THE PRESENTATION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH IN NOVEL FORM AS DEMONSTRATED BY DOSTOEVSKY

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem

The problem is two-fold. First, it is necessary to discover the various aspects of Christian truth that are dealt with in Dostoevsky's major novels. Second, it is necessary to note the way in which these truths are dealt with in terms of plot and character situations.

B. The Significance of the Problem

The novel has been quite generally overlooked as a device for Christian teaching. A novel which possesses the qualities of literary greatness will be read by hundreds of thousands if not millions of the more intelligent people of at least the English-speaking world. If, in addition to the just-mentioned literary qualities, such a novel would deal with a great religious theme and reflect Christian truth, its influence and power would be beyond reckoning. Bruce Barton has stressed the fact that Jesus concentrated during his earthly ministry on the market place. In regard to this, Barton says further, "The present day market place is the newspaper and magazine. Printed columns are the modern thoroughfares."[1]

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1. Bruce Barton: The Man Nobody Knows, p. 139.

C. The Method of Procedure

It will be in order first to examine the novel form itself and consider its validity as a vehicle for the expression of Christian truth. Then will follow a biographical study of the novelist himself, and a statement of the relationship between the life and the literature produced by the life.

Following these preliminary considerations, the main body of the thesis will be dealt with. This will consist of a study of the actual presentation of Christian truth in each of Dostoevsky's four major novels.

D. The Sources

The primary source material will be the four master-novels of Dostoevsky. These are: Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, The Possessed, and The Brothers Karamazov. Several of his less important novels will also be referred to on occasion.

There is a considerable amount of secondary source material. Among the more able authorities on Dostoevsky are Berdyaev, Gide, Hromadka, Troyat, Yarmolinsky, Zernov, and Zweig.

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CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

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PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

A. Introduction

Before proceeding with the points of central significance in the thesis, it is necessary to give consideration to several factors that underlie the whole study. We must know the essence of the novel form and the biographical background of the author whose works are being considered in the thesis. To deal with these points is the purpose of this chapter.

B. The Novel Form Itself

1. Its Essence.

In the light of the complete historical development of the novel, and the many schools of thought as to what the novel is, it may seem rash to attempt a clear-cut definition of the novel-form. That the undertaking is indeed almost presumptuous is to be seen from a listing of divergent viewpoints concerning the novel. Realism opposes romanticism. The earlier novel with its editorial philosophizing and moralizing is opposed by the later concept of the "well-made novel" with its insistence upon a free development of the action and total purpose. The "well-made novel" in turn has been opposed by the "new

novel." The "genteel novel" is regarded with nausea by the super-realists of the Dreiser school. Fielding, Eliot, Meredith, and Proust stressed psychological elements, while Zola, Hugh, Wells, and Dostoevsky made their novels vehicles of their whole philosophies of life. De Maupassant had no philosophy of life that he was fervently interested in presenting in novel form. Yet he was unsympathetic with the psychological novelists. He simply wanted to get on with the story. The old, regular, simple, concentrative, continuous, analytic type of novel is opposed by the new irregular, complex, deliberately eccentric, discontinuous, impressionistic type of novel.[1]

However, there are at least three common denominators in every great novel. First, the novel embodies a slice of life. It usually deals with subjects that are "of enduring interest to human beings: God, love and hate, death, money, ambition, envy, pride, good and evil."[2] The subjects of course are always dealt with through the lens of the author's understanding. "In the final analysis, all the author has to give is himself."[3] Henry James says of the novelist that "his prime sensibility is the soil out of which his subject springs."[4]

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1. J. W. Beach: The Twentieth Century Novel, pp. 14-333.
2. W. Somerset Maugham: "Ten Best Sellers," Good Housekeeping, July, 1948, p. 123.
3. Ibid.
4. Morris Roberts: The Art of Fiction and Other Essays by Henry James, p. xviii.

James lays down the dictum that "a novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life."[1] Morris Roberts states that it was Balzac who gave the novel "its capacity . . . to build a world and tell us what goes on in it from day to day."[2] Roberts also speaks of the novel as "an elaborate art, often close to poetry, the aim of which is the maximum of expression."[3]

Second, the novel depicts realistic characters. Maugham states that people keep reading in a great novel because they want to know how it is going to turn out, and that they want to know this because they are interested in the characters.[4] A curiosity or concern or affection has sprung up between the reader and the characters. He must needs continue to read in order to learn their future experiences and final destinies. The same bond is created between the reader of the novel and the characters of the novel that Edwin Lewis speaks of in referring to the unity of spirit created between the reader of history and the personages of history. "Spirit answers to spirit, essential man speaks to essential man ..."[5]

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1. Morris Roberts, op. cit., p. 8.
2. Ibid., p. xv.
3. Ibid., p. xix.
4. Maugham, op. cit., pp. 122, 123.
5. Edwin Lewis: A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation, p. 234.

Third, the novel operates in the realm of action. "The soul of a novel is its action."[1] This does not obviate the necessity of design. James says, "Every good story is of course both a picture and an idea, and the more they are interfused the better the problem is solved."[2] "A story is the complete fusion of 'picture and idea' and should be the novelist's main preoccupation. It was James', and it is the essence of form."[3]

In addition to the three common denominators just listed, two more might be suggested. Both will draw heavy fire as not germane to the essence of the novel. Both will receive warm support. Moreover, they are mutually contradictory.

The first of these is that the novel is designed primarily to entertain and that the devices of variety, surprise, and sentimental gratification are to be used to this end. F. Marion Crawford strongly supports the concept that the novel is primarily an entertainment device. "The novel . . . is an intellectual artistic luxury . . . In art of all kinds the moral lesson is a mistake . . . We are nothing but public amusers . . ."[4] Many of the great novelists would have recoiled in horror from such

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1. Roberts, op. cit., p. xi.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. xix.
4. F. Marion Crawford: The Novel: What It Is, pp. 9-22.

statements. The viewpoint of these objectors is expressed in the second of these two suggested additional points; namely, the novel represents a search for truth. Maugham states that the greatest novels embody such an attempt. Surely, the novels of Dostoevsky, Victor Hugo, and Henry James (to mention only three) are inexplicable apart from the concept of such a search for truth, or perhaps we should say, presentation of truth. Roberts, in commenting on James, says that he could not appreciate Flaubert's novel, Madame Bovary, because of the fact that:

> "Flaubert could imagine no better protagonists, no better agents for his action, than Emma Bovary and Frederic Moreau. The student of James' novels and prefaces knows what this means: he could not conceive of a novel without a hero, and there is nothing heroic about Flaubert's masterpieces. James' hero is a man of superior character, and it was his belief that nothing much worth telling about life could be told apart from the experience of such a character, who reflects life and meaning upon the story . . . James' novels are the projection of a fine and searching criticism upon sordid realities." [1]

If it be objected that none of the above definitive points absolutely set the novel apart from the short story, it can only be answered that the short story is too rigidly circumscribed a form to give full play to life, character-development, action, entertainment, or the presentation of truth. The novel form is an attempt to

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1. Roberts, op. cit., pp. xii-xiii.

escape the limitations of the short story, the drama, the poem. Its ultimate cry is "Don't fence me in!" It seeks "the maximum of expression."

2. Its Validity as a Vehicle of Christian Truth.

The novel deals with life. Christian truth exists for the divine purpose of redeeming life. The novel deals with character portrayal. Christian truth explains evil character, and is efficacious in producing noble character. The novel deals with action. Christian truth has been revealed historically and is being revealed today through the media of human activity. In addition to these obvious correlatives, it is to be noticed again that many novelists feel one of the characteristics of the novel form to be a search for truth, or a solution of a problem involving truth and error, or the presentation of truth. The practicality of the novel for the conveyance of Christian truth is so obvious that the point might easily be needlessly belabored.

C. The Novelist Here Under Consideration

1. The Life of Dostoevsky.

a. His Home and Early Life.

Fyodor Mihailovitch Dostoevsky was born on October 21, 1821, in Moscow. His father held a post in a Moscow hospital. He was a man of dark moods. He held

his family to a rigid discipline. Many years later the novelist recalled the severity of the Latin lessons which the father imposed upon him and his brother:

> "We brothers dared not sit down, nor rest our elbows upon the table, but stood like statues as, turn and turn about, we conjugated and declined. These lessons (the appointed time for which was the evening) we greatly dreaded, for the reason that, in spite of his goodness of heart, our father was extremely exacting and impatient, and above all things, hasty of temper. Even the smallest mistake on our part would cause him to start railing at us."[1]

The father later became an alcoholic, and became more and more abusive to his serfs, who, in desperation, finally murdered him. This was in 1838, when Fyodor was seventeen years of age.

The mother was a "pretty, gentle creature, devoted to her family, and absolutely submissive to her husband."[2] She died prematurely in 1837. Her death was a factor in the development of her husband's alcoholism.

The elder Dostoevsky tried to provide a secure future for his sons. To this end, he sent them to the College of Military Engineering at St. Petersburg. Fyodor was sixteen at the time of his entrance. He disliked the technical studies and secured only fair grades. Nevertheless, in 1843, he obtained a commission. His real interest was

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1. J. A. T. Lloyd: Fyodor Dostoevsky, pp. 6-7.
2. Ibid., p. 5.

in literature. He read the Russian authors, Pushkin and Gogol, and the Western authors, Dickens, Schiller, Hoffman, Balzac, Sand and Victor Hugo.

b. His First Literary Triumph.

In 1844, one year after entering the army, he resigned his commission and devoted himself to writing. "I have no regrets," he wrote to his brother. "I have a hope. I am in the act of finishing a novel . . ."[1] It was to be called Poor Folk. With great trepidation of spirit, he allowed a friend, D. V. Grigorovitch, to take his novel to the great Russian literary light, Nekrassov. Grigorovitch and Nekrassov began to read it together. The skepticism of Nekrassov gave way successively to interest, delight, and enchantment. It was nearly daybreak when they finished. Immediately they rushed to Dostoevsky's flat and poured their congratulations upon the stunned and delighted youth. This was in 1844 or 1845. It was a supreme triumph. Unfortunately, Dostoevsky could not stand his success. His emotional balance was poor. He was cursed with a chronic feeling of social inferiority. When his success came, he drank avidly the praises poured out to him. His feeling of inferiority turned (at least to outward appearances) to one of superi-

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1. J.A.T. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 18.

ority. The world was his oyster and he expected everyone to realize it. He became boorish either without fully realizing it or without caring greatly.

> "He attacked lest he be attacked. He gave himself airs, lest he be humiliated. He thought he was brilliant, when in reality he was unbearable; he thought he was witty, when in reality he was malicious and stupid. He thought he pirouetted with aristocratic grace but one could hear the tread of his heavy peasant boots."[1]

He became a social target (and a very vulnerable one) for his cultured companions. "The literati fell upon this easy prey like a swarm of wasps ..."[2] The young man was deeply hurt. His old inferiority, never totally destroyed, reasserted itself. He also developed a persecution complex. He wished devoutly for the speedy publication of his novel as a means of recovering his prestige and vanquishing his enemies. It was published in 1846. To his amazement, many of the reviews were savagely critical. He nursed the wounds they created, but gloated over the favorable notices he received. Then, too, it was some consolation just to be the central figure in a literary battle between the two opposing camps of critics! Poor Folk was very similar to Gogol's famous story, The Great-coat. Dostoevsky now began work on a second novel, The Double. It was an extremely subtle psychological study

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1. Henry Troyat: Firebrand: The Life of Dostoevsky, p.83.
2. Ibid.

but it failed to bring the acclaim that Poor Folk had. Succeeding stories were likewise snubbed by the critics. The young author knew frustration, poverty, and near-panic.

c. His Arrest and Consequent Exile in Siberia.

The Russian government, during the last years of the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855), was exceedingly suspicious of all independent political thinking. It felt that such thinking was the cause of all political discontent and insubordination. Forbidden fruits are always tempting, and so it was that groups of young men in St. Petersburg and Moscow formed secret circles in order to discuss the latest Western political theories. Dostoevsky became a member of one of these groups. Apparently, it was innocent enough, and beyond a little irresponsible talk about "Revolution," posed no serious threat to the existing government. However, that government took a different view of the matter. "In the early morning of April 23rd, 1849, the novelist divined in his sleep curious-looking figures beside his bed."[1] It was the secret police. He was led away to prison. Months of interrogation followed. In December 1849 (with twenty others) he was abruptly condemned to death. An hour af-

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 39.

ter he learned of his sentence the gaoler appeared at his cell and told him to dress. He with his comrades was driven to snow-covered Semyonovski Square. It was early in the morning and very cold. Their breaths rose like steam. All the apparatus of execution was at hand, a platform, a sheriff, a priest with a silver crucifix, and a firing squad. The novelist later recalled the scene in these words:

> "I thought I might perhaps have five minutes more to live, and awful those moments were. I kept staring at a church with a gilt dome, which reflected the sunbeams, and suddenly felt as if these beams came from the region where I was to be myself in a few moments!" [1]

Just then an officer galloped across the square, bearing the news that the men had been pardoned, and their sentences commuted to Siberian imprisonment. The whole scene had been a cruel staging! Nevertheless, Dostoevsky was happy. His penal servitude was to be for a term of four years, followed by service in the ranks in Siberia. The journey to Siberia was begun on sledges and took eight months.

The conditions of his imprisonment beggar description. Cold, heavy work, hunger, lack of proper sanitation facilities, sadistic officers, brutal fellow prisoners -- all these were part of the picture. Yet there were compen-

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

sations. He enjoyed manual labor and received some kindness from certain local officials. Most important of all, he made a great triple discovery.

> "Discovery of the people, discovery of Russia, discovery of the Gospel -- this triple miracle took place in a fetid barracks in the heart of Siberia, at the very time when Dostoevsky's intimates thought he was lost forever."[1]

Dostoevsky wrote to his brother, "In the penitentiary, I ended up by discovering men, real men, profound, powerful, and beautiful characters. Gold under filth."[2] In these people he felt he saw a part of the contemporary world-significance of Russia. "Soon he would attribute a Messianic role to this people."[3] He discovered the Gospel because the Scriptures were virtually the only literary resource that he had. These three discoveries were of incalculable significance to his future work.

