

The Beautiful and Sublime

Fyodor Dostoevsky:

Christianity, Orthodoxy, Christology, and Love

By Joe Carlson

Authorization to Submit Thesis

This thesis of Joe Carlson, submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Culture and titled, "The Beautiful and Sublime," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signature and date below, is now granted to submit a final copy to the Academic Dean for approval.

Peter Leithart, Ph.D., committee chair

Date _____

Final Approval by the Academic Dean:

Mr. Christopher R. Schlect, Academic Dean

Date _____

Abstract

Dostoevsky is probably one of the five most debated authors in history. He has been called an existentialist, an expressionist, a radical, a realist, a fascist, an atheist, oppressed, depressed, possessed, and most pointedly, a Christian.

As children of the West, we see much in Dostoevsky that either scares us, unsettles us, or is just plain foreign to our minds. Much of those sentiments stem from the fact that we simply do not understand the paradigm in which Dostoevsky was writing.

Dostoevsky was a Christian and wrote as such. His books are thoroughly filled with biblical allusions. In doing so, and because he was a talented author, he wrote typologically. He used a figure from Scripture and based his characters on that figure. This is seen most prominently in his use of the Christ-figure as a literary device.

At the foundation of love, is a God who is Love. This God, who has revealed Himself in the Holy Bible to us as Love, has also revealed Himself to us as triune. This means that Love is in some way triune.

"We dreamt about something enormous, about everything 'beautiful and sublime!.."

- Dostoevsky

And He said to him, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" This is the greatest and foremost commandment. The second is like it, *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*

- Matthew 22:37-39

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Table of Contents.....	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
One Introduction.....	7
Two Dostoevsky's Biography.....	12
Three Evidences of Christianity in His Novels.....	20
Four The Grand Inquisitor.....	28
Five Russian Orthodoxy.....	39
Six Dostoevsky the Orthodox.....	50
Seven Dostoevsky's Christology.....	63
Eight Threefold view of Love.....	78
Nine Conclusion.....	93
Bibliography.....	96

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank first of all my wife, Jen, who has suffered many earfuls of my own excitement and enthusiasm. The fact that she still wants to make me dinner at night, produces in me a genuine gratefulness for her patience and love. However, if I had a nickel for every time she nodded her head and smiled...

I also wish to thank Dr. Peter Leithart, who has lent his ear, and corrective pen to this endeavor. Through his wisdom and guidance, I have been able to see the distinctions between what is up and what is down. My extreme gratitude also goes out to his library, without which I would not have those books I borrowed from it.

I wish to thank Jeff Moss, Nathaniel Ealy, Josh Davis, David Henrekson, and Brent McLean, for granting me their minds and mouths as we discussed Dostoevsky and his works, trying to decipher the meaning of certain passages and their relevance to the work's overarching theme. Thanks for the Ritz and Port.

Finally, I wish to thank my parents, without whom this would not be possible. Had they not decided to give birth, and raise up a child, I would not have had the opportunity to be here. My heartfelt thanks to them also for granting me an education here at New St. Andrews. I am forever indebted to their dedication to my upbringing, and doing so to the glory of God.

Soli Deo Gloria

Chapter One Introduction

Dostoevsky is probably one of the five most debated authors in history. He has been called an existentialist, an expressionist, a radical, a realist, a fascist, an atheist, oppressed, depressed, possessed, and most pointedly, a Christian. More than a few diametrically opposed groups have claimed him as their own. Victor Terras says in his book, *Reading Dostoevsky*, "He is an excellent 'devil's advocate.' Sophisticated readers have mistaken for his own ideas what Dostoevsky was in fact trying to refute."¹ His ideologies have been studied over and over again, and complete and utter agreement still lies well beyond the horizon. A. Boyce Gibson puts it well in the introduction to his book, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, "Of books on Dostoevsky there is no end. The only excuse for another is that everyone sees him differently. He is the sort of writer whom everyone *will* see differently."² The reason for this is found in Dostoevsky's incredible ability to write polyphonically, as Mikhail Bakhtin describes it in his book, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. "A plurality," says Bakhtin, "of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid

¹Victor Terras, *Reading Dostoevsky*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 6.

²A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), 1.

voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels."³ Otto Kaus in his work, *Dostojewski und sein Schicksal*, quoted by Bakhtin, says this: "No author concentrated in himself so many utterly contradictory and mutually exclusive concepts, judgments, and evaluations as did Dostoevsky – but most astonishing is the fact that Dostoevsky's works justify as it were all these contradictory points of view: every one of them really does find support for itself in Dostoevsky's novels."⁴ It becomes more obvious why he is such a highly debated author.

This thesis is going to maintain throughout that Dostoevsky was a Christian. He had faith in the Christ of the Scriptures, and sought to proclaim Him to the world through the novels he wrote. At points it may not seem like Christianity at all. But that is our problem, not his. The first section has as its aim, putting forth solid evidence of the faith of Dostoevsky. Many have held that he was an atheist, or at least a hater of God. Much, if not all, of this type of thinking has come from a misunderstanding of how Dostoevsky wrote. Because of his style, the plurality of voices consistently held throughout a given work, people ascribe a certain voice to Dostoevsky, which is entirely inconsistent with the facts of his life. A great example of this is D.H. Lawrence, and his interpretation of *The Grand Inquisitor*. This debate comprises the final chapter of the first section.

Following that will be a discussion of Eastern Orthodoxy, and how Orthodoxy plays a major part in understanding this Child from the East. Gibson points out in his introduction, that "Some of the problems of Western critics are due to unfamiliarity with Dostoevsky's Russian Orthodoxy setting."⁵ This section attempts to make clear points of confusion, and bring light to the novels of Dostoevsky, illuminating key aspects that are steeped in Orthodoxy.

³Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 6.

⁴Ibid., 18.

⁵ Gibson, 6.

Thirdly, as I telescope down from Dostoevsky's Christianity, to his Orthodoxy, I take as an in depth example, his Christology. Christ, and His sacrificial life, is the focal point of Dostoevsky's faith, and that is reflected in his works. We will look at several characters from his major novels, particularly those who take on attributes of Christ, and are themselves Christ-figures in the story. I hope to discover by this exercise, more specifically who the Christ was that Dostoevsky cherished and admired.

Lastly, I wish to develop a three-fold view of love which Dostoevsky himself laid out in his crowning work, *The Brothers Karamazov*. This discussion will involve several examples of Dostoevsky defining and refining this three-fold view. It will be seen however, that this view of love is entirely biblical, one which we should take and apply to our own lives, and in our own relationships.

Why do a thesis on Dostoevsky? What is so important about this author that I need to spend the rest of these pages debating, discussing, admiring, and learning from him? Hopefully, the question will be answered as you continue through to the end. But to whet the appetite, consider this. In this modern, Western age we live in, our faith in God has become rigidly defined by our culture. We are simply not able to think outside the box our culture has created. That this should happen is natural of course, but the complacency, and almost apathy, with which we accept it, is not. Scripture is not defined by Western 21st Century American culture. Yet often that is exactly the assumption we maintain. The effort we need to make therefore is to step in the shoes of brothers from different cultures. This enables us to view our weaknesses and polemical difficulties from the outside. From the inside things can look quite rosy and perfect. This brings us to the West vs. East discussion. Being solid children of the West, our faith has, to a large degree, represented all that the West has become. Our history defines our theology. Likewise, the history of the East has defined their theology. It behooves us then to be students of the East, desiring to understand

the positions they take in defending the same book and the same Christ that we in the West worship. This in turn will aid our own stances, understanding that challenges and debates strengthen beliefs. As wind toughens the tree's branches, so putting our Western faith against the winds of the East, will only serve to strengthen our faith in God.

To this end we study Dostoevsky. As a mighty brother in the faith, he knew God and Christ, and placed his faith in Him. As a mighty brother in the Orthodox tradition, he understood God and Christ differently than we do. What we downplay, he often emphasized. What we often overlook, he brought to center stage. However as Gibson said above, we Westerners will often misunderstand someone like Dostoevsky, caught off guard by his frankness and unpietistic understanding of Christianity. What is meant by unpietistic? Often, our Christian sensibilities are offended by the presence of prostitutes, murderers, demons, etc. and cannot look beyond at what they represent, or their role in the story. Dostoevsky was not ashamed to talk about prostitutes, murderers, and demons. In fact, his books are filled with them. This is what offends our pietistic ears. Because of this, people are afraid of him, and neglect the rich faith that he everywhere expresses. Our cups need to be shaken, if only to see what comes out. Besides, the author I am discussing here happens to be one of the best who ever wrote, who has been recognized worldwide as having incredible insight into the human psyche. His last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, is studied in universities all across the globe, and is hailed as one of the greatest books of all time. It is important then, and not only for these later reasons, that we study this brother who was supremely gifted by God, and greatly used of God to preach Christ to the world.

With that said, let us commence this study, and may God bless it with accuracy and insight, and may it bring glory to His name.

Section One

The public Dostoevsky was a Christian, and in his later years a Christian propagandist: Dostoevsky the artist calls so much in question that highly qualified critics have seen his public professions as a mask for his inward misgivings. At the very least, the artist gives the atheist so much rope that he confronts the believer on equal terms.⁶

No account can properly represent him, even as an artist, which in any way slurs his complete devotion to Christ.⁷

- A. Boyce Gibson

They nudged each other and mocked at my father, when they heard his first words; but gradually, as he went on speaking, the jeers and laughter ceased. The moujiks saw before them their ideal - a true Christian, a wise and modest man, who placed God above all.⁸

- Aimee Dostoevsky

⁶Ibid., 2.

⁷Ibid., 5.

⁸Aimée Dostoevsky, *Fyodor Dostoevsky: A Study*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), 65.

Chapter Two Dostoevsky's Biography

Dostoevsky's life was a journey. To simply look at his actions, and none of his written works, one would say that he was never a Christian, until the last ten or so years of his life. He was a liberal socialist and subsequently was exiled to Siberia for his 'crimes' against the state; he was unfaithful to his first wife, ran away from his duties to Europe and became excessively addicted to gambling. Only, it would seem to the casual observer, in the last ten years did he actively engage in responsible, Christian activities. Despite all this, he was a Christian. Like all of us he struggled with sin, and did so until his death. Throughout his life, however, he fastened on to first the idea of Christ, then the person of Christ, and finally the reality of Christ. One might say, "Well, don't we know someone by their fruits?" Of course. But one must take into account all of the said person's fruits. This includes all of Dostoevsky's novels. Understanding these novels are half the battle in discovering what Dostoevsky believed.

To give some basic guidelines, a very short outline of Dostoevsky's life written by Constance Garnett, used as a Translators Preface to *Crime and Punishment* is here

reproduced. Garnett translated virtually every well-known work of Dostoevsky's, as well as a few of his more obscure short stories. This short biography will serve as an outline as I discuss the more religious aspects of his life.

Dostoevsky was the son of a doctor. His parents were very hard-working and deeply religious people, but so poor that they lived with their five children in only two rooms. The father and mother spent their evenings in reading aloud to their children, generally from books of a serious character.

Though always sickly and delicate, Dostoevsky came out third in the final examination of the Petersburg school of Engineering. There he had already begun his first work, 'Poor Folk.'

This story was published by the poet Nekrassov in his review and was received with acclamations. The shy, unknown youth found himself instantly something of a celebrity. A brilliant and successful career seemed to open before him, but those hopes were soon dashed. In 1849 he was arrested.

Though neither by temperament nor conviction a revolutionist, Dostoevsky was one of a little group of young men who met together to read Fourier and Proudhon. He was accused of 'taking part in conversations against the censorship, of reading a letter from Belinsky to Gogol, and of knowing of the intention to set up a printing press.' Under Nicholas I. this was enough, and he was condemned to death. After eight months' imprisonment he was with twenty-one others taken out to the Semonovsky Square to be shot. Writing to his brother Mikhail, Dostoevsky says: 'They snapped swords over our heads, and they made us put on the white shirts worn by persons condemned to death. Thereupon we were bound in threes to stakes, to suffer execution. Being the third in the row, I concluded I had only a few minutes of life before me. I thought of you and your dear ones and I contrived to kiss Plestcheiev and Dourov, who were next to me, and to bid them farewell. Suddenly the troops beat a tattoo, we were unbound, brought back upon the scaffold, and informed that his Majesty had spared us our lives.' The sentence was commuted to hard labor.

The intense suffering of this experience left a lasting stamp on Dostoevsky's mind. Then followed four years of penal servitude, spent in the company of common criminals in Siberia, where he began the 'Dead House,' and some years of service in a disciplinary battalion.

He had shown signs of some obscure nervous disease before his arrest and this now developed into violent attacks of epilepsy, from which he suffered for the rest of his life. The fits occurred three or four times a year and were more frequent in periods of great strain. In 1859 he was allowed to return to Russia. He started a journal—'Vremya,' which was forbidden by the Censorship through a misunderstanding. In 1864 he lost his first wife and his brother Mikhail. He was in terrible poverty, yet he took upon himself the payment of his brother's debts. He started another journal—'The Epoch,' which within a few months was also prohibited. He was weighed down by debt, his brother's family was dependent on him, he was forced to write at heart-breaking speed, and is said never to have corrected his work. The later years of his life were much softened by the tenderness and devotion of his second wife.

In June 1880 he made his famous speech at the unveiling of the monument to Pushkin in Moscow and he was received with extraordinary demonstrations of love and honor. A few months later Dostoevsky died.⁹

⁹Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, trans. Constance Garnett. (<http://www.planetpdf.com>), 2-5.

On October 30, 1821, Fyodor Dostoevsky was born to very staunch members of the Russian Orthodox Church. Both mother and father were close followers of all the Orthodox customs and traditions. They desired all of their children to be as steeped in the faith as they were. "In our family, we knew the Gospels from our earliest childhood,"¹⁰ he wrote, recalling his early years. "I knew Christ in the family home while still a child."¹¹ He grew up on the storybooks, *One Hundred and four Stories from the Old and New Testament*, and *Acts of the Martyrs*.¹² Growing up, they gave him strict instruction in religious studies. Gibson notes, "The family received religious instruction from the deacon at the hospital to which his father was attached. Every year they paid a holiday pilgrimage to the Troytsa monastery for the festival of St. Sergius – they stayed there two or three days, taking part in all the services, absorbing the splendor of the ritual and sharing the fervor of their fellow-worshippers."¹³ This strict, ultra-conservative upbringing may have played a part in the direction Dostoevsky took in the thirties and forties. In the 1830's French Romanticism was in vogue. Then Belinsky's nationalism came on the scene, and the French were downplayed a great deal. A new type of 'Christian Atheism' came with Belinsky's nationalism. Gibson explains,

But of one thing we can be sure: even in the midst of his Western misadventures, Dostoevsky remained devoted to the figure of Christ. In this age of 'Christian atheists' inside the churches, it is easier to follow the perplexities and repugnancies of nineteenth-century 'Christian atheists' outside the churches. So long as Christ is delivered of his shroud of deity, he can be revered as the best man ever. If this is a way out, Dostoevsky certainly took it."¹⁴

What this means is that much of early 19th century Russia were Christians only in name. They went through the motions, crossed at the right times, but never put a whole lot of stock in real salvation. This would become a problem for Dostoevsky later in life. However,

¹⁰Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, tans. Boris Brasol, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), 152.

¹¹Ibid.

¹² Gibson, 9.

¹³Gibson, 9.

¹⁴Ibid., 12.

at this point, he was more concerned with social problems, and the need for social reform. Christ as an *idea* was fine. In fact Dostoevsky was devoted to that idea. But the nation was the end all, and that is where 'true' salvation was to be found.

Many testimonies, if pictured on a graph, would look like a check mark. The upward climb is preceded by a short downward slash. This period of Dostoevsky's life could be seen as that downward slash. He had stopped attending Church for a few years, and was caught up in the thick of national socialism. Then came his arrest: the vertex of the check mark. Through his harrowing execution and reprieve, and subsequent time in Siberia, Dostoevsky re-thought much of his previous doctrines. Much later in life, Dostoevsky wrote, commenting on this early period, "From the people I received back into my soul Christ, whom I had known in the family home when still a child, and nearly lost when in my turn I was transformed into an European liberal."¹⁵ In his younger days, he had been influenced to a great degree by the West. It was Siberia, as far east as you can get, that shook him back to Russia. It was there that for the first time he came into contact with the Russian people. Everyone in his literary circles back home was already bent toward the West. This was, therefore, an invaluable experience. It challenged his idealistic view, and his 'Christian atheistic' socialism. By coming into contact with the Russian people, he came to know their wretched condition. He also came to see their peasant faith in God.¹⁶ This gave rise to his understanding that truth comes from the people, not the elite upper crust. As he became more enamored with the people and with their simple faith, his own faith was renewed. His liberalism was slowly cracking. Christ was becoming slowly a person, instead of an idea. But not all was rosy. The intellectualism of his youth was tough to shake. Gibson points out, "In Siberia Dostoevsky encountered and appropriated factors in life which passed over into Christian feeling, and at the same time made him acutely aware of the practical as well as

¹⁵Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*, 984.

¹⁶Gibson, 21.

the intellectual difficulties.”¹⁷ Dostoevsky, at the time, wrote a friend, “I am a child of the age, a child of unbelief and doubt, up till now, and till the grave shall cover me.” He speaks of a “longing for faith, which is all the stronger for the proofs I have against it.” Nonetheless, he has moments where he feels loved, and feels he can love. “In such moments,” he continues,

I have formulated my creed, in which all is precious and holy to me...there is nothing lovelier, deeper, more appealing, more rational, more human and more perfect than the Savior...not only is there no one else like him, there never could be...If anyone could prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth really did exclude Christ, I should stay with Christ rather than with the truth.¹⁸

Here we see clearly for the first time the sharp division that would remain within Dostoevsky for many years. On one side he desires faith, and Christ. He finds beauty in who He is. However, he is still not convinced that He is Truth. Christ and Truth are not synonyms for Dostoevsky, yet. He is a child of ‘unbelief’ searching for faith. Gibson comments, “The letter is a significant item in a progress report; it reveals a sharpening of the conflict, brought on by a growing Christian concern; it shows at least how much Dostoevsky disliked his unbelief; and it keeps the issue open.”¹⁹ In abstracting Truth in this manner, Dostoevsky betrays that he is still fixated on the *idea* of Christ. The *idea* of Christ is something that can be abstracted from all reality as well, and therefore can be held in opposition to the *idea* of Truth. However, as I said before, this was the vertex of the check mark. It is in this part of his life that the *idea* is transformed into the *person*.

In prison, he grew to become one of the people. This was the initial spark of Dostoevsky’s concern with community. He had always had a deep concern for the poor, as seen in his first, and highly praised book, *Poor Folk*. However, the idea of community, or ‘togetherness’, was new. It also was the beginning of his understanding of religion. Before

¹⁷Ibid., 22.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 23.

Siberia, religion was an idea which individuals could participate in. Now, there was an aspect of community in worship. This would continue to flower and bloom throughout the rest of his life.

On his return from Siberia, he encountered a new Russia. It was being attacked again by the West, and individualism was gaining the upper hand. This was appalling to Dostoevsky who had become so connected with the people, and valued their judgment over any given member of the intellectual elite.²⁰ After his first trip to Europe, leading to London, which disgusted him, he developed deeper nationalist foundations, foundations that included their Orthodoxy. Gibson says, "His trip westward consolidated his nationalism; he turned to the native resources of his country, including its Orthodoxy. Through the Russian people he was slowly making his way back to the Russian Church."²¹

When he returned from Russia, a new period of literary growth began. He began to develop his own thoughts, his own convictions, discovering them as he wrote. Beginning with *Notes from the Underground* right up through his last work, *The Brothers Karamazov*, we can trace a constantly changing, or rather maturing, voice. He had the incredible talent to state his beliefs clearly, and then create a character that carries the voice of his opponent, and that voice is just as strong, just as convincing, as his own. This was how Dostoevsky's mind worked. He himself was plagued by much doubt, and so he created characters who expressed this doubt. Like an onion, layers are peeled off, one by one. The utilitarian Underground man comes to the surface, and is peeled away to reveal Raskolnikov, who is a more consistent manifestation of that doubt. However both meet the prostitute who hold out to them true love, forgiveness, and redemption. I will discuss this idea of a 'virgin prostitute' later, but for now consider this. Dostoevsky recognizes his doubts, understands the confusion that he still is riddled with, and places the character that manifests his unbelief

²⁰Ibid., 24-26.

