

**WAR AND CHRISTIANITY,
FROM THE RUSSIAN
POINT OF VIEW**

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War and Christianity, from the Russian point of view by Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov & Stephen Graham

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VLADIMIR SERGEYEVICH SOLOVYOV & STEPHEN GRAHAM

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FROM THE RUSSIAN POINT OF VIEW

THREE CONVERSATIONS BY

VLADIMIR SOLOVYOF

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

S T E P H E N

G R A H A M

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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TO THE
MEMBERS

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PREFACE

VLADIMIR SOLOVYOF, the author of this book, is Russia's greatest philosopher and one of the greatest of her poets, a serene and happy writer. He was born in 1853 and died in 1901, that is, he flourished in Russia during the same years that Nietzsche lived in Germany. He was a seeker and also a seer, a thinker and also a singer. His life is not marked by irritability, and it did not culminate in mental and psychic collapse as did the life of Nietzsche. Probably life was easier for a man of genius in Russia than in Germany—there are wider spaces there, more freedom, more tenderness between man and man, less materialism, less selfishness, less to send one mad.

Solovyof came from a happy home and of a literary family. His father, Serge Mikhailovitch Solovyof, was a historian; his mother, a Little Russian of old family and culture, was proud to remind her children of a kinsman who had been a great philosopher in his day. At home there was an atmosphere of real things—never any of the cheap wit and vulgarism and mental meanness that so often sterilise the creative intelligence of otherwise wonderful children. There was much reading aloud and many lively discussions about life and

religion. Every one of Solovyof's brothers and sisters achieved distinction in life and letters later on. Vladimir was, however, the greatest and showed his gifts from the first.

The young man's distinctive tone in thought was opposition to positivism, humanitarianism and the ideas of Western civilisation, and throughout his student days he propounded in many arguments a lively belief in Russia and the Russian idea, in orthodoxy and mysticism. But with all his brilliance he was also an industrious scholar. He graduated in 1873, and gave many of the succeeding years of youth to research and study. He held a professorship for a short while, but gave up his chair in 1882, and the remaining eighteen years of his life were devoted almost entirely to literary work.

As a poet he was, nearest to Fête, one of the most delicate of Russian poets. Solovyof was the first poet philosopher of his country, the first to speak simply and beautifully in verse of the most difficult problems of man's life and religion. In his works you may seek and find the Russian idea, the Eastern Christian point of view. His philosophy derives in part from gnostic Christianity, and is associated with the idea of St. Sophia rather than the idea of St. Peter, with eternal wisdom rather than eternal law.

It would be impossible to sum up in a sentence the author's majestic vision of life, but we may cite an exclamation from one of his poems :

" All evil is powerless, man is for ever, and God is with us ! "

In national culture Solovyof owned Dostoieffsky as his prophet. With Dostoieffsky he was one of the great spiritual leaders of the Russian people. He was in all his work and faith opposed to Tolstoy, considering Tolstoyism to be a sort of moral atrophy. Yet he never attacked Tolstoy by name, and was never mixed up in any acrid controversy. The accompanying volume is one of the chief of those in which Tolstoyism and positivism are combated. At the present moment, when recurring war has caused much heart-searching in the minds of Christian people, it has been thought most fitting to issue a translation of this Russian book.

War has not prompted so many misgivings in Christian Russia as it has done in the humanitarian and materialistic West. It is felt that—

“Religion is never shaken down by war, but logicians are shaken in their logic, agnosticism is shaken, materialism is shaken, atheism is shaken, positivism is shaken. The intellectual dominance is shaken and falls, the spiritual powers are allowed to take possession of men’s being.”

Solovyof issued “War and Christianity” on Easter Day, 1900, the year before his death. According to Valery Brusof, one of the most interesting of contemporary Russian essayists—

“Towards the end of Solovyof’s life a sort of special power and intensity of perception seemed to show itself in his work. The poet and thinker approached the most sacred problems of contemporary man. . . . Everyone was listening to the powerful voice of Solovyof as to the words of a master; his right to judge was acknowledged. . . . Death unexpectedly cut short this teaching so necessary to us. . . . But, beware of superfluous lamentation,

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The General

let us call to mind that he himself tried to find a sense and a moral indispensability even in the shot of Dantes and the destruction of the 'godly phial' as if it were a potter's vessel."

Especial thanks are due to Mr. Edward Cazalet, of the Anglo-Russian Literary Society, who translated Conversation II., and to Mr. W. J. Barnes and Mr. H. H. Haynes, who translated Conversation III., and to Mr. Barnes who saw through the proofs.

STEPHEN GRAHAM.

LONDON,
April, 1915.

THE SCENE

IN the garden of one of those villas which, at the foot of the Alps, look down on the blue depths of the Mediterranean, there met one summer five Russians : an old general, of many campaigns, we shall call him the General ; a politician, a " father of the Senate," resting from the theoretical and practical occupations of State affairs, we shall call him the Politician ; a young prince, a moralist and popular teacher, responsible for the editing of various more or less helpful pamphlets on moral and social questions, we shall call him the Prince ; a lady of middle age, interested in all that concerns human beings, she is the Lady ; and the fifth was a gentleman of doubtful age and social position, let us call him Mr. Z.

I was a silent listener to all their conversations, some of which appeared to me to have much interest, and whilst they were fresh in my memory I wrote them down. The first conversation was begun in my absence. I believe it started *apropos* of some newspaper article or peace pamphlet on the subject of the campaign against war and military service, which was being carried on by the Baroness Luttner and Mr. Stead, following in the footsteps of Tolstoy.

The Politician, on being asked by the Lady

w.c.

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