On February 15th, 1854, Dostoevsky left the penitentiary. His term had been served. He was now sent to Semipalatinsk to become an infantryman in the Seventh Battalion of the Siberian Infantry. At Semipalatinsk he became the close friend of Baron Vrangel, the District Attorney. He also fell in love with a Mme. Issayeu, the wife of a dissolute Captain. She was blonde, lovely, and

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1. Troyat, op. cit., p. 168.
2. Ibid., p. 169.
3. Ibid., p. 170.

cultured. To her presence he returned again and again as the moth to the flame. By degrees his clumsy but fervent ardour changed her compassion for him into a reciprocal affection. There is no certainty that they were immoral. It is more likely that they simply viewed with a somber dramatic fascination the hopelessness of their position. Shortly afterward, the husband died, and the impassioned Dostoevsky pressed his suit. However, the unstable lady by now had another interest of the heart. Eventually, Dostoevsky won her, and she and her son, Paul, came to live with him. They were only moderately happy. She was greatly distressed by his attacks of epilepsy. This disease had become aggravated by the conditions of prison life. In the meantime, Vrangel and others were pulling strings to get permission for the novelist to return to Russia. In 1859 their efforts were crowned with success, and Dostoevsky and his family left Semipalatinsk on the long journey home.[1] Troyat describes vividly the scene as they reached the Russian frontier:

> "After a second half of two days at Tiumen, the travelers reached the forests of the Ural. It was hot . . . The horses advanced slowly . . . Suddenly at a turn of the road, Dostoevsky caught sight of a guide-post surmounted by the two-headed eagle . . . The driver stopped his horses, and everybody got down from the carriage.
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1. Lloyd (op cit.) says 1858.

> "Dostoevsky stood before the very line he had crossed ten years before, sick, in chains, bound for the prison, and the penitentiary . . . He removed his hat, made the sign of the cross, and said, 'The Lord has at last permitted me to see once more this promised land.'"[1]

He was not permitted to return to St. Petersburg at once, but was forced to spend six weeks in the City of Tver. By late September, 1859, the way was cleared for him to return to his beloved St. Petersburg. His exile was at an end.

d. His First Hectic Years Following the Return to St. Petersburg (1859-1866).

During these years he was engaged in restoring his literary reputation. Tragedy, obstacles, successes, and a lack of personal discipline made a strange pattern of light and shadow. In 1860, or 1861, he and his brother, Mikhail, began a periodical called The Time. It was a success. In it appeared The Insulted and Injured and The House of the Dead. In 1862 Dostoevsky visited Europe for the first time. His none-too-faithful wife did not accompany him. Soon after the return to St. Petersburg from Siberia, she fell ill and went to Tver. Here she was deserted by a once-persistent illicit lover. In 1863 the novelist returned to Europe, gambled, and took a mistress. In 1863 The Time was suspended by an overly suspicious

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1. Troyat, op. cit., pp. 206-207.

government. In March 1864 he and his brother issued a new periodical, The Epoch. Debts piled up on it. Mikhail suddenly died, and Dostoevsky was left to shoulder his debts and the care of his family. In April his wife died. The magazine went bankrupt. Paul Issayeu clamored for support. Other relatives made their claims on his good nature. His epileptic attacks continued. He became saddled with a rigid contract by an unscrupulous publisher. He was at the nadir of his post-Siberian fortunes. In 1865 he went to Europe for a third time. He lived with his former mistress, gambled, and began work on Crime and Punishment, his first great novel. He returned to St. Petersburg in October 1865.

e. His Second Marriage and His Prolonged Sojourn in Western Europe (1866-1871).

In his desperation over the approaching deadline for his next novel, Dostoevsky hired a secretary in the fall of 1866 to assist him in his work. Her name was Anna Grigorievna Snitkin. She was twenty years of age. He was over twice as old. She was efficient. Moreover, she developed an affection for this strange and dynamic man. The novelist recognized her worth and fell in love with her. They were married on February 15th, 1867. She was a pearl of great price. "She was the type of woman who tidies everything."[1]

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1. Troyat, op. cit., p. 288.

In spite of the fact that with her assistance he had met his deadline in the fall of 1866 and avoided the penalty clause, his financial situation remained precarious. There was danger that he would be imprisoned. Accordingly, he and his wife left for Europe in the spring of 1867. They were not able to return until 1871. During this time he produced The Idiot, The Possessed, and Raw Youth. The sojourn abroad was trying, and all the more so because of the fatal attraction which the roulette wheel still possessed for him. Many times they were on the verge of beggary. Through it all his wife was a stabilizing influence and a Gibraltar of patience.

f. His Final Years of Peace (1872-1881).

An inheritance, the financial wisdom of his wife and the increased income from his novels brought at last a measure of financial stability to Dostoevsky. His fame was increasing. He was coming to be regarded as not only a great novelist, but as a great teacher. In 1873 he began the successful Journal of an Author. In 1879-1880 appeared his greatest work, The Brothers Karamazov. His acceptance by his countrymen reached a dizzying apex on the occasion of his famous Pushkin speech in 1880, only six months before his death. He planned to write a book on Jesus, but the time was too short.

An attempt to discover the nature of Dostoevsky's personality in these closing years of his life involves one in a mesh of conflicting testimony. According to some, even at this time when the author's bark of life had drifted into quieter waters, he was still an irritable, angry man, one who drank a bit too much at times, and who was even paedophilic. Others thought of him as a generous, kindly man who had come forth like gold from the fires of his past tribulations. The truth is likely somewhere between the two evaluations. Any man of outstanding genius is almost certain to possess a turbulence of spirit that at times makes it difficult for him to get along with his fellows. Moreover, genius tends to breed jealousy among one's rivals, and when slanders against the great once start, there is practically no stopping them. As to the charge of paedophilia, it must be said that it was made shortly after the novelist's death, and that it has been repeated many times since. Moreover, in several of his novels there appeared instances of this perversion on the part of his characters. However, the charges against the novelist himself rest upon dubious bases. The matter has been gone into with great thoroughness by several scholars (Nötzel, for instance) who have in consequence dismissed the allegation as an unjustifiable slander. Yarmolinsky may be close to the truth when he writes:

> "The assumption that Dostoevsky was obsessed by a paedophilic impulse, which he probably never satisfied, and which must have repelled him as intensely as it attracted him, would explain his preoccupation with the theme."[1]

What was the nature of Dostoevsky's religious experience in these closing years ? There are those who deny that he ever had a Christian experience. The question is complex. To begin with, one must define the term "Christian experience." Dostoevsky lived in the sacramentarian, high-church atmosphere of Eastern Orthodoxy, and came to an ever-deeper veneration of it. In The Possessed he refers reverently to "the stately ceremony of the administration of the sacrament"[2] (the last rites). In The Brothers Karamazov Father Zossima tells how as a lad of eight he attended mass:

> "I saw . . . how the incense rose from the censer and softly floated upwards and, overhead in the cupola, mingled in rising waves with the sunlight that streamed in at the little window. I was stirred by the sight. . . ."[3]

Such a scene Dostoevsky must himself have known and loved. In such a church Christian experience tends to center in an identification of self with the Church, the Body, rather than in the intensely individual experience that is stressed

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1. Avrahm Yarmolinsky: Dostoevsky: A Life, pp. 419-420.
2. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Possessed, p. 604.
3. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 299.

in a low-church atmosphere.

Entirely apart, however, from this matter of defining terms, a contemporary fellow-countryman of Dostoevsky, namely Strakhov, accused him of not having faith, stating that the secret of the novelist's difficulty was his hatred of his fellow-man. In all likelihood Strakhov, both in his accusation and his reason, was wide of the mark. Zernov states, "He met Christ . . . in one of his darkest hours, and was saved by Him from despair and mental and physical degeneration."[1] Yarmolinsky says that in The Brothers Karamazov "faith -- the simple faith of the peasants that Dostoevsky repeatedly professed to have found -- is allowed the final word."[2] It is indeed in connection with this great culminating novel that the faith of the author is to be most clearly seen. As the reader passes from The Possessed, the third of the master-novels, to The Brothers Karamazov, the fourth, it is apparent at once that there is a new glory, a higher level unfolding before him. In corroboration of this, King writes of a "much more positive and robust faith in this last of his novels than in The Possessed, published eight years earlier."[3] It is true that according to a family tradi-

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1. Nicholas Zernov: Three Russian Prophets, p. 115.
2. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 391.
3. Henry Hall King: Dostoyevsky and Andreyev: Gazers Upon the Abyss, p. 25.

tion, Dostoevsky depicted himself as the free-thinker, Ivan, in The Brothers Karamazov. Yarmolinsky agrees with this. "There can be small doubt as to the identification of the novelist with Ivan Karamazov."[1] Nevertheless, it is apparent that Ivan is drawn not from the total personality of the author, but from that part of him that was prone to doubt, and over which he achieved a final though extraordinarily difficult victory. The Brothers Karamazov was written with the deliberate purpose of demonstrating the splendor and practicality of Christianity. In it he portrays the saintly Zossima, elder of the monastery. "'I cherish,' he wrote, 'the very same thoughts that Zossima expresses.'"[2]

Dostoevsky, like many another genius of Christianity, possessed a strong stamp of individualism. This expressed itself in his conviction that the Russians were the "only God-bearing people,"[3] in thinking of Hell as "the suffering of being unable to love,"[4] in stressing confession to the earth and to fellow-men instead of to Christ, and in emphasizing the expiatory value of suffering.

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1. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 391.
2. Ibid., p. 385.
3. Dostoevsky: The Possessed, p. 223.
4. Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 336.

Three months before his death, he wrote to Aksakov regarding the publication of his "Journal." Gide quotes him as follows:

> "I confess in all friendship, that intending to undertake next year the publication of the "Journal," I have besought God often and long to make me pure in heart and of lips; without sin and envy, and incapable of wounding."[1]

On January 25th, 1881, he was stricken by an internal hemorrhage. He rallied temporarily, but on the night of January 27th, called his wife. "You know, Anna," he said in a low voice, "I have not been sleeping for three hours, and I have been thinking all this time. It is obvious to me that I will die today . . . Light a candle, Anna, and give me the Gospel."[2] It was his custom, in moments of indecision, to open at random his old prison Bible, and read where his eyes fell. He opened it, found the place and handed it back to Anna, saying, "Read." He had opened to Matthew 3:14. He felt the words, "Suffer it to be so now," to be prophetic of his approaching death. "That means I will die."[3] He passed away that evening.

Thirty thousand people accompanied his body to the cemetery. Soon it was all over. "Then began the real

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1. André Gide: Dostoevsky, p. 46.
2. Troyat, op. cit., p. 433.
3. Ibid., p. 433.

life of Feodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, a life outside of time and space, in the hearts of those who loved him."[1]

2. The Relationship Between the Life and the Novels.

This relationship is seen in terms of poverty. Dostoevsky himself had been at least very close to the utter want which characterizes the clerk in Poor Folk. He was poor in his student days at the military academy in St. Petersburg. During the period of his prolonged sojourn in Western Europe, as we have already noticed, he was at times very near to beggary. All this personal experience stood him in good stead when he began to write Poor Folk.

It is seen in terms of gambling. On each of his first three journeys to Europe, and during the four-year European exile, he indulged his passion for gambling. Although he needed the money that he hoped gambling would give him, he gambled for a still more deeply-seated reason. He gambled because he had a passion for it. In his novel The Gambler he has analyzed perfectly the psychological state of the chronic gambler.

It is seen in terms of epilepsy. The disease remained with him from his youth to the end. He makes Prince Myshkin, the leading figure in The Idiot, an epi-

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1. Troyat, op. cit., p. 438.

leptic, and through him describes thoroughly the disease.

It is seen in terms of prison life. He knew the particulars of prison life from first-hand (Siberian) experience. This life he reflected in The House of the Dead and Memoirs from Underground.

It is seen in terms of political intrigue. He had experienced at least a touch of political intrigue in connection with the secret gatherings in which he participated just before his arrest in 1849. The life of intrigue in revolutionary societies is set forth in The Possessed.

It is seen in terms of a realization of what it is like to look death in the eye. On that cold December morning in Semyonovski Square he had felt himself to be only five minutes from eternity. What this is like is put into the mouth of Prince Myshkin in The Idiot.

It is seen in terms of psychopathic insights. Dostoevsky lived in a world of self-inquisition, and experienced keenly its tortures. He used the insights that he gained from this self-analysis in his vivid and subtle character-portrayals.

> "Dostoevsky was, after his fashion, a psychiatrist not by right of science but by right of suffering. Of all the novelists . . . he was perhaps the nearest to being actually a psycopathist because he was so very near to becoming a psychopath."[1]

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 311.

It is seen in terms of his character delineations. His father quite likely served as at least a partial model for old Karamazov. His mistress, Pauline, is faithfully reproduced in The Gambler. His aunt, Mme. Kumanin, became the Grandmother in the same novel. Most interesting of all, he depicted himself (according to a Dostoevsky family tradition) in the figure of Ivan Karamazov.

It is seen in terms of the dualism of the human personality.

> "In one and the same person there continued to exist, as it were side by side, the inquisitiveness of a police inspector and the inquisition of an alienist. Against his mysticism . . . the awe of icons, the undying faith in a flight of stronger eagles over the renewed city of Constantine, there stood out in stark perspective a concrete personal world of hypochondria, jealousy . . . debt, . . . temperament, . . . epilepsy, the ever-deepening consciousness of the gulf between aspiration and achievement. It is no wonder that so many of his creations are, literally from moment to moment, uncertain of themselves, swayed by a duality even of intention. In none of his books is this last phase of hesitation more apparent than in The Eternal Husband."[1]

It is seen in terms of the centrality of Christian truth. Dostoevsky "met Christ . . . in one of his darkest hours, and was saved by Him from despair and mental and physical disintegration."[2] This meeting with Christ in

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 172.
2. Zernov, op. cit., p. 115.

the Siberian prison-barrack led him in later years to put Christ at the center of The Brothers Karamazov.

D. Conclusion

We have now stated the problem, its significance, the method of procedure, and have mentioned sources. We have considered by way of preliminary the essence of the novel form and its validity as a vehicle of Christian teaching. Lastly, we have followed the melodramatic, checkered career of Dostoevsky and have seen that to a large degree his unusual novels have reflected his unusual background of experience.

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CHAPTER II

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH IN EACH OF THE FOUR MAJOR NOVELS OF DOSTOEVSKY

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THE PRESENTATION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH IN EACH OF THE FOUR MAJOR NOVELS OF DOSTOEVSKY

A. Introduction

This chapter will be begun with a discussion of the complexity of Dostoevsky and the difficulty of gaining his viewpoint. Each of the four novels will then be taken up in turn. Each will be surveyed and then dealt with in terms of the Christian truth presented therein.