²¹Ibid., 27.

morally below a prostitute. Through all his misgivings about Christianity, he still recognized that it held the answers. Whether it was true or not, it was better to trust in Christ. I am not so naïve to think that Dostoevsky led a rosy and charming life. He struggled, and struggled bitterly, especially when it came to faith. One can see his struggles by reading chronologically his works. What they point to in the end however, is a vibrant Christianity, which led him to preach the love of Christ.

This biography does not intend to dive deeply into all aspects of his personal life, but I will mention one thing briefly. He was married twice. The first wife was a widow from Siberia, and was not altogether helpful.²² She was just as unstable as he was, and therefore, he found no rest at home. He fell in love with another woman, and chased her to Europe, where he found her in another man's arms. He then came home to his wife, who was dying. That year, his wife died, his brother died, and the literary journal he co-published with his brother, also died. Hard times were upon him. There is not much wonder why Dostoevsky discontinued attending church, though still devoted to the *person* of Christ, and the idea of community. The *person* of Christ was a great example, but could do nothing but inspire us to a better life. At this point, this Christianity of his was somewhat theoretical, something he wrote in his works and journal, but not necessarily worked out in his own life. A couple years afterward, he met and married his second wife. She was the rock he had needed. She brought strength and stability to their relationship, and he stayed with her the rest of his life. Gibson says of her influence,

Her Christianity enveloped him, so to speak, from two sides. In the first place, she tactfully nudged him into resuming relations with the Orthodox Church, from which he had kept aloof, though increasingly drawn to it by a common enemy [western individualism] and a sense of need which he could not justify. [Secondly,] she gave him peace of mind and the material contentment which he needed not so much as a writer...but as a pilgrim.²³

²²Ibid., 34.

²³Ibid., 35.

The effect this had on his spiritual growth was great. It was through her that he came to love the *reality* of Christ. The characters manifesting his doubt are continually degraded, though not lessened as far as their believability. The story itself shows these strong and independent voices to be the shams they are. For instance, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan, who is the main spiritual antagonist, winds up with a brain fever, and on the brink of suicide. What a way to affirm the strength and validity of his arguments! Proportionally as well, things shift. Most of the *Notes from the Underground* is the expression of doubt, whereas the salvation appears almost as a footnote. In *The Brothers Karamazov* most of the ink is used in either explaining what Zossima said or what Alyosha did in response to it. The doubt no longer carried the weight it used to. This is reflective of Dostoevsky's state of mind and the stability that faith brought him. He wrote in a notebook once, "Therefore it is not like a child that I believe in Christ and profess faith in him, but rather, my hosanna has come through the great crucible of doubt, as the devil says in that same novel of mine." So by the end of his life, he had become quite outspokenly Christian. However, his faith dates back, decades before his death. The story of that seed is as twisted and gnarled as a character in one of his novels. In fact, his novels are precisely where we see the seed grow, blossoming into a giant and steadfast tree, firmly planted, and strengthened by the winds of doubt.

Chapter Three Evidences of Christianity in His Novels

Having concluded a recounting of his life, three short stories will be of interest as I continue the discussion of Dostoevsky's Christianity. The first is *The Peasant Marey*. This profound little tale is found in his *Diary of a Writer*, and relates a story from Dostoevsky's childhood. Out in the woods one day, Dostoevsky, as a small child, distinctly hears someone cry, "Wolf!" Frightened, the child runs to safety found in the arms of a peasant, named Marey. He was plowing in the fields next to the woods. The peasant comforts the child, crosses him, and sends him on his way, promising to keep him safe. The child Dostoevsky did not remember this event until he grew up and was in prison, in Siberia. The memory of this peasant comes at the beginning of his Siberian regeneration. There are a few interesting things to note here. First, the name of the peasant is not a coincidence. Marey, closely related to Mary, stands in place of the Church. Mary has a very powerful history of associations. Both Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene give a picture of the Church. Mary the mother of Jesus symbolizes the maternal aspect of the Church, who is our mother. The Church

stretches out her arms and offers comfort, as a mother. Mary Magdalene was the prostitute saved by Christ, and given a new life. She is the symbol of salvation and of redemption. The Church stretches out her arms and offers salvation and redemption to the world. It is these connotations that Dostoevsky wishes to bring to mind, by remembering the peasant with the name Marey.

Secondly, he increases our awareness of this by mentioning the *feminine* aspects of this gentle peasant. This again points toward the Church, which is feminine in nature, being the Bride of Christ. As the peasant first holds the child, Dostoevsky says of him, "He smiled at me with a slow, *motherly* sort of smile," and a bit later, "he smiled at me with that same *motherly* smile..."²⁴ He continues at the end to say, "Only God perhaps saw from above with what profound and enlightened human feeling, and with what delicate, almost *womanly*, tenderness the heart of a coarse, savagely ignorant Russian serf was filled."²⁵ To thrice describe a peasant named Marey as being motherly, or womanly, makes it obvious Dostoevsky is alluding to the Church. Thirdly, Marey is constantly making the sign of the cross, and saying "Christ be with you." These are priestly actions, again signifying the role that Marey is taking. This allows us a little insight into what Dostoevsky believed about the Church and its role in salvation. Lastly, Dostoevsky's Siberian Regeneration began with the recollection of this story. At the end of the tale, he recounts

And so I got off the bunk and looked round, I suddenly felt, I remember, that I could look at these unhappy creatures with quite different eyes, and that suddenly by some miracle all hatred and anger had vanished from my heart. I walked round the prison peering into the faces I came across. That rascal of a peasant with his shaven head and branded face, yelling his hoarse drunken song at the top of his voice – why, he, too, may be the same sort of peasant as Marey: I cannot possibly look into his heart, can I?"²⁶

²⁴ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Best Short Stories of Dostoevsky*, trans. David Magarshack, (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 111 (emphasis mine).

²⁵Ibid., 113 (emphasis mine).

²⁶Ibid.

He saw in Marey the perfect Christian, the one who gives without expecting anything in return, the one who loves without condition. He realized that day in prison that he cannot judge the heart. All he can do is love the man. This is what he means by telling us that the drunken reveler might be of the same sort as Marey. By saying that he cannot look into his heart, Dostoevsky means it's possible the drunk may one day be as loving and as kind as Marey, for the seeds of that disposition are in the heart, tucked away, where Dostoevsky cannot see. It is at this point in Dostoevsky's life that we see the Christian Humanitarian start to emerge. It is this mentality, this peasant Marey, who he sees bringing salvation to the world.

The second short story is a description of exactly the opposite. *Notes from the Underground* has long been hailed as a classic, but definitely can be described as noir. Its anti-hero is the epitome of the 'willful' man, who does what he wants, for its own sake. He hates 'the world and all that is in it.' He declares that he is the 'real man;' only he has succeeded in achieving the final end of where everyone wants to go, but no one dares. He hates reason, and the 'finality' of it. The *Notes* is a biting comedy, satirizing some of the philosophical strands of the day. The opening lines are worthy of repetition here.

I am a sick man.... I am a spiteful man. No, I am not a pleasant man at all. I believe there is something wrong with my liver. However, I don't know a damn thing about my liver; neither do I know whether there is anything really wrong with me. I am not under medical treatment, and never have been, though I do respect medicine and doctors. In addition, I am extremely superstitious, at least sufficiently so to respect medicine. (I am well educated enough not to be superstitious, but I am superstitious for all that.) The truth is, I refuse medical treatment out of spite. I don't suppose you will understand that. Well, I do. I don't expect I shall be able to explain to you who it is I am actually trying to annoy in this case by my spite; I realize full well that I can't "hurt" the doctors by refusing to be treated by them; I realize better than anyone that by all this I am only hurting myself and no one else. Still the fact remains that if I refuse to be medically treated, it is only out of spite. My liver hurts me – well, let it damn well hurt – the more it hurts the better.²⁷

It only continues from there. Dostoevsky, always a master, ridicules two extremes in one punch in this story. The Underground man himself ridicules those who trust absolutely in

²⁷Ibid., 115.

science and mathematics. He sees the problem in that there is no room left for free choice. Thus he defies medicine out of spite. He needs to show people that he has the choice, and the power to execute it. Here is the other extreme, a life based solely on choice. On the one hand is the absolute of pure reason and science. On the other hand is the complete freedom of the will, freedom of choice.

The *Notes* are divided into two sections. The first is a complete tirade against the rationalists from the Underground man, in the form of angry essays. He goes on and on about the folly of such trust, and the necessity for freedom. The second part is Dostoevsky making fun of the narrator and the expression of his 'free will.' He does this by showing that when it comes to action, he is a complete pile of mush. He has no outward expression of resoluteness whatsoever. The second part, a normal story, with plot and characters, shows the utter failure this position is. This man recalls his youth and shows his progress, trying to justify all his accusations in the first section. He remembers one time, when he was feeling hysteric, 'craving ... conflicts and contrasts.' In this mood, he had walked past a bar, and witnessed a fight in which one man was thrown out the window. He goes on to describe how he envied this man, for at least, we are left to presume, there was something in him which was acknowledged by someone else. So the Underground man went into the bar, hoping to pick a fight with the gentleman who did the throwing. However, he was disappointed.

I was standing beside the billiard-table and, in my ignorance, was blocking the way. As he had to pass me, he took me by the shoulders and, without a word of warning or explanation, silently carried me bodily from where I was standing to another place and passed by as though he had not even noticed me. I could have forgiven him if he had given me a beating, but I could not forgive him for having moved me from one place to another as if I were a piece of furniture...The quarrel, however, was in my hands: if I had uttered one word of protest, I should most certainly have been thrown out of the window. But I changed my mind and preferred – to efface myself angrily.²⁸

²⁸Ibid., 166.

When taken by itself, at face value, the entire short story can seem fairly depressing. Gibson puts it best when he says, "There are few documents in literature which look less Christian than *Notes from the Underground*."²⁹ And at first glance I would have to agree with him. However, as we consider the story on a deeper level we find the dark alternatives to Christianity, and see just how silly they are. In philosophical terms we have the dichotomy of faith and reason. When each is expressed to the exclusion of the other, dreadful consequences arise. Dostoevsky, in *Notes from the Underground* shows just how ridiculous life is outside of Christian thinking. We see this most clearly at the end of the story. The Underground man has fallen into the red light district looking for someone, but instead sleeps with a prostitute. He torments her by 'quoting' his own speech about leaving that life of sin, and living more honorably. She, convinced of his sincerity, changes her ways, convicted of her sin. He had given her his address, and in a moment of uncharacteristic sweetness, invited her to come see him. She does that, much to his chagrin, and offers him redemption. He is at first unsure, and then completely mistaken. She comes offering an honest and true love, truly desiring to see him changed, and he thinks she simply wants money. She then leaves, never to return.

The point of this episode is to show the complete and utter failure the Underground man is. His philosophy causes him to see everything upside down, and he is not able to grasp at all the only thing that can save him. He is lost. Much has been skimmed over in this summary of the story, but it is an important work in the life of Dostoevsky. It contains two antitypes who find their fulfillment as major characters in later books. The prostitute Lisa is the antecedent of Sonya in *Crime and Punishment*. The Underground man finds his future in Ivan Karamazov. One might ask why this is, because the Underground man finds intellectualism a disease, and Ivan is pure intellectualism. This is possible because the

²⁹Gibson, 79.

Underground man “sees”, with Ivan, the impossibility of God. They are the two sides of the same coin, in essence. He is Will, where Ivan is Reason. This is the eternal pendulum-swing in a world without God. The Underground man hates reason, and thinks that free choice is the only way to prosper. However, he can never free himself from reason nor the conclusions it brings.³⁰ Ivan, is the flip side of this contradiction. He is devoted to reason, but cannot shake the idea of choice, and the freedom of the will. Thus his internal struggles ensue. This is important to note for it marks the beginning of Dostoevsky thinking more deeply about these topics of great importance to the Christian reader.³¹

The third story comes right at the end of his life. It was the last one he wrote right before *The Brothers Karamazov*. He called it *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*. In it we see the redemption of the Underground man. The Ridiculous Man is a man to whom nothing makes any difference, ‘nothing in the world.’ He understood life to hold no meaning whatsoever, and was consistent about it. This consistent attitude brings him to commit suicide one night. On his way home to do this deed, he runs into a little girl, lost and asking for help. He does not stop for her, but finds that he is touched by her despair. This is new to him. Something has made a difference to him. This gives him pause. As he sits at the table looking at the gun that was going to end his life, he falls asleep. He dreams that he has shot himself, and has been buried. He cannot feel, speak, or see. But he can think, hear, and perceive what is going on around him. He knows, in this dream, that he has been laid in a casket, and is being carried to the graveyard. He hears the words being spoken over him. He remembers shooting himself in the chest, but can feel no pain. Time goes by. All of a sudden, a drop of water, which has been gathering on the lid of the coffin, falls onto his

³⁰ Ernest J. Simmons, *Dostoevsky: The Making of a Novelist*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 123.

³¹See Gibson, 78-87.

closed left eye. This awakens pain in his wound, from where he shot himself. As this water awakens his senses, he perceives that he is being transported by an unknown being, through space, to a different planet. He arrives, and is placed on what appears to be a Greek Isle. The world is fresh and new, untouched by sin. The people who live there are innocent and free. Over time, as he lives with them, they learn to lie. This leads them spiraling down the path of worldliness. He sees what he has done, and tries to undo it. However, it is too late. He offers himself up to be crucified for their abominations, but they refuse, convinced that they were in no trouble. He is visibly and actively concerned for them, so much so that they have to lock him up in an asylum. That is when he wakes up. When he awakes, he realizes that there is much to look for in life. He comes to the conclusion that "Evil is the not the normal condition among men."³² He proclaims, "Oh, how I long for life, life! I lifted up my hands and called upon eternal Truth – no, not called upon it, but wept."³³ And thus he continues to preach the rest of his life.

The Ridiculous man, at the beginning is the story, is the underground man. The world is of no consequence; nothing matters; man has the freedom to regard nothing. These assumptions come crashing when he sees the little girl. He feels pity, and suddenly something does matter. This is the first step in the process of his regeneration. Next, he is baptized in the grave. As he lies in the coffin, the one thing that causes him to feel the pain of his death is water dropping on his eyes, causing him to see. He is then raised to a new life, and taken to a pre-fall world where is able to see first hand the effects of his sin. This is too much and he is brought to his knees with guilt. When he wakes up, he realizes, "I have beheld it – the Truth – it is not as though I had invented it with my mind: I have beheld it, I have beheld it, and the living image of it has filled my soul forever."³⁴ This is obviously a

³²Dostoevsky, *The Best Short Stories*, 347.

³³Ibid., 346.

³⁴Ibid., 347.

reference to Christ. He is the answer to the problems that sin has introduced. And the Ridiculous man must preach that Truth, and continue to do so, until heaven is established on earth. The last jab at the Underground man comes at the end where he says, “‘The consciousness of life is higher than life, the knowledge of happiness is higher than happiness’ – that is what we have to fight against! And I shall, I shall fight against it!” The Underground man spent all his time pondering the consciousness of life, and considered it supreme; likewise with the knowledge of happiness. He spent all his time in the realms above; he never had the courage to live. This is the message of the Ridiculous man, and with him we can say, Amen.³⁵

³⁵An interesting point can be drawn from the child, who instigates the redemption of the Ridiculous fellow. Is it a reference to the Holy Infant lying in the manger? Or perhaps it is simply falling in line 19th Century, Dickens Sentimentalism? I would argue for neither. Dostoevsky had a curious yet wonderful fascination with children. He says in his diaries (*Diary of a Writer*, 166) that, “Children are strange people; I dream about them – they appear in my visions.” It is easy to see from a cursory glance of his novels that children often play a vital role in the story: the group of schoolboys in *The Brothers Karamazov*; the child in Svidrigailov’s dream in *Crime and Punishment*, as well as Sonya’s siblings; the childlike qualities of Myshkin, and his love for children in *The Idiot*. The children always represent the redeemed future for Dostoevsky. Alyosha entrusts faith and love to his schoolboys; Myshkin teaches his children friends patience and mercy. I believe at the heart of Dostoevsky’s use of children is his recognition of the words of Christ, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). Here is where Dostoevsky places the importance of children. It is true, that through Zossima, he does believe them to be innocent, sinless creatures. “Love children especially, for they too are sinless like the angels; they live to soften and purify our hearts and, as it were, to guide us.” (*The Brothers Karamazov*, 357) Nevertheless, they are the beacons, for Dostoevsky, showing us a world of simple faith.

Chapter Four The Grand Inquisitor

The chapter of *The Brothers Karamazov* known to the world as "The Grand Inquisitor," has caused no small amount of consternation for those reading and studying Dostoevsky. It is here at this point, where critics part ways in their assessment of the writer's faith. Half say that Dostoevsky lands on the side of atheism, which has its champion in Ivan, while the other half sees his own refutation of Ivan in the love of Father Zossima. It is right that there should be so much dispute over this passage, for at the heart of it is the foolishness of the Gospel. Taking our cue from Augustine, the world we live in falls into two camps: the City of God, and the City of Man. The City of Man will see a refutation of God and conclude that there is no answer. Any response such as Zossima's is weak and irrational. The City of God will say, the irrationality is the point. God's ways are above Man's ways. As for the weakness, Zossima could not be a stronger, more potent weapon in the war against Satan and his minions. The City of Man cannot and never will, apart from the grace of God, understand the 'irrationality' of God's love. And so the debate rages on, and will until the final day.

In this climactic chapter, the lifetime of Dostoevsky's own wavering between doubt and faith come to a clear and decisive head. As Mitya says in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "The awful

thing is that beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man."³⁶ Every character of every novel shows up for this final battle: the Myshkins and the Sonyas, the Raskolnikovs and the Underground Men. All are here in these pages, deciding once and for all the problem of evil in the face of a good and gracious God. In an essay concerning this very subject, Eliseo Vivas says, "In 'The Grand Inquisitor' [Dostoevsky] finally brought to full expression the implication of the conflict between God and freedom on the one hand and the atheistic effort to bring heaven to earth by dispensing with God on the other."³⁷ This is a battle in essence between Ivan and Zossima, and because of the nature of the fight, the implications are far reaching.

Before I continue, a quick summary of the chapter may be helpful. R. P. Blackmur, in his essay, "*The Brother's Karamazov: The Grand Inquisitor and the Wine of Gladness*," provides a concise and helpful overview, which would be appropriate to quote here.

Sometime in the sixteenth century, Christ appears in Seville, where the people recognize Him and are drawn to Him, by Himself and the miracles He performs. When the cardinal sees this, he darkens, and has his guards seize and imprison Christ, because He "hinders" and is a danger to the peace and safety of society. He tells Christ that he will burn Him tomorrow and that the people who kissed His feet today will heap embers tomorrow. The rest of the poem is the old Inquisitor's rejection of Christ for refusing the three temptations in the wilderness as they are presented in Matthew but which the cardinal represents as the three necessary powers capable of conquering rebellion and making happiness, and which he calls miracle, mystery, and authority. Christ chose rather what was beyond the power of man, and the church has been compelled to correct His work. It is like Ivan's account of man's cruelty to the children but at the universal level. Lastly, the Inquisitor accuses Christ of the pride of love and freedom in rejecting the temptations; for had He accepted them, man would have had all he "seeks on earth - that is some one to worship, some one to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious antheap, for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men." Yet when for only answer Christ kisses the old man "on his bloodless aged lips," the old man released Him, telling Him to go "and come no more... come not at all, never, never!" So Alyosha kisses Ivan, for Ivan is, after all, the individual choosing to wrestle with God.³⁸

According to the Grand Inquisitor, man needs Miracle, Mystery, and Authority. These are in answer to man's basic, fundamental needs: something to worship, something to

³⁶Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett, (New York: The Modern Library, 1996), 118.

