "Pis'mo k izdateliu *Russkogo obozreniia*," p. 93.

Vatican decisions after 1054 as dogmatic, and thereby were ready to reunite with the Eastern Orthodox Church, seen as the keeper of the Christian truths of the undivided ancient Church. Some Russian specialists in the Old Catholic issue, for example Father Ioann Ianyshev, emphatically argued that the Old Catholics factually belonged to the Orthodox Church by the very fact of their Creed, and the Most Holy Synod merely had to acknowledge this fact and to promulgate a decision to consider the Old Catholic Church as an autocephalous Orthodox Church of the Western Rite.[34] In this way, the project of reunification would usher into the world a new era of the triumph of "true" Christianity over secularism and "Roman heresy."[35]

In 1895 the Patriarch of Constantinople issued an address in which he discussed the possibility of reunification between the East and the West, arguing, among other things, that such a reunification would become possible if Catholicism reverted to the first seven councils.[36] Ianyshev responded to this address in a triumphalist tone, saying that the whole of the Eastern Church was now ready to "renounce everything, which would be proven to be unfitting to the [principles] of ancient, undivided Church."[37] The point of reunification between East and West was, thus, not to make Old Catholicism join Russian Orthodoxy,[38] but to recognize it as an equal part of the universal Orthodox Church by the very fact of its adherence to the fundamental principles, and rejection of the later layers of religious thought and practice.[39]

...OR SAVING THE SELF?

The proponents of a "return" to the universal Christian fundament clashed with the supporters of the conservative reading of the Orthodox Tradition (*Predanie*), who emphasized the wholeness of the historical experience rather than

34 Ioann Ianyshev, "Ob otnoshenii starokatolikov k pravoslaviiu," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 45 (1875), p. 735. See also: Osinin, "Staro-katolicheskoe dvizhenie i Miunkhenskii tserkovnyi kongress," p. 786; "Programma Miunkhenskogo kongressa staro-katolicheskoi partii," *Khristianskoe chtenie,* no. 11 (1871), pp. 802–814; Urs Küry, *Die Altkatolische Kirche. Ihre Geschichte, ihre Lehre, ihr Anliegen* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1978); Schulte, *Der Altkatolicismus*, pp. 338–346.

35 [Anonymous], "X (I internatsional'nyi) kongress starokatolikov v Kel'ne," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 41 (1890), p. 676; Aleksandr Kireev, "Vossoedinenie tserkvei i slavianstvo," in Kireev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, p. 195.

36 "Patriarshee i sinodal'noe poslanie," 1895. Available at: https://lib.pravmir.ru/library/readbook/1345 (accessed 15 July, 2019).

37 "Ianyshev to Kireev, 22 November 1895," *Materialy k istorii*, p. 14.

38 *Tserkovnyi vestnik* sympathetically reproduces an article by professor Eugène Michaud, arguing that the Old Catholics should not be pressed into copycatting the Orthodox Church because each national church should have rights to practice religion in its own language and "according to its own taste" ("Stat'ia Misho [Michaud]," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 46 (1897), p. 1522.)

39 Ibid., p. 27.

purity of the fundament of religious faith. Unlike Protestant teaching of *sola scriptura,* Eastern Christianity puts a greater emphasis on *Predanie*, seen as a whole corpus of religious knowledge, comprised of the decision of the Church councils, canons, liturgical traditions, writings of the Fathers of the Church, hagiography, art works and ancient church histories. According to the Orthodox understanding, prevalent in Russia, religious truth is deposited in *Predanie* in its entirety, not just in the Scriptures.[40]

Being with and inside the *Predanie* is, thus, the magisterial way to fulfil the Christian mission. This streak of the religious thought is aligned with Messianism of covenant, which highlights cultural authenticity of a community, and downplays universalism.