It is exceedingly difficult to unravel Dostoevsky and see his viewpoint in its entirety. In regard to this point, Mirsky states that his novels may be read in four different ways, namely, as political tracts, as revelations of a new Christianity, as autobiographical reflections, and as great detective stories.[1] Berdyaev, Gide, Lloyd and Zernov make sweeping statements concerning his complexity. Thus, Berdyaev states:

> "Nobody has succeeded in compassing his personality wholly and completely . . . Dostoevsky is for some a champion of the downtrodden . . . for others, a ruthless genius; for yet others, the prophet of a new Christianity."[2]

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1. Prince Dmitri Mirsky: A History of Russian Literature, p. 353.
2. Nicholas Berdyaev: Dostoevsky: An Interpretation, p. 14.

It may be noted, however, that none of these three viewpoints listed by Berdyaev necessarily excludes the other two. Gide describes Dostoevsky as:

> "Conservative, but not hidebound by tradition: monarchist, but of democratic opinions: Christian, but not a Roman Catholic: Liberal, but not a progressive: Dostoevsky remains ever the man of whom there is no way to make use! (italics his)."[1]

Lloyd is still more extreme:

> " . . . There is . . . layer after layer in the Russian novelist above the glazed surface, and when one thinks one has penetrated to the last layer of all, one meets again and again only a note of interrogation. No one can afford to be doctrinaire over Dostoevsky, who was doctrinaire over nobody and nothing . . ."[2]

In this connection, let us yet note Zernov. "He was a perplexing writer, and his life and works contain many contradictions which have not yet been solved and probably will never be solved."[3]

What are we to do with these statements? First, I agree with Mirsky and Berdyaev. Second, I admit the complexity of the author and recognize with sorrow that many little literary and psychological Hiawathas have made a happy-hunting-ground out of him, finding precisely the

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1. André Gide: Dostoevsky, p. 42
2. J.A.T. Lloyd, op. cit., pp. 115-116.
3. Nicolas Zernov, op. cit., p. 115.

game they had desired to find when they set out. This is no reflection on the great Gide and Zernov, though it might apply to Lloyd. Third, Zernov, while stating that there are perhaps irreconcilable contradictions in the works of the novelist, does not state any of these contradictions. On the contrary, he devotes 28 pages to a splendid summary of the positive message of Dostoevsky. Fourth, it is just possible that some of those who posit insoluble contradictions in Dostoevsky are those who would likewise find them in any supernatural system of thought. Fifth, over against Gide's previously quoted statement that Dostoevsky is "ever the man of whom <u>there is no way to make use</u>" must be set another statement by the same author:

> " . . . in all our Western literature . . . the novel, with but rare exceptions, concerns itself solely with relations between man and man, passion and intellect, with family, social, and class relations, but . . . practically never with the relations between the individual and his self or his God, <u>which are to Dostoevsky all important</u>" (italics mine).1

Sixth, let us notice two quotations from Berdyaev's great work on Dostoevsky:

> "His art is completely immersed in the profound realities of the spiritual universe. Even the construction of his books in no way resembles that of the so-called

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1. Gide, op. cit., p. 15.

> realistic novels. Throughout his exterior plots, relating some improbable tale of crime, we feel the presence of this inner reality, something different, more real than the others. For Dostoevsky, the ultimate realities are not the external forms of life, flesh and blood man, but their inner depths, the destiny of the human spirit."[1]

Near the end of his work on Dostoevsky, Berdyaev states, "I know no more profoundly Christian writer than Dostoevsky."[2]

It is now our purpose to survey the four novels and note the great Christian truths presented in them by Dostoevsky. Lloyd and Gide to the contrary, we will be able to become doctrinaire in regard to the novelist, and we will be able to put his writings to use as well. Four aspects of Christian truth will be dealt with in connection with Crime and Punishment, one in connection with The Idiot, and two in relation to The Possessed. The chief stress will be placed upon Dostoevsky's last and greatest novel, The Brothers Karamazov, in connection with which ten aspects of Christian truth will be considered. It should be noted that in the case of each novel, the study being made in this thesis falls far short of being exhaustive.

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1. Berdyaev, op. cit., pp. 25-26.
2. Ibid., p. 209.

B. Crime and Punishment

1. Introductory Survey of the Novel.

The essence of Crime and Punishment has been stated by Dostoevsky himself. Writing to Katkov, an associate, he describes it as follows:

> "The action takes place in our time. A young student of middle-class origin, who has been expelled from the university and who lives in extreme poverty, decides by one stroke to escape from his painful predicament. His light-hearted action is the result of the instability of his ideas and of the influence of certain embryonic thoughts in the air. He decides to kill an old woman, a pawnbroker. This woman is stupid, deaf, sick, stingy, wicked; she exacts exorbitant rates of interest from her victims and ill treats her young sister whom she employs as her maid. 'She is completely useless, she does no one any good, why should she live ?' Such are the questions that torment the young man's mind. He decides to kill her, to rob her, and to use her money for the benefit of his mother who lives in a little town, and of his sister, whom he wants to protect from the amorous advances of a landowner in whose house she is employed as a governess. He also needs money to continue his studies.
>
> "But the divine truth and the earthly laws are operating, and in the end he is self-constrained to give himself up, even though he may have to die in a penitentiary, because this is his only hope of again being able to associate with people. But the feeling of exclusion and isolation which followed the crime was the greatest of tortures. The laws of truth and human nature are victorious, and the criminal resolves to accept suffering in order to redeem his action."[1]

. . . . . .

1. Henry Troyat, op cit., p. 263.

What are the "embryonic thoughts in the air" which lead the ex-student, Raskolnikov, to commit his crime ? They are the tempestuous, radical, yea, even Nietzschean social theories which became current among the Russian intelligentsia in the late nineteenth century, and which have found their terrifying concrete expression in modern Bolshevism. Raskolnikov became convinced that mankind is to be divided into two classes, the Napoleons, and the common herd. The latter passively obey the laws which the former (who are personally beyond law) create for the rest of mankind. He wants to prove that he is the former type. Melancholy, supersensitive, irritable, highly intelligent, he lies in his tiny room and conceives the plot of murdering the old pawnbroker, Alyona Ivanovna, in order to put his theory to the test. He also wants her money for what he tells himself are altruistic purposes. At first he is horrified by the thought of the deed, but then falls in with it. With a violently throbbing heart, he carries out the crime. Surprised in the midst of the murder by another old woman, Lizaveta, he despatches her, too. Terror and irrationality then take over within him. He is scarcely able to cover his tracks. Only by the greatest good fortune does he avoid leaving any decisive clues. By page 73 the second murder has been committed. For most of the remain-

ing 400 pages the reader sits in the tortured cockpit of Raskolnikov's mind, beholding the steady disintegration of his whole self. He tries to justify his crime on the same grounds that led him to commit it.

> " . . . At once a lawyer to himself and to his victim, he is no longer an individual, but a battleground.
>
> "Murder cannot be justified before the tribunal of his conscience, and the murderer's personality disintegrates ..."[1]

It is verily a "psychological account of a crime."[2] It is likely this inward quality that led Thomas Mann to describe it as "the greatest detective novel of all times."[3]

Other characters enter the story: Dounia, Raskolnikov's proud, idealistic sister, one of Dostoevsky's famous "proud women"; Razumihin, the impetuous young giant who befriends Raskolnikov, and falls in love with Dounia; Porfiry Petrovitch, the police investigator who suspects Raskolnikov almost from the beginning, "toys with him, tries his patience to the breaking point, reassures him, and then frightens him again with diabolical cold-bloodedness";[4] Svidrigailov, the lecher, a man possessed both by the ices of cynicism and the fires of lust,

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1. Troyat, op. cit., p. 268.
2. Yarmolinsky, op cit., p. 221.
3. Thomas Mann: "Dostoevsky -- In Moderation," The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, p. ix.
4. Troyat, op. cit., p. 269.

a man who, finally unable to gain possession of Dounia, takes his own life; Marmeladov, the massively evil old drunkard who reduces his well-born wife, Katerina Ivanovna, to utter poverty, and drives his ethereal daughter, Sonia, into prostitution; and lastly, the incredible Sonia herself, a prostitute in body in order to support her mother and her brothers and sisters, but a saint in spirit. It is she who brings to pass the spiritual resurrection of Raskolnikov. "The figure of this fragile sinner, this woman condemned by the earthly laws but vindicated in the eyes of heaven, is one of Dostoevsky's most charming creations."[1]

Criminologists have found this book to be a profound analysis of the criminal mind. Yarmolinsky says, "It is reported that an obdurate murderer was driven to repent and confess after reading Crime and Punishment."[2]

Needless to say, Raskolnikov, Marmeladov, Svidrigailov and Sonia all serve either negatively or positively in their own peculiar ways as reflectors of Christian truth.

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1. Troyat, p. 273.
2. Avrahm Yarmolinsky: Dostoevsky: A Life, p. 220.

2. Its Presentation of Christian Truth.

a. In Relation to the Effects of Sin in the Life of Raskolnikov.

The old woman was dead. She lay in a pool of her own blood. Raskolnikov had committed the crime that he had planned in order to prove that he was a Napoleon. He took her keys and dashed into the bedroom where she kept her valuables. The keys would not fit the locks.

> "It was not so much that his hands were shaking but that he kept making mistakes; though he saw for instance that a key was not the right one and would not fit, still he tried to put it in . . ." 1

His frenzied endeavors in the bedroom were soon interrupted by the sound of footsteps and a low moan from the other room. Seizing his axe, he ran out and saw Lizaveta, the sister of the murdered woman, gazing in stupefaction at the body on the floor. She had just come in from shopping and had a bundle in her arms. She, too, was speedily despatched. A terrible loss of mental integration followed for the would-be Napoleon.

> " . . . Raskolnikov completely lost his head, snatching up her bundle, dropped it again and ran . . . Fear gained more and more mastery over him . . . The

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1. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 71

> feeling of loathing . . . surged up within him and grew stronger every minute."[1]

He washed the axe and then turned his attention to his clothing.

> "At the first glance there seemed to be nothing but stains on the boots. He wetted the rag and rubbed the boots. But he knew he was not looking thoroughly, that there might be something quite noticeable that he was overlooking. He stood in the middle of the room, lost in thought. Dark agonizing ideas rose in his mind -- the idea that he was mad and that at that moment he was incapable of reasoning, of protecting himself, that he ought perhaps to be doing something utterly different from what he was now doing."[2]

Only with utter good luck was he able to avoid leaving basic clues, and get back to his tiny room. There he flung himself on the sofa and lay in a daze.

> " . . . he did not sleep, but sank into blank forgetfulness. If anyone had come into his room then, he would have jumped up at once and screamed. Scraps and shreds of thoughts were simply swarming in his brain, but he could not catch at one, he could not rest on one, in spite of all his efforts ..."[3]

Eventually he slept.

The next morning --

> " . . . A dreadful chill came over him; but the chill was from the fever that had begun long before

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1. Dostoevsky; Crime and Punishment, p. 73.
2. Ibid., pp. 73-74.
3. Ibid., p. 79.

> in his sleep. Now he was suddenly taken with violent shivering, so that his teeth chattered and all his limbs were shaking. . . ."[1]

In a frenzied fashion he began trying to cover his tracks. The booty must be hid. He pushed it into a hole in the wall. Then in horror his dazed mentality began to perceive piece after piece of incriminating evidence upon his person and in the room. He tried to take care of all.

> " . . . The conviction that all his faculties, even memory, and the simplest power of reflection were failing him began to be an insufferable torture.
>
> "'Surely it isn't beginning already! Surely it isn't my punishment coming upon me? It is!'"[2]

In this state of mind he received a summons from the police station. He went, half-decided upon confessing his crime. The summons turned out to be merely about a minor financial matter. While at the station, however, he overheard a discussion between two officers regarding the double murder. Raskolnikov tried to leave, but fainted before he reached the door. After being revived, he was casually quizzed by the curious officers. His answers were jerky and sharp. The police regarded him with increasing wonder. Nevertheless, he was released. As he

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1. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 80.
2. Ibid., pp. 81-82.

scurried home, he repeated to himself, "A search -- there will be a search at once. The brutes! they suspect."[1] Again he tried to remove all clues.

His thoughts were ever on one theme -- his crime. He was nearly beside himself. "'Damn it all!' he thought suddenly, in a fit of ungovernable fury. 'If it has begun, it has begun. Hang the new life! Good Lord, how stupid it is!'"[2] Later he said to himself, "I shall get well and I shall not worry . . . But what if I don't get well at all ? Good God, how sick I am of it all!"[3] In regard to his frame of mind at this time, Hare says:

> "It turns out that the subconscious moral sense can be stronger than the intellect, for after the murder Raskolnikov has to fight even harder to suppress his horrible memories than he had previously fought to justify his project. One could not say that he feels remorse; he is overwhelmed by a confused crowd of feelings, the most galling of which is the shame of discovering himself to be so weak and so easy a prey to inward reproaches." 4

He develops a consuming hatred for everything and everyone around him. It is the old terrible psychology of Amnon and Tamar. Because Amnon had so grievously wronged Tamar he hated her (through a subconscious transfer to her

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1. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 96.
2. Ibid., p. 99.
3. Ibid.
4. Richard Hare: Russian Literature from Pushkin to the Present Day, pp. 129, 130.

of his hatred for himself). Raskolnikov had wronged society. Now he hated society.

He decides to visit his good friend Razumihin. In his friend's apartment, he is totally inept and rude -- and the worst of it is, the poor wretch can't help it.

He loses his appreciation for beauty. While on a walk, he stops on a bridge to look at the cathedral. Always before it had thrilled him. Now it leaves him cold.

He loses his former interest in theories and problems.

> "He felt it almost amusing, and yet it wrung his heart. Deep down, hidden far away out of sight all that seemed to him now -- all his old past, his old thoughts, his old problems and theories, his old impressions . . . and all, all .... He felt as though he were flying upwards and everything were vanishing from his sight." 1

Delirium has its way with him. He has a tremendous desire to talk about the murder. He is grossly insulting to his sister's fiancé. Driven by a terrible compulsion, he revisits the scene of his crime. He behaves as a foreigner to his mother and sister when they come to St. Petersburg. His attitude toward them is climaxed in a hesitantly delivered but firm speech:

> " . . . Leave me alone, leave me alone. Whatever may come to me, whether I come to ruin or not, I want to

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1. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 103.