³⁷*Dostoevsky: A collection of Critical Essays*, René Wellek, ed., (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1962), 85.

³⁸*Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, Robin Miller, ed., (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1986), 207-208.

bind their conscience, and something to keep them unified. Miracle inspires awe, and therefore worship. Mystery convinces them of something greater than themselves, and therefore binds the conscience. Authority places them below a leader who will therefore keep them unified. Christ refused the devil who offered Him the keys to each of these. He refused to turn stones into bread (miracle), to cast himself down and be caught by angels (mystery), and to accept the kingdoms of the earth (authority). Thus He gave up the opportunity, and died on the cross. Of course the unbeliever can never see a resurrection. But this is exactly where Dostoevsky was going. Because of the resurrection, Christ is the answer, though not for the reasons the Grand Inquisitor is thinking of. He is the answer, because He is love. The resurrection is the epicenter of love. The love of Christ, permeating through, and exemplified by His followers, is what will conquer the world. Resurrection has already been noted as the theme of the book by the choice verse which opens the novel. Dostoevsky opens his masterpiece with John 12:24, which says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and dies, it abideth alone: but if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit." This verse sets the tone for the rest of the story. It is through love, Dostoevsky wants to communicate, that the world will be resurrected, and made new. Through the love of Christ, the love of man for his neighbor, and man taking onto himself the responsibility for the sins of all others, faith, hope, and charity will abound to the masses. This again will define the camps. Again, very Augustinian in design, the City of God will strive for unity and harmony and love for all. The City of Man will strive for Miracle, Mystery and Authority but without love. The City of God will seek love and humility and thus obtain power. The City of Man will seek power, and obtain nothing but the guilt of spilt blood.

We see this distinction in all of his novels, and most clearly here in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Instead of cities though, Dostoevsky used the terms "Europe" and "Russia" to symbolize the opposing camps. These two nations also stood for the ideologies that came out

of their respective cities. "Europe," in his mind, referred more specifically to Western Rationalism, and Marxist Socialism. Vivas notes that, "'Europe,' includes the 'state' which is force, with its instruments, mysticism, miracle, and authority; justice without love, which involves blood; equality in things; and the multiplication of desires. Those at the controls of such a society are condemned to isolation and spiritual suicide and the ruled are sentenced to envy or murder."³⁹ This "Europe" is seen in the Spanish Inquisition, the French Revolution, and finds its end result, after Dostoevsky, in the German Genocide. It is a product of the enlightenment and the idea that Reason is king. For if Reason is king, the Western mind can easily do away with God, hence the atheistic direction the Rationalistic West goes. Dostoevsky also saw that atheism and socialism were two sides of the same evil coin. As it is said of Alyosha,

In the same way, if he had decided that God and immortality did not exist, he would at once have become an atheist and a socialist. For socialism is not merely the labour question, it is before all things the atheistic question, the question of the form taken by atheism to-day, the question of the tower of Babel built without God, not to mount to heaven from earth but to set up heaven on earth.⁴⁰

It is this kind of socialism Dostoevsky sees taking root in the West. Because the co-existence of God and evil does not meet our standards of reason or rationality, we will do away with God for we empirically know that evil exists. The champion of this view is Ivan. It is he who writes the story of The Grand Inquisitor. It is also interesting to note here that Dostoevsky deeply despised the Roman Catholic Church for these very reasons. Through the lips of Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, he states his feelings.⁴¹ The language is over the top, but it is in keeping with the character

³⁹Wellek, 81.

⁴⁰*The Brothers Karamazov*, 26.

⁴¹Simmons, 207: "These and other themes are developed most fully by Myshkin in his impassioned outbursts at that unfortunate party at the Emanchins'. He declares that there are two ways to unite society into an harmonious whole – the way of oppression through authority, which amounts to establishing equality by force, and the way of service, which achieves harmony through mutual submission of one another. Then he elaborates this point by a thesis that was becoming a kind of credo in Dostoevsky's thinking. Roman Catholicism, Myshkin insists, has accepted the path of authority which inevitably leads to socialism – the aim of both Roman Catholicism and socialism being to subject all to their authority, and in return for this submission to promise equality. The second path is that of the Russian Orthodox faith, the aim of which is to bring about universal

in the story. The basic sentiments remain the same. Allow me to quote a substantial portion, which reflects the heart felt feelings toward this Western Socialism.

'It is not a Christian religion, in the first place,' said the latter, in extreme agitation, quite out of proportion to the necessity of the moment. 'And in the second place, Roman Catholicism is, in my opinion, worse than Atheism itself. Yes— that is my opinion. Atheism only preaches a negation, but Romanism goes further; it preaches a disfigured, distorted Christ—it preaches Anti-Christ—I assure you, I swear it! This is my own personal conviction, and it has long distressed me. The Roman Catholic believes that the Church on earth cannot stand without universal temporal Power. He cries 'non possumus!' In my opinion the Roman Catholic religion is not a faith at all, but simply a continuation of the Roman Empire, and everything is subordinated to this idea—beginning with faith. The Pope has seized territories and an earthly throne, and has held them with the sword. And so the thing has gone on, only that to the sword they have added lying, intrigue, deceit, fanaticism, superstition, swindling;—they have played fast and loose with the most sacred and sincere feelings of men;—they have exchanged everything—everything for money, for base earthly POWER! And is this not the teaching of Anti-Christ? How could the upshot of all this be other than Atheism? Atheism is the child of Roman Catholicism—it proceeded from these Romans themselves, though perhaps they would not believe it. It grew and fattened on hatred of its parents; it is the progeny of their lies and spiritual feebleness. Atheism! In our country it is only among the upper classes that you find unbelievers; men who have lost the root or spirit of their faith; but abroad whole masses of the people are beginning to profess unbelief—at first because of the darkness and lies by which they were surrounded; but now out of fanaticism, out of loathing for the Church and Christianity!... Socialism is the progeny of Romanism and of the Romanistic spirit. It and its brother Atheism proceed from Despair in opposition to Catholicism. It seeks to replace in itself the moral power of religion, in order to appease the spiritual thirst of parched humanity and save it; not by Christ, but by force. 'Don't dare to believe in God, don't dare to possess any individuality, any property! Fraternelle ou la Mort; two million heads.'⁴²

From this we see the frustration Dostoevsky feels with the West.⁴³ Not only has the Western philosophy gone in the direction of rationalism and socialism, but, in his mind, so has the

harmony by preaching submission and service to one another. The latter, of course, is the path that Myshkin follows... Convinced of this pervasive contradiction, Myshkin, like Dostoevsky, seems to see all humanity dividing itself into the meek and good of heart on one side and the self-willed and offending people of the other. With the first he identifies Russia and the Russian Christ, with the self-willed and offending people the nations of Western Europe along with their Roman Catholicism."

⁴²Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Eva Martin (<http://www.planetpdf.com>), 1006-1008.

⁴³We can read this from Dostoevsky's own mouth in the March, 1876 edition of his *Diary of a Writer*, pg. 254ff: "Roman Catholicism will unquestionably forsake the earthly potentates who, in truth, have long ago betrayed it and instigated in Europe a universal baiting campaign whose organization is at present fully completed. Why, Roman Catholicism is known to have made even sharper turns: once upon a time, when this was necessary, it did not hesitate to sell Christ in exchange for mundane power. Having proclaimed the dogma that 'Christianity cannot survive on earth without the earthly power of the Pope,' it thereby has proclaimed a new Christ, not like the former one, but one who has been seduced by the third temptation of the devil – the temptation of the kingdoms of the world: 'All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me!'... Nay, in this there is power; this is solemn and not funny; this is the resurrection of the ancient Roman idea of world dominion and unity, which never did die in Roman Catholicism; this is the Rome of Julian the Apostate, but not of him who had been conquered, but, as it were, of Christ triumphant in the new and final battle. Thus, the sale of the true Christ in exchange for the kingdoms of the world

Western Church. And when the Church is no longer preaching Christ, the society is in pretty bad shape. Ernst J Simmons notes,

The social and religious theories that Myshkin enunciates at the Epanchin's reflect very clearly the curious dual approach that Dostoevsky propounds in much of his future fiction and journalism. The path of authority aims to destroy society and to construct it anew in order to obtain equality through despotism. Myshkin's path leads to the individual suppressing himself, and through service and compassion establishing a rule of equality and brotherly love. This universal dualism involves Dostoevsky's supplementary contradictions between Russia and Western Europe, between the Roman Catholic Church and Russian Orthodoxy, and between faith in Christ and a belief in socialism.⁴⁴

Dostoevsky felt that the Church and state were walking hand in hand toward the goal of human slavery. Not slavery in terms of labor, but the slavery that comes with the miracle, mystery, and authority of socialism. In the essay quoted from above, Vivas says later on that

It is not freedom that man wants, but miracle, mystery, and authority. He "is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born." The Roman Catholic Church has managed to correct the harm that Jesus attempted to do, and socialism but carries on from where Rome leaves off. In order to give man happiness it has been necessary for the Church to take the sword of Caesar and in taking it of course it rejected Jesus and chose Satan. For this reason Dostoevsky believes that socialism and Catholicism are identical as to ends: both seek to relieve man of the burden of freedom.⁴⁵

has been consummated....And in Roman Catholicism it will be actually consummated and brought to an end....All these heart readers and psychologists will rush to the people and will bring to them their new Christ, the one who has acceded to everything and who has been proclaimed at the last impious *sobor* in Rome....They will say...'In days past the main force of faith consisted of humility, but now humility must come to an end, and the Pope has the authority to abrogate it, since he possesses the full power. Yes, you are all brethren, and Christ Himself has ordained that all be brethren; if however, your elder brothers refuse to accept you as brethren, arm yourselves with sticks and enter their houses and compel them to become your brethren by force. Christ has long waited for your corrupt elder brothers to repent, and now He grants you His own permission to proclaim: '*Fraternite ou la mort!*' (Be my brother or else death to you!) Should your brother refuse to share with you his property, half and half, take it all away from him, since Christ has long waited for his repentance, but now the time for wrath and vengeance has come...you shall all become rich and, through wealth, righteous because all your desires shall be satisfied, and every cause of evil will be thus eliminated.'... I repeat: in our day papacy is, perhaps, the most dreadful among all "segregations" threatening universal peace." We can also see this in *The Brothers Karamazov*, 26: As soon as he reflected seriously he was convinced of the existence of God and immortality, and at once he instinctively said to himself: 'I want to live for immortality, and I will accept no compromise.' In the same way, if he had decided that God and immortality did not exist, he would at once have become an atheist and a socialist. For socialism is not merely the labour question, it is before all things the atheistic question, the question of the form taken by atheism to-day, the question of the tower of Babel built without God, not to mount to heaven from earth but to set up heaven on earth.

⁴⁴Simmons, 209.

⁴⁵Wellek, 85.

In Ivan's view, Christ failed at the critical point. He had the opportunity to take the reins of the masses and thus lead them into happiness. Instead, he chose unwisely to give them freedom. This is not what they want, nor what they need, the argument will go. Thus, Christ failed. In the eyes of Europe, our only hope for happiness is found in the few "elect" who will guide us and lead us, making us give up our God given freedom for what they tell us we want, which in the end is slavery. This is the result of unbelief. Vivas insightfully comments that "unbelief is lack of love which in turn is hell."⁴⁶

Russia, on the other hand, standing in for the City of God, refers to the exact opposite. By Russia, Dostoevsky meant a deeply and genuinely Christian world, a world where man finds his freedom a delight because of love, specifically the love of Christ. It is a world where each man bears the "guilt of all." A society based not on mysticism, miracle, and authority, but on love, sacrifice, and humility. Vivas describes "Russia" as including

the church after it has absorbed the state, the denial of desires, the brotherhood of all living beings, spiritual dignity, justice in Christ and instead of pride and envy, humility and recognition of one's own sinfulness, and hence one's responsibility for the sins of all other men.... Dostoevsky knew that the City of God is not of this world, but the route to it must be through "Russia" and not "Europe" since the latter has been corrupted beyond redemption by the Grand Inquisitor, the Bernards and the socialists - who are three peas from the same pod.⁴⁷

D. H. Lawrence, an advocate of Dostoevsky's atheism, says this in his "Introduction to 'The Grand Inquisitor:'"

And we cannot doubt that the Inquisitor speaks Dostoevsky's own final opinion about Jesus. The opinion is, badly, this: Jesus you are inadequate. Men must correct you. And Jesus in the end gives the kiss of acquiescence to the Inquisitor as Alyosha does to Ivan. the two inspired ones recognize the inadequacy of their inspiration: the thoughtful one has to accept the responsibility of a complete adjustment.... this then is the Grand Inquisitor's summing up of the nature of mankind. The inadequacy of Jesus lies in the fact that Christianity is too difficult for men, the vast mass of men..... Christianity then is the ideal, but it is impossible. It is impossible because it makes demands greater than the nature of man can bear.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ibid., 80.

⁴⁷Ibid., 81.

⁴⁸Ibid.

And later he adds:

Jesus loved mankind for what it ought to be, free and limitless. The Grand Inquisitor loves it for what it is, with all its limitations... It seems a strange thing that men, the mass of men, cannot understand that life is the great reality, that true living fills us with vivid life, "the heavenly bread," and earthly bread merely supports this. No, men cannot understand, never have understood that simple fact. They cannot see the distinction between bread, or property, money, and vivid life... only the few, the potential heroes or the "elect," can see the simple distinction. The mass cannot see it and never will see it... Dostoevsky was perhaps the first to realize this devastating truth, which Christ had not seen... All that remains is for the elect to take charge of the bread - the property, the money - and then give it back to the masses as if it were really the gift of life. In this way mankind might live happily, as the Inquisitor suggests.... Let them bow down, let them bow down *en masse*, for the mass, who do not understand the difference between money and life, should always bow down to the elect, who do.⁴⁹

The common masses of men are merely cattle that need to be fed and sustained, in the mind of Lawrence. Only the elect, the great cattle "prodders" can know what true life consists of, and only through laying down everything at the feet of these great ones can the mass of men obtain true happiness. *If anything is more antithetical to Dostoevsky's entire life, I surely do not know what it could be!* This is the product of atheistic thinking. If there is no God to bow down to, man must bow to man, thus Rome. To conclude his socialistic interpretation of Dostoevsky, he says this, "Jesus kisses the Inquisitor: Thank you, you are right, wise old man! Alyosha kisses Ivan: Thank you brother, you are right; you take a burden off me! So why should Dostoevsky drag in Inquisitors and *autos-da-fe*, and Ivan wind up so morbidly suicidal? Let them be glad they've found the truth again."⁵⁰ Here he shows that he misses the whole point completely. Being a Western Rationalist himself, he cannot see that the kiss *is the answer*. It is not acquiescence. Furthermore, he does not see that if a character ends up badly, he must have started out on the wrong foot. This is how Dostoevsky tells a tale. He gives a "full voice" to each of his characters, and then uses the outcome of the story to explain who was right, and who was wrong. If Dostoevsky were truly an atheist, Ivan would be the winner, not wanting to commit suicide.

⁴⁹Ibid., 92-93.

⁵⁰Ibid., 97.

However, as it turns out, Alyosha is the one praised in the end, and his faith is understood as the only way to find universal peace and happiness.

It is here that we see the essence of Dostoevsky's Christianity. It is in the figures of Sonya, Myshkin, Father Zossima, and in the hero of tomorrow, Alyosha that Dostoevsky defines his idea of what will redeem mankind, his idea of love. He pits the West and the rationalist against Russia and the true believer; the idea that reason is king, against God; the self-sufficiency of man against his need of a savior. Dostoevsky pounded this same nail in *Notes from the Underground*. His character was the ultimate voluntarist.

It is Dostoevsky who makes us look at him and laugh, but the idea of "the self sufficiency of the intellect"⁵¹ is at the root of Western thinking. This underground man finds his brother in Ivan, and in all the dictators who have oppressed the people through the ages. This is the irony of The Grand Inquisitor, and the irony of Ivan. He sees evil in the world, the pain of the innocent, and says there can be no God because of it. But in reality it is the system that he presents in The Grand Inquisitor that produces such a world that will be ripe with people who oppress the poor, beat helpless children, and stick pins in biscuits and feed them to puppies. It becomes more and more clear that Father Zossima is the only answer to such a problem. Dostoevsky says of the monk, and thus implying all who would be holy and servants of God,

When he realizes that he is not only worse than others, but that he is responsible to all men for all and everything, for all human sins, national and individual, only then the aim of our seclusion is attained. For know, dear ones, that every one of us is undoubtedly responsible for all men – and everything on earth, not merely through the general sinfulness of creation, but each one personally for all mankind and every individual man. This knowledge is the crown of life for the monk and for every man.... Only through that knowledge, our heart grows soft with infinite, universal, inexhaustible love. Then every one of you will have the power to win over the whole world by love and to wash away the sins of the world with your tears....⁵²

It is here that we see the answer to Ivan. Father Zossima entreats his hearers to be humble, and take upon themselves the sins of the world, following in the footsteps of the Savior, who

⁵¹Ibid., 83.

⁵²*The Brothers Karamazov*, 182.

did it perfectly and redemptively. Only in this manner, which is simply following the command to love God and neighbor, can we win the world for Christ. Only in this manner can we reconcile the existence of evil and the presence of God. Only in this manner are we equipped to take evil and cast it down. Thus we look in the face of the Grand Inquisitor, who would spit at Christ, desire human autonomy, lead the world into socialism and slavery, and trust in the “self-sufficiency of the intellect”, and what are we called to do? Kiss his aged, bloodless lips.

Section Two

“Holy” is the real name of God, of the God “not of scholars and philosophers,” but of the living God of faith. The knowledge about God results in definitions and distinctions. The knowledge of God leads to this one, incomprehensible, yet obvious and inescapable word: holy. And in this word we express both that God is the Absolutely Other, the One about whom we can know nothing, and that He is the end of all our hunger, all our desires, the inaccessible One who mobilizes our wills, the mysterious treasure that attracts us, and there is really nothing to know but Him. “Holy” is the word, the song, the “reaction” of the Church as it enters into heaven, as it stands before the heavenly glory of God.⁵³

- Alexander Schmemmann

I hate that America already! And though they may be wonderful at machinery, every one of them, damn them, they are not of my soul. I love Russia, Alyosha, I love the Russian God, though I am a scoundrel myself.⁵⁴

- Dimitri Karamazov

The essence of religious feeling does not come under any sort of reasoning, or atheism, and has nothing to do with any crimes or misdemeanors. There is else here, and there will always be something else – something that the atheists will for ever slur over; they will always be talking of something else. But the chief thing is that you will notice it more clearly and quickly in the Russian heart than anywhere else. And this is my conclusion. It’s one of the chief convictions which I have gathered from our Russia. There is work to be done, Parfyon! There is work to be done in our Russian world, believe me!⁵⁵

- Prince Myshkin

He did not know that the new life would not be given him for nothing, that he would have to pay dearly for it, that it would cost him great striving, great suffering. But that is the beginning of a new story—the story of the gradual renewal of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, of his passing from one world into another, of his initiation into a new unknown life⁵⁶

- Speaking of Raskolnikov

⁵³Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 32.

⁵⁴*The Brothers Karamazov*, 867.

⁵⁵*The Idiot*, 209.

⁵⁶*Crime and Punishment*, 449.