The Church conservatives argued that the wholeness of the Christian truth was kept in Eastern Orthodoxy, and all new developments in it, even after the Great Schism, are truthful and necessary. Thus, if the Old Catholics felt affinities with Orthodoxy, they should pass the rite of repentance (for being baptized in Roman Catholicism) and thereafter they could be adopted by the Orthodox Church in its historical reality, not by some imaginary ancient undivided Church.[41] The most influential Slavophile of the second generation Ivan Aksakov voiced this position especially powerfully; in an open letter to Döllinger he wrote that Old Catholics were trying to base their Church only on the "reminiscences of the Ecumenical Church which existed ten centuries ago," and neglecting the existence of the living Church which "keeps faith and doctrine of the ancient undivided Church immutable." So, the Old Catholics had to reject not only Papal decrees and dogmas, but also

> the spirit and life of the whole Millennium of Catholicism... It is not enough to reject, but you need a complete renunciation... it is even not enough to renounce, you need a complete purgation and renovation of your spirit.[42]

Little wonder that representatives of the conservative thought in politics and religion adamantly resisted the proposals of the Old Catholics about reunification of the Churches. The most important of them, Konstantin Pobedonostsev and Lev Tikhomirov warned that rapprochement with Old Catholicism could open the window to the West and Western ways too wide, and thereby would let Western rationalism and the "spirit of Protestantism" into Russia.[43]

40 See, for example: Lev Shaposhnikov, "Ponimanie traditsii v pravoslavnom bogoslovii," *Vestnik Sankt Peterburgskogo universiteta. Seriia Filosofiia i konfliktologiia* 17, no. 1 (2014).

41 [Anonymous], "Vzgliad greka na starokatolicheskoe dvizhenie," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 24 (1875), p. 6.

42 Ivan Aksakov, *Pis'mo k doktoru Dellingeru po povodu programmy* (Moscow, 1871), pp. 18, 26–28.

43 Smirnov, "K starokatolicheskomu voprosu," *Vera i razum,* no. 19 (1893), p. 393; no. 20 (1893), pp. 521–522; no. 23 (1893), p. 678; Kireev, "Diary, 17 December 1876," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 7, l. 21ob.); Lev Tikhomirov, *Teni proshlogo* (Moscow, 2000), p. 661. See also: William Birkbeck, *Life and Letters of W. Birkbeck* (New York: Longmans, 1922), p. 142; Konstantin Pobedonostsev, "*Bud' tverd i muzhestvenen...*" (St. Petersburg, 2010), p. 75.

Fedor Dostoevsky launched another powerful attack on the Old Catholic proposal about the reunification of the Christian Church. He saw it as a covert Catholic and socialist propaganda, purporting to destroy Russia's cultural specificity.[44] Similarly, bishop Amvrosii (Kliucharev) argued that theological debates meant not much, they were merely the free play of speculative mind; he wanted to "come to their church and feel at home, [otherwise] if there is no unity in rituals, a Russian man would never recognize them as ours, as Orthodox believers."[45] *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* the mouthpiece of the Ober Procurator, likewise referred to the people's religious traditions and observed that the idea of reunification would be untenable if Old Catholics disregarded the attachment of the Russians to their religious mores and habits.[46]

The main concern, voiced by conservative religious journals on this matter, pertained to the fear that Old Catholicism would bring too much of the Western ideas and values to Russia. The actual issue with Old Catholicism was not theological disagreement, but a "gut feeling" of sorts, that Old Catholicism was too "Western," too "cerebral," and too distant from the "Orthodox ideal of a modest theologian."[47] In words of the supporters of Old Catholicism, this skepticism boils down to "a fear of all things foreign" and to an inability to "separate important things from the less important ones."[48] Indeed, the whole project of Old Catholicism was based on deliberation on what is fundamental and what is secondary in Christian dogmas,[49] so conservatives had all reasons to accuse it of "haughty claims to... build everything on one's own discretion."[50] For example, the journal *Vera i razum* hosted writings of the prominent critic of Old Catholicism father Eugene Smirnov. Smirnov voiced concerns that the Old Catholics demanded the "complete and uttermost *demolition of the wall* (*polnyi i vsesovershenneishii snos steny*)... separating us from Europe."[51] Smirnov

44 Elisabeth Blake, *Dostoevsky and the Catholic Underground* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014), pp. 148–154; Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad, 1972), vol. 26, p. 132.