> be alone. Forget me altogether, it's better. Don't inquire about me. When I can, I'll come of myself or . . . I'll send for you. Perhaps it will all come back, but now if you love me, give me up . . . else I shall begin to hate you, I feel it . . . Good bye!" 1

Meanwhile, the police are fastening their suspicions more and more upon him, though they are virtually without positive evidence. Conversations ensue between Raskolnikov and the crafty Porfiry. These conversations are a terrible strain on the murderer. He cannot fully control himself, even outwardly, and tells more than he would need to tell. However, he does not confess. He does not tell a soul until in terrible agony he delivers up his secret to Sonia, the incredible spiritual prostitute with whom he has strangely formed an irreproachable friendship. The passage wherein this confession is described is one of tremendous power:

> " . . . <u>that</u> minute had come.
>
> "He hid his face in his hands again and bowed his head. Suddenly he turned pale, got up from his chair, looked at Sonia and without uttering a word sat down mechanically . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "'What's the matter?' asked Sonia, dreadfully frightened.
>
> "He could not utter a word. This was not at all, not at all the way he had intended to 'tell' and he did
>
> . . . . . .

1. Dostoevsky: <u>Crime and Punishment</u>, p. 277.

> not understand what was happening to him now. She went up to him softly, sat down on the bed beside him and waited, not taking her eyes off him. Her heart throbbed and sank. It was unendurable; he turned his deadly pale face to her. His lips worked, helplessly struggling to utter something. . ." [1]

At last, in indirect fashion, he tells his secret.

When Porfiry Petrovitch for the first time flatly accuses Raskolnikov of the crime, it produces an electrifying result. "Raskolnikov leapt from the sofa, stood up for a few seconds and sat down again without uttering a word. His face twitched convulsively."[2] Still he does not confess.

Thus in a host of ways Dostoevsky shows the effects of Raskolnikov's sin -- a list of effects that in their sum involve the near-absolute disintegration of the soul of the murderer. Two symbolic utterances can be selected. One comes from Sonia immediately following his confession to her. "'What have you done -- what have you done to yourself ?' she said in despair . . ."[3] The other comes from Raskolnikov himself a few minutes later in the same conversation. "Did I murder the old woman ? I murdered myself, not her! I crushed myself once for all, for ever ...."[4] Not for nothing is the novel entitled Crime

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1. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 360.
2. Ibid., p. 402.
3. Ibid., p. 362.
4. Ibid., p. 369.

and Punishment.

b. In Relation to the Decisive Position of the Will.

Raskolnikov makes no bones about the premeditated, deliberate nature of his murder. "I wanted to become a Napoleon, that is why I killed her...."[1] André Gide says:

> "On the one hand, denial and surrender of the self; on the other, affirmation of the personality, the will to power (italics his), an exaggerated loftiness of sentiment. And take due note of this fact; in Dostoevsky's novels, the will to power (italics his) leads inevitably to ruin."[2]

c. In Relation to Confession and Cross-Bearing.

After revealing his crime to Sonia, Raskolnikov looks up at her "with a face hideously distorted by despair,"[3] and asks,

> "'Well, what am I to do now ? . . .'[4] "'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,

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1. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 365.
2. Gide, op. cit., p. 88.
3. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 370.
4. Ibid.

> 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.
>
> "He was amazed at her sudden ecstasy.
>
> "'You mean Siberia, Sonia ? I must give myself up ?' he asked gloomily.
>
> "Suffer and expiate your sin by it, that's what you must do.'" 1

He refuses.

> "'It will be too much for you to bear, too much!'

she repeated, holding out her hands in despairing supplication."[2] Still he refuses, though it is apparent that he is counting the cost. Sonia offers him a cross. He starts to take it and then draws back his hand.

> "'Not now, Sonia, Better later,' he added to comfort her.
>
> "'Yes, yes, better,' she repeated with conviction, 'when you go to meet your suffering, then put it on. You will come to me, I'll put it on you, we will pray and go together.'" 3

Eventually he comes for his cross.

> "Without a word Sonia took out of the drawer two crosses, one of cypress wood and one of copper. She made the sign of the cross over herself and over him, and put the wooden cross on his neck." 4

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1. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 370.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 372.
4. Ibid., p. 461.

He follows her instructions almost to the letter. On his way to the police station (with Sonia following from afar), he remembers her words, bows down in the square, and kisses the earth. The jeering shouts of bystanders check him from publicly proclaiming his crime, but he goes on to the police station. There, white-faced and staring, he finally makes his confession.

He is sentenced to eight years of penal servitude in Siberia. Sonia follows him. Though Raskolnikov has confessed to Sonia and to the authorities and has accepted his punishment, he still does not repent of his crime. His heart is still hard. However, he slowly becomes aware of "the fundamental falsity in himself and his convictions."[1] There comes at last the day when he flings himself at the feet of Sonia and throws his arms around her knees.

> " . . . For the first instant she was terribly frightened . . . But at the same moment she understood, and a light of infinite happiness came into her eyes . . . . They were both pale and thin; but those sick pale faces were bright with the dawn of a new future, of a full resurrection into a new life . . . .
>
> "They resolved to wait and be patient. They had another seven years to wait . . . But he had risen again and he knew it and felt it in all his being, while she -- she only lived in his life." 2

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1. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 477.
2. Ibid., p. 481.

Of this incident, Hromadka writes: "The day came when the Risen Christ prevailed. Raskolnikov broke down; he wept and threw his arms around Sonia's knees."[1]

The book closes as follows:

> " . . . He did not know that the new life . . . would cost him . . . 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 . . . That might be the subject of a new story, but our present story is ended." 2

Hromadka, after analyzing the spiritual significance of Crime and Punishment, says:

> "The casual reader, after a perfunctory reading of Dostoyevski's work, may cast sceptical and distrusting eyes at this interpretation and wonder whether this analysis is not an example of the method by which a professional theologian reads his 'dogmatic theories' into the world of a literary genius. The evangelical soul, on the other hand, may be disappointed at the scarcity in Dostoyevski's novels of direct and explicit preaching on Christ and His way of salvation. He would be right . . . . All events, all changes, transformations, collapses, crises and victories seem to have little to do with any other-worldly reality and agent. Dostoyevski does not preach; he only on rare occasions speaks explicitly. Yet if you read between the lines and pierce beyond the events and figures he describes, you realize the fourth dimension of his world.
>
> "Behind almost all Dostoyevski's writings stands the invisible and intangible figure of the Crucified and Risen . . ." 3

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1. Josef Hromadka: Doom and Resurrection, p. 43
2. Dostoevsky: Crime and Punishment, p. 482.
3. Hromadka, op. cit., p. 44.

C. The Idiot

1. Introductory Survey of the Novel.

The book centers about Prince Myshkin, who is repeatedly referred to by the other characters as an "idiot." This designation is given him because of his susceptibility to epileptic seizures, and because of the way he fails to fit into the normal social grooves.

His personality is almost incredible.

> " . . . He has the candor and the awkwardness of a child, the humility of a saint, the pitying love which, understanding all, pardons all. After the fashion of the true Christian . . . he asserts his self by yielding it . . . ." [1]

While Dostoevsky was writing this book, he told his niece, Sonia, that his purpose was "to portray a truly beautiful soul." [2] Myshkin is the result. Why did he depict his central figure as an epileptic ? Yarmolinsky answers:

> "His instinct as a writer told him that he must humanize his ideal Christian by a degrading touch of nature. His Christlike Prince . . . is tainted with imbecility: the hero is an 'idiot.' The wine is precious, but the vessel is flawed . . . ." [3]

Myshkin is generous, scrupulous, filled with a kindness toward all men and all living things, and pos-

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1. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 261-262.
2. Ibid., p. 260.
3. Ibid., p. 261.

sessed of a subtle gift of perceiving the future destinies of his fellows. He is all this, but he is not quite human, in spite of the novelist's tremendous effort to make him so. "The character of the idiot is perhaps the least human of all those conceived by Dostoevsky."[1] He loves two women, but with a selfless quality that is unreal. "He is free of all sensuality."[2] Neither is he quite Christian. True, he possesses a radiance that draws all classes to him as a magnet. True, he mellows the ambitions and tempers the vanity of many of the sons of Hell that swarm about him. Nevertheless, his feet do not quite touch the ground. He is a stranger to practicality. He explains and mitigates sin without removing it. He is too much of a humanistic philosopher to be a redemptive Messiah to his unhappy associates. In the brutal, never-to-be-forgotten climax of the book, he is defeated by the world, and lapses permanently into the insanity of his early childhood. Moreover, none of his close associates survive the maelstrom of the closing events.

The author fairly charges into his story with his opening sentence, "At nine o'clock in the morning,

. . . . . .

1. Troyat, op. cit., p. 324.
2. Ibid.

toward the end of November, the Warsaw train was approaching Petersburg at full speed."[3] Myshkin, the young but penniless nobleman, is returning at last from a stay of several years in Switzerland, where he has been receiving fairly successful treatment for his epilepsy. Within a day (a day that runs to 172 pages) he has met for the first time and become fatefully involved with a whole host of complex characters. There is Rogozhin, the merchant's son, just become an heir to a vast fortune, a passionate young man who has developed a savage desire for the beautiful Nastasya Filippovna, an unhappy soul living in the consciousness of the betrayal of her virginity by a wealthy roué. There is General Epanchin, the well-to-do pillar of society, his unstable but well-meaning wife, Lizaveta Prokofyevna; and their three blooming daughters, Alexandra, Adelaida, and Aglaia. There is Gavril Ardalionovitch, the scheming, materialistic, yet fatally hesitant secretary to General Epanchin. Before this first day is over, Myshkin has made long speeches to General Epanchin's footman, has blundered before the General's secretary, has won a foothold in the General's frost-encrusted heart, has met Lizaveta Prokofyevna and her three daughters, and has held them fascinated by his entrancing conversation and humility of spirit, has met Nastasya Filippovna and fallen in love with her (a love characterized more by pity and

awareness of her intrinsic worth than anything else), has saved her from the clutches of Gavril Ardalionovitch, has proposed to her, has learned that he himself is heir to a vast fortune, and has lost Nastasya to Rogozhin, who departs with her into the night for a sensual debauch. During this same day the lovely Aglaia has fallen in love with Myshkin. Here, for the first time, the reader is allowed to catch his breath.

Six months intervene before the story reopens, a period about which the reader learns only through subsequent references. During this time, Nastasya leaves Rogozhin for Myshkin, and Myshkin for Rogozhin. Myshkin has tried to save the unhappy girl, not for himself (he is well nigh incapable of selfishness) but for her own sake. However, Nastasya, who fears Rogozhin because of his savagery of passion, emptiness of mind (and her conviction that after marrying Rogozhin, he would kill her out of frustration at not being able to possess her fully) fears Myshkin's goodness more. As Myshkin later put it to Aglaia:

> " . . . She ran away from me . . . simply to show that she was a degraded creature . . . Do you know that in that continual consciousness of shame there is perhaps a sort of awful, unnatural enjoyment for her, a sort of revenge on someone. Sometimes I did bring her to seeing light round her once more, as it were. But she would grow restive again at once

> and even came to accusing me bitterly of setting myself up above her . . ." [1]

Aglaia also expresses clearly the terrible anarchy of Nastasya's soul, in a bitter confrontation where the virginal daughter of General Epanchin bites off her words at the fallen Nastasya, "You can love nothing but your shame and the continual thought that you've been brought to shame and humiliated."[2]

Having lost Nastasya to Rogozhin and filled with sadness for her future, Myshkin turns to Aglaia for companionship. Although a host of lesser characters occupy their individual portions of the vast canvas, the central figures of the remainder of the novel are Aglaia, her other suitor, Yevgeney Pavlovitch, Myshkin, Nastasya and Rogozhin. For a time it seems that Myshkin will marry Aglaia, in spite of his awkwardness and epileptic seizure at a soireé held by the Epanchins for the distinct purpose of introducing him to the upper crust. Indeed, this impulsive, generous creature, Aglaia, sets her heart upon marrying the idealistic Prince. Only one doubt disturbs her mind. Does Myshkin still have any affection for Nastasya ? In her typical, headstrong, impulsive way, she drags Myshkin off to the house of Nastasya to "have it out

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1. Dostoevsky: The Idiot, pp. 425-426.
2. Ibid., p. 567.

with her." The scene that follows beggars description and is climaxed by Nastasya's hysterical appeal to Myshkin to choose even now between her and Aglaia. The Prince, not comprehending fully the decision required of him, sees only the tragic, suffering face of Nastasya, and hesitates. Aglaia, horror-stricken, runs out of the house. Myshkin tries to follow, but before he gets to the door, Nastasya throws herself before him and faints in his arms. Myshkin stays with her, overcome by pity. Motivated by the same impulse, he plans to marry her, though in his sexless simplicity he cannot see why he cannot have both Aglaia and Nastasya in the sort of platonic companionship that is all he desires. Yevgeney Pavlovitch is merciless in his analysis of Myshkin's action in relation to Aglaia. To his face he cries --

> "But you ought to have understood how intense and how much in earnest the girl was ... in her feeling for you. She did not care to share you with another woman and you ... you could desert and shatter a treasure like that!" [1]

Still later, Yevgeney reaches the climax of his analysis with the observation, "Do you know what, my poor prince, the most likely thing is that you've never loved either of them!" [2]

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1. Dostoevsky: The Idiot, p. 568.
2. Ibid., p. 573.

The moral anarchy of Nastasya Filippovna, however, does not permit her to marry Myshkin. At the door of the church, dressed in her wedding finery, she catches sight of the face of Rogozhin. Heedless of the occasion, heedless of her former fear of him, faced now with what she feels in the terrible dilemma of her proud heart to be the confusion of marrying so good a creature as Myshkin, she dashes into the crowd, seizes Rogozhin by both arms and shouts, "Save me! take me away!"[1] Rogozhin obeys.

The book now closes with a scene of unrivalled terror. Myshkin goes in search of them, not caring for himself, but only for their welfare. At first, he is unsuccessful in his pursuit, but soon Rogozhin comes to Myshkin and with a strange air leads him at sundown to a darkened room. There, on the bed, covered only with a sheet, lies the body of Nastasya Filippovna. When the police break in the next morning, Rogozhin is raving, and Myshkin, relapsed into the complete idiocy of his early childhood, is caressing and trying to soothe him. This is the end. The epilogue adds only the melancholy details that Myshkin's relapse is permanent, that Rogozhin is sentenced to Siberia, and that Aglaia has descended to one degeneracy after another.