Chapter Five Eastern Orthodoxy

In discussing Dostoevsky's own faith, an understanding of Eastern Orthodoxy is crucial. As children of the West, we see much in Dostoevsky that either scares us, unsettles us, or is just plain foreign to our minds. Much of those sentiments stem from the fact that we simply do not understand the paradigm in which Dostoevsky was writing. He, like all of us, was a child of his times. The paradigm into which he was born was 19th Century Russia, and a Russia that held very firmly to its religion, which was Eastern Orthodoxy. We have seen how, growing up, Dostoevsky was well acquainted with the Christian faith, and I have gone through much to prove that he was indeed a man of faith, who trusted in Christ for his salvation. What remains before us is to show, to the best of our abilities, the worldview assumptions, if you will, Dostoevsky would most likely have held. This in turn will illumine our minds to the staunch Christianity that is so thoroughly present in his works.

First a disclaimer. In these following paragraphs, I will be presenting Eastern Orthodoxy with a selective hand, meaning some issues will be left untouched in the interest of time and scope. I will be showing the key areas, which I believe pertain to the topic at hand. To engage in critical discussion and debate over these doctrines is important, but not necessary here. This is said here with the purpose of acknowledging that Eastern Orthodoxy has its faults, and at points wanders far from an orthodox understanding of Scripture. However, it will do us all good to sit before the issues presented here, and learn from them.

There is much that we can learn from our brothers in the East, and it would benefit us greatly to listen with an open ear, and humble heart. With that said, let us continue.

To begin any discussion on Eastern (or Russian) Orthodoxy, we must understand that we are in all ways completely and utterly different than our brothers to the East. The paradigms in which the West and the East work are as different as the sea is from the mountains that look down on it. And yet both are a mighty body, a house of power and strength. Both have been created and are to live together in harmony and unity. Nevertheless, the sea still crashes against the feet of the mountains, and the earth still quakes in anger.

Speaking as generally as possible, the sea is the East, and the mountains are the West. The West is very rigid and solid in its doctrines. The West (in particular, our Modern Evangelicalism) may be seen in some lights as static and unchanging. The West has a need to define and categorize and systematize. Our Greco-Roman forefathers left an ever-present desire to philosophize and to think about things in abstract ways. Like a mountain, we see God as Somebody knowable and approachable; Someone who can be distinguished from this mountain or that. In contrast to this, the East, as pictured by the sea, moves and fluxes, and remains much more organic in its outlook on life and faith. Like the sea, it sees God as a dark mystery, unknowable and unfathomable. The East is much quicker to say “I don’t know” than the West. The West is often tempted to view itself in individualistic terms. Modern Evangelicalism is a good example of this. There is no sense of spiritual fellowship. “Just me and Jesus,” they say, betraying a lack of understanding of what the Church really is. It’s thought is vertical, like a mountain. Again, in contrast to this, the East is much more horizontal, like the sea. It’s very foundation is the Church and the fellowship therein. The individual is much less important than the entire body. Community is stressed, and taking

that community to the ends of the earth. Again, this may sound as if there is no good in the West. However, we Westerners know our strengths all too well, and it is good for us to see our weaknesses in the light of our brother's strengths. In order to move on, we must understand these differences, and understand that they run deep. It is not as simple as asking what an Easterner believes about the doctrine of election, for the categories themselves that we derive that doctrine from, are nowhere present in his mind. Thus, only with patience and a teachable spirit are we able to proceed. The reward, however, is gaining an understanding of a richly gifted brother whose heart was the salvation of the world, and who strove to see the name of Christ on the tongues of humanity.⁵⁷

So, what *do* Russians believe? We have very briefly mentioned already some of the key distinctions, and I hope to now make them clearer. First, what does the East believe about *our ability to know God*? Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, in his book *The Orthodox Church*, summarizes nicely this doctrine:

God is absolutely transcendent. [Gregory Palamas states,] 'No single thing of all that is created has or ever will have even the slightest communion with the supreme nature or nearness to it.' This absolute transcendence Orthodoxy safeguards by its emphatic use of the 'way of negation', of 'apophatic' theology. Positive or 'cataphatic' theology – the way of affirmation – must always be balanced and corrected by the employment of negative language. Our positive statements about God – that He is good, wise, just and so on – are true as far as they go, yet they cannot adequately describe the inner nature of the deity. These positive statements, said John of Damascus, reveal 'not the nature, but the things around nature'. 'That there is a God is clear; but *what* He is by essence and nature, this is altogether beyond our comprehension and knowledge.'⁵⁸

In his discussion of Eastern Orthodoxy, Donald Fairbairn explains further:

According to the Orthodox, the cataphatic theological method brings one not to knowledge of the true God, but merely to a false knowledge of a philosophical idea of God as the highest being. Eastern Christendom makes a sharp distinction between rational or

⁵⁷Again, the distinctions here between the East and the West are generalizations. There are examples to the contrary in either case. The point here is not to discuss the differences in detail between the East and the West. Rather it is simply to notice general trends which are identifiable.

⁵⁸Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 208-209.

philosophical knowledge on one hand and personal, mystical communion on the other. This latter way of knowing God and being united to him is the goal of apophatic theology.⁵⁹

This emphasis on the Creator/creature distinction is at the very foundation of Eastern theology. From this apophatic approach comes their deep and rich mysticism, which often turns off any outside observer immediately. We Westerners are completely taken aback at the thought of something so mystical being labeled as Christian. But that shows our immaturity and inability to see past our own system.

This apophatic, mystical approach in no way denies *any* knowledge of God. Fairbairn later elaborates,

The point [of apophatic theology] is rather that God cannot be reduced to an idea that we can describe in philosophical language...He is a personal being whose inner life is thoroughly unknown to us, but who makes himself known by showing us His outward life, his loving communion as directed toward creation. Orthodoxy seeks not to peer into the mystery of God's inner life, but rather to rejoice that He has granted us to share in His outward life as we are united to him in His energies.⁶⁰

To speak in Western terms, we cannot know God's *ontological* nature, but we can know His *economic* nature. In Eastern terms, this is known as the difference between God's 'essence' and His 'energies.' In other words, we cannot know who He really *is* (ontological nature or essence), but we can know what he really *does* (economic nature or energies). This includes descriptions of Him in scripture, and inferences about Him from history. However, all inferences and descriptions are at their simplest form, apophatic. This is because they are either metaphor or other forms of indirect statements. We can say nothing directly, because we are finite and simply do not have the ability to wrap our minds around a direct statement. It is similar to the sun. We have knowledge about our sun by the way it affects us. We learn about the sun by describing what it does. It is impossible to approach the sun directly for it would cause our eyes to go blind. Thus we are left with knowledge

⁵⁹Donald Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*, (Westminster John Knox Press: London, 2002), 53.

⁶⁰Ibid., 55.

about the sun, and much less *of* the sun. The only thing we know *of* the sun is that it is bright.⁶¹ Ware summarizes this as well, in saying

God, although absolutely transcendent, is not cut off from the world, which He has made. God is above and outside His creation, yet He also exists within it. As a much used Orthodox prayer puts it, God is 'everywhere present and filling all things.' Orthodoxy therefore distinguishes between God's essence and His energies, thus safeguarding both divine transcendence and divine immanence: God's essence remains unapproachable, but His energies come down to us. God's energies, *which are God Himself*, permeate all His creation, and we experience them in the form of deifying grace and divine light. Truly our God is a God who hides Himself, yet He is also a God who acts – the God of History, intervening directly in concrete situations.⁶²

With this in mind, we can know *about* Him, through what He has done, and what He has revealed to us. The first and foremost doctrine in the Russian mind is that of the Trinity. Ware says, "Our social programme, said the Russian thinker Fedorov, is the dogma of the Trinity. Orthodoxy believes most passionately that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not a piece of 'high theology; reserved for the professional scholar, but something that has a living, *practical* importance for every Christian."⁶³ The differences between the East and the West over the doctrine of the Trinity date back to the patristics. The West sought to defend the Trinity against polytheism, whereas the East wished to guard against modalism. This means the West emphasizes the unity of God, and the East His three-ness. This leads to the West being individualistic, and leaving the East to emphasize community. The debate over the *Filioque* clause of the Nicene Creed was one of the first instances of the Great Schism, which was inevitable. The West wished to add the phrase 'and the Son' to the sentence "He [the Spirit] proceeded from the Father," showing the Spirit is sent by the Son as well as the Father. The East however protested and declared that phrase an injustice to the Trinity. They believed affirming that phrase forced a subordination within the Three equal persons. The Father and the Son were both above the Spirit. The East wished to deny this, and therefore

⁶¹See Schmemmann, 32.

⁶²Ware, 209.

⁶³Ibid., 208, emphasis his.

they left unreconciled, for the West was unshaken in their resolve. The East saw the unity of the Trinity located in the person of the Father. The Father spoke the Word, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. To locate the Spirit's procession in another person as well as the Father would disrupt the unity they find in the Trinity. In emphasizing the three-ness of God, they are emphasizing the co-eternality of all three persons. The Father is eternal, the Son eternally begotten, and the Spirit eternally proceeding. Hence the *filioque* debate. Each one has a specific economic reality (or energy), and each one is equally eternal in the possession of that energy. Fairbairn says,

He is a society, a fellowship of three divine persons. The love that the three persons share with one another is the basis for His creation of people to share fellowship with Himself, and also the basis of His redemption of people. By maintaining the distinctions between the persons of the Trinity, Eastern theology avoids the Western temptations to turn God into a philosophical idea and highlights the personal, relational character of God, and thus the relational character of Christian life as well.⁶⁴

The West rationalizes God, and tries to fit Him in a nice tidy box. The East tries to maintain the separateness of God. The West, because of their emphasis on the unity of God, and their bent toward rationalizing Him, leads right into an individualistic faith that sees no real need for concrete, and lasting, fellowship, in terms of the Church.⁶⁵ The East, on the other hand, who emphasizes the community within the Godhead, is very dependant upon community and relations as far as the Church goes, which is why Church tradition is so important. We are not a slice of history separate from what has gone on before us, and what will come after. We are part of the Church past, present, future, and in communion with them.

The next issue concerns the dual nature of Christ. This topic has seen much debate throughout history. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are a testimony that the debates are

⁶⁴Fairbairn, 59.

⁶⁵This is spoken in the context of Modern Evangelicalism. There have been many fathers in the faith from the West who believe in the community of faith (Luther, Calvin, Barth, Leithart, just to name a few). The point being made here deals with the modern conception, and the particularly American conception, of the Individual, and his "almighty" independence.

still present with us. Basic orthodoxy, East and West, has come to a common understanding of this, and has held to it since the early Middle Ages. Fairbairn summarizes, "Orthodoxy asserts that...the one person of Christ is not a product of the incarnation; His single person is the eternal person of God the Son. The incarnation was not a process of making a person out of two impersonal natures, but was an act by which God the Son added humanity to who He already was."⁶⁶ This is to assert that Christ was not incomplete before the incarnation, but rather was complete and whole as the second person of the Trinity. The East takes this definition and with it emphasizes more strongly the famous statement from Gregory of Nazianzus, "Whatever is unassumed, is unhealed." Ware describes this as the fourth of four essential doctrines in describing who God is. He says,

Our God is an Incarnate God. God has come down to humankind, not only through His energies, but in His own person. The Second Person of the Trinity, 'true God from true God,' was made human: 'The word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John I, 14). A closer union than this between God and His creation there could not be. God Himself became one of His creatures.⁶⁷

Though this is not a point of contention between the East and the West, it is important to note that this is something the East holds as essential (again, not unlike the West). A Christ that has not become completely human can do no good at all. You will remember that this was extremely important to Dostoevsky as he grew in his faith. Without a connection to mankind, a connection like the incarnation, mankind is lost.

The last issue to discuss is salvation, and all that comes with it. An Eastern understanding of salvation begins with an Eastern understanding of the original state of man, and his fall. Before the fall, man was incomplete and immature. Man's vocation, in his unfallen state, was to become like God, *theosis* or deification. He was created with freedom, and was to use that freedom to gain a more intimate union with God their Father. Fairbairn states,

In the Eastern mind, the image of God consists of those faculties that God gave humanity at creation in order to make union with him possible. On the other hand, the likeness consists

⁶⁶Ibid., 61.

⁶⁷Ware, 210.

of those perfections that God intended humanity to acquire by using free will to cooperate with God's grace and to grow to maturity and complete union with God.⁶⁸

A journey was still before him, a journey towards theosis. Vladimir Lossky explains further, "The perfection of our first nature lay above all in this capacity to communicate with God, to be united more and more with the fullness of the Godhead, which was to penetrate and transfigure created nature."⁶⁹ Man was on the road toward that goal, but suddenly decided, in his freedom, to jump off the path, irrevocably, in the fall. Man had the potential to become like God, but gave it up when he ate the fruit. In the fall man lost the ability to attain that end, namely deification. However, he did not lose his image, which was God's image. Therefore he still had the potential to enter into union with God, but the ability to do that on his own was now lost. Sin takes on a different set of clothes in this picture. Fairbairn explains, "Sin has less to do with disobedience and consequent guilt than it does with the failure to pursue the calling of deification (being hungry for God alone)."⁷⁰ This does not lessen their view of sin however. On the contrary it is still very serious. This is because of their view of the Christian life. Fairbairn continues,

Such an idea is consistent with the fact that Eastern theology views reality less in legal categories and more in terms of life and relationship than does Western theology. From a Western perspective, a view of sin with less emphasis on guilt may not be as severe a view of sin as ours, but one should not conclude that the Easterners have a low view of sin. To the Orthodox, sin is still very serious. The major consequence of the fall and of humanity's sinfulness, according to Orthodox thought, is that people are now unable to become united to God. The task that God set before people at creation has become one which we are not capable of fulfilling.⁷¹

Again, with life and journey at the center of Orthodox thought, sin becomes an immense and unconquerable obstacle. Salvation becomes that which can place man back on the path towards deification. God descended in the person of Christ, and in redemption, made it

⁶⁸Fairbairn, 67.

⁶⁹Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: New York, 1976) 126.

⁷⁰Fairbairn, 75.

⁷¹Ibid., 75.

possible for man to pursue theosis once again. In Christ's work on the cross, God did not fully complete theosis for mankind, but merely made it possible for them to continue on the path.⁷² The atonement of Christ conquers the powers of sin and death, in which we were all fast bound. With those powers conquered, we are now able to pursue deification once again, with Christ as our mediator, guide, example, and helper.⁷³ Fairbairn goes on to point out that, "The Orthodox regard theosis as being, first and foremost, the result of the Holy Spirit's activity in people.... The Holy Spirit gives us God's own energies, granting us the transformation that Eastern Christendom associates with salvation."⁷⁴ Grace therefore means the transference of God's energies ("those aspects of His divine life which he chooses to share with people") to man, deifying them, enabling them to pursue theosis.⁷⁵ How does this happen to man? How does one obtain theosis? The answer is in Moses on the Mount. "People to whom the revelation is given are thereby transformed so as to become the ones through whom it is given, just as the light revealed to Moses transformed him so that his face shone with glory."⁷⁶ Moses was illumined by God, and he then went and brought that to the people. God uses means to transform and illumine. Therefore salvation in Eastern thought is never individually centered. "[Our] calling is not simply to be united individually to God through *theosis*, but to unite the entire world to God."⁷⁷ The East sees it as one of their central callings to take the illumination given to them and use it to unite the world to God. However this is done most specifically in Liturgy, rather than missions. The Church, as should be expected, plays the largest role in this. Fairbairn states, "The Church is the realm

⁷²See Ibid., 79.

⁷³See Ibid., 85-86.

⁷⁴Ibid., 86.

⁷⁵See Ibid., 87.

⁷⁶Ibid., 70.

⁷⁷Ibid., 72.

in which Christian life is born, is nurtured, grows to maturity, and reaches its ultimate goal of participation in the divine nature.⁷⁸ And later,

The role of the Church in Orthodox salvation doctrine should not be surprising, given the prominence of the Church in the Eastern understanding of tradition as the source of its vision of Christian life. In fact, the roles of the Church in making people the body of Christ and in assisting people in gaining union with God are virtually one and the same. Theosis is not an individual matter; it involves the entire Church, and indeed the entire universe. No one aspires to become a partaker of the divine nature alone; people pursue transformation as the community of saints.⁷⁹

So we can see that salvation comes, and renews mans ability to pursue deification. Here is the fundamental difference between East and West. The West looks back at what God has done. The East looks forward to what God will do. In looking back, we Westerners find salvation and justification accomplished for us. The East would agree that there is salvation, but would understand it more as a progressive event. Salvation and glorification in the East are much more like our doctrines of sanctification. Life is a journey towards final and complete salvation, final and complete deification. To conclude, Maximos Aghiorgoussis, a source for Fairbairn, gives a helpful summary of what salvation is in the Eastern mind. His seven keys to understanding salvation are 1) Christ's work focuses on the incarnation and on his person; 2) Salvation is communion with Christ, participation in Divine life and sanctification by the energies of God; 3) Atonement is the reversal of mans death rather than merely a substitution; 4) Christ achieves salvation, Holy Spirit applies it to people; 5) People can really choose salvation, and actualize it through love; 6) Salvation comes in Christ, from the Holy Spirit, through the Church; 7) Salvation is not complete until the Second Coming and the Last Judgment.⁸⁰

The one idea that summarizes all of Eastern theology is that of the journey. To the Orthodox mind all of faith and life are centered around the journey toward deification, or

⁷⁸Ibid., 88.

⁷⁹Ibid., 94-95.

⁸⁰Maximos Aghiorgoussis, *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran - Orthodox Dialogue*, John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias, eds. (Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, 1992), 56-57.

theosis. Becoming like God is the goal of every Christian, and the life leading up to the final completion in the Second Coming is the primary manifestation of that. If nothing else is remembered, remember that. Journey is everything. And that journey consists of one outward action: love. According to Aghiorgoussis, the 5th key to understanding salvation is that it is actualized by love. Love is at the center of the Divine Community. Love is foundation for redemption. Love is what makes man's journey possible. The journey toward God must be steeped in a love for Him, for His saints, and for His creation. If a deep and biblical love is nowhere present, neither is the possibility for salvation. Journey is everything, and love is the path on which one travels.⁸¹

With a brief overview of Eastern, and therefore Russian, Orthodoxy, we now have the ability to continue and show even further how Dostoevsky was a Christian. In this section we will strive to show how his deeply held Russian Orthodox convictions seeped through every page of his novels. Hopefully this will illumine us as we attempt to understand more closely what Dostoevsky was trying to accomplish in his masterful works. The picture that will emerge will be that of a man struggling to express the love of Christ to the world, and do so against the atheistic temptations inherent in his secular culture. Therefore, let us now turn to the Orthodox aspects of Dostoevsky's faith.

⁸¹Some might argue that these Orthodox doctrines are products of the 20th Century Orthodox Church, and were not the doctrines the Church in Dostoevsky's day held. In response to that, three things. One, these are basic tenets of the Church. Without these doctrines, the Eastern Orthodox Church (Russian, or any other) would not be. Two, the Orthodox Church places such a firm trust in the authority of Tradition, that it would be difficult to believe that there could have been a major rebellion from within, so as to completely reverse all these fundamental truths. And thirdly, the authors of my sources were thoroughly steeped and referenced throughout, the authors from the late 19th Century. The reasons for not using them here are simply time and scope. Summaries were the goal here, and not in depth discussions.

Chapter Six Dostoevsky the Orthodox

The first book to look at in discussing the Orthodox aspects of Dostoevsky's faith is *Crime and Punishment*. To jump right in, Sonya is all.

In *Crime and Punishment*, she is the embodiment of salvation and the Church. This is brought out in three major ways. First, she is a woman and a harlot. These two in combination point very specifically to the Church. The Church is our mother, and therefore a woman. The Church is also a harlot that was made beautiful and pure. This is the idea of the 'virgin prostitute.' In this forgiven Church, we find salvation. We go to the Church to find comfort, solace, and redemption. It is in the Church that Christ resides, for she is His bride and body. For Sonya to be the embodiment of these things is important, for she offers salvation to Raskolnikov. It is in her that he finds comfort and peace. It is also in her that he finds redemption.