45 Kireev, "Diary, 14 January 1878," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 7, l. 104ob.

46 [Anonymous], "Otzyv starokatolicheskoi gazety," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 45 (1875), p. 11; Konstantin Pobedonostsev, *Moskovskii sbornik* (Moscow, 1896), pp. 207–208; John Basil, "Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev: An Argument for a Russian State Church," *Church History* 64, no. 1 (1995), p. 48.

47 Ioann Ianyshev, "Pravda li, chto starokatoliki...," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* 13 (1894), p. 197.

48 "Razmyshleniia pravoslavnogo khristianina po voprosu o soedinenii starokatolikov s pravoslavnoiu tserkov'iu," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 2 (1897), p. 39; cf. "Difficulties on the way of reunification consist not so much of theological dissimilarities, but rather in a certain, historically emerged distrust to all Western religious world." Aleksandr Kireev, "Posleslovie," in Kireev, *Sovremennoe polozhenie starokatolicheskogo voprosa* (Sergiev Posad, 1908), p. 26.

49 Kireev, "Vvedenie," in Kireev, *Sochineniia,* vol. 2, pp. 1–2.

50 [Anonymous], "Otsutstvie u starokatolikov opredelitel'nogo ispovedaniia very," *Tserkovnyi vestnik,* no. 10 (1875), p. 9.

51 Smirnov, "K starokatolicheskomu voprosu..." *Vera i razum,* no. 19 (1893), p. 393. Original italics.

also maintained that the dialogue with Old Catholicism had come down to the attempt "to transform our Orthodox Church into the Protestant Church."[52] One year after, Smirnov articulated an opposite position—but an equally negative one towards Old Catholicism; this time he identified it as nothing else but "proud, arrogant and self-aggrandizing Papacy" (*papstvo gordelivoe... samoobol'shchennoe i zanoschivoe*).[53] Vladimir Solov'ev who became known as a prophet of the reunification of Christian Churches, rapprochement between Russia and Vatican, and a propagator of the Third Rome Messianism,[54] was not, however, particularly welcoming to the Old Catholics as well. He suspected that they had rejected Catholicism because they had been caring about their freedom of thinking, not about the purity of Church principles.[55]

Father Eugene Smirnov, who made his name by criticizing the Old Catholics, remarked that sophisticated Old Catholic scholars were insurmountably far from the ideal of an Orthodox thinker who "works humbly, obedient to the Church and being aware of his weakness, who refrains from any judgment [and] human speculations [*mudrovaniia*]."[56] The journal *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik* accepted that the Old Catholics denied *filioque* but vaguely maintained that they "to a certain extent still remain under the spells of the Western thinking (*pod obaianiem zapadnogo myshleniia*) on this matter."[57] In 1903 the Holy Synod under Pobedonostsev's guidance made a sour-sweet address to the Patriarch of Constantinople on its position on the Old Catholic cause. The Old Catholics were commended for their willingness to separate from Vatican, but at the same time the Most Holy Synod pointed at the fact that they are "too close to the Protestant world by language, civic life and university education," and hence, it might be too difficult for them to withstand the "inconspicuous but constant influence" of Protestantism.[58]

Conservative neo-Slavophile Dmitry Khomiakov maintained that the Old Catholics should "transplant themselves" (*se greffer*) into the Orthodox Church because the "living Church" was nore important than dogmas: a person might know dogmas but not follow them, whereas participation in the life of the Orthodox Church was a necessary precondition for salvation.[59] During the First

52 *Vera i razum*, 1893, no. 23, p. 678.