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[1] Dostoevsky: The Idiot, p. 584.

Is the Prince a reflector of Christian truth ? A positive answer, if given at all, must be severely qualified. Myshkin was neither completely human nor technically Christian, but yet a radiance shines from him almost to the bitter end. Why did Dostoevsky so alloy the character and personality of the Prince ? For one thing, Dostoevsky wrote the book under tremendous financial pressure. He agonized over the fact that he was plucking an unripe fruit and hastening it prematurely to the literary market. Then, too, Dostoevsky at this time may have been lacking yet in an appreciation of what true Christlikeness consists. He was barely removed from the period of moral chaos that followed his return from Siberia. He started the book with the fervent intention of painting a real and yet transcendently beautiful character. Because of his own sensuality, he likely conceived of such a character as lacking in sensuality. He started to portray him thus. Made desperate by literary deadlines, and the difficulty of achieving a unity in the mass of material that his imagination piled up, he allowed the nature of his imperfectly conceived creature to spin out to its inevitable conclusion, i.e., loving neither Aglaia nor Nastasya in the full sense, he lost both, and his own reason besides in his agony over their agonies. Thus the original concept of a beautiful figure yields to that of a weird one. Thus, in-

stead of conquering the world in truly Christlike fashion, Myshkin becomes a victim to the faulty original conception of his literary creator, and is conquered by the world.

Apart from the moving and tragic figure of Myshkin, however, Christian truth is demonstrated, albeit, negatively so, in the portrayal of sin and its effects. Even so, the student who approaches this novel with the purpose of finding Christian truth demonstrated cannot help but feel that for his purposes this is the least fruitful of Dostoevsky's great novels.

The comments of literary critics vary greatly. Yarmolinsky speaks of it as a book that "puzzled and discomfited"[1] the critics of his own day. A few others have felt it to be the novelist's best work. The author himself stoutly defended it. Troyat is sweeping in his criticism: "This overwritten, loosely constructed, unbalanced story unfolds in a nightmarish atmosphere."[2]

2. Its Presentation of Christian Truth In Relation to the Effects of Sin in the Life of Nastasya Filippovna.

As we have already noticed, her sin was that of immoral relations with a wealthy roué. While it is to be

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1. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 267.
2. Troyat, op. cit., p. 330.

granted that the responsibility lay more with her betrayer than with the young girl herself, it cannot be denied that she shared that responsibility. This sinful relationship resulted in a fearful pattern of emotional chaos and volitional instability. After four years of this relationship, Nastasya learned that her master, Afanasy Ivanovitch, was about to be married to a wealthy young girl of high standing. Nastasya, then twenty years of age, acted with decision. She went to him, and venomously told him that she was determined to break up the marriage out of sheer spite for him -- "if only that I may have a good laugh at you, for I too want to laugh now."[1] Afanasy Ivanovitch was astounded at the creature who stood before him. When he had last been with her at his country estate four months before, she had been a lovely girl, timid, playful, melancholy and tearful by turns. Now there was a ferment of contempt and vengeance-seeking at work in her quite able young brain. She was sarcastic. She told him openly "that she had never had any feeling in her heart for him except contempt -- contempt and loathing."[2] Afanasy retired to think the whole thing through. He decided to yield to her, knowing that if he did not, the vengeful young woman would stop at nothing to disgrace him.

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1. Dostoevsky: The Idiot, p. 38.
2. Ibid.

During the five years that followed, he endeavored constantly to break his chain. It might be said that he felt he would never be completely safe until Nastasya herself was safely married to someone else. Meanwhile, he supported Nastasya in luxury, though their former relationship was not resumed. Near the end of this five-year period, he again desired to contract a marriage with a highly eligible young woman, namely, Alexandra, the eldest daughter of General Epanchin. He felt that Nastasya Filippovna was the only great obstacle. After reflection, he laid the whole situation before the General. That astute man of the world was not as shocked as one might have expected. Instead he began to plan realistically with his friend as to how the difficulty might be surmounted. In the General's employ was an aggresive young secretary, Gavril Ardalionovitch. This young man had been paying court to Nastasya for some time. It was decided that he (Epanchin) and Afanasy would approach Nastasya together with the utmost frankness and lay a quite elaborate proposal before her. This proposal was as follows: If she would agree to marry Gavril, Afanasy would guarantee her future with the sum of seventy-five thousand roubles. Nastasya answered the two friends with surprising calmness, stating simply that she would think over their proposal. Later, she promised to give her definite answer

at a party in her lodgings on her twenty-fifth birthday.

As chance would have it, it was on the morning of that very day that Prince Myshkin arrived in St. Petersburg from his long stay in Switzerland. The crowded events of that hectic day have already been alluded to. Suffice it to say that by evening, Myshkin knew of the proposal and the coming party, had met Gavril and divined his selfishness, had met Nastasya, had been subtly attracted to her, and had heard the half-drunk Rogozhin madly promise to bring Nastasya one hundred thousand roubles yet that day in exchange for her body that night. Nastasya had made no promise. Nastasya had immediately been attracted to Myshkin. She instinctively saw that his heart was pure. That evening Myshkin determined to attend the party, even though he had not been invited. He was received with delight by Nastasya. General Epanchin, Afanasy Ivanovitch, Gavril Ardalionovitch, and a number of others were already present. It was to be an eventful evening.

> "Nastasya Filippovna had taken a glass of champagne and declared that she would drink three that evening. It was difficult to understand her strange and at times abrupt and sudden sallies, her hysterical and causeless laughter, alternating with silent and even morose depression . . . ." 1

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1. Dostoevsky: The Idiot, pp. 137-138.

Capricious beyond bounds, she caught at the crazy suggestion of a buffoon that each person present should narrate the incident "that he himself honestly considered the worst of all the evil actions of his life."[1]

> " . . . Nastasya Filippovna was always self-willed and inconsiderate when once she had expressed a desire . . . And now she seemed hysterical, ran to and fro and laughed spasmodically and violently, especially at Totsky's (Afanasy's) uneasy protests . . . ." [2]

The game began. Soon it was Afanasy's turn. The old leper reeled off with complete outward self-assurance a tale concerning a minor misdemeanor that did him as much credit as otherwise.

> "All the while he was telling his story, Nastasya Filippovna was staring intently at the lace frill of her sleeve, and kept pinching it with two fingers of her left hand. She didn't even once glance at the speaker." [3]

At the conclusion of the anecdote, Nastasya turned suddenly to Myshkin and said, "Tell me what you think. Shall I be married or not ? As you say, I will do."[4] The effect was electrifying. Myshkin, terribly burdened, could scarcely speak. Then, it came out. "'N-no . . . don't

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1. Dostoevsky: The Idiot, pp. 137, 138.
2. Ibid., p. 139.
3. Ibid., p. 147.
4. Ibid., p. 150.

marry him,' he whispered at last, and breathed painfully. "'So shall it be then.'"[1]

Events then followed in rapid succession. Nastasya brushed aside all protests, and announced that she would leave her flat the next day. Afanasy she "set . . . free for nothing."[2] She rose to go. Just then "there was a violent ring at the bell."[3] It was Rogozhin with his hundred thousand roubles. She hesitated. Myshkin, filled with pity for this woman and admiration for her splendid potentialities, offered her his hand. She was deeply touched, but still made no decisive move. Just then it was announced to the assemblage (to Myshkin's own astonishment) that Myshkin himself was heir to a great fortune. The announcement was quickly verified. Now, entirely apart from monetary considerations, Nastasya had a clear choice between a good man and a sex-crazy youth, between good and evil, between regeneration and degradation. She nearly accepted the Prince, and then in a strange, perverse, almost incoherent, half-mad way, accepted Rogozhin's hundred thousand, flung it away, and went into the night with Rogozhin. Her vacillation between the two men and her fateful decision that night were symbolic both of much

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1. Dostoevsky: The Idiot, p. 150.
2. Ibid., p. 151.
3. Ibid.

of what was to follow, and of her final terrible destiny.

> " . . . The action of the novel unfolds in her tragic conflict between two equally powerful sentiments, pride and moral sensibility. For her to accept the advances of the wild . . . Rogojin is a conscious step lower in the mire and ruin to which she feels she is condemned by her previous immoral life, and while accepting him, she revolts inwardly against him. But her pride will not allow her to marry Mishkin, whose sympathy she resented as something insulting, sincere though it was, because she felt bound to acknowledge his moral superiority . . ." 1

Several weeks later, just before her wedding to Rogozhin, she left him and fled to Myshkin, who tried to lead her to a higher plane of life. He failed, and she returned to Rogozhin, only to leave him again. Still later, she again returned to the merchant's son.

A number of months after Nastasya had left Myshkin, he analyzed to Aglaia his failure in the following words:

> "Oh, she's crying out every minute in her frenzy that she doesn't admit going wrong, that she was the victim of a depraved and wicked man. But whatever she may say to you, believe me, she's the first to . . . believe with her whole conscience that she is ... to blame. When I tried to dispel that gloomy delusion, it threw her into . . . misery . . . She ran away from me. Do you know what for ? Simply to show me that she was a degraded creature. But the most awful thing is that perhaps she didn't even know herself that she only wanted to prove that to me, but ran away because she had an irresistible inner craving to do something shameful, so as to say to herself at once: 'There, you've done something
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1. Hare, op. cit., pp. 131, 132.

> shameful again, so you're a degraded creature . . . Sometimes I did bring her to seeing light round her once more . . . . But she would grow restive again at once, and even came to accusing me bitterly of setting myself up above her . . . and told me . . . that she didn't want . . . sympathy or help from anyone, nor to be elevated to anyone's level. . . ."[1]

In the confrontation scene, Aglaia gives vent to the following condemnation: "You can love nothing but your shame."[2] Deeply stung by Aglaia's bitter analysis, she roused herself and, forgetting Rogozhin, demanded that Myshkin choose between her and Aglaia. Through her hysteria and Myshkin's infinite pity, she gained him, only to leave him again for Rogozhin at the portal of the church, as was noted in the introductory survey of the novel. Rogozhin marries her and then in a frenzy of frustration, kills her, just as she had predicted. The final scene as Rogozhin leads Myshkin into the darkened room is surely one of the most terrible of all literature:

> "Myshkin's heart beat so violently that it seemed as though it were audible in the death-like stillness of the room. But his eyes were by now accustomed to the darkness, so that he could make out the whole bed. Someone lay asleep on it, in a perfectly motionless sleep; not the faintest stir, not the faintest breath could be heard. The sleeper was covered over from head to foot with a white sheet and the limbs were vaguely defined; all that could be seen was that a human figure lay there, stretched at full length. All around in disorder at the foot of the bed, on chairs beside it, and even on the floor, clothes had been flung in disorder . . . At the end of the bed

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1. Dostoevsky: The Idiot, pp. 425-426.
2. Ibid., 557.

> there was a crumpled heap of lace and on the white lace the toes of a bare foot peeped out from under the sheet; it seemed as though it had been carved out of marble and it was horridly still. Myshkin looked and felt that as he looked, the room became more and more still and death-like. Suddenly there was the buzz of a fly which flew over the bed and settled on the pillow. Myshkin started." 1

Snow comments on the sequel to this as follows:

> " . . . The final scene, in which . . . Mishkin, relapsed into idiocy, is found comforting the delirious Rogozhin beside the dead body of Nastassia Filippovna . . . is surely as far as any writer has ever gone in presenting the havoc wreaked by human passion." 2

In the words of J.A.T. Lloyd, Nastasya has hesitated "too long between the Prince's dream of beauty redeeming the world and Rogozhin's doom of killing what he loves best on earth."[3]

Thus we have traced the tragic course of Nastasya Filippovna. A sinner, she refuses to be reclaimed. Her pride cannot or will not pay the price that her moral sensibility cries out for. The effects of her first great sin and her continuing state of sin keep going on and on. She becomes spiteful, a perfect female hellcat in relation to Afanasy Ivanovitch. She is hysterical and nearly mad at her birthday party. She cannot decide between the men

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1. Dostoevsky: The Idiot, p. 596.
2. Valentine Snow: Russian Writers, p. 48.
3. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 158.

who symbolize the two poles of her spiritual anarchy. At the end, she is killed on her bridal night. Nor is the human wreckage confined to her alone. Myshkin, Rogozhin, and Aglaia are all heavily mortgaged against the future as direct or indirect results of her sin. The picture is a tremendous one. I stand before it in awe.

D. The Possessed

1. Introductory Survey of the Novel

On November 25, 1869, the weighted body of a young student was found in a pond near the Moscow Agriculture Academy. He had been a member of a secret revolutionary society and had been murdered for a breach of discipline. The incident made a profound impression upon Dostoevsky. It strengthened his determination to hit a smashing blow at the godless socialism that was springing up in Russia.

In the resultant novel Dostoevsky elaborated the following ideas: Russia is cursed with an undercover movement that promises freedom, but that actually would destroy all freedom. Its leaders profess to love Russia while actually they hate her. They wish to overthrow the existing social order only that they may rule over a new one. They are utter Nietzscheans, utter nihilists. They

desire not only to overthrow social oppression, but the Church, family ethics, culture, independent thought, and private ownership. They will use every deceit, meanness, and terror available to hurl the existing order into chaos, will then seize control on the pretext of restoring order, establish a super-state, and remake the world in the image of man.

When the book appeared, a mighty cry of indignation arose from Russian liberals. It was passionately contended that Dostoevsky had outrageously slandered the reform movement. Actually, he had overdrawn the underground societies as they existed in his day. However, the book stands as stark prophecy. The author, sympathetic with reform as such, saw with clairvoyant vision the hellish result that would come of a witches' brew of atheism, utilitarianism, and neo-autocracy.

