



Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov

By Vladimir Solovyov, Judith Deutsch Kornblatt

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The founder of modern Russian philosophy, Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900) is widely considered its greatest practitioner. Together with Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, he is one of the towering intellectual figures in late-nineteenth-century Russia, and his diverse writings influenced much of the non-Marxist tradition of twentieth-century Russian thought. Philosopher, journalist, poet, and playwright, Solovyov was also a mystic who claimed to have had three visions of Divine Sophia.

This personification of wisdom with golden hair and a radiant aura echoes both the eternal feminine and the world soul. Rooted in Christian and Jewish mysticism, Eastern Orthodox iconography, Greek philosophy, and European romanticism, the Sophiology that suffuses Solovyov's philosophical and artistic works is both intellectually sophisticated and profoundly inspiring. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt brings together key texts from Solovyov's writings about Sophia: poetry, fiction, drama, and philosophy, all extensively annotated and some available in English for the first time (with assistance from the translators Boris Jakim and Laury Magnus).

In the comprehensive introductory essay that encompasses the book's first half, Kornblatt establishes the historical, philosophical, religious, and literary context of Solovyov's Sophiology, emphasizing its connection to contemporaneous religious and philosophical thought as well as other social and cultural trends in Europe and the United States?for example, Solovyov's reactions to his changing world ran parallel to and sometimes intersected with those of Darwin, Nietzsche, and William James. Sophiology is once again finding enthusiasts both in Russia and among seekers around the world.

The definitive introduction to Solovyov's wisdom and its profound impact on Russian thought and culture, Divine Sophia makes Solovyov's mystical visions and literary "re-visions" of Sophia accessible to scholars and lay readers alike. Solovyov's wisdom writings captivated several generations of poets and philosophers during the pre- and postrevolutionary periods in Russia and abroad. In particular, his Sophiology had a profound influence on such major figures of Russia's Silver Age as Alexander Blok, Andrei Belyi, Pavel Florensky, and Sergei Bulgakov.

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Editorial Review

Review

"An extremely interesting and valuable book In post-Soviet Russia, there is renewed interest in Solovyov's philosophy and, among some theologians, in sophiology, which is no longer seen as a threat to doctrinal orthodoxy. Given current interest in the subject in the West as well, Judith Deutsch Kornblatt has provided a timely and valuable resource for the study of Solovyov's concept of Divine Sophia."?Hugh Wybrew, *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 & 28 August 2009

"The present volume is not only striking for its manifest erudition, but also for its utter handiness. . . . For specialist and non-specialist alike, the author has performed an invaluable service, making research available, especially to those not conversant in Russian. In one handy volume, every contribution Solovyov ever put to ink on the subject of Divine Wisdom is found: from the purely exploratory . . . to his formal, philosophical expositions."?R. Slesinski, *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* (2011)

"Judith Deutsch Kornblatt's remarkable and erudite study of the Sophia in Vladimir Solov'ev's life and writings offers a comprehensive presentation of the origins of the wisdom principle of Sophia in religious thought and its evolution in Solov'ev's identity. . . . The book's unusual structure of two distinctively different parts?the first an intellectual tour-de-force analyzing the myriad facets of Sophia and her influence on Solov'ev, and the second a collection of annotated translations of the philosopher-poet's wisdom writings, with a reading guide preceding each group of translations?will appeal to both scholars and educators."?Valeria Z. Nollan, *Slavic Review* (Winter 2010)

"*Divine Sophia* is an appealingly readable and accessible summary of Vladimir Solovyov's life, a presentation of the social, intellectual, and historical context in which he lived and thought, and an examination of the various sources of his Sophiology. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt reveals Solovyov the eccentric, the man, and the philosopher. This comprehensive collection of Solovyov's sophiological writings, carefully translated (by Kornblatt, Boris Jakim, and Laury Magnus) and thoroughly annotated, offers something for both scholars and seekers. The intellectual impact of this volume is far greater than the sum of its individual parts"?Maria Carlson, Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Kansas

"*Divine Sophia* offers a thorough and nuanced analysis of Solovyov's writings on the subject and makes them available in a translation that reads well in English. I recommend this book to anyone interested in Russian

thought and culture."?Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, Fordham University

"By gathering Solovyov's variegated writings on Divine Wisdom into one volume and outfitting them with extensive but never intrusive commentary, Judith Deutsch Kornblatt has provided a unique resource for the study of modern Russian thought. If few areas of Russian intellectual life escaped Solovyov's influence, even fewer areas of Solovyov's own creativity escaped the lure of Divine Sophia, his theo-philosophical Muse. In her exposition, Kornblatt shows a remarkable talent for bringing clarity to complicated material without oversimplifying it. Solovyov's religious and intellectual world emerges from her analysis as radiant as ever, except that we understand it better. Kornblatt also opens up dimensions of Solovyov's sensibility that have been sorely underestimated by previous scholars, especially Solovyov's love of laughter, pranks, travesty and self-parody. She shows that Solovyov's powerful sense of humor was not an incidental personality trait but stood at the heart of his moral and mystical universe. This wonderful insight sets the whole of Solovyov's work into a new register, challenging us to read and evaluate this Russian philosopher, poet and prophet in ways that measure up to his stunning originality."?Paul Valliere, McGregor Professor in the Humanities, Butler University

"Judith Deutsch Kornblatt has provided an invaluable service to all of us who love and study Solovyov and who find the Sophiological tradition a source of fascination and delight. The choice of texts is impeccable, and the accompanying exposition is comprehensive and profoundly illuminating."?David Hart, Providence College

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Judith Deutsch Kornblatt is professor and associate chair of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature and associate dean for Arts and Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is author of "The Cossack Hero in Russian Literature" and coeditor of "Russian Religious Thought," also published by the University of Wisconsin Press.

Boris Jakim is the foremost translator of Russian religious thought into English. His published translations include works by S.L. Frank, Pavel Florensky, Vladimir Solovyov, and Sergius Bulgakov.

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