Secondly, her real name is Sophia, which is Greek for Wisdom. This brings in connotations of the Holy Spirit as well. In some capacity, she embodies the Holy Spirit, leading, prodding Raskolnikov to confess, and eventually bringing about redemption in him.

It is in her presence that he feels the most guilt, if he would allow himself to call it that. It is through her 'Holy Spirit' type convictions and prodding's that he finally confesses his crime, first to her, then to the police. Sonya is the one who brings him to do penance by kneeling in the crossroads and kissing the earth he has offended. This is the first step in his redemption, and therefore his deification, but more on that later.

Thirdly, she is the keeper of the Scriptures. Like the Church, she has authority over them. Twice the New Testament is mentioned in the story. The first time is when Raskolnikov demands that Sonya read him the story of Lazarus. The next time the New Testament appears is in Siberia where Raskolnikov serves his time. Dostoevsky informs us that, "Under his pillow lay the New Testament. He took it up mechanically. The book belonged to Sonya; it was the one from which she had read the raising of Lazarus to him."⁸² From this we can clearly link Scripture to Sonya. They belong to her, and the only two times they are mentioned is in connection to her. Thus in relation with the other two points it is easy to infer that Sonya plays the part of the Church. She is a motherly figure to Raskolnikov, as well as a savior. She is the one in whom redemption, conviction of sin, guidance toward deification, and the Scriptures themselves are found. From this we can gather that these attributes Dostoevsky saw as being obvious in the Church itself. We can easily surmise that he believed the Church to be all that Sonya is. The Church is salvific, motherly, convicting, and keeper to the keys of Scripture. Later on we will see how she is a Christ figure as well.

Another instance of note in *Crime and Punishment* is when Sonya's father and Raskolnikov meet for the first time in a bar in the opening pages of the story. Marmeladov, the father, is a drunkard and a worthless man. He is weeping over his several pints, all the while sharing the story of his life with Raskolnikov, who is sitting there listening.

⁸²*Crime and Punishment*, 449.

He will pity us Who has had pity on all men, Who has understood all men and all things, He is the One, He too is the judge. He will come in that day and He will ask: 'Where is the daughter who gave herself for her cross, consumptive stepmother and for the little children of another? Where is the daughter who had pity upon the filthy drunkard, her earthly father, undismayed by his beastliness?' And He will say, 'Come to me! I have already forgiven thee once.... I have forgiven thee once.... Thy sins which are many are forgiven thee for thou hast loved much....' And he will forgive my Sonya, He will forgive, I know it ... I felt it in my heart when I was with her just now! And He will judge and will forgive all, the good and the evil, the wise and the meek.... And when He has done with all of them, then He will summon us. 'You too come forth,' He will say, 'Come forth ye drunkards, come forth, ye weak ones, come forth, ye children of shame!' And we shall all come forth, without shame and shall stand before him. And He will say unto us, 'Ye are swine, made in the Image of the Beast and with his mark; but come ye also!' And the wise ones and those of understanding will say, 'Oh Lord, why dost Thou receive these men?' And He will say, 'This is why I receive them, oh ye wise, this is why I receive them, oh ye of understanding, that not one of them believed himself to be worthy of this.' And He will hold out His hands to us and we shall fall down before him ... and we shall weep ... and we shall understand all things! Then we shall understand all! ... and all will understand, Katerina Ivanovna even ... she will understand.... Lord, Thy kingdom come!⁸³

Here we have the ravings of a Russian peasant, who is brought to poverty by his own will. His family is in shambles, his wife is mentally retarded, and his daughter sells herself in order to put bread on the table. This last point really makes Marmeladov feel disgusted with himself, for that is his duty. Nonetheless, he is not able to climb out of his self-dug pit, and so looks forward to the 'final judgment', which he here describes. The two things to point out are first, his firm belief that Sonya will be forgiven all her sins. This is interesting in light of the point mentioned above, concerning the harlot, or the 'virgin prostitute.' Dostoevsky, in picturing a prostitute as a salvific figuration of the Church, he is in no way denying the sin that she is committing. This only serves to strengthen the depravity that Dostoevsky believes is inherent in man. Furthermore, it makes redemption that much more beautiful. In creating a character so steeped in sin, and yet so pure in heart, he makes possible the redemption of anyone. It is from the father's speech here that we learn why that is. How can Sonya be so pure in heart and yet such a vile sinner? The answer is, undoubtedly, love. Marmeladov is certain that at the last day Christ will say to Sonya, as He said in the Gospels, "Thy sins

⁸³Ibid., 18.

which are many are forgiven thee for thou hast loved much.”⁸⁴ The second point lies in Christ’s response to Marmeladov and those like him. He is confident that Christ will say to him, “Because you know you do not deserve this, you may enter.” This shows a sense of salvation that we are not accustomed to in the West. Salvation based entirely on humility is a Russian concept. Christ suffered, and did so with great humility, and so, for Marmeladov to do the same makes him Christ-like, and therefore a heaven-bound Christian. However this is not based on their own humility, but rather on Christ’s acceptance of humility over and against pride. This is a case of the justified publican verses the self-righteous Pharisee. Granted, Dostoevsky is not trying to give us a complete picture of salvation here. That comes with the entire story taken as a whole. But this is one aspect we must understand to be very important in the Russian mind. Suffering and doing so with humility is essential in the Christian life, for it is imitative of Christ.

The last point to draw out of *Crime and Punishment*, which hopefully will round out our discussion of salvation, is the journey of Raskolnikov himself. In Raskolnikov we see the perfect example of salvation according to a Russian “system.” We first find him as a student who is completely nihilistic, utilitarian and out to prove that he is a ‘Superman,’ able to rise above the law in order to better society. He acts upon his beliefs and kills an old ‘worthless’ pawnbroker and her sister who accidentally walks in at the inopportune moment. He succeeds in eluding the police and gets off scot-free. However, his conscience never gives him rest. His mind is convinced he was in the right to kill them, but his soul will not be deceived. This knowledge haunts him constantly, and especially in the presence of Sonya,

⁸⁴Luke 7:47. It is interesting to note that Christ here is forgiving a prostitute. This highlights something that will be discussed later, but can be mentioned here. Christ is quick to forgive sins of commission, where repentance is more readily found. It is the sins of omission which are not repented for, and therefore are not forgiven. The Pharisees who are self-righteous verses the prostitutes who know their sin. Marmeladov would place himself with the prostitutes, because he knows his sin, and therefore knows he is unworthy of salvation. This attitude is the salvific humility found in Russian Orthodoxy.

who, you will remember, is his conscience, his 'Holy Spirit.' He finally can take the torment no longer and confesses his crime, and is subsequently sent to Siberia. Even there though, he does not relinquish his belief that he was in the right. It is only after a dream wherein he sees his utilitarian nihilism played out to its logical end that he finally repents and restoration begins. Again, it is through Sonya and her silent but firm spiritual presence that he finds his way. After remembering the New Testament that was underneath his pillow in Siberia, he thinks to himself, "Can her convictions not be mine now?"⁸⁵ It is then that the scales come off, and he allows Sonya to nourish him, and bring him to life. With this background the last lines become some of the most beautiful in all of literature.

He did not know that the new life would not be given him for nothing, that he would have to pay dearly for it, that it would cost him great striving, great suffering. But that is the beginning of a new story—the story of the gradual renewal of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, of his passing from one world into another, of his initiation into a new unknown life.⁸⁶

The gradual renewal of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, is the key aspect of theosis. It is the deification of one over the course of his lifetime. This is the journey which so central in Russian theology. The fact that the Christian life would 'cost him great striving, great suffering,' is an idea that is glossed over with too much frequency in the West. We forget that Christ called us to pick up our cross daily. But this is nowhere diminished here in these lines. The walk of a Christian is hard, and often painful. This is an aspect of Russian theology which encourages us toward growth. The ending can be and has been greatly misunderstood, if we do not keep in mind the Russian thinking at work in the background. If we forget that Dostoevsky was Orthodox, a painful and gradual regeneration that costs much, will seem less than hopeful. But this is not the case, and Dostoevsky understood that; he understood the journey of life.

⁸⁵Ibid., 449.

⁸⁶Ibid.

Next in our study comes the interesting book, *The Idiot*. Why it is interesting will be discussed at greater length later in our discussion of Dostoevsky's Christology. For now it will be enough to bring out three aspects of Orthodox theology located in this story. First, touching on the nature of Christ, Prince Myshkin, the protagonist, says,

...The baby smiled at her for the first time in its life. I saw her crossing herself with great devotion, "What are you doing, my dear?" "God has just such gladness every time he sees from heaven that a sinner is praying to Him with all his heart, as a mother has when she sees the first smile on her baby's face." That was what the woman said to me almost in those words, this deep, subtle and truly religious thought - a thought in which all the essence of Christianity finds expression; that is the whole conception of God as our Father and of God's gladness in man, like a father's in his own child - the fundamental idea of Christ!⁸⁷

Here we have expressed 'the fundamental idea of Christ,' the idea that He is our advocate. Dostoevsky is saying here that God is our Father, and takes joy in man because of Christ. We can be found perfect in the eyes of God because of Christ. He has triumphed over sin and death, and has made it possible for us to be seen as children once again. The old mother says that God finds similar gladness in a repentant sinner to that of a mother seeing her child smile for the first time. This also defines the fundamental idea of Christ's death and resurrection. Russian theology places great emphasis on the victory in the incarnation through which Christ made possible man's ability to repent. This is why "all the essence of Christianity" finds its expression in the repentant sinner, and God's joy over him. The fact that God can find joy in man at all is the fundamental idea of Christ. This works in a Western theology, but is more clearly seen through the Eastern assumptions that Dostoevsky wrote with. At work is their idea of the fall, Christ's incarnation, and more specifically His role as mediator and advocate.

Myshkin's main spiritual antagonist is a young man, dying of consumption, named Ippolit. Toward the end of the book, this young atheist launches into a lengthy "Explanation"

⁸⁷ *The Idiot*, 208.

of why he is an atheist. This is a direct assault on Myshkin and his pietistic Christian convictions. It is a long diatribe meant to explain away God. Even though he is proven wrong, he touches on issues that are very true, and has some amazing insights. He uses them as proofs against Christianity, but they are better used as whetstones, sharpening our faith. They are not necessarily unique to Russian theology, but are useful in defining Dostoevsky nonetheless. The first example, Ippolit is trying to do away with religion based upon the fact that we can understand neither God nor His will. He has been told that faith is the answer, but he feels that he will not be held responsible for no 'fault' of his own, meaning his inability to comprehend. He goes on to say,

We degrade God too much, ascribing to Him our ideas, in vexation at being unable to understand Him. But, again, if it's impossible to understand Him, I repeat it's hard to have to answer for what it is not given to man to understand. And, if it is so, how shall I be judged for being unable to understand the will and laws of Providence? No, we'd better leave religion on the side.⁸⁸

Here we see Ippolit's frustration with apophatic theology, which has at its core man's inability to comprehend God. We see this same thought process later in Ivan Karamazov. The atheist does not understand, cannot reason God, and therefore concludes that there is no God. Because we cannot comprehend, He cannot be. The biting remark at the opening of his thoughts here, though, rings true. It may be that in part this is an attack on the West from Dostoevsky, and a cautioning of Russia to not do the same. We do ascribe our ideas to Him. We try to fit Him in a box that we make, with the sole purpose of understanding, and comprehending. Ippolit is half right here. We cannot and will not ever understand the Infinite. His response is wrong in that it therefore denies God's existence entirely. The correct response, the one that Dostoevsky points to is that of faith.

⁸⁸Ibid., 394.

The second example from this speech is a few pages earlier as Ippolit is discussing a painting of Christ being taken down from the cross. He says it made a very deep impression on him. He describes,

I know that the Christian Church laid it down, even in the early ages, that Christ's suffering was not symbolical but actual, and that his body was therefore fully and completely subject to the laws of nature on the cross. In the picture the face is fearfully crushed by blows, swollen covered with fearful, swollen and blood-stained bruises, the eyes are open and squinting: the great wide open whites of the eyes glitter with a sort of deathly, glassy light. But strange to say, as one looks at this corpse of a tortured man, a peculiar and curious question arises; if just such a corpse (and it must have been just like that) was seen by all His disciples, by those who were to become His chief apostles, but the women that followed Him and worshipped Him, how could they believe that that martyr would rise again? The question instinctively arises: if death is so awful and the laws of nature so mighty, how can they be overcome? How can they be overcome when even He did not conquer them, He who vanquished nature in His lifetime, who exclaimed, 'Maiden, arise!' and the maiden arose - 'Lazarus, come forth!' and the dead man came forth?⁸⁹

He continues by describing nature as a large impersonal machine that devours even the Supreme Being. This is naturally in defense of his atheism, as he cannot see the world right side up with the Supreme Being as someone who is actually supreme, even above nature. Here, in this picture, which he knows to be completely accurate, he finds refutation enough of the effectiveness of Christ on the cross. But again, Dostoevsky is showing that it boils down to faith. If Christ did not take on the full nature of death, then we would still be lost. "Whatever is unassumed is unhealed." What Ippolit sees as refutation is indeed the very foundation of hope. But without faith, hope is nothing. What Ippolit points to here though is a major point of emphasis in the East. Christ suffered tremendously, and in suffering found victory. It was through His suffering that He overcame. This is the basis for the glory of suffering in the Russian Christian life. It is the basis for their asceticism. This is not in contrast to the West, but again, must be understood through Eastern eyes. Their emphasis on suffering, and doing so because Christ did, is central. It is also important to understand their view of what the cross accomplished. For them it was much more victory over sin and

⁸⁹Ibid., 388-389

death, than it was atonement, though that is involved. Sin and death were the things that held man back from the presence of God, and therefore a conquering of them meant man could be reconciled to God. The Christ who was victor over death means much more to a Russian than does the Christ whose blood was offered for our sins in the courts of heaven. For Christ to be consumed by nature also makes sense of the Resurrection, for that is where the victory lies. Ippolit, through unbelief and a hard heart, speaks the very essence of truth here, but is unable to see its outcome; he is unable to see the redemption that comes in the God-Man submitting to the powers of death.

In wrapping up our discussion of Dostoevsky's Russian Orthodox underpinnings, *The Brothers Karamazov* must make an appearance. Much has been said already, and more will be said later. However, at this point, let us take a look at the brothers themselves and point out something unique about each one. To begin with, I shall look at Ivan. Ivan is the middle child, the older full brother of Alyosha and the younger half brother of Dimitri. If a body part could describe each of the brothers, Dimitri would be the heart, full of passion, Alyosha would be the hands, always serving, and Ivan would be the brain, ceaselessly thinking. Ivan represents human wisdom, Western rationalism, atheistic socialism, and everything that can be encapsulated within those walls. To him, God does not exist because we cannot comprehend Him (much like his predecessor Ippolit). We saw earlier his reasons for believing that Christ was a failure. Dostoevsky again hammers the truth that without faith, love for God is impossible. Without faith, love itself is impossible. We see in Ivan the danger of trying to rationalize Holy Truth. It will inevitably end in atheism. If the brain and its ability to reason is the ultimate source of authority, then there is no room for Christ. The problem lies, among other things, in Ivan's insistence on the 'cataphatic' approach to the knowledge of God. He must identify and define directly the attributes of the Other. He

wants to look straight at the sun and tell you what color it really is. The problem of course is that as soon as you try to do that, you go blind. The minute you think that you can put your mind around the Almighty, you blind yourself to reality, and thus all attempts at knowledge become futile and lead to utter despair. This is exactly what happens to Ivan. He wants to comprehend, and fails. This leads him to a world of devils and chaos. There is no glimmer of hope in this world, apart from the grace of God. Dostoevsky is saying to us through Ivan and subsequently, Zossima, "Shut up and love your neighbor. Stop trying to rationalize the one above rationalization. Accept or perish." Here we see the heart of Dostoevsky. Love is all we need to concern ourselves with, in his mind. It redeems, purifies, restores, and heals all. It is the key characteristic we see in all his Christ-figures, which we will look at in a short while. However, it is important to define love as Dostoevsky does, in light of the Ivans and Ippolits.

Dimitri as I said above is the heart. He is the impassioned one who has great zeal for life, and of all things sensual. Ivan is the intellectual center, and Alyosha is the spiritual center, whereas Dimitri is the plot center.⁹⁰ Around his actions the story is developed. Dimitri is the most dynamic character in the whole book. He goes from a wild and senseless philanderer, to a humbled man of faith. It is interesting that his conversion is centered around the death of his father. But that's another discussion. What matters here comes at the crux of Dimitri's conversion. This is after the murder, while he is in jail waiting for the trial. Alyosha, who plays Dimitri's conscience (much like Sonya to Raskolnikov), is listening.

'Rakitin wouldn't understand it,' he began in a sort of exaltation; 'but you, you'll understand it all. That's why I was thirsting for you. You see, there's so much I've been wanting to tell you for ever so long, here, within these peeling walls, but I haven't said a word about what matters most; the moment never seems to have come. Now I can wait no longer. I must pour out my heart to you. Brother, these last two months I've found in myself a new man. A new man has risen up in me. He was hidden in me, but would never have come to the

⁹⁰ See Gibson, 170ff.

surface, if it hadn't been for this blow from heaven. I am afraid! And what do I care if I spend twenty years in the mines, breaking ore with a hammer? I am not a bit afraid of that — it's something else I am afraid of now: that that new man may leave me. Even there, in the mines, underground, I may find a human heart in another convict and murderer by my side, and I may make friends with him, for even there one may live and love and suffer. One may thaw and revive a frozen heart in that convict, one may wait upon him for years, and at last bring up from the dark depths a lofty soul, a feeling, suffering creature; one may bring forth an angel, create a hero! There are so many of them, hundreds of them, and we are all to blame for them. Why was it I dreamed of that 'babe' at such a moment? 'Why is the babe so poor?' That was a sign to me at that moment. It's for the babe I'm going. Because we are all responsible for all. For all the 'babes,' for there are big children as well as little children. All are 'babes.' I go for all, because someone must go for all.⁹¹

He is speaking of the punishment of going to Siberia, when he says, "I go for all." Here we see the new man arising in Dimitri, who is obviously Christ. This new man has made him aware that he is responsible for the state of fallen humanity. Here again we see the Russian idea of community that is so prevalent. Who in the West thinks it is their fault that the children in Eastern Africa are dying of starvation? Who in the West takes that responsibility? Who even thinks that there is responsibility to be taken? We Westerners do not even think in those terms. Dostoevsky did, and it is something we should all take to heart. Upon first reading the words, "Each is responsible for all" spoken by Father Zossima, a Westerner is completely confused, and cannot make heads or tails of it. "How am I responsible for my brother's actions? Each is responsible for themselves, right?" But in Russian thought, this makes perfect sense, and for us to comprehend what Dostoevsky is saying here, we must step inside the shoes of an Orthodox. Community and universal fellowship is central in this discussion. This is not to advocate universalism, but merely to point out, as Christ did, who your neighbor is, and how you are to treat him. In one sense we are in fellowship with the world. This is because we are all made in the image of God. Therefore, since we are called to act on God's behalf and share the Gospel unto the four corners, we are responsible for those who are lost. This is why Dimitri feels he must be punished. He needs to suffer for the sake of others. He feels responsible for their physical and spiritual suffering. Thus, he is fine

⁹¹ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 675.

with being sent to Siberia, even though he is innocent of the crime. This is one of the key themes in *The Brothers Karamazov*, the idea that the Christian life is not an individualistic reality. It is a journey in community. How is the journey realized? To answer that, I turn to Alyosha.

Alyosha is the hero, or the future hero, of the story. He is the one for whom the book is written. He is also a Christ-figure in the story. He has 'grown up' in the monastery under the direction of Father Zossima, another Christ-figure. In Alyosha we see the idea of theosis. He has been a follower of Christ from an early age, but experiences a true and lasting conversion after the death of Zossima. Before his death, Alyosha is counseled one last time. In these words we see the heart of the Christian life for a Russian. Again, Alyosha is listening, while Zossima speaks.