53 Quoted from Ianyshev, "Pravda li, chto starokatoliki," p. 197.

54 For example: Evgenii Gollerbakh, *K nezrimomu gradu: Religiozno-filosofskaia gruppa "Put'" (1910–1919) v poiskakh novoi religioznoi identichnosti* (St. Petersburg, 2000), p. 207; Andzhelo Tamborra, *Katolicheskaia tserkov' i russkoe pravoslavie: Dva veka protivorechiia i dialoga* (Moscow, 2007), p. 379.

55 Vladimir Solov'ev, "O tserkovnom voprose po povodu staro-katolikov (1883)," in Solov'ev, Sobranie sochinenii, 9 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1901–1907), vol. 4, p. 114.

56 Quoted from: Ianyshev, "Pravda li, chto," p. 197.

57 Vladimir Kerensky, "Starokatolicheskii vopros v noveishee vremia," *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik,* no. 1 (1897), p. 125.

58 "Otvetnoe poslanie Sviateishego Pravitel'stvuiushchego Sinoda ko Vselenskoi Patriarkhii," *Tserkovnye vedomosti,* no. 24 (1903), p. 255.

59 Kireev, "Diary, 1 October 1895," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 7, l. 34.

World War, father Pavel Florensky developed a negative attitude to the Old Catholics, following the similar conservative argumentation against ignoring the importance of traditions, canons and authorities in the Church.[60]

The revolution of 1905–07 played into hands of the advocates of Old Catholicism because it showed that "spontaneous" religiosity of the people, their supposed non-reflexive attachment to the religious tradition was only a myth, because the religious cover of the people "the God bearer" was peeled off in no time. The religious intellectuals woke up to the fact that there was a need for bringing the people back to the Church by means of missionary work and religious education; the model of an Orthodox intellectual marked by humble obedience to the Church and avoidance of sophisticated reasoning fizzled out.[61] Holding the Old Catholic scholarship in great esteem, its Russian followers contemplated ways, in which reason could be fused with religious revelation.[62]

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

One of the central ideas of the Old Catholic leaders was the concept of the "single body" of the Church, which puts together both clergymen and laymen as equally important members and provides for ample opportunities for the laity to participate in the Church life, service and theological discussions. The very project of Old Catholicism was conceived and implemented by a handful of lay theology professors, some of whom later on became bishops of a newly erected Church. They referred to the canons of the undivided Church according to which laymen could elect priests from their milieu, so the Church was perceived as a wholeness of the Christian people. As Alois Anton, bishop of the Vienna's Old Catholics argued, "clerics are only one part of the Church, but not the Church per se."[63] This concept of the Church implied elaboration of new sociability in religious communities, based on the active involvement of the lay people into the life of the parish and into debates on theology. Old Catholic bishop Eugene Weber professed that "the goal of our movement... lies in making Evangelic truths available to all believers and to provide them a possibility of an independent judgment in religious issues." So, the ultimate purpose of Old Catholicism was to bring up a new Christian, characterized by self-conscious and rationally-bounded faith and truly Christian piety instead of Roman "formalism." It was assumed that only this new type of a believer could withstand the pressure of atheism and secularism.[64]

60 Sergii Eliseev, "Sviashchennik Pavel Florenskii, slavianofil'stvo i starokatolitsizm: Zametki k teme," 22 December 2007, available at: https://bogoslov.ru/article/256934; Pavel Florenskii, *Okolo Khomiakova: Kriticheskie zametki* (Sergiev Posad, 1916).

61 E.g., Kireev, "Diary, 26 October 1893," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 11, l. 433ob.

62 E.g., Rtsy [Ivan Romanov], [lead article], *Letopisets,* no. 1–2 (1904), p. 3.

63 Quoted from: Halama, *Altkatholiken*, p. 103.

64 V. Dobronravov, "Desiat' let iz istorii starokatolicheskogo dvizheniia," *Khristianskoe chtenie,* no. 11–12 (1890), pp. 566, 582.