As in The Idiot, the action unfolds upon a tremendous canvas. There are two great interlocking plots. The first concerns Nicolay Stavroguin, the apotheosis of indecision. He is a young nobleman, the son of Varvara Petrovna, the great lady of the small provincial town which is the scene of the action. He is a strong, handsome, almost nerveless, dynamic creature, but he cannot decide where to throw his strength. He welcomes every new sensation, every new experience that will arouse him from inertia and arrest his boredom. He rapes a little

girl and then allows her to commit suicide; he marries a crippled insane girl simply because it is an idiotic thing to do, and then keeps it quiet; he fights a duel with complete carelessness, firing above his opponent's head or into the bushes; he half joins the revolutionary movement, but then withdraws; he preaches Christ to Shatov at the same time that he poisons the heart of Kirillov; he makes public his absurd marriage, and then connives at the murder of his wife; he accepts for a night the impetuous invitation of Lizaveta, a high-born, idealistic, beautiful and love-crazed woman, ruins her and then tells her the next morning that he didn't love her after all. At the end, he hangs himself, in order to "brush" himself "off the earth like a nasty insect,"[1] as he puts it.

The second plot concerns Pyotr Verkhovensky, the demonic, unprincipled, clever and calculating organizer of the revolutionary movement. Amazingly enough, Verkhovensky, the great disciple of leveling, raises one of his fellowmen to a pedestal, and worships before it. The man thus idolized is Stavroguin. Verkhovensky thinks the enlistment of Stavroguin to be utterly essential to the success of his movement, but there is besides a suggestion of an unholy passion for him. Stavroguin hesitates, but finally spurns the movement.

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1. Dostoevsky: The Possessed, p. 615.

A galaxy of other characters appear. Kirillov, "the god-tortured semi-madman,"[1] certainly "one of the most remarkable characters of Dostoevsky's world,"[2] reasons that God does not exist, and that therefore man is God. He follows this deduction with the insane logic that if a man will but make the supreme assertion of self-will, namely, suicide, for the deliberate purpose of freeing his fellow-men from the fear of death, he will constitute a new Christ, and all men will be reborn into a golden age. True to his incredible logic, and willing to be this neo-Messiah, he finally blows his brains out. Mirsky, after listing Stavroguin, Pyotr Verkhovensky, and Kirillov, says, "These three figures are enough to indicate in their maker a creative force in which he has had no human rivals."[3]

Shatov is an intellectual rustic who joins the movement, and then, after finding God, tries to withdraw. He is murdered by the revolutionary clique as a traitor.

Stepan Verkhovensky, the father of Pyotr, is a mild liberal of the former generation, "a sniveling failure, idealistic and bombastic."[4]

Almost the entire action takes place in a small provincial town, where Varvara Petrovna, the mother of

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 187.
2. Troyat, op. cit., p. 357.
3. Mirsky, op. cit., p. 357.
4. Troyat, op. cit., p. 359.

Stavroguin, and the benefactress of Stepan Verkhovensky, is the reigning aristocrat. Onto this stage comes the young Verkhovensky. He organizes a group of five, successfully carries out a bewildering multiplicity of intrigues, pursues Stavroguin, arranges for the murder of Stavroguin's wife, encourages Lizaveta to keep her tryst with him, and tries to cement his organization with the blood of Shatov, feeling that the terror and guilt inspired by their connivance in this murder will prevent them from ever trying to break away. Kirillov, the suicide-crazy atheist, consents to assume responsibility in his suicide note for the murder of Shatov. His work in the town apparently accomplished, Verkhovensky sets off in pursuit of Stavroguin. The book ends on the sombre note of the suicide of the latter.

The dying Stepan Verkhovensky, in the closing pages of the book, utters its obvious message. He asks for the story of the Gadarene demoniac and the swine to be read to him. As the reading is finished, he says in great excitement:

> "An idea has occurred to me . . . You see, that's exactly like our Russia, those devils that come out of the sick man and enter into the swine. They are all the sores . . . all the impurities, all the devils great and small that have multiplied in that great invalid, our beloved Russia, in the course of ages and ages . . . But a great . . . Will will encompass it from on high . . . and all those devils will come forth . . . and will beg of themselves to enter into swine; and indeed maybe they have entered

> into them already . . . But the sick man will be healed and 'will sit at the feet of Jesus' and all will look upon him with astonishment." 1

Dealing as it does with the clash in Kirillov between the God-Man and the Man-God, with the terrible passivity of the soul of Stavroguin, and with the problem of the Christian social order, the book is rich in Christian significance.

For all its power of character portrayal and Christian significance, it is too sprawling and loosely-organized. Strakhov wrote to Dostoevsky in regard to The Possessed:

> "In richness and diversity of ideas, you are manifestly the first writer of Russia. Compared to you, even Tolstoy is monotonous . . . And yet you overcomplicate your works. If the fabric of your novels were simpler, their effect would be doubly powerful." 2

Dostoevsky likely recognized the validity of this criticism. On one occasion he stated:

> "With me, several separate novels are compressed into one, which as a result lacks harmony and measure . . . The power of inspiration is always more intense than the means of expression." 3

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1. Dostoevsky, The Possessed, p. 596.
2. Troyat, op. cit., p. 361.
3. Ibid., pp. 361-362.

2. Its Presentation of Christian Truth.

a. In Relation to the Freedom of the Will as Seen in Connection with Kirillov.

Kirillov, "the god-tortured semi-madman,"[1] is truly "a promethean rebel."[2] As we have already noticed, he --

> "reasons that God does not exist, and that therefore man is God. He follows this deduction with the insane logic that if a man will but make the supreme assertion of self-will, namely suicide, for the deliberate purpose of freeing his fellowman from the fear of death, he will constitute a new Christ, and all men will be reborn into a golden age." 3

He is a fellow-traveller with Pyotr Verkhovensky but possesses his own intensely original brand of nihilism. His is a Nietzschean rebellion raised to its highest degree. The scene where Kirillov finally carries out his purpose and shoots himself is one of stark power.

b. In Relation to the Social Order.

Dostoevsky's treatment of the subject of the social order in The Possessed is both negative and positive, but more the former than the latter. That is to say, he emphasizes through his revolutionary characters

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 187.
2. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 301.
3. Ante, p. 70.

a picture of the new and godless social order that they are envisioning.

It was the conviction of the novelist that while social reform was necessary, nothing but catastrophe could result from placing social power in the hands of anti-theistic revolutionaries.

> " . . . in spite of his insistence on the urgent need of social improvements, he was the greatest enemy of the coming Revolution . . . The reason for his opposition was his belief that the movement for social reform was inspired and controlled by men who were rebels against God, and who therefore, far from leading men into the Promised Land, would drag them into a state of slavery and oppression." 1

Joseph Hromadka, the Eastern European Protestant theologian (and authority on Dostoevsky), writes:

> "In the seventies of the nineteenth century, a dreadful premonition tormented Russia's most versatile genius, F.M. Dostoevski, that the very foundation of modern European civilization was shaken and an unfathomable catastrophe and chaos were approaching." 2

This catastrophe that he envisioned was to be no mere change of dynasties. It was to be the eroding away of the invisible but vital moral pillars of civilization itself. In The Possessed, as we have noted, he describes the social order that would be the product of the godless revolution-

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1. Zernov, op. cit., pp. 93-94.
2. Hromadka, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

ary movement. He does so as a means of exposing and discrediting this horror of human depravity. Gide says, "In The Possessed we find all the seeds of Bolshevism."[1]

Let us now see the broad outlines of his portrait of social nihilism.

Shigalov, a small-town intellectual who engages in revolutionist philosophy, awkwardly but with intense earnestness tries to present his social theories to his mirth-stricken fellows.

> "I am perplexed," he says, "by my own data and my conclusion is a direct contradiction of the original idea with which I start. Starting from unlimited freedom, I arrive at unlimited despotism. I will add, however, that there can be no solution of the social problem but mine." 2

Later, with the utmost fervor, Pyotr Verkhovensky, the diabolical socialist wonder-worker of the book, says, "Shigalov is a man of genius."[3]

When Stavroguin is about to desert the movement, Verkhovensky passionately sketches for him the nature of the new order:

> "Every member of the society spies on the others, and it's his duty to inform against them. Everyone

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1. Gide, op. cit., pp. 30-31.
2. Dostoevsky: The Possessed, p. 365.
3. Ibid., p. 378.

> belongs to all and all to everyone. All are slaves and equal in their slavery . . . The great thing . . . is equality . . . The level of education, science, and talents is lowered. A high level of education and science is only possible for great intellects, and they are not wanted . . . Great intellects cannot help being despots . . . They will be banished or put to death . . . Copernicus will have his eyes put out, Shakespeare will be stoned . . . The thirst for culture is an aristocratic thirst. The moment you have family ties or love you get the desire for property. We will destroy that desire; we'll make use of incredible corruption; we'll stifle every genius in its infancy. We'll reduce all to a common denominator! Complete equality! . . . Slaves must have directors. Absolute submission, absolute loss of individuality, but once in thirty years Shigalov would let them have a shock and they would all suddenly begin eating one another up, to a certain point, simply as a precaution against boredom!" [1]

Verkhovensky tells one of his deluded followers, "All . . . you have to do . . . is to bring about the downfall of everything -- both the government and moral standards."[2] He describes his movement as "a new religion."[3] He confides to Stavroguin his four techniques for cementing revolutionary underlings together, namely, leading them to spy on each other, giving them titles, stirring their sentiments, and making them ashamed of having their own opinions. He later uses a fifth technique, namely, binding the members of a circle in the mutual guilt of a desperate crime. To Stavroguin he cries:

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1. Dostoevsky: The Possessed, p. 379.
2. Ibid., p. 552.
3. Ibid., p. 369.

> "We will proclaim destruction . . . Why is it that idea has such a fascination ? . . . Well, and there will be an upheaval! There's going to be such an upset as the world has never seen before . . . Russia will be overwhelmed with darkness, the earth will weep for its old gods."[1]

In regard to the pertinence of all this to later Russian history, Berdyaev states:

> "Dostoievsky, with the foresight of genius, perceived the character and ideological bases of the Russian revolution that was in preparation. In the most exact sense, he was the prophet of the revolution: it took place in the way he said it would; he revealed its inner dialectic and gave it a form."[2]

One must marvel at the extraordinary psychological insight that made it possible for Dostoevsky to predict so accurately events that were still half a century beyond his time. Such an insight into the souls of men and the genii of movements is neither to be explained on the basis of divine revelation nor technical clairvoyance. It is to be explained only on the basis of sheer genius -- and genius eludes exact definition.

Dostoevsky was one of those profound individuals who thought, not by rational process, but by instinct. He was not deliberate, but intuitive. He thought not by lantern-light but by flashes of lightning.

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1. Dostoevsky: The Possessed.
2. Berdyaev, op. cit., p. 133.

E. The Brothers Karamazov

1. Introductory Survey of the Novel.

The Brothers Karamazov was Dostoyevsky's last and greatest work. It has evoked many superlatives. Yarmolinsky writes of it as "the greatest"[1] of his novels. Troyat describes it as "this tremendous book."[2] Arnold Bennett, the author of the foreword to Andre Gide's Dostoevsky, says:

> "I first met Gide in the immense field of Dostoevsky. He said, and I agreed, that the Brothers Karamazov was the greatest novel ever written. This was ages ago, and years have only confirmed us in the opinion."[3]

"The conscious intention that worked itself out in The Brothers Karamazov was to demonstrate in a mighty apologue the validity of the religious outlook."[4]

The book is a gigantic framework on which Dostoevsky hangs his final philosophy of life.

The novel swings about four main characters. These are: Fyodor Karamazov, the father, and his three sons, Dmitri, Ivan, and Alyosha. The elder Karamazov is a complete profligate. Sensuality is his entire apologetic for existence. He battles with his first wife, a proud, powerful woman, who bears Dmitri before she leaves him. He drives his

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1. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 373.
2. Troyat, op. cit., p. 413.
3. Gide, op. cit., p. 8.
4. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 390.

second wife, the mother of Ivan and Alyosha, to insanity and death, well-nigh forgets his children altogether, introduces a harem into his house, and plays the part of a neighborhood buffoon, even though he retains sufficient character to become a man of considerable wealth through expanding the large dowry given him by his first wife. Not the least of his crimes is that of cheating his eldest son, Dmitri, out of a large part of his rightful inheritance. Mirsky says, "No one has ever created anything approaching the impure grandeur of old Karamazov."[1]

Dmitri comes to manhood as a wild, undisciplined, and yet idealistic and generous youth. His outstanding characteristic is sensuality. In this respect he is truly a son of his father.

Ivan is brilliant and yet without a moral anchor. He is an idealistic free thinker. He cannot cast God out of his universe, but yet he resolutely refuses to yield himself to a theistic cosmogony.

Alyosha is a young monk at the nearby monastery. He is an improved version of Prince Myshkin, a "Christ-like" character with his feet on the ground. He comes to a strong belief in God, and his life beautifully mirrors that belief, but he is not an epileptic, or sexless, or awkward, or one who (to judge from external appearances) might be thought

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1. Mirsky, op. cit., p. 357.

of as being constitutionally predisposed to a life of self-abnegation. On the contrary, at the time the main story opens, he is

> "a well-grown, red-cheeked, clear-eyed lad of nineteen, radiant with health . . . very handsome, graceful, moderately tall . . . with . . . wide-set dark grey, shining eyes . . ."[1]

He comes to a mature faith, but not before he feels the pangs of sensual temptation and terrible doubt.

Ivan is a puzzle. Alyosha is a radiant, positive force. Berdyaev says of Dostoevsky,

> "It is worth noticing among his heroes that the 'sons of darkness' (Stavroguin, Versilov, Ivan Karamazov) are the ones whom others try to fathom, towards whom actions tend, while the 'light bearers' (Muishkin, Alyosha) themselves understand others and are the point of departure for action."[2]

A host of other characters appear. Smerdyakov, a bastard fourth son of old Karamazov, a cold, cunning, self-centered caricature of the worst side of Ivan, plays a leading role. Father Zossima, the great elder of the monastery, Alyosha's spiritual father, expresses a total Christian philosophy of life. Grushenka, a voluptuous courtesan who yet possesses a strong degree of idealism, and the young heiress, Katerina Ivanovna, the last of Dostoevsky's "proud women," complete the list of main secondary characters. In addition to these, there are literally scores of lesser figures.