This is not your place for the time. I bless you for great service in the world. Yours will be a long pilgrimage. And you will have to take a wife, too. You will have to bear all before you come back. There will be much to do. But I don't doubt of you, and so I send you forth. Christ is with you. Do not abandon Him and He will not abandon you. You will see great sorrow, and in that sorrow you will be happy. This is my last message to you: in sorrow seek happiness. Work, work unceasingly. Remember my words, for although I shall talk with you again, not only my days but my hours are numbered.⁹²

Here we see the journey that is so essential to man's deification (or sanctification to appease our Western ears). Alyosha is not to remain static, always in the safety of the monastery. Zossima recognizes, rightly, that if Alyosha is to be true to his capabilities and to his calling, he must be sent out into the world. His fate is a 'long pilgrimage'. There is much in life that he must experience that is essential to his salvation. Here we have theosis in a nutshell. If we do not understand this distinctively Eastern concept, we will miss much of the beauty in Dostoevsky.

⁹² Ibid., 80-81.

Section Three

In such moments I have formulated my creed, in which all is precious and holy to me...there is nothing lovelier, deeper, more appealing, more rational, more human and more perfect than the Savior...not only is there no one else like him, there never could be...If anyone could prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth really did exclude Christ, I should stay with Christ rather than with the truth.⁹³

- Dostoevsky

He is to seek among the atheists, Slavs and Europeans, Russian fanatics and hermits, a Polish Jesuit proselytizer and Russian flagellants, and finally to discover on Russian soil the Russian Christ and the Russian God.⁹⁴

- Dostoevsky

⁹³ Gibson, 22.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 39.

Chapter Seven Dostoevsky's Christology

Dostoevsky was a Christian and wrote as such. His books are thoroughly filled with biblical allusions. In doing so, and because he was a talented author, he wrote typologically. He used a figure from Scripture and based his characters on that figure. This is seen most prominently in his use of the Christ-figure as a literary device. However, this device not only enriches the story, but also adds tremendous meaning and definition to what we can postulate Dostoevsky himself believed. It was from his beliefs as to who Christ was, that his characters developed and became what we know in his books. It remains in our study to look at these characters and decipher who this Christ was that Dostoevsky loved.

To begin with, in *Crime and Punishment*, we find an interesting twist that is at first disturbing to the unsuspecting reader. The Christ-figure is not a man. It is a woman, Sonya. And not only is she a woman, she is a prostitute. How can this be? Well several things must be remembered. First of all, a Christ figure does not mean Christ Himself. Nor does it mean that the Christ figure must include every one of Christ's attributes. What it does mean is that there is someone in a story that represents in some fashion the person of Christ, whether that be with regard to His teaching, His actions, or His character. Most commonly it refers

to someone who takes on the redemptive role as one who is sacrificed for the sake of another's salvation. Often, however, it will be a combination. Second, we must remember the importance of the suffering of Christ in Russian thought. Christ suffered passively, humbly, meekly, silently, and with a certain goal in view, namely the salvation of mankind. Therefore whenever someone suffers in like manner, it is considered to be a very Christ-like suffering. This is thoroughly Russian, and thoroughly Dostoevskian. Third, a Christ figure can be identified as such because of the situation he finds himself in. This is basic typology. Allusions to Scripture are a regular tool at the disposal of an author, and often an author will place a character in similar circumstances that Jesus was in, in order to draw either parallels, or distinctions. If we keep these things in mind, it is easier to see that Sonya, a prostitute, could actually be a Christ figure.

Sonya is the key figure in Raskolnikov's spiritual redemption. She leads him out of his darkened theories, through a constant and sacrificial love. This is one of Dostoevsky's favorite concepts: the idea of redemptive love. I will look at this more in-depth later. Sonya is the perfect example of one who loves like Christ. It is not a selfish or prideful love. It is not a controlling or grasping love. It is a love that heals, a love that is patient, and a love that gives much more than it receives. It is a redeeming love, bringing the one loved from a state of depravity into a state of grace. It is through this love that Raskolnikov finally puts off the old man, repents, and is reborn. Here is where modern readers have a problem with Dostoevsky. In keeping with the Russian mind set, Sonya is absolved of her life of sin by her intentions. Her sacrifice, in giving her self away for the sake of keeping a disordered and ugly family fed, is almost praised. The same type of honor for the "Virgin Prostitute" is found in *Les Misérables* by Hugo. Fantine is forced to harlotry for the sake of the life of her child. In the same way she is revered as an angel for her sacrifice. It is hard for us in a post-welfare world to imagine this type of situation. Dostoevsky would probably not find this justifiable in

real life, because real life is always more sticky. He is using this as a picture of the ultimate sacrifice, the giving up of oneself for the life of a friend. No man hath greater love, Christ says. Sonya loves her family so much, that she, in essence, lays down her life for their sake. Now prostitution always rubs us the wrong way, because it is sin. But if we look at the principle Dostoevsky is telling us, it becomes most Christ-like.

How is she the key figure in Raskolnikov's redemption? The most obvious way is seen in the passage that has already been discussed. As she reads the raising of Lazarus to him, you can see the scales slowly descending from his eyes. Slowly, it is true, but it does happen. It is almost as if Sonya is standing at the tomb of Raskolnikov, and by the power of the Spirit, calling him out of death. This is the picture we see in *Crime and Punishment*. In saving Raskolnikov, she is also in part, saving herself. Her redemptive love works both ways. By the end of the book, the vision of a life together, a life in which they can put the past behind them together, is made most clear. She too is resurrected, as the fruit of her sacrifice. Victor Terras points out that not only is she the salvation of Raskolnikov, she is the hero to stand against all the God-hating philosophies presented in the book. In speaking of the central theme of the book, he says,

"What is the greatest good?" The question is asked in terms of a confrontation, on an existential plane, between Sonya Marmeladov's unshakeable Christian faith and self-effacing humility and the carnal hedonism of Svidrigailov, the Benthamite utilitarian ethics of Luzhin, the socialist positivism of Lebeziatnikov, and, of course, Raskolnikov's notion that power is the greatest good...It must be observed that Dostoevsky has managed to introduce at least one significant encounter between Sonya and all four characters whose views oppose hers.⁹⁵

He goes on to describe her thus:

Sonya has all the Christian virtues. Though she has suffered much injustice, she never claims to be a victim but, on the contrary, calls herself "a great sinner"... Her whole being is penetrated by Christian *agape*. The impression that she is really a saint is supported by the wealth of New Testament symbolism associated with her. It is made explicit in the Epilogue when we learn that the convicts "even went to her to be healed."...Even her name is symbolic: Sophia is Divine Wisdom, in both the Orthodox and the romantic tradition.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Terras, *Reading Dostoevsky*, 52.

⁹⁶Ibid., 53.

We have made the claim that Sonya is a Christ figure. The reasons are these: First, she suffers beyond all imagination, doing so passively and with a humble heart. This is in direct correlation to Christ's own suffering on the Cross, or to be Russian, in the Incarnation. Her suffering is also sacrificial, much like the sacrifice of Christ. The price Sonya paid was essentially her life. She gave her self away, not for reasons of self, but rather out of selfless love for those around. This leads us to the second reason. Her sacrificial suffering has an object. She gives herself in order that her family may eat. Because of the circumstances of the day, there is no other way for a woman to make enough money to support a family. She lays down her life, so that others may live. Again, this is a picture of the Cross. It is not a nice and tidy picture, but a picture nonetheless. Third, she plays the part of Christ in the raising of Raskolnikov. Though it is clear in the book that it is her faith that saves him, she still fills the typological role of savior. Our 21st century, pietistic minds do not like the idea that a prostitute can be holy, let alone a picture of Christ. But, thankfully, Dostoevsky was neither pietistic nor a product of the 21st century.

To give some context, *The Idiot* is Dostoevsky's attempt at describing a 'positively good man'. The basic plot line is as follows. Prince Myshkin, pure, innocent, spiritually and physically meek, and very much naïve, is introduced to a family of high society. The three daughters of the family are extreme beauties, with the youngest being the highest beauty. Her name is Aglaya. There is another beautiful woman connected to this family, who is also of irregular beauty, of whom it is said, "with beauty like that, she could turn the world upside down." Her name is Natasya. She is a wild woman, leading a life of debauchery. Myshkin falls in love with her, but with a love that is based in pity rather than passion. He wishes to marry her in order to redeem her, and keep her from following her lustful passions. He asks for her hand, because she returns his love. Nevertheless, she refuses because she does not want to ruin his saintly character. Consequently, she runs away with her former, and very

jealous lover. Time races forward. Myshkin has fallen in passionate love with Aglaya. It is expected that they announce their intent to be married. When Natasya returns, however, Myshkin chooses her, again out of pity, and breaks off relations with Aglaya. Myshkin and Natasya plan a wedding, but when the day arrives, she runs away again. This time she runs to her demise. The jealous lover kills her in a fit. Upon discovering this, Myshkin relapses into his former illness and is re-admitted in Switzerland.

There is much more, and in what is here given, there consists merely a skeleton of the story. In fact, the thematic center of the book appears nowhere in what was recounted. However, this is intended just to give context for the things that I am going to discuss.

First of all, why was this book intended to describe a 'positively good man' or as other translations put it, a 'truly beautiful soul'? This comes from Dostoevsky's own notes on the matter. In a letter dated 1 January 1868, he says, "I started a new novel, and began working day and night. The idea of the novel is an old favorite of mine...the main idea of the novel is to portray a positively good man... Perfection is an ideal, and this ideal...is still far from a realization. There is only one positively good figure in the world, namely Christ."⁹⁷ He loved Christ, and the idea of His perfection. Naturally, out of this love, came a desire to depict Him in literature. From the beginning of this novel, Prince Myshkin was meant to be that picture of Christ. In Dostoevsky's notebooks we find much that supports this idea. "In the manuscript notes his name is frequently coupled with that of Christ, and in one place he is called 'Prince Christ.'"⁹⁸ Not only did Dostoevsky make Myshkin the spiritual parallel with Christ, but also in his physical appearance as well. "The parallelism between Myshkin and Christ is everywhere apparent in the novel. The description of Myshkin on the opening page recalls the familiar features of Christ as they are ordinarily portrayed in the art of the Eastern

⁹⁷Victor Terras, *The Idiot: An Interpretation*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 28.

⁹⁸Simmons, 200.

Church."⁹⁹ Some of the other characteristics that connect him with the person of Christ are: his attraction to children, and belief in them; his relentless state of humility; his purity in thought and deed; his ability to quickly understand others and their point of view; his chaste innocence.

One of the difficulties any author has in doing a project like this is the simple fact that anyone other than Christ *cannot* be perfectly good, or *truly* beautiful. Attempts had been made before to cast a human being as perfect, but they ended by being too unrealistic to be appealing, or helpful. Dostoevsky was aware of these things, and this troubled him greatly. The goal was to create a character that was going to be believable. To do this he needed to create someone who was somewhat of a simpleton, and was ridiculed for his innocence. He regarded Don Quixote as the best example of this type of Christ-figure. This type of character is morally pure, and still creates compassion and sympathy in his readers. However, regarding this very issue, he remarked, in the letter quoted from above, "there is nothing of this sort in my novel, absolutely nothing, and that is why I am terribly afraid that it will be a positive failure."¹⁰⁰

The other problem Dostoevsky had was creating a believable situation in which the perfect man will interact with the sinful world, and remain perfect. Simmons makes the comment, "In *The Idiot* the idea of the entirely good man is worked out by bringing the Christ-like character of Myshkin into contact with a world of greedy, sensual, sinning people. This problem is complicated by the fact that Myshkin ...is passive, whereas the society in which he lives is intensely active."¹⁰¹ Here is where we begin to see the Christology of Dostoevsky come out. Christ was meek and gentle. One of the key elements in Russian theology is that Christ suffered passively in order to gain the salvation of the world.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Terras, *The Idiot: An Interpretation*, 28.

¹⁰¹ Simmons, 202.

Therefore one key characteristic of a Christ-figure is passivity. This is how Myshkin hoped to conquer, through this Christ-like passivity. He must be willing to undergo ridicule and persecution, silently, like a lamb led to the slaughter. Simmons notes, "Sinning men and women are drawn to [Myshkin] and transformed by the Christian beauty of his nature. They are deeply affected by a humility and a patient submission to suffering that invokes the image of Christ who passively, not actively, submitted to suffering at the command of God in order to achieve the salvation of man."¹⁰² We see examples of this in the *Idiot* throughout. Myshkin is constantly ridiculed, called an idiot, and in one case physically hit. He, in his passivity, turns the cheek.

"Are you always going to get in my way?" roared Ganya. He let go Varya's arm and, mad with rage, gave Myshkin a violent slap in the face with the hand thus freed.

"Ah!" cried Kolya, clasping his hands. "My God!"

Exclamations were heard on all sides. Myshkin turned pale. He looked Ganya straight in the face with strange and reproachful eyes; his lips quivered, trying to articulate something; they were twisted into a sort of strange and utterly incongruous smile.

"Well, you may...but her...I won't let you," he said softly at last.¹⁰³

In this passage we see the lamb-like passivity that was so important in creating a Christ-figure. Myshkin, after being insulted physically and verbally, turns the other cheek, and continues to stand against Ganya's violent rage. In this scene, Ganya intends to hit a woman. This is why Myshkin is standing against him, and says, "but her...I won't let you." However, this is inadequate, and the protagonist fails. In this Christological experiment, Dostoevsky found himself constrained by the world he had created. This forced Myshkin into failure. He was *too* passive, *too* meek. The strength and power of Christ's humility (and the humility that Zossima speaks of, as we will see later) was not found in the mild Prince. Rigid passivity does not have the strength or the wisdom to love, and redeem with that love. Through this failure of a Christ-figure, Dostoevsky, who is not therefore a failure as an author, shows us indirectly what Christ needed to be. If Christ were rigidly passive, the

¹⁰²Ibid., 203.

¹⁰³*The Idiot*, 109.

world would be lost. Here, we would remember Dostoevsky's own gradual growth. *The Idiot* corresponds to the period of time in which he was fixed on the *person* of Christ, and not yet the *reality* of Christ. That comes later, in full maturity, in his final work.

Still, Myshkin remains a Christ-figure, despite his failure, and the parallels throughout the work prove that. One of the most striking of these parallels is the story of Marie, which Myshkin himself tells. The story in brief, is that of a young, poor girl who is seduced by a traveler, and is abandoned outside of town. She returns to find a hostile community, who show no forgiveness at all. They refuse to give her shelter, clothes, or even food. Only Myshkin pities her and gives her aid. He is ridiculed and despised because of this. However he continues to help her despite the persecution. He even brings his young friends (the town's children) to a place where they regard her with pity, and desire to help her as a friend. They continue to give her food and fellowship until she dies from illness. The parallels between Christ and Myshkin appear on two levels here. The obvious one is the girl, Marie, or Mary, who is Mary Magdalene. She is the despised woman who finds forgiveness in Christ and follows him thereafter. Myshkin of course takes the part of Christ. This reveals the quality of forgiveness that Myshkin shares with Christ. Myshkin is quick to forgive the repentant Marie, who has committed a sin of commission in her fornication. However, he is slower to forgive the townspeople, who are committing sins of omission, in their unforgiving attitude towards Marie.

The second level of this parallel is with the children. Myshkin is fascinated by children and holds them in high regard. This is also much like Christ who did not forbid the children to be brought to him. Christ even says that we must become like a child in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven. There is as well, the image of a group of children always following Myshkin wherever he goes. They even hold secret meetings, when the parents discourage them from meeting with Myshkin. This parallels with Christ and his disciples.

One final typological parallel. Just before the plot reaches its climax, Myshkin considers fleeing from his trials back to Switzerland. However he decides that it would be more honorable to stay and face what has been presented to him. This mirrors closely Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Christ-figure, though obvious in *The Idiot*, was weak and therefore a failure. Unchecked, and unbalanced passivity is the cause for this failure. It is not a complete picture of who Christ was, and therefore cannot have the redemptive authority Christ Himself had. It is not until Dostoevsky's final book that this Christ-figure reaches its full maturity. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, we find much that will enrich us and teach us about the Christ Dostoevsky held dear.

The Brothers Karamazov is a fascinating book. In it is the culmination of Dostoevsky's career, the climax of his spiritual warfare, the apex of his polyphonic style, and a host of supremely crafted characters. The two characters that represent Christ are the third and youngest brother Alyosha Karamazov, and his spiritual father and mentor, Father Zossima. They present the victory of Christian love in the face of the second brother, Ivan's humanistic atheism, and rationalistic worldview. In *The Brothers Karamazov* two armies are lined up against each other waiting to fight. Those two sides are: faith in the inherent goodness of God, and an implicit love for all of His children; and Western rationalism which denies the justice of God, leading to a denial of God Himself, ending in a socialism that says all things are legitimate, including murder. The Grand Inquisitor is the masterpiece of the latter army. A life of love is the masterpiece of the former. It is through Christ-likeness that we conquer the rational world of humanistic socialism. So how do we understand Christ in light of these two characters, Alyosha and Zossima? *The Brothers Karamazov* is eager to show us.

First, Alyosha. Beginning at his infancy, we see parallels between him and Christ. As a baby his mother wept and prayed for him in front of the icon of Mary. She lifted him up towards Mary, "holding him out in both arms to the image as though to put him under the Mother's protection."¹⁰⁴ This is putting Alyosha on the same level as Christ, typologically, when one thinks of the picture of the Madonna and Child. As he grows up, he lives in the monastery, learning to be a "lover of humanity" as his soul is "struggling from the darkness of worldly wickedness to the light of love."¹⁰⁵ Simmons says of him, "Like Prince Myshkin, Alyosha possesses this "highest beauty" which is a moral beauty...He moves through the pages morally influencing the characters and events...he is passive, submissive, ever ready to turn the other cheek, and Christ-like in his capacity for suffering."¹⁰⁶ This parallel is also seen in the Grand Inquisitor. Ivan's story ends with Christ kissing the old man on his "bloodless lips." At the end of their discussion, Alyosha kisses Ivan. Directly after the story is read, he takes the place of the Christ character and kisses his ideological opponent. It is through implicit love that Ivan is conquered, not through rationalization, or "point-by-point" refutation.

In the final scenes of the book, we have another stark parallel, as Alyosha gives his Speech at the Stone. It just so happens that there are "about twelve" boys there listening to him instruct them on how to live. This is much too close to the Great Commission to ignore. It is the final page of the story, Alyosha is telling twelve boys to love one another, and it is Alyosha speaking. His previous parallels to Christ only serve to strengthen this one. Again, he stands in the shoes of Christ, and exhorts his disciples to love one another and enjoy the life God has blessed them with. This is all happening directly after the funeral of their friend, Ilusha. These are the last few lines:

¹⁰⁴ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Simmons, 333.

"Karamazov," cried Kolya, "can it be true what's taught us in religion, that we shall all rise again from the dead and shall live and see each other again, all, Ilusha too?"

"Certainly we shall all rise again, certainly we shall see each other and shall tell each other with joy and gladness all that has happened!" Alyosha answered, half laughing, half enthusiastic.

"Ah, how splendid it will be!" broke from Kolya.