Russian advocates of Old Catholicism shared the same convictions. Ioann Ianyshev vigorously argued that a "national-religious organism" was inseparable, in which spiritual and material aspects could not be differentiated. Hence, he continued, we should not separate the state from the church and the church from society.[65] This organism came up from the baptismal font in 988, when, according to Kireev, "the state merged organically with the Orthodox Church" and transformed into "Holy Russia," in which the religious ideals were naturally connected with the political life of the Russian people.[66] Kireev wrote that such an organic unity could be viable only in the Orthodox countries, where the secular and the religious authorities harmoniously unite. Russia's universal mission, according to this interpretation, consists of its religious-political relations as an embodiment of the ideal of the "Church-State." Having adopted technical and technological novelties from Europe, "Russia has to stop imitating... and start building on its own ancient ethical grounds... in organic union with the Church and with consideration to the ancient political institutions of Muscovite Russia."[67] Again and again, Kireev, stressed this idea in his writings, claiming that this was Russia's special mission to show the world, how this union between the Church and the state could become possible.[68] This means that promoting Old Catholicism in Europe, Russia would carry out its global mission in yet another important aspect: it would set an example of the perfect socio-political order.[69]

The hallmark of the thought of these reformists was an idea to reinvigorate parishes (*prikhody,* local religious communities), which gained much publicity in the late imperial period thanks to the publications by Slavophile Aleksandr Papkov.[70] This was not merely the question of better organization of the Church, in debates on Old Catholicism, parishes played the key role as constructing blocks of an Orthodox civil society. A Church parish emerged as an ideal candidate for merging grassroots activities and self-government with religiosity.

Kireev cherished a vision of an ideal social life in "fraternities," which should combine religious and spiritual aspects of parishes with economic activities, resembling cooperative associations.[71] He saw Old Catholicism as a

65 "Rech' I. L. Ianysheva, 25 aprelia 1876," in *Sbornik protokolov Obshchestva*, pp. 23, 35.

66 Aleksandr Kireev, "Rech' na torzhestvennom zasedanii SBO," in Kireev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, p. 23.

67 Aleksandr Kireev, "Nashi osnovopolozheniia," in Kireev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, p. 208.

68 Kireev, "Otvet Avstriiskomu Slavianinu," in Kireev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, p. 52.

69 Kireev, "Religioznye zadachi Rossii" and "Vossoedinenie tserkvei i slavianstvo," in Kireev, *Sochineniia,* vol. 2: 201, p. 460.

70 See, among dozens of his writings, A. Papkov, *Besedy o pravoslavnom prikhode* (St. Petersburg, 1912). More on this: Daniel L. Scarborough, *The White Priests at Work: Orthodox Pastoral Activism and the Public Sphere in Late Imperial Russia*, PhD dissertation (Washington, DC, 2012).

71 *Zhurnaly i protokoly zasedanii Vysochaishe utverzhdennogo Predsobornogo Prisutstviia* (St. Petersburg, 1906), vol. 3, p. 300.

gear to regenerate Russian parishes. He believed that "the Old Catholics have very solid foundations for parishes. Priests and laypeople who elect priests act together, they walk the same road." This arrangement would enable people not only "to live with the Church, but also to live in the Church."[72] Kireev arranged publication of Aleksandr Papkov's paper on ancient Russian parishes in *Revue international de théologie*, which expressed the belief that Old Catholicism would remind the Russian Church of its own (imaginary) past:

> ...In the peasant commune... a church was also the center of social life. People gathered around it in order to discuss their everyday life. The clergy was not a separate cast, but part of the people... Various charity institutions were organized around a church... The commune, supported by parishioners, elected priests and the administration.[73]