As the main story of the novel gets under way, the

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1. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 20.
2. Berdyaev, op. cit., p. 44.

three sons have all returned to their home community and have established their own types of contact with their monstrous father. Ivan discusses questions of liberal thought with him and maintains an attitude of philosophical calm toward his parent's evil ways. Dmitri soon runs afoul of his father. They quarrel over the inheritance. Worse yet, they come to loggerheads over the same woman, Grushenka. The passionate Dmitri is attracted to her at first only by "the curve of her body," but later by her deeper qualities as well. Old Fyodor fairly wallows in sensual anticipation when he thinks of her. As for Grushenka, she merrily goes her way, coquettishly careless of the passions she has aroused. Alyosha divides his time between the monastery and his father's house. He is the only one of the sons who really has any devotion for the father. The other woman, Katerina ("Katya") Ivanovna, figures in the lives of both Dmitri and Ivan. Out of gratitude for a great favor done on her behalf by Dmitri and also because of her fervent desire to reform the generous but wilful youth, she has become his betrothed. However, though she is scarcely conscious of it, she is in love with Ivan, who, in turn, is deeply smitten by her.

The story develops rapidly. The hate between Dmitri and his father grows with terrible rapidity. The father invites Grushenka to come to him, offering her 3000 roubles if she will do so. This sum, incidentally, is the

absolutely minimum figure that Dmitri figures his father still owes to him. It seems to him that the evil old man is actually using his wrongfully-withheld inheritance as a lever to rob him also of his Grushenka. Beside himself, Dmitri threatens in the hearing of almost the whole town to kill his father. He takes to spying on his father's house continually, filled with dread lest Grushenka should actually go to the old man, and determined in that event violently to interpose himself. Alyosha is terribly alarmed, sensing that a tragedy is in the making. Ivan watches the developing tension between his father and eldest brother with arrogance and even a measure of satisfaction, and loftily condescends to discuss with Smerdyakov his theory that to the unbeliever "all is lawful." He really fears only that his father might consent to marry Grushenka, in which case the disposition of the old man's fortune would be radically altered (away from the sons and toward her). He is perfectly willing, he believes, to let the "one reptile . . . devour the other,"[1] as he puts it.

Alyosha exerts a radiant influence on all around him, but the radiance is well-nigh lost in the steadily-deepening gloom of the conflicting and interweaving passions and motivations of old Fyodor, Dmitri, Ivan, Grushenka, Katya, and Smerdyakov. He holds a long conversation with

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1. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 190.

Ivan in which the latter expresses fully and with tremendous power his negative philosophy of life. This presentation includes the famous "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" (of which more will be said in the next sector of the outline). At the end of it the shaken Alyosha replies only by softly kissing his brother on the lips.

Alyosha, upon leaving Ivan, goes to the monastery to be with his beloved elder, Zossima, who is obviously dying. The young novice fully shares the widely-held belief that the death of the saintly elder will be followed by some miraculous demonstration (such as, for example, the preservation of his body from decomposition). When, as expected, the death soon occurs, and then when contrary to all expectation, a shockingly premature decomposition takes place, the youth is crushed. He leaves the monastery for a short time and very nearly yields to the blandishments of Grushenka. Almost immediately, however, he successfully passes through his great spiritual crisis and gains forever a new and higher consciousness of God and his purposes.

In the meantime, Ivan is drawn into subtle and fatal conversation with Smerdyakov. This repulsive figure suggests that Ivan leave town temporarily and await developments, hinting ever so vaguely that a violent action will ensue in his absence. Scarcely knowing his own heart, Ivan complies.

Smerdyakov, believing the death of his father to be Ivan's greatest wish, then craftily murders the old man

in such a way as to throw the blame onto Dmitri. The latter is arrested and an insurmountable mountain of circumstantial evidence piles up against him. Ivan begins to search his soul. He seeks out Smerdyakov and is horrified to hear the depraved creature tell him that he, Ivan, who deliberately absented himself in order that his tool might do the terrible deed, is the real murderer. "Ivan is innocent before human justice, but nothing can justify himself in his own eyes. Because he negates God, he is faced with Smerdiakov. Instead of superman, he discovers the ape."[1]

Dostoevsky is here

> "driving home the same moral lesson that he had sought to point in Crime and Punishment: that the mind, having abandoned the religious attitude toward life, may not be able to return to that haven save by the road of crime."[2]

On the day of the trial, nearly crazed with an incipient attack of brain fever, Ivan rises in court and makes an incoherent confession. He is not believed. He is regarded as ill, and rushed out of the courtroom. The mills of justice grind on, and Dmitri is given a sentence of twenty years' penal servitude in Siberia.

At the end of the book Ivan lies near death, but hope is held for his recovery. Katya hovers over him, though in an excess of self-abnegation, she still loves Dmitri. The prisoner is plotting what apparently will be a success-

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1. Troyat, op. cit., pp. 403, 404.
2. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 388.

ful escape, after which he and Grushenka plan to go to America. Alyosha, though scarred by the recent events, continues to radiate the glory of Christ. At the extreme end, he is seen in the midst of a group of boys who are devotedly loyal to him. They are discussing the question of the death of one of their schoolmates, Ilusha. "Karamazov," cries the lad Kolya, "can it be true what's taught us in religion, that we shall all rise again from the dead and . . . see each other . . .?

"Certainly we shall all rise again,"[1] joyously replies the purest of the Karamazovs. Carried away by the fervor of the moment, the boys respond to the leadership of Kolya, and raise the shout, "Hurrah for Karamazov!"[2]

2. Its Presentation of Christian Truth.

a. In Relation to the Struggle between Good and Evil.

Dmitri, the sensualist, pours out his heart to his pure brother, Alyosha, near the beginning of the book. He climaxes one portion of his confession with the words: "Is there beauty in Sodom? Believe me, that for the immense mass of mankind beauty is found in Sodom. Did you know that secret? . . . God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man."[3]

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1. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 821.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp. 106, 107.

That closing sentence could be taken as symbolic of much of Dostoevsky's literature. There, indeed, "God and the devil are fighting" and "the battlefield is the heart of man." Of all Dostoevsky's great characters, only perhaps Pyotor Verkhovensy, Kirillov, Smerdyakov and old Karamazov are beyond the pale. In the heart of all the rest, God and the devil are fighting their cosmic battle. Zernov says of Dostoevsky's characters:

> "They are capable of heroism and self-sacrifice, and at the same time they can commit vile and cruel deeds. They stand on the edge of a precipice of crime and degradation, and yet they long for goodness and truth. Their whole life is a struggle; they are torn between their hopes and fears. Love and hate, a readiness to help and a desire to hurt constantly contest in them, so that no one can predict which tendency will eventually win. . . His novels show man in all his perplexity and contradictions and disclose a power of good and evil such as most men are seldom ready to acknowledge in themselves. . . He brought to an end that optimistic humanism which closed its eyes to the dark explosive elements of human nature. . . Dostoevsky's analysis of the conflict between good and evil led to the conclusion that both these forces originated outside human beings, that they were more powerful than man himself. Man was not the author either of good or evil, but he was the field of their never-ceasing struggle. . . In other words, he asserted the traditional Christian belief that man's place was between God and Satan."[1]

b. In Relation to the Freedom of the Will.

Old Karamazov, with scarcely a tremor in his hardened heart, says, "For I mean to go on in my sins to the end, let me tell you. For sin is sweet . . ."[2]

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1. Zernov, op. cit., pp. 87-89.
2. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 175.

Dmitri, in an anguished farewell to Alyosha, nearly prepared in his heart to kill his father if Grushenka goes to him, says:

> ". . . let me tell you that I've never done anything before . . . that can compare in baseness with the dishonour which I bear now at this very minute on my breast . . . which will come to pass, though I'm perfectly free to stop it. I can stop it or carry it through, note that. Well, let me tell you, I shall carry it through. I shan't stop it . . . I can still pull up; if I do. . . But I shan't pull up. I shall carry out my base plan. . . Goodbye. Don't pray for me."[1]

However, to Zossima is given the most sweeping statement in relation to free moral agency:

> "Oh, there are some who remain proud and fierce even in hell, in spite of their certain knowledge and contemplation of the absolute truth; there are some fearful ones who have given themselves over to Satan and his proud spirit entirely. For such, Hell is voluntary and ever consuming; they are tortured by their own choice."[2]

In regard to this sweeping human freedom, Zernov writes, "According to Dostoevsky, man was much more free than most men knew themselves to be; he was surprisingly, staggeringly free; he could resist God to the very end."[3] Hromadka writes on this point with tremendous force in Doom and Resurrection. He states that according to Dostoevsky:

> "sin and evil do not originate on the level of subrational nature; they come into existence in the kingdom of spirit, at the peak of our moral consciousness, at the point where men make accountable and responsible decisions between life and death, heaven and hell, God and Satan, truth and falsehood, at the moment when man deliberately defies the ultimate authority of divine truth."[4]

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1. Ibid., pp. 159, 160.
2. Ibid., p. 337.
3. Zernov, op. cit., p. 89.
4. Hromadka, op. cit., p. 35.

c. In Relation to the Nature of Belief and of Unbelief.

Belief, says Dostoevsky, does not come through miracles. The realist can always find good and sufficient reasons for disbelieving if he is determined not to believe. If such a person is confronted with a miracle before his very eyes he will either still disbelieve it or will say that it embodies a principle of nature hitherto unknown to him. To the realist, however, who has faith, miracles become easy.

> "Faith does not . . . spring from the miracle but the miracle from faith. If the realist once believes, then he is bound by his very realism to admit the miraculous also."[1]

Alyosha is "honest in nature, desiring the truth . . . seeking to serve it at once with all the strength of his soul . . ."[2] Belief for him was easy. He fulfilled the condition of John 7:17, and received the promise. Of course, this early faith of Alyosha received a dreadful shock when the odor of death began to emanate from the body of his beloved elder only a little more than twelve hours after his death, from the very body which he and his fellow-monks had thought incorruptible, from the body in regard to which he and his fellows had expected miracles of healing. He became acutely aware of the forcefulness of Ivan's defense of unbelief the day before. He asked an impious friend for

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1.Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 21.
2.Ibid., p. 21.

sausage and vodka (!), he allowed Grushenka to sit upon his lap, he tasted champagne, but soon his better nature reasserted itself and he returned to the monastery. It was late at night. He stepped into the elder's cell where, in accordance with ancient custom, Father Paissy was reading the New Testament aloud over the coffin of the dead man. The window was open and fresh air filled the room. Father Paissy was the only one there. In the stillness of the night, the words of Scripture rang out in the small room. Alyosha, no longer the weak lad of a few hours before;

> "began praying quietly. Fragments of thought floated through his soul, flashed like stars and went out again at once, to be succeeded by others. But there was reigning in his soul a sense of the wholeness of things . . ."[1]

Intermittently he prayed and listened to the voice of Father Paissy. Worn out, he began to doze. As from afar, he heard phrases and fragments of the passage describing the marriage in Cana. Alyosha dreamed he was there. Suddenly Zossima was there too, "joyful and laughing softly."[2] The walls receded and his great and beloved counselor came to him, and took him by the hand. "We are rejoicing,"[3] the old man said.

> "'We are drinking the new wine, the wine of new, great gladness. . . Begin your work, dear one, begin it, gentle one! . . . Do you see our Sun, do you see Him?'

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1. Ibid., p. 375.
2. Ibid., p. 377.
3. Ibid.

"'I am afraid,' whispered Alyosha.

"'Do not fear Him. He is terrible in His greatness, awful in His sublimity, but infinitely merciful. He has made Himself like unto us from love and rejoices with us. He is changing the water into wine that the gladness of the guests may not be cut short. He is expecting new guests . . .'"[1]

With a glowing heart, Alyosha woke. In silence he left the cell, the open window, and the "soft, solemn"[2] voice of the elder. Into the night he went.

"His soul, overflowing with rapture, yearned for freedom, space, openness. The vault of heaven, full of soft, shining stars, stretched vast and fathomless above him. The Milky Way ran in two pale streams from the zenith to the horizon. The fresh, motionless, still night enfolded the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the cathedral gleamed out against the sapphire sky. The gorgeous autumn flowers, in the beds round the house, were slumbering till morning. The silence of the earth seemed to melt into the mystery of the heavens. The mystery of earth was one with the mystery of the stars . . ."[3]

Alyosha gazed at the scene, then knelt, weeping, and kissed the earth.

"He longed to forgive everyone and for everything, and to beg forgiveness . . . he felt clearly and, as it were, tangibly, that something firm and unshakable as that vault of heaven had entered into his soul."[4]

Alyosha never wavered from the experience gained in that hour.

With Ivan it was different. He knew that there was a God. He had told Alyosha so in their long conversation

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1. Ibid., p. 377.
2. Ibid., pp. 377, 378.
3. Ibid., p. 378.

of the preceding day. He believed in "the eternal harmony"[1] which would someday come to pass. However, he threw the suffering of mankind, and especially of innocent children, in the face of God, and refused to accept harmony at such a price. He concluded his defense with the words, "It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket."[2]

d. In Relation to the Effects of Unbelief as Seen in the Life of Ivan.

Ivan refuses to yield to God. He insists upon an attitude of intellectual rebellion because of the problem of human suffering. When Alyosha remonstrates that he will not be able to stand such alienation from God, he sullenly replies that he will be able to stand it until he is thirty anyway. His rejection of God leads him to the deduction that to the unbeliever, "everything is lawful."[3] He says, "There is no virtue if there is no immortality."[4] He regards his father and Dmitri as two Kilkenny cats and is willing to see them destroy each other. He only fears that his father in his passion for Grushenka will consent to marry her, in which case his inheritance would be vitally

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1. Ibid., p. 241.
2. Ibid., p. 251.
3. Ibid., p. 271.
4. Ibid., p. 66.

affected. He develops a partly-subconscious desire for his father's death, though he is completely unwilling to consummate it himself. Smerdyakov, however, reads his mind like an open book, and with extreme subtlety and heavily-veiled language, suggests that he leave for several days and await developments. Ivan half guesses the significance of Smerdyakov's suggestion, and is angered, but finally, scarcely knowing his own mind, obeys and leaves in a state of nervous tension. On the train, he is sunk in meditation. "The train flew on, and only at daybreak, when he was approaching Moscow, he suddenly aroused himself . . .