"Well, now we will finish talking and go to his funeral dinner..." [said Alyosha].¹⁰⁷

It is no accident that they then partake in a funeral dinner together (i.e. communion) after discussing the resurrection, after the death of their friend. There is a heavy Christological emphasis here. It is reasonable to think of Alyosha as the 'Christ' for the future. He is coming into his own, maturing and growing in wisdom throughout the book. Dostoevsky ends with a vibrant, "Hurrah for Karamazov" (Alyosha is referred to here). Taking the cue from *The Idiot*, a successful character must love one thing, in this case humanity, both sacrificially and passionately. To do this one needs experience in the world; one needs to be as innocent as doves *and* as shrewd as serpents; one needs to love with a passion that for which he is sacrificing. This is where Myshkin failed, but where Alyosha will succeed. Zossima specifically sends him out, saying on his own deathbed,

This is what I think of you, you will go forth from these walls, but will live like a monk in the world. You will have many enemies, but even your foes will love you. Life will bring you many misfortunes, but you will find your happiness in them, and will bless life and will make others bless it - which is what matters most.¹⁰⁸

This passage emphasizes the necessity of experience in the world. This does not mean he needs to give into the temptations, but merely needs to learn what the world is like. He must know what he wishes to redeem. Nothing assumed, nothing healed.

Here is where Zossima becomes the Christ-figure. We must remember that one of the key aspects of the Russian Christ was the idea of suffering, and suffering passively. The idea that came from his brother's deathbed, and that he reiterates over and over again, that each is responsible to all for all. One must suffer for everyone. We are all sinners, and it is

¹⁰⁷ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 880.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 317.

only through responsibility for all that we can come to truly love all. That is the idea of the Cross. Christ became responsible for His Bride, out of love, and love flowed out of the responsibility. This leads into another characteristic of Christ, who is the gap between the unknowable and the known, between the infinite and the finite. There is a reason why all the peasantry flock to Zossima for blessing. He is their earthly mediator, not in a Roman way, but in a Russian way. It is in this way that Zossima becomes a Christ-figure to the whole village. He represents the much higher, more perfect Mediator who is the Incarnation of God, the Word of Life, Jesus. It is being responsible for all, and loving all implicitly that defeats the argument against rationalism. The West says, 'Know, in order to love.' Zossima, along with Augustine says, 'Love, in order to know.' This is why multiple times throughout the book, the exhortation is given to multiple audiences to love life, love this world. We love in order to know. We know in order to redeem. We must also remember that Zossima came to this position of sainthood after living in the world. It is this example that he sets for Alyosha, the idea of knowing what you wish to redeem. Experiencing the world in such a way that makes you as shrewd as serpents, yet keeps the innocence of doves.

When Zossima died, Alyosha, along with all the other monks, expected to see a miracle come from his corpse. They were especially waiting to see if the body would decompose, or not. If it did not produce an odor, then it was for sure that Zossima was a saint. If he did start to smell, this meant that he was just an ordinary man. Well it is obvious from the text concerning him that he was the 'saintliest of saints'. And, to the horror of some of the monks, his body does start to smell. This causes no small amount of consternation in Alyosha. He enters a great spiritual crisis, from which he arises a better man. However the interesting point here is an anecdote from Dostoevsky's own life. One afternoon, Dostoevsky and his second wife, Anna went to see the painting by Holbein of Jesus being taken down from the cross. Dostoevsky was very struck by this painting, for it actually

showed Jesus with a dead body. His flesh was yellow and dead. His body was broken and showed signs of early decomposition. This horrified Dostoevsky, but made a lasting impression on him. From this experience he realized that in order for Christ to redeem mankind, He needed to die like a man. This meant dying, and decomposing in the grave for three days. This meant that Jesus body on Saturday smelled. In this light, it is interesting that Dostoevsky portrays the saint to beat all saints, as smelling. So, contrary to what the monks believe about Zossima, the fact that he smells in death, is actually proof of his sainthood, or at least his Christ-likeness. It certainly is proof for his status as a Christ-figure. It is also through this death that Alyosha himself, as mentioned above, goes through great spiritual warfare. In one sense, he too dies at this point, dying to himself. He is wrapped up in the death of his spiritual father. However, he comes out of the funeral a new person, being resurrected in a very real sense. This idea of death and resurrection is constantly played on in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The book opens with John 12:24, where Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." This is the theme of the story, and sheds light on the Christ-figures and their role in their world.

Dostoevsky is a most complex author. His stories always have multiple levels of meaning. The most prevalent however is always the spiritual struggle of man in his plight against a holy, yet loving God. Ernest J. Simmons writes, "Over all radiates a spiritual glow, so characteristic of Dostoevsky's great novels, that illumines at once the darkest recesses of the minds of the proud and humble, of the criminal and morally debased and inspires them to seek a deeper meaning in life through suffering to ultimate salvation."¹⁰⁹ At the heart of Dostoevsky's novels is the desire to introduce to the world the dark and horrific state man

¹⁰⁹Simmons, 171.

currently lives in. The depravity of man is complete and total. Dostoevsky has over and over again explored the “darkest recesses” of the “morally debased” in order to show how stupid, and how weak man is apart from God’s mercy and grace. He combats wholeheartedly Nihilism, Utilitarianism, Hedonism, Socialism, Rationalism, and all other atheistic philosophies, which have at its heart the refusal to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. At the heart of Dostoevsky, we find a man who desperately loved Christ. His devotion to Him and to His love is made clear throughout his novels. Through his characters he developed quite a biblical view of what this Christ-like love ought to be, how it ought to show itself to others, and how it might potentially redeem mankind. He accomplished this in his works through the use of the Christ figure, which helps us define who he believed Christ is, and what the salvation of the world ought to look like. His figures, namely Sonya, Myshkin, Alyosha, and Father Zossima have been selected here for their clear representations. We have seen how and in what way each of these partake and exemplify the sacrifice of Christ, the passion of Christ, and the wisdom of Christ. We have seen how the love of Christ was shown through them, and in so doing, affected those around them. We have seen both positive and negative examples; what Christ was, and what Christ had to be. In closing, JI Paker gives us a clear picture of the overall theme, which connects the lifetime accomplishments of Dostoevsky, and speaks plainly of the faith that this great author possessed.

Dostoevsky is to me both the greatest novelist ... and the greatest Christian storyteller ... of all time. His plots and characters pinpoint the sublimity, perversity, meanness, and misery of fallen human adulthood in an archetypal way matched only by Aeschylus and Shakespeare, while his dramatic vision of God’s amazing grace and of the agonies, Christ’s and ours, that accompany salvation, has a range and depth that only Dante and Bunyan come anywhere near. Dostoevsky’s immediate frame of reference is Eastern Orthodoxy and the cultural turmoil of nineteenth-century Russia, but his constant theme is the nightmare quality of unredeemed existence and the heartbreaking glory of the incarnation, whereby all human hurts came to find their place in the living and dying of Christ the risen Redeemer.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ *The Gospel in Dostoevsky*, The Bruderhof ed., (Pennsylvania: The Plough Publishing House, 1988), vii.

Section Four

My brother asked the birds to forgive him; that sounds senseless, but it is right; for all is like an ocean, all is flowing and blending; a touch in one place sets up movement at the other end of the earth. It may be senseless to beg forgiveness of the birds, but birds would be happier at your side – a little happier, anyway – and children and all animals, if you were nobler than you are now. It's all like an ocean, I tell you. Then you would pray to the birds too, consumed by an all-embracing love, in a sort of transport, and pray that they too will forgive you your sin. Treasure this ecstasy, however senseless it may seem to men.

Seek no reward, for great is your reward on this earth: the spiritual joy which is only vouchsafed to the righteous man. Fear not the great nor the mighty, but be wise and ever serene. Know the measure, know the times, study that. When you are left alone, pray. Love to throw yourself on the earth and kiss it. Kiss the earth and love it with an unceasing, consuming love. Love all men, love everything. Seek that rapture and ecstasy. Water the earth with the tears of your joy and love those tears. Don't be ashamed of that ecstasy, prize it, for it is a gift of God...¹¹¹

- Father Zossima

One must sacrifice to the extent of giving everything and not even wishing that anything be given in return...How is this to be done? It is impossible to do it, but it must be done in and for itself, it must be in one's nature, unconsciously existing in the nature of the whole tribe. In a word, there ought to be a foundation of brotherly love – there ought to be love.¹¹²

- Dostoevsky

¹¹¹ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 357-358.

¹¹² Simmons, 112.

Chapter Eight Threefold view of Love



At the foundation of love, is a God who is Love. This God, who has revealed Himself in the Holy Bible to us as Love, has also revealed Himself to us as triune. This means that Love is in some way triune. Whether we understand that or not is a different story. However, it remains. God is essentially triune. Therefore, that will be reflected in everything about Him. Some attributes may show this more than others, and that is natural. The God of the Bible has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father eternally begets the Son, and the Spirit eternal proceeds from the Father. The Son sends the Spirit, and the Spirit reflects the Son. Their relationship is one of covenant, harmony, mutual indwelling, and love. In their love, they seek to glorify one another. Glory is best when given, rather than taken. The Father glorifies the Son and the Spirit, the Son glorifies the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit glorifies the Father and the Son. This pattern of praise-giving lays a foundation for how we ought to live. The Father made a covenant with the Son, and the Son with the Father, and the Father and the Son both with the Spirit. This covenant was the redemption of mankind. The Father would pour out His love and mercy, the Son would sacrifice Himself,

and the Spirit would come and illumine the heart and mind, bringing the wisdom of God to defeat the foolishness of men. In this scheme, what some call an economic view of God, the Father has shown great passion, the Son has given Himself in humility, and the Spirit has imparted wisdom. These are by no means mutually exclusive. The Son is passionate and the Father shows wisdom. However, it is not unnatural, and is actually quite obvious, to look at the Trinity with these designations, for that is how God has revealed Himself to us. These three manifestations of God are the foundation for the three parts of a godly love; a love that reflects who God is in His nature. If any given instance of love does not reflect or at least is not able to reflect all three of these attributes, then the love is not true love, and will fail. When God so loved the world, He had to love it with all three aspects, or else the world would not have been saved. We see that working with the actions of the three Persons of the Trinity. All three Persons had to work in harmony with one another, or else the project would have been doomed. So what do I mean by Passion, Humility, and Wisdom? Let's take a closer look.

Passion here implies a deep, heartfelt love. It is the love a man has for his bride on their honeymoon. It is a basic conception of what love is. It is a love that entails joy and happiness. The one who loves with a Passion loves a friend and a companion. He himself derives joy from loving this friend. The one who loves with a Passion misses this friend in their absence. This Passion also entails a deeply intimate bond. Between men or women it can be the intimacy of brothers or sisters respectively. Between a man and a woman it is the unique sexual bond of marriage. It is the type of love that covers a multitude of sins. It is quick to forgive, and slow to anger. This love is warm, yet solid. It is the type of love that when asked for a loaf of bread, would not give a scorpion. With these attributes of love, the Father has loved His children. It could even be said that He misses His children. This in no way denies His self-sufficiency. He does not need us. However He has chosen to take

delight in us, and desires to be with us. This is the love of the Father. Deuteronomy 23:5 says, "But the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because He loves you." He tells Israel He will "love them freely" in Hosea 14:4. The end of Romans 8 tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our Father loves us, and loves us Passionately.

Humility, or sacrifice, signifies action. This is the part of love that gives. No man hath greater love than to lay down his life for a friend. This love puts the other first, and seeks their desires before their own. The love of humility can be painful, and often is. However, the one who loves humbly does so with joy, and finds great delight in giving of oneself for another, despite any pain that may be involved. It is this type of love that makes forgiveness possible. Someone must sacrifice something to appease wrongdoing. Whether it be an insult or a murder, sacrifice is made, leading to forgiveness. This Humble, sacrificial love was shown to us by the Son, Jesus Christ. He gave Himself up to be sacrificed on our behalf, atoning for our sins. This He did for the joy set before Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He made Him who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Philippians 2:9 reminds us that "Being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross." The Son loves us with Humility, and went to the cross because of that love.

Finally, Love must be accompanied by Wisdom. This aspect of Love determines how love is to be shown and to whom. Without Wisdom love will be misguided. It may be as Passionate and as Humble as it can be, but if it is unwise, it is not godly Love. For instance, a married man can love a woman with all the passion in the world. He can be humble and sacrifice himself again and again for her sake. But if this woman was not his wife, his

passionate, humble 'love' becomes non-love. It was a lack of wisdom that drove this man to adultery. The hard part is that Wisdom must be sought and acquired. It is something that illumines our mind once it has been found. The Proverbs are full of admonitions to seek wisdom, for it is more precious than gold, yes, than much fine gold. The only difference is that in the plan of redemption, we are not able to seek God. The Spirit finds us, and imparts a new heart to us, giving us eyes that can see, and ears that can hear. He is the Spirit of wisdom, and enables those whom He enlightens to see clearly, and think wisely.¹¹³ However, this does not happen overnight. Those to whom the Spirit has imparted new eyes, must seek wisdom, now that they are able. They must not wait around for inspiration, but must go out into the marketplace of this world and seek wisdom. They find it of course in the Word of God, and not in the world itself. But they must actively pursue it. Therefore wisdom has the quality of being acquired. It is something we take on gradually as we learn from the Word, and experience life. This is why the elderly are far wiser than young folk. They have lived a life full of mistakes that they have learned from. This is wisdom in action. This is a necessary part of wisdom as well. You can read all you want, but until what you read finds its way to your hands and feet, it is not wisdom. The Spirit has loved us, and in loving us, opened our minds to the wisdom of God.

The Divine Trinity has loved this world. The Father loves passionately, the Son loves humbly, and through the love of the Spirit, wisdom is imparted. All three of these must be in place, and of equal force. Otherwise the love will not work or be received. Now, as a side note, this is not a universalistic statement. Just because God has loved the world with this type of a love, does not mean that every man, woman, and child who ever had breath will be saved. There is such a reaction as the hardened heart. The Underground Man is a good example of this. He was loved passionately, humbly, and wisely, but he did not repent or

¹¹³See Ephesians 1:17.

come to his senses. In fact the love of the woman drove him even deeper down in his cycle of destruction. This is an instance of the second, though less common, reaction to godly love. However, if those who are loved, are open to that love, and receive that love with joy, healing, restoration, and redemption will inevitably follow. Also, it must be stressed that these qualities are by no means mutually exclusive. Each Person of the Trinity takes part in each expression of Love. The Father is both humble and wise, and so on. I am simply looking at individual aspects that are emphasized in Scripture to some degree, and seen in how the Economic Trinity has expressed Himself to us.

Now what does any of this have to do with our subject, Dostoevsky, you might be wondering? Well, here is where the rubber meets the road, and my hypothesis proves true or false. Here I maintain that Dostoevsky himself points to this three-fold scheme in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Father Zossima, whom we have seen as a Christ figure, gives his last exhortations to his fellow monks shortly before he dies. Alyosha writes them down, and has thus preserved them for us. In his admonition on “Prayer, Love and contact with other worlds,” the blessed father shares with us the following:

Brothers, have no fear of men’s sin. Love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of Divine Love and is the highest love on earth. Love all God’s creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love. Love the animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and joy untroubled. Do not trouble it, don’t harass them, don’t deprive them of their happiness, don’t work against God’s intent. Man, do not pride yourself on superiority to the animals; they are without sin, and you, with your greatness, defile the earth by your appearance on it, and leave the traces of your foulness after you — alas, it is true of almost every one of us! Love children especially, for they too are sinless like the angels; they live to soften and purify our hearts and, as it were, to guide us. Woe to him who offends a child! Father Anfim taught me to love children. The kind, silent man used often on our wanderings to spend the farthings given us on sweets and cakes for the children. He could not pass by a child without emotion. That’s the nature of the man.

At some thoughts one stands perplexed, especially at the sight of men’s sin, and wonders whether one should use force or humble love. Always decide to use humble love. If

you resolve on that once for all, you may subdue the whole world. Loving humility is marvelously strong, the strongest of all things, and there is nothing else like it.

Every day and every hour, every minute, walk round yourself and watch yourself, and see that your image is a seemly one. You pass by a little child, you pass by, spiteful, with ugly words, with wrathful heart; you may not have noticed the child, but he has seen you, and your image, unseemly and ignoble, may remain in his defenseless heart. You don't know it, but you may have sown an evil seed in him and it may grow, and all because you were not careful before the child, because you did not foster in yourself a careful, actively benevolent love. Brothers, love is a teacher; but one must know how to acquire it, for it is hard to acquire, it is dearly bought, it is won slowly by long labor. For we must love not only occasionally, for a moment, but for ever. Everyone can love occasionally, even the wicked can.¹¹⁴

What we find here is an amazing sermon, fit for any time and any place. This short homily on love is one of the many pearls found in Dostoevsky. Here we see exactly, the three-fold nature of Love. In the first paragraph Zossima exhorts his hearers to love the world with an 'all embracing love.' Love the animals, love the children, love everything! Love in a way that encourages and sustains the happiness of others. Divine love, he says, is to love a man even in his sin. This is the passionate love the Father has shown to us, his sinful children, and it is the highest love on earth. We are to love every 'grain of sand' on this earth, for it is God's creation. We are to love the world! Take joy in it! With joy and passion, embrace all, love all, care for all. This is the first vital element of love.

The second paragraph asks, "whether one should use force or humble love." The answer is of course, humble love, for it is stronger than any force on earth. To love with humility is to put others first, to take on their needs as more important than your own. This is the essence of what sacrifice is. Christ loved with humility on the cross, and therefore was an effective sacrifice. He counted Himself as less important than those He loved, and by doing so, ensured their salvation. To love with humility is to love sacrificially. It is a far more potent love, as Zossima says, than love of self, or with force, which is a non-love. In answer to his question whether to use force or humble love, he replies, "Always decide to use humble love. If you resolve on that once for all, you may subdue the whole world. Loving

¹¹⁴ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 356-357.

humility is marvelously strong, the strongest of all things, and there is nothing else like it.” This is in reference to what to do with a sinful man. Do you force him in to repentance and holiness? Or do you simply love him, understanding this sinful man as better than yourself? This is the second vital element of love.

The third paragraph lays out the quality of wisdom that is found, or should be found in love. “Every day and every hour, every minute, walk round yourself and watch yourself, and see that your image is a seemly one,” he tells us. How is this done? Zossima explains that it is through love. You have caused a child to stumble by not heeding this exhortation, because, he explains, “you did not foster in yourself a careful, actively benevolent love.” He continues to elaborate saying, “Brothers, love is a teacher; but one must know how to acquire it, for it is hard to acquire, it is dearly bought, it is won slowly by long labor.” This is the side of love involving wisdom. Love itself is wisdom, or a teacher. It is something that cannot be easily acquired, as well. Only after much trial, after ‘long labor’ can wisdom be bought. Even then it is at a ‘dear’ price. Love must be wise in order for it to be godly love. This is the third vital element of love.

These three aspects are all inherent to true Love. If one aspect is not found, then it cannot be true Love. A love comprising equally and fully of all three aspects is a mature love. Immature love may emphasize one aspect over another, though not to the exclusion of another. For instance, a young newlywed couple on their honeymoon may emphasize passion more than all the others, while still holding onto humility and wisdom. Their love, though immature in this instance, is still real love. The example of the man committing adultery is an example of a non-love. When one aspect is missing entirely, then love can no longer be.

Therefore, all three aspects are mutually dependant upon one another for their full expression. Passion must be bathed in humility and wisdom. Humility must recognize the

importance of wisdom and passion. Wisdom must have passion and humility to direct. Each has their corresponding sins as well. Over inflated Passion, inflated to the exclusion of the others, turns into lust. Humility, in the absence of the other two, is in fact, morose and pitiful pride. Wisdom, all by itself, can turn into a frightening intellectualism. However, as soon as they are corrupted, they are no longer what they were. Intellectualism is never wisdom, pride is never humility, and lust is never true passion. Only an equal balance of passion, humility, and wisdom will achieve a healthy and 'actively benevolent' love.

Myshkin, who was *The Idiot*, was a tragedy. His love was not an equal balance of the three. His love was divided, and therefore it turned into a non-love and all involved were lost. A brief blurb in Gibson's *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, hits the nail on the head.