This tendency of giving power to the laypeople was duly noted and criticized in the conservative Church press. *Khristianskoe chtenie*, for example, pointed at the corollary of such an accent on people's participation in the life of the parish: it implied that the common people had a capacity of an autonomous and rational judgement in Church matters. This posited a certain threat to the clergy's authority and signaled that "the Old Catholics are too much infatuated with the Protestant tendency" (*uvleklis' protestantskoi tendentsiei*).[74] Vladimir Kerensky stroke the same note when he criticized Old Catholic theologian Eduard Herzog for the Protestant idea that the pastor and his flock should not be separated.[75]

GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the very beginning, the Old Catholic movement put forward the principle of the national church, based on the canon of autocephaly of Churches. Against the background of the German and Italian unification, Old Catholicism interpreted this canon as the claim for sovereignty of the national Church and its independence from Vatican, for the vernacular language in Church services and for recognition of national rites.[76] In other words, leaders of Old Catholicism viewed the Church through the same lenses as the nation-state. For them, Old Catholicism echoed the ideas of Saints Cyril and Methodius, baptizers of the Slavs in the 9th century. These ideas include recognition of the seven ec-

72 Aleksandr Kireev, "Mladokatolitsizm i starokatolitsizm," in Kireev, *Sochineniia,* vol. 2, p. 137.

73 Aleksandr Papkoff, "Les confréries religieuses dans l'ancienne Russie," *Revue internationale de théologie*, no. 14 (1896), p. 255.

74 V. Dobronravov, "Desiat' let iz istorii starokatolicheskogo dvizheniia (1871–1881)," *Khristianskoe chteniie,* no. 9–10 (1890), pp. 578–581.

75 Vladimir Kerenskii, *Shestoi international'nyi starokatolicheskii kongress i razvitie starokatolitsizma v poslednie gody (1902–1904)* (Kazan', 1904), p. 67.

76 E.g., Eduard Herzog, "Die Nationalkirche," *Revue internationale de théologie,* no. 13 (1896), pp. 15–16.

umenical councils, negation of the centralization in Christianity, standing for organization of autocephalous national Slavic Churches, and acceptance of the national languages in religious services. Michaud mentioned, for example, that the Old Catholics venerate Czech reformers of Catholicism Jerome of Prague and Jan Hus.[77]

Russian supporters of Old Catholicism accepted the nation-church principle in general, but added another, paradoxically universalist dimension to it. For them, establishment of national Old Catholic Churches in Poland, Lithuania and Czech lands would create the common religious grounds and bring these peoples closer to Russia. Poet Fedor Tiutchev exaltedly reacted to the Old Catholic movement, calling it a new pacifying (*primiritel'nyi*) principle, which would define Russia's present mission (*prizvanie*).[78] Kireev, Sergei Sharapov, Nikolai Aksakov, and some other neo-Slavophiles and pan-Slavists propagated Polish Old Catholicism as a method to soothe the Russian-Polish discord because "we could be friends with the Poles if it were not the religious difference, but Old Catholicism would befriend us."[79] Kireev, for example, believed that converting the Poles into Old Catholicism would be "*the key for solving the Polish problem*."[80] He maintained that the central reason for the Russian-Polish antagonism was religion and especially anti-Russian propaganda of Jesuits in Poland. If the common religious grounds were established, the Russo-Polish ethnic and linguistic affinities would come to the fore and serve as the backbone for the would-be Slavic Union.[81]

Kireev actively promoted the Polish Mariavites, who established an independent Catholic Church of Poland.[82] The Mariavites came into being in the 1880s independently from the Old Catholicism, and Kireev rendered their leader Jan Kowalski great service by relating him to Old Catholics. The latter enthroned him as a bishop on the Vienna congress in 1909.[83] It gave Kireev

77 Vladimir Kerenskii, "Chetvertyi starokatolicheskii s"ezd i ego znachenie..." *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik,* no. 10 (1897), pp. 735–738. See also: "Otchet prot. A. Tachalova o piatom starokatolicheskom kongresse," in Ianyshev, ed., *Katekhizis, izdannyi v Bonne* (St. Petersburg, 162). On Old Catholicism in Bohemia and its connection with Pan-Slavic ideas see: J. Bradley, "The Old Catholicism and Pan-Slavism in Bohemia," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 39, no. 93 (1961), pp. 512–516.

