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# **Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin: The Search For Orthodox And Catholic Union**



## Synopsis

Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin analyzes questions of nationality and religious identity in nineteenth-century Russian history as reflected in the life of Jesuit priest Ivan Gagarin. A descendent of one of Russia's most ancient and politically powerful families, Father Ivan Gagarin, S.J. (1814-1882) dedicated his life to creating a union between the Orthodox and Catholic churches that would preserve the dogmatic and traditional beliefs of both. Traditional understandings of Russian identity have emanated from the perspective of the dominant Orthodox religion; this captivating study uses the unionist work of Gagarin to illumine Russia's national identity from the perspective of Roman Catholicism. Seeing his unionist proposals as necessary for the preservation of Russian stability, Gagarin found himself in frequent opposition to the Orthodox Church. While Gagarin believed that Church union would preserve Russia from the threats of communism and revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church believed that union would mean the sacrifice of religious truth, ecclesial independence and religious orthodoxy. Jeffrey Beshoner's even-handed analysis reveals that the Roman Catholic Church presented its own s

## Book Information

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“Beshoner presents a well-researched and evenhanded examination of the evolution of Gagarin's thought within the context of the political and theological debates of the time. He shows that the fascinating story of Gagarin, the Don Quixote of Catholicism, exemplifies the futility of all-encompassing projects for the nation's salvation. His book is richly documented, and

he makes generous use of archival material from France, Italy, the Vatican, and Russia. The book is an important resource for scholars interested in the Westernizers/Slavophile controversy, in problems of Russian national identity, in mutual misconceptions between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Vatican, and in ecumenical politics in general. *Slavic Review* "Beshoner's meticulous analysis makes a valuable contribution to the scholarship on religious and church history in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Above all, it provides a full, well-researched account of a prominent Russian Catholic publicist, stripping away rhetoric and polemics to give a coherent account of his views and how he came to them. *American Historical Review* "Jeffrey Bruce Beshoner surprises readers with an intriguing book that includes nationalism, diplomacy and religion. It provides a multifaceted look into the history of Russia compared with the rest of Europe during the nineteenth century. Beshoner's work transcends the history of nineteenth-century Russian Orthodoxy. . . . He clearly defines and shows Gagarin's motives, writings, and experiences. *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin: The Search for Orthodox and Catholic Union* would prove beneficial in graduate-level courses, as well as in some upper level undergraduate courses. *History: Reviews of New Books* "Beshoner's presentation of Gagarin is valuable and extensive. It gives us another historical example of a division within Christian experience that still troubles many. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

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Beshoner's work transcends the history of nineteenth-century Russian Orthodoxy. . . . He clearly defines and shows Gagarin's motives, writings, and experiences. Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin: The Search for Orthodox and Catholic Union would prove beneficial in graduate-level courses, as well as in some upper level undergraduate courses. • History: Reviews of New Books • Beshoner's presentation of Gagarin is valuable and extensive. It gives us another historical example of a division within Christian experience that still troubles many. • Journal of the American Academy of Religion Jeffrey Bruce Beshoner received his Ph.D. in Russian history from the University of Notre Dame. He is currently a member of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Penance in the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. He resides in Washington, DC, where he continues to pursue his interests in Russian religious thought and ecumenical history.

If you are interested in the reunion of East and West, then this book will be of much interest to you! I was reminded of Jaroslav Pelikan's outstanding book, "Confessor Between East and West" while I read Beshoner's account of Ivan Gagarin. I'll quote from the conclusion to let you know where the author goes with his thesis and then you can decide if you would like to read his supporting chapters. I personally do not agree with Gagarin's belief that Roman Catholicism would bring Russia its political and intellectual "salvation", but I am greatly drawn to his commitment to his ideals. Moreover, any book that even promotes the agenda of reunion, in spite of the motives, is worth noting. Enjoy!"Personal contact with the West and the influence of such thinkers as Schelling, Chaadaev, Ancillon, and Jouffrey led Gagarin to the conviction that Russia's social and political backwardness was directly attributable to its separation from Catholicism. By following the Byzantine Empire into schism from Rome, Russia had separated itself from the mainspring of Western social and intellectual progress; in turn, the subjugation of the Russian Church to Russian secular authority became inevitable. Gagarin, therefore, reasoned that church union reattaching Russian to Catholicism would restore Russia to social and intellectual parity with the West. Seeking the best means of personally fostering this union, he joined the Society of Jesus. Gagarin's choice was costly. He lost the right to visit Russia and his family; he lost his inheritance; and he suffered decades of calumny- all to save the homeland that rejected him."\*\*\*\*Don't forget to check out Jaroslav Pelikan's "Confessor Between East and West"!

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