Myshkin's love for Natasya was three quarters pity, and she was quick and intelligent enough to see it. As he learns his way round, he begins to notice the difference and turns his human love towards Aglaya, but again, because he is insufficiently incarnate, he unintentionally but nonetheless cruelly deceives her. He vacillates and in the ensuing crisis is ruled by pity. Because he is drawn both ways at once, he can neither save nor satisfy...Being sacrificial and not passionate, except in his sacrifice, he failed, and the result was a Christian tragedy.¹¹⁵

This Myshkin, who was deliberately written as a Christ figure, did not have the physical means to carry out his love. He did not have the experience or the acquired love it takes to understand how to apply humble love. He had not with 'long labor' won it. Therefore, without the armor of wisdom, or the acquired love that would teach him, he mistakenly divided his affections, which led to his demise. However, had he maintained an equal balance of the three aspects, and kept his love undivided, we would have a different story. Gibson again says, "If he had been both sacrificially and passionately in love with Natasya, as Sonya was with Raskolnikov, he could have swept her away from the mercenary clutches of Ganya and the savage sincerity of Rogozhin alike." But again this takes an equal balance of passion, humility, and wisdom, which Sonya had. To her I now turn.

¹¹⁵Gibson, 114-115.

We have already noted how Dostoevsky created Sonya as a Christ figure. The reason why she works in *Crime and Punishment* is because of the balance she maintains between passion, humility, and wisdom. Sonya loves Raskolnikov passionately. She has 'fallen in love' with him if you will. Raskolnikov, in chapter 4 of book 5, "looked at Sonya and felt how great was her love for him, and strange to say he felt it suddenly burdensome and painful to be so loved."¹¹⁶ This was a true all-embracing love as well. A few lines above this one, Raskolnikov says, "Because I couldn't bear my burden and have come to throw it on another: you suffer too, and I shall feel better! And can you love such a mean wretch?"¹¹⁷ She has seen him in his sin, and has embraced him wholly, without reserve. This is what frightens Raskolnikov, and makes him feel uneasy. He cannot understand how she can love such a 'mean wretch' who has done nothing to make her life easier. In fact he has simply come to throw his burden on her, so that she may suffer too. But that is her love of humility as well. She loves him, and not just passionately, but with the desire to see him set free, to see him redeemed. As they talk, in chapter 4 of book 4, she is described: "Her pale cheeks flushed, there was a look of anguish in her eyes. It was clear that she was stirred to the very depths, that she was longing to speak, to champion, to express something. A sort of insatiable compassion, if one may so express it, was reflected in every feature of her face."¹¹⁸ She loved him compassionately, as well as passionately, with the very purpose of coming along side and taking on his suffering. The following passage comes directly after he tells her that he was the one who murdered the two ladies.

'What have you done—what have you done to yourself?' she said in despair, and, jumping up, she flung herself on his neck, threw her arms round him, and held him tightly.

Raskolnikov drew back and looked at her with a mournful smile. 'You are a strange girl, Sonya—you kiss me and hug me when I tell you about that... You don't think what you are doing.'

¹¹⁶ *Crime and Punishment*, 343.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 337.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

‘There is no one—no one in the whole world now so unhappy as you!’ she cried in a frenzy, not hearing what he said, and she suddenly broke into violent hysterical weeping.

A feeling long unfamiliar to him flooded his heart and softened it at once. He did not struggle against it. Two tears started into his eyes and hung on his eyelashes. ‘Then you won’t leave me, Sonya?’ he said, looking at her almost with hope.

‘No, no, never, nowhere!’ cried Sonya. ‘I will follow you, I will follow you everywhere. Oh, my God! Oh, how miserable I am! ... Why, why didn’t I know you before! Why didn’t you come before? Oh, dear!’

‘Here I have come.’

‘Yes, now! What’s to be done now? ... Together, together!’ she repeated as it were unconsciously, and she hugged him again. ‘I’ll follow you to Siberia!’¹¹⁹

She is horrified of course by the actions of her loved one, but that is no hindrance to her devotion. She cries out, “Why didn’t I know you before!” as if she is responsible for his actions. She almost blames herself for his crimes. She is already taking responsibility for his sin, and in doing so, identifying herself with him. This is the Christ-like love she shows. Humility brings her to her knees and places her morally underneath him. But her humility does not simply accept this passively. The wisdom side of love is there in full force. She loves him sincerely, and is ready to accept his burden and go with him to Siberia, but her wisdom must be expressed, allowing the passion and the humility to be directed. She must become his conscience in a way and show him the path he must take. At the end of the discussion, of which the first part is quoted above, she tells him what he must do. She tells him what wisdom dictates. This is the natural reaction of a balanced love, which Sonya here expresses. He asks, “What am I to do now?” Her reply is the following:

‘What are you to do?’ she cried, jumping up, and her eyes that had been full of tears suddenly began to shine. ‘Stand up!’ (She seized him by the shoulder, he got up, looking at her almost bewildered.) ‘Go at once, this very minute, stand at the cross-roads, bow down, first kiss the earth which you have defiled and then bow down to all the world and say to all men aloud, ‘I am a murderer!’ Then God will send you life again. Will you go, will you go?’ she asked him, trembling all over, snatching his two hands, squeezing them tight in hers and gazing at him with eyes full of fire.¹²⁰

He has committed a heinous crime, and she offers him new life. Her love for him remains balanced, giving her the desire to love, the strength to love, and the knowledge of what to

¹¹⁹Ibid., 334-335.

¹²⁰Ibid., 341.

do with that love. She truly has the ability to offer him life, and because of the love she has, redemption really is an option. As the rest of the book unfolds, we see that Raskolnikov is genuinely renewed by her love at the end. Her balanced love of passion, humility, and wisdom brought healing and regeneration to an otherwise lost and troubled man.

Dostoevsky brought together everything that he had ever done in *The Brothers Karamazov*. It is fitting that here Dostoevsky himself finally gives us his definition of love. It is also fitting that it comes from the mouth of Dostoevsky's most Christian character, Father Zossima. The blessed Father is the central refutation of the story's atheistic questions, as we have seen. In the life and teachings of Father Zossima, we find the only answer that will effectively destroy the attack on God. When he says that one must bear the responsibility for all, the blame rests on our inabilities, our sin, where it should, for the atrocities of mankind. Suffering is a manmade state, and we are the ones who need to bear that burden. Zossima leads the way, championing the threefold view of love I have described. In the paragraphs following the extended section, quoted above, Zossima goes on to explain this 'each man's responsibility' to those listening. He continues,

My friends, pray to God for gladness. Be glad as children, as the birds of heaven. And let not the sin of men confound you in your doings. Fear not that it will wear away your work and hinder its being accomplished. Do not say, 'Sin is mighty, wickedness is mighty, evil environment is mighty, and we are lonely and helpless, and evil environment is wearing us away and hindering our good work from being done.' Fly from that dejection, children! There is only one means of salvation, then take yourself and make yourself responsible for all men's sins, that is the truth, you know, friends, for as soon as you sincerely make yourself responsible for everything and for all men, you will see at once that it is really so, and that you are to blame for everyone and for all things. But throwing your own indolence and impotence on others you will end by sharing the pride of Satan and murmuring against God.¹²¹

It is not a coincidence that this falls in the section on Love. He has exhorted us to engage the world with an all-embracing love, one that is humble, and is also dearly bought with long

¹²¹ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 358.

labor. What are we to do with that love? Redeem the world is the obvious answer. How do you go about doing that? By taking on the responsibility for the sins of the world. And by doing that, you love them with an all-embracing, humble, and wise love, fraught with experience. "Only through that knowledge," Zossima affirms earlier, "our heart grows soft with infinite, universal, inexhaustible love. Then every one of you will have the power to win over the whole world by love and to wash away the sins of the world with your tears...."¹²² This is the answer to Ivan's dilemma, and a fuller expression of what it means to 'kiss his aged, bloodless lips.'

Zossima shows this love not only to Ivan however, but to the whole village. He spent time, daily, out in the courtyard of the monastery, blessing the 'peasant women who have faith' as one of the chapters is called. He loved them dearly, as children. After seeing a certain mother and daughter, Zossima says warmly, "May the Lord bless you both, you and your babe Lizaveta! You have gladdened my heart, mother. Farewell, dear children, farewell, dear ones."¹²³ The peasants flock to him, and he does not turn one away. "The monks used to say that he was more drawn to those who were more sinful, and the greater the sinner the more he loved him."¹²⁴ Tending to their needs, and serving them as best he can, he loves them with humility, putting them first. As he puts them first, he is able to discern what is best for them, whether it be a prayer, a sign of the cross, a sermon, or a healing. As he loves others selflessly, he gains the wisdom needed. The narrator tells us, "It was said that so many people had for years past come to confess their sins to Father Zossima and to entreat him for words of advice and healing, that he had acquired the keenest intuition and could tell from an unknown face what a new-comer wanted, and what was the suffering on his

¹²²Ibid., 182.

¹²³Ibid., 54.

¹²⁴Ibid., 29.

conscience.”¹²⁵ By submitting himself to the service of others, he gained experience, and through that, wisdom. Again, to drive a point into the ground, through this balanced love, the blessed Father is able to have such a positive effect on the townsfolk.

This is why Dostoevsky presents Zossima as the answer to Ivan, and not Alyosha. Alyosha has not yet come into his own. Zossima has the full-orbed love that he preaches, and therefore can be effective in his love. Alyosha is at the beginning of the road that Zossima is coming to the end of. The Father is eager to teach his young ‘apprentice’ all that he knows that he too may love maturely, and be of help to those he encounters. Alyosha already has the all-embracing passion and the humility that is needed. What he lacks is a lifetime of experience, a well of wisdom from which he can draw. As Dostoevsky first describes Alyosha, he says, “He was simply an early lover of humanity.”¹²⁶ As a boy he decided that he wanted to enter the monastery and live under Father Zossima. He came to realize that he must give all to follow Christ. He must give of himself entirely. Here was his love of humility. In this love, he had a passion to serve others, which is seen throughout the story. But even so, Alyosha is still not the answer to Ivan’s threats for he is not complete.

We must remember that the entire book, *The Brothers Karamazov*, is in one sense a preface to a larger work. In the Preface from the Author, Dostoevsky tells us that the present book is the background history for the real story. All that happens in *Brothers* is background information, but necessary for what we will learn in the second, unwritten story. What we are left with is the beginnings of something, the first fruits of something grander, something even more Christian, perhaps, than Father Zossima. The pupil picks up where the master leaves off. For this very reason Zossima is quick to send Alyosha out into the world, so that he may experience life, and from that, gain the wisdom he needs to approach life with a balanced love. Zossima explains to Alyosha, “This is not your place for the time. I bless you

¹²⁵Ibid., 28.

¹²⁶Ibid., 17.

for great service in the world. Yours will be a long pilgrimage. And you will have to take a wife, too. You will have to bear all before you come back. There will be much to do. But I don't doubt of you, and so I send you forth. Christ is with you."¹²⁷ This is Alyosha's journey, which I spoke of earlier. He must depart, and go into the world. There he will find the wisdom, through experience, he needs.

Myshkin failed, mainly, because he was 'insufficiently incarnate' as Gibson pointed out. He lacked the social knowledge, the experience of the world that was needed in order to serve the world. We are called to be shrewd as serpents, not just innocent as doves. This is why Alyosha will succeed. He is willing to face the world, though suffer he will. Zossima prepares him, "You will see great sorrow, and in that sorrow you will be happy. This is my last message to you: in sorrow seek happiness."¹²⁸ But through this suffering, he will find wisdom. As he grows in wisdom, his balanced love will grow, allowing him to do great things, and be of great service. This is what Zossima is calling him to. This is what he is sending him out to accomplish. Here we see the first fruits of Dostoevsky's still future hero.

Let us extrapolate a little, and go beyond where the branches are firmly rooted to the stem. Here I propose an experiment. Is the fact that there are three brothers coincidental? I am fairly certain that they represent different strands of Russian thought in the 19th Century. But could it be possible that each also represent a certain aspect of love taken to an extreme? Let us see.

Dimitri, the oldest, is a very passionate young man. He loves, but with an excessive amount of all-embracing passion, which, we saw earlier, turns to lust. This is what gets him in trouble time and again throughout the story. Through his trials he is brought to an understanding of his sin, and through the guidance of Alyosha, is brought to the threshold of

¹²⁷Ibid., 80-81.

¹²⁸Ibid., 81.

redemption. In the end he realizes this new life, and grabs hold of it. Through his trials he learns humility and wisdom, and begins to understand what a balance love looks like.

Ivan is the embodiment of pure 'wisdom', which I called above, a frightening intellectualism. This is the most disastrous, for it leads to a rejection of God. Because of the severity of his condition, he is brought the lowest, and it is only hinted that there may be regeneration in his future. However, he is in one sense the real murderer. The illegitimate half-brother, who did the killing, was only acting has the hands of Ivan's mind. Ivan realizes this and it nearly kills him. He shows what intellectualism leads to, and it horrifies us.

Alyosha is a little different. He had the advantage of observing the paths his older brothers have taken, and learning from them. In a strict sense, he is the embodiment of humility. He is the one who entered the monastery, and took on the orders of a monk. However, because of his advantage, and his position as a monk, he was able to curb his humility, keeping it from turning into morose and pitiful pride. He was also able to learn from Dimitri's passion, and from Ivan's intellectualism. He discovered that passion is good, as long as it is kept in check by humility and moderation. He also learned that the intellectualism that Ivan showed was dangerous. You will remember from the section on the Grand Inquisitor above, that Alyosha saw that fighting Ivan on his ground was impossible, and he showed him the only answer that was valid: the kiss. With passionate humility and humble passion, Alyosha was ready to be sent into the world, to gain the wisdom he needed. This is why Dostoevsky had such faith in him, and believed he would bring reformation to the hearts of men.

Chapter Nine Conclusion

So what have I said here in this discussion? Hopefully the question raised in the introduction has been answered to your satisfaction.

Hopefully you have come to see how important this man Dostoevsky and his writings are to the Christian student. Our desire was from the beginning to share in our enthusiasm for this great man, and contribute a little to the larger body of scholarly work that has been done. So what have I done here? I have attempted to portray a Christian man, in all honesty, with an honest view of who he was. This has meant a somewhat detailed, though brief, lesson in Russian Orthodoxy. This allowed us however to understand many of the non-Western aspects of Dostoevsky's works. This was essential, for apart from learning the paradigm in which Dostoevsky wrote, we would be unprotected from misrepresenting and misunderstanding a very Russian author. Dostoevsky himself despised the West, and what it did to Christianity, and so to understand him with Western eyes would be a grave mistake.

We still recognize however that this study has done little more than open the issue. Much has been done on the cultural-religious background of 19th Century Russia, and therefore the societies surrounding Dostoevsky. Joseph Frank, though not quoted much here, has helped us in grasping the bigger picture, and seeing Dostoevsky in much fuller and well-rounded light. He has written a five-volume biography, going into great detail, taking care to show the influencing trends in philosophical, literary, cultural, and religious thought. I continue to be indebted to him for his work.

If time and space permitted, I would love to carry out a comparative study in Russian literature, developing the Christologies of other Christian authors. This would allow us to see a clearer picture of how cultural these conceptions were of who Christ was. Also of importance would be a cross-cultural study of Christologies, drawing out English, French and German authors.

Hopefully, at some point, more work can be done on the three-fold view of love. It would be good to dive into all the works of Dostoevsky, and see just how early it can be found. A comparative study with other Russian novelists of the time would give us an understanding of whether or not this view is unique to Dostoevsky. Unfortunately, time and space do not permit this study here.

A final comment on Dostoevsky as a person. Throughout his life, he had a deep and abiding concern for the welfare of humanity. In his early years this concern took shape in the 'socialist' circles in which he ran. After his time in Siberia, it turned into a Christian humanitarianism. By the end of his life, he voiced his ardent hope for the salvation of the world, and the real end of all suffering, through Zossima, as he entreated everyone to become responsible for all. By becoming a servant to all, one is able to conquer. Here we can see where the heart of Dostoevsky lived. Through his own service to his family and relations, and through the humility and self-sacrifice of his fictional creations, he gives us a

fitting epitaph. If there was ever an appropriate phrase, summarizing the life and work of Dostoevsky, it would be, “The second is like it, *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*” He strove to instill this concept in the hearts of his readers, and despaired at the apparent lack of it he saw. The concluding words of *Dream of a Ridiculous Man* are fitting here.

But Truth whispered to me that I was *lying*, and so preserved me and set me on the right path. But I’m afraid I do not know how to establish a heaven on earth, for I do not know how to put it into words...I will say more: even – yes, even if this never comes to pass, even if there never is a heaven on earth (that, at any rate, I can see very well!), even then I shall go on preaching. And really how simple it all is: in one day, *in one hour*, everything could be arranged at once! The main thing is to love your neighbor as yourself – that is the main thing, and that is everything, for nothing else matters. And yet it is an old truth, a truth that has been told over and over again, but in spite of that it finds no place among men!¹²⁹

In conclusion, Dostoevsky has garnered quite a reputation for being attuned to psychological patterns, especially those belonging to criminals. This has been quite a turn-off for many Christians, particularly those in Christendom who have been caught up in pietistic thinking. What this has led to is a distrust of a book that contains murders, prostitutes, lying, stealing, devils, hallucinations, and all other sorts of sinful, sordid happenings. This has betrayed a misunderstanding of who Dostoevsky was and what he wrote. Because of the outward appearance of the story, many have not cared to dig a little and discover the richness and beauty that is deeply Christian in all his stories. In response, I would encourage folks to brave the big books, and discover the glory of Christ, as Dostoevsky preached Him. Read him, and seek to understand the servant’s heart he lays on the table. If you do, I am convinced you will learn to appreciate all in Dostoevsky that is “beautiful and sublime.”

¹²⁹ *The Best Short Stories*, 348.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Best Short Stories of Dostoevsky*. Translated by David Magarshack. (New York: The Modern Library, 1992)

_____ *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated by Constance Garnett. (New York: The Modern Library, 1996)

_____ *Crime and Punishment*. Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc, 1994)

_____ *The Diary of a Writer*. Translated by Boris Brasol. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949)

_____ *The Gospel in Dostoevsky*. Edited by the Bruderhof. Pennsylvania: The Plough Publishing House, 1988.

_____ *The House of the Dead*. Translated by David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1985.

_____ *The Idiot*. Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: The Modern Library, 1935.

_____ *The Idiot*. Translated by Eva Martin, <http://www.planetpdf.com>

_____ *The Letters of Fyodor Dostoevsky*. Translated by Ethel Colburn Mayne. London: Chatto and Windus, 1917.

Secondary Sources

~On Dostoevsky~

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Cox, Roger L. *Between Earth and Heaven*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969.

Dostoevsky, Aimée. *Fyodor Dostoevsky: A Study*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922.

Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979.

_____ *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871-1881*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002.

- Gibson, A. Boyce. *The Religion of Dostoevsky*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973.
- Leatherbarrow, William J. *Fedor Dostoevsky*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981.
- _____. *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Jackson, Robert L. editor. *Dostoevsky: New Perspectives*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984.
- Miller, Robin Feuer. *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1986.
- Seduro, Vladimir. *Dostoevski's Image in Russia Today*. Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1975.
- Steinberg, A. *Dostoievsky*. New York: Hillary House Publishers, 1968.
- Simmons, Ernest J. *Dostoevsky: The Making of a Novelist*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1962)
- Terras, Victor. *The Idiot: An Interpretation*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990.
- _____. *A Karamazov Companion*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981.
- _____. *Reading Dostoevsky*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.
- Thompson, Diane Oenning. *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Wellek, René, editor. *Dostoevsky: A collection of Critical Essays*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1962.
- ~On Russian Orthodoxy~
- Aghiorgoussis, Maximos. *A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church*. Ed. Fotios K. Litsas, New York: Greek Orthodox Diocese of North and South America, 1984.
- _____. *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran – Orthodox Dialogue*. Ed. John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992.
- Fairbairn, Donald. *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976.
- Schmemmann, Alexander. *For the Life of the World*. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973.
- Ware, Timothy. *The Orthodox Church*. London: Penguin Books, 1993.