78 Letter of Fedor Tiutchev to Ivan Aksakov of 2 October 1871, in F. Tiutchev, *Pis'ma* (Moscow, 2019), p. 295.

79 Kireev, "Diary, 21–22 August 1897," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 10, l. 150; cf.: Kireev, "O starokatolikakh," in Kireev, *Sochineniia,* vol. 2: 102; Kireev, "O starokatolitsizme," in Kireev, *Sochineniia,* vol. 2, p. 115; "Kireev to N. Ziotov, 2 November 1897," in Kireev and Ianyshev, *Materialy*, 27; Sharapov, [Lead article], *Russkii trud,* no. 1 (1898), p. 11.

80 "Kireev to Ziotov, 2 November 1897," in *Materialy k istorii,* 27. Original italics.

81 "O starokatolikhakh," in Kireev, *Sochineniia,* vol. 2, p. 102.

82 Olga Novikoff, *Le général A. Kireev et son dénouement à l'ancien-catholicisme* (Bern, 1912), pp. 1–2; Basil, "The Russian Theological Academies," p. 96; V. Sokolov, "Pamiati A. A. Kireeva," *Bogoslovskii vestnik,* no. 11 (1911), p. 645.

83 Kireev, "Diary, 18 July 1909," in Kireev, *Dnevnik, 1905–1910* (Moscow, 2010), pp. 331, 334.

reasons to boast that he had introduced Old Catholicism in Poland.[84] His initiative could be contextualized as an attempt to "de-Catholicize" Poland after the revolt of 1863, represented inter alia by the project of the "reverse Union."[85] Kireev related his talk with tsar Nicholas II on this issue in January 1898:

> Tsar: but they, the Czechs and the Poles, are ardent Catholics, are not they?
> I: Sure, but this is precisely Old Catholicism which would give them a possibility to change their relations to us...
> Tsar: All right, I understand. Have you spoken with Pobedonostsev about this?
> I: Have mercy! Pobedonostsev stands on a completely different point of view. He does not understand the [idea] of the universal church. For him, the Church is limited by the Liteinaia [street in St Petersburg] or in any case does not go beyond our political borders!
> The Tsar was silent.[86]

In February 1898, Kireev had another audience with Nicholas II and pontificated on the role of the Old Catholics as a bridge between Russia and the Slavs in the Habsburg Empire. This time his diary sounded more optimistic: "the tsar completely understood [his idea]."[87]

Kireev entertained similar hopes in relation to the Czechs. They were seen as the potential anti-Austrian force and Russian allies. *Narodni Listy,* one of the newspapers of the nationalistic Young Czech Party, was proposed as a potential publishing outlet for propaganda of Old Catholicism.[88] Russian pan-Slavists had especially high opinion of the Czechs because of the Hussite movement of the early 15th century and the so called "Cyril and Methodius idea," i.e. the concept of religious autonomy of the Slavic peoples, baptized by Saints Cyril and Methodius who rejected the Papal authority. For example, poet and translator Vladimir Umanov-Kaplunovskii advanced an idea of establishing an independent "Cyril and Methodius" Church for all Catholic Slavs.[89]

Supporters of Old Catholicism believed that this movement would lay the foundation of the pan-Slavic Union. On the one hand, it would turn the Slavs in the Habsburg Empire into Russia's allies, and on the other hand, it would allow Russia "to liberate the Western Slavs from the yoke of Roman Catholicism" and give them a chance to develop national Slavic churches.[90] Seen from the bird's eye perspective, Kireev's interpretation of pan-Slavism meant

84 Olga Novikoff, *Le général A. Kireev*, pp. 1–2.

85 Mikhail Dolbilov and D. Stalunas, *Obratnaia uniia: Iz istorii otnoshenii mezhdu katolitsizmom i pravoslaviem v Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1840–1873* (Vilnius, 2010).

86 Kireev, "Diary, 9 January, 1898," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 11, l. 179ob–180.

87 Kireev, "Diary, 10 February, 1898," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 11, l. 226.

88 "Letter of Father Sergei Lebedev to Kireev, 20 February, 1876," MB RSL, f. 126, k. 18, d. 1, l. 37ob.

89 Sharapov, [lead article], *Russkii trud,* no. 6 (1897), p. 8.

90 Kireev, "O starokatolitsizme," in Kireev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, p. 116.

that it would become the first step towards the implementation of Russia's global religious mission.[91]

Another neo-Slavophile, Sergei Sharapov, penned the most detailed account on the desired Slavic unification on the basis of the religious community. In his utopia *Fifty Years from Now* (1902) a protagonist finds himself in 1952 and converses with a fellow traveler:

- There is no longer Catholicism in Poland. Poland is in spiritual communion with us.
  I almost jumped from my seat:
- Did Poland adopt [Eastern] Orthodoxy?
- ...You measure against your own yardstick. To join the Universal Church does not mean to "adopt Orthodoxy." Orthodoxy is the Eastern form of the universal Church, but there are others.
- Let me make a guess: is it Old Catholicism?
- Right, but...we call them "Western Christians" and they call us "East Christians" and we are in full communion. There are differences in rites, but the Nicene Creed is one for all...[92]

As a reader learns further, confessional unity facilitated the creation of the Slavic Union. Embedded into the neo-Slavic utopia, Old Catholicism was perfectly commensurable with the vision of an all-Slavic federation comprised of politically and religiously autonomous national entities.

CONCLUSION

The debates on Old Catholicism demarcated two camps among the religious intelligentsia and conservative thinkers in Russia. The opponents of Old Catholicism articulated the covenant version of Messianism, who propagated "saving the self" instead of "saving the others." For them, being faithful to the national religious tradition represented the ultimate religious and societal value. On the other side, the camp of utopian and Messianic dreamers called for the renovation of the Church by means of restoring the ancient bases of their faith. Supporters of the Old Catholics were in certain aspects similar to Protestant fundamentalists of the early 20th century or Muslim fundamentalists of our days. They wanted to establish an alternative order by means of an overtly modern project of restoring (or better: inventing) the tradition of ancient Christianity through deliberation, reflection and openness to academic pursuit.[93] More than that, this alternative order was designed as a means to fight back secularism by introducing religion into the very fabric of social life. According

91 Kireev, "Otvet kommentatoru," in Kireev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, p. 139.

92 Sharapov, *Cherez polveka* [1902], in Sharapov, *Posle pobedy slavianofilov* (Moscow, 2005), p. 85.

93 Cf. Eric Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Laura Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire: Imperial Russia's Illiberal Path* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), p. 102.

to this interpretation, Russia's mission in the world has three aspects: reunification of the divided Christian Church, reconciliation among the Slavs, and restauration of the religious social order.

The Old Catholic debates addressed the problem of renovation of the Church, society and the state by means of coming back to the primordial principles of early Christianity and by (re-)inventing religion-based and self-governing small communities (parishes). These debates had a lasting impact on Russian religious and political thinking. It resonated with the "Religious renaissance" of the early 20th century and especially with the ideas of the "Solov'ev's Religious-Philosophical Society." It echoed in the calls for the "back-to-the-roots" theology and in projects of "Orthodox civil society" of the next generation of theologians in exile. Today, Patriarch Kirill and his followers contemplate the "inter-traditional" union with the conservative forces outside of Russia, which bears strong resemblance with the projects, entertained by the proponents of Old Catholicism in the late imperial period. Messianism is back again. Similarly to its role in late imperial Russia, now it ideologically positions the country, which is stuck in the limbo of "triple inabilities," described in the beginning of the article: inability to structurally change, or to adjust its self-perception to the deteriorated international reputation, or to physically fight against those, who do not "recognize" Russia as a great power.