"'I am a scoundrel,' he whispered . . ."[1]

After the murder of old Karamazov Ivan begins a terrible struggle with his mind and conscience. It is an exceedingly complex situation for in truth he is not fully conscious of an agreement between him and Smerdyakov. He queries Smerdyakov cautiously, and is actually satisfied that the lackey is innocent, and that his brother, Dmitri, has committed the crime. A second time his doubts drive him to the servant. This time the two men go deeper. Ivan leaves, convinced that Smerdyakov is the murderer and that he himself indirectly incited the servant to the deed. An outstanding piece of evidence regarding Dmitris' culpability is then thrust before him and again with tremendous relief he believes him-

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1. Ibid., p. 289.

self clear of moral responsibility. However, his twinges of conscience reappear and drive him on the eve of Dmitri's trial to a third and terrible conversation with Smerdyakov. "Nobody has described the torments of conscience with quite the power of Dostoevsky."[1] This time the two men hit bottom, and all is revealed. Ivan now knows that he himself is the murderer and the unhappy Smerdyakov simply his eager tool. ". . . the horrifying truth dawned upon him: it was his own criminal desire, which he believed safely locked within his breast, that had guided the hand of the murderer."[2] Dostoevsky here teaches:

> "that the will to crime is equivalent to, or perhaps more evil than, the act. This is the doctrine of Christian maximalism: 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer'"[3]

Berdyaev says:

> "Dostoevsky shows the travail of conscience working to the point where it convicts of a crime of which no law court would take cognizance."[4]

Very near to a fearful attack of brain fever, he wrestles with the problem of confession. In this dreadful frame of mind he receives a "visitation" from the Devil. The Devil engages in some light conversation, philosophizes on his own occasional interest in salvation and the necessity of his continued existence for the operation of a moral

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1. Berdyaev, op. cit., p. 102.
2. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 377.
3. Ibid.
4. Berdyaev, op. cit., p. 103.

universe, reminds Ivan of his (Ivan's) free-thought vaporings and receives a glass of tea a la Luther from the maddened Ivan. When Alyosha comes in, Ivan tells of the interview: "And he (italics his) is myself, Alyosha. All that's base in me, all that's mean and contemptible."[1] Yarmolinsky says, "The scene between Ivan and his devil presents a divided soul confronting with horror its own division."[2] The next day, as we have already noticed, the fevered, incoherent Ivan makes his confession at the trial, only to have it completely disregarded as the ranting utterance of a sick man. He is taken from the court and his rapidly developing illness takes its course.

In Ivan Karamazov we see clearly depicted the results of unbelief. Rejection of God is followed in his case by pessimism ("all I want is to live on to thirty, and then . . ."[3]); rejection of moral standards, a criminal desire and its unique projection into a criminal deed, the torments of an outraged conscience, a divided personality and a sickness that was largely induced by his mental strain.

e. In Relation to the Effects of Insincerity.

Near the beginning of the book, old Karamazov visits Father Zossima and falling suddenly on his knees

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1. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 693.
2. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 382.
3. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 271.

in buffoonery, cries, "Teacher! . . . What must I do to gain eternal life?"[1] The reply of Zossima is classic:

> "Above all, don't lie to yourself. The man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to such a pass that he cannot distinguish the truth within him, or around him, and so loses all respect for himself and for others. And having no respect he ceases to love, and in order to occupy and distract himself without love he gives way to passions and coarse pleasures, and sinks to bestiality in his vices, all from continual lying to other men and to himself."[2]

f. In Relation to the Social Order.

In The Brothers Karamazov, as in The Possessed, Dostoevsky devotes considerable space to the question of the social order. The whole issue of a true civilization versus a radical revolution is to him closely bound up with religious truth. Thus he editorialized at one point,

> ". . . socialism is not merely the labour question, it is before all things the atheistic question, the question of the form taken by atheism today, the question of the tower of Babel built without God, not to mount to Heaven from earth but to set up Heaven on earth."[3]

Father Zossima makes a similar utterance:

> "And we may ask the scornful themselves: if our hope is a dream, when will you build up your edifice and order things justly by your intellect alone, without Christ . . . Of a truth, they have more fantastic dreams than we. They aim at justice, but denying Christ, they will end by flooding the earth with blood. . ."[4]

Kolya, the schoolboy, all unwittingly expresses to Alyosha in terse form the psychological basis of social

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1. Ibid., p. 38.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp. 21, 22.
4. Ibid., p. 331.

nihilism:

> "Oh, Karamazov . . . I sometimes fancy all sorts of things, that everyone is laughing at me . . . and then I feel ready to overturn the whole order of things."[1]

However, it is in the famous "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" that Dostoevsky in The Brothers Karamazov deals at greatest length with the question of the social order. This "Legend" is the climax of Ivan's long and extremely powerful defense of his unbelief. By implication, it completes his defense. Ivan states that he once developed an idea for a poem, but had not yet put it into poetic form. His recounting of the plot constitutes "The Legend." The scene is laid in Seville during the days of the Inquisition. Suddenly, in the form of a man, Jesus appears, moving among the people, winning them by his silent compassion and his occasional miracles. The "Grand Inquisitor," the cardinal in charge of the persecution, has him placed in prison. That night the Inquisitor, a wizened old man of ninety years, comes to the cell and queries the Christ. Receiving no answer, he begins a monologue. He upbraids Christ for having returned and promises to burn him at the stake on the morrow. He then accuses Christ of rejecting the three admonitions of "the wise and dread Spirit"[2] in the wilderness, of denying bread, an earthly kingdom, and the spectacularity of miracle. He contends that Christ made the way of salva-

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1. Ibid., p. 588.
2. Ibid., p. 258.

tion too difficult for all save the very strong. We have corrected your mistake, he continues. We give the people bread, we have an earthly kingdom, and we rely upon miracles to hold the credulous. You left men too free. With so much freedom, they were unhappy. We have corrected this. We now hold men in submission and they are happy. They do what we tell them. We are not too hard on them, and even allow a measure of sin to their weak natures. "Why hast Thou come now to hinder us?"[1] It finally develops that the old man does not believe in God at all and is simply participating cynically in a gigantic hypocrisy, pretending to believe, but actually using the name of God only as a device of social control. During the entire interview Christ says never a word.

> "When the Inquisitor ceased speaking he waited sometime for his Prisoner to answer him. His silence weighed down upon him. He saw that the Prisoner had listened intently all the time, looking gently in his face and evidently not wishing to reply. The old man longed for Him to say something, however bitter and terrible. But He suddenly approached the old man in silence and softly kissed him on his bloodless aged lips. That was all his answer. The old man shuddered. His lips moved. He went to the door, opened it, and said to Him: 'Go, and come no more . . . come not at all, never, never!' And he let Him into the dark alleys of the town. The Prisoner went away."[2]

Ivan, of course, aligns himself with the Grand Inquisitor, for like the old cardinal, he recognizes the existence of God, and simply proceeds apart from Him. "The Legend" is a

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1. Ibid., p. 264.
2. Ibid., p. 270.

polemic against both Roman Catholicism and godless socialism. To Dostoevsky, the two are terribly similar. Both are totalitarian. Both wish to build an earthly kingdom.

> "Dostoievsky often refers to the bond that he thought he had detected between socialism and Catholicism, socialism being to him nothing but a secularized Catholicism. That is why the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor was written against both . . . though more against socialism, Catholicism appearing only in an exterior form."[1]

Truth and art are conjoined in a superlative way in "The Legend." "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor is the high point of Dostoevsky's work and the crown of his dialectic."[2]

Dostoevsky also approaches the problem of the social order in a positive (though somewhat apocalyptic) way in The Brothers Karamazov. This is done through Zossima. In referring to the monks he says:

> "They keep the image of Christ fair and undefiled, in the purity of God's truth, from the times of the Fathers of old, the Apostles and the martyrs. And when the time comes they will show it to the tottering creeds of the world. . . That star will rise out of the East."[3]

Again Zossima says:

> "And can it be a dream that in the end man will find his joy only in deeds of light and mercy and not in cruel pleasures as now. . . I firmly believe that it is not and that the time is at hand. . . I believe that with Christ's help we shall accomplish this great thing."[4]

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1. Berdyaev, op. cit., pp. 144, 145.
2. Ibid., p. 188.
3. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 325.
4. Ibid., p. 330.

g. In Relation to Christ.

Here we must refer briefly again to that part of Alyosha's great spiritual crisis where he feels his departed elder to be speaking to him. Zossima says of Christ, "He is terrible in His greatness, awful in His sublimity, but infinitely merciful. He has made Himself like unto us from love and rejoices with us."[1]

Near the end of Ivan's attack on a moral order that allows innocent children to suffer, he says, "Is there in the whole world a being who would have right to forgive and could forgive"[2] (these crimes against children)? A short time later, Ivan having spent himself, Alyosha speaks.

> "'Brother,' said Alyosha suddenly, with flashing eyes, 'you said just now, is there a being in the whole world who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? But there is a Being and He can forgive everything, all and for all, because He gave His innocent blood for all and everything. You have forgotten Him, and on Him is built the edifice, and it is to Him they cry aloud: "Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy Ways are revealed!"'"[3]

Surely, if there were only one such passage in all Dostoevsky, it would be worth reading his entire works to gain one such nugget!

However, it is to "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" that we must turn to find the novelist's greatest depiction of Christ. The very power of the scene lies in the kindly but unbroken silence of Christ. Once again the Son of Man

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1. Ibid., pp. 377, 378.
2. Ibid., p. 251.
3. Ibid., p. 252.

is before a Pilate. Once again "he opened not his mouth."[1] Berdyaev calls "The Legend" an "extremely powerful vindication of Christ."[2] Zernov goes still further. He writes:

> "The world's literature does not possess any picture of Christ comparable in its power to that given by Dostoevsky in The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor. The most remarkable feature of this legend is Christ's complete silence; throughout the whole scene He does not say a single word. It is only the Grand Inquisitor who argues, who tries to prove his case, who hates, fears and admires. Christ stands in front of him, subdued and yet triumphant, understanding all, forgiving all and yet pronouncing His final judgment."[3]

h. In Relation to Hatred.

Dostoevsky was well aware of the Cain-Abel and Amnon-Tamar psychology of hatred where the evil man hates the good man and where a man who has wronged another hates his victim simply because of his own wrong action. An illustration of the former type of hatred is given by Father Zossima. The elder tells how in his youth he encouraged a murderer to confess his crime and gain peace. The criminal battled with his conscience for a long time. Finally, after making a clean breast of his crime, he told Zossima that at one moment he had very nearly murdered him. Said the murderer: "I hated you as though . . . you were to blame for everything . . . I . . . longed to avenge myself on you . . ."[4]

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1. Isaiah liii, vii.
2. Berdyaev, op. cit., p. 188.
3. Zernov, op. cit., p. 108.
4. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Brothers Karamazov, p. 324.

An illustration of the Amnon-Tamar type is given with terrible force in connection with old Karamazov. The author tells us that when on one occasion the old ruin was asked why he hated a certain individual, he answered "with his shameless impudence: 'I'll tell you. He has done me no harm. But I played him a dirty trick, and ever since I have hated him.'"[1]

i. In Relation to the Scriptures.

Father Zossima speaks in magnificent terms of the Bible. He says of it:

> "Good heavens, what a book it is, and what lessons there are in it! What a book the Bible is, what a miracle, what strength is given with it to man. It is like a mould cast of the world and man and human nature, everything is there, and a law for everything for all the ages."[2]

He states that the priest should gather the people around them and read from the Scriptures:

> "Let him open that book and begin reading it without grand words or superciliousness, without condescension to them, but gently and kindly, being glad that he is reading to them and that they are listening with attention, loving the words himself, only stopping from time to time to explain words that are not understood by the peasants."[3]

He further says that if the priest is faithful in thus ministering with the Word, his people "will of their own accord help him in his fields and in his house, and will treat

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1. Ibid., p. 84.
2. Ibid., p. 300.
3. Ibid., pp. 301, 302.

him with more respect than before . . ."[1]

j. In Relation to Immortality.

Zossima had not the least fear of death. On the contrary, he looked forward to the life beyond with a quiver of anticipation. "My life is ending," he tells his devoted circle at the monastery, "I know that well, but every day that is left me I feel how my earthly life is in touch with a new, infinite, unknown, but approaching life, the nearness of which sets . . . my mind glowing and my heart weeping with joy."[2] When the end came for the venerable elder, he "quietly and joyfully gave up his soul to God."[3] The book closes on the triumphant note of immortality. "'Karamazov,' cried Kolya, 'can it be true . . . that we shall all rise again from the dead and shall live and see each other again . . .?'

"'Certainly we shall arise again, certainly we shall see each other and shall tell each other with joy and gladness all that has happened!' Alyosha answered . . .'"[4]

F. Conclusion

Let us now enquire into both the general techniques

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1. Ibid., p. 303.
2. Ibid., p. 301.
3. Ibid., p. 338.
4. Ibid., p. 821.

of the novelist and those that especially concern his presentation of Christian truth.

One can list at least six general techniques of Dostoevsky. First, he relies heavily upon character portrayal. This is his great forte. His characters seem to fairly walk out of the pages into the living-room of the reader. What a gallery they make! There is Raskolnikov, the sensitive, brooding, would-be Napoleon; Sonya, the pure prostitute; Porfiry Petrovitch, the crafty, profound police investigator; Nastasya Filippovna, the lovely, gifted, but perpetually vacillating wronged woman; Prince Myshkin, the meek, openhearted light-bearer; Aglaia Epanchin, the virginal, headstrong beauty; Stavroguin, the cold experimenter; Kirillov, the half-mad atheist; Pyotr Verkhovensky, the demonic organizer; old Karamazov, the tower of sensuality; Ivan, the gifted, arrogant unbeliever; Father Zossima, the saintly, venerable elder; and Alyosha, the pure in heart--all these and hundreds besides hang on the walls of Dostoevsky's literary gallery.

Second, he is a master at creating suspense. The reader cannot decide at mid-passage what the conclusion will be. One frequently realizes that several of the characters are withholding vital information. The reader can only go on and wait for its explosive presentation. Mirsky says,

> "His novels, however charged they may be with ideas and philosophy, are in substance novels of mystery and suspense . . . The atmosphere of tension to bursting

point is arrived at by a series of . . . devices."[1]
One of these devices is the omission in The Idiot of all direct reference to a period of six months that lies between the first and second parts of the novel. The reader learns of this period only by subsequent references to it.

Third, he compresses all his character-portrayal and action into exceedingly brief periods of time. For example, the first 172 pages of The Idiot deal with a period of only approximately eighteen hours. In this short length of time, practically all of the characters are introduced and the action builds up to an initial climax. Nor is this an isolated illustration. Zernov says of Dostoevsky's characters in relation to this chronological compression:

> "One can see . . . that their problems and struggle are typical of those which beset all human beings, that the impression of unreality first produced is due to the concentration in a short space of time, of . . . conflict which is usually spread over many years in the life of other people."[2]

Fourth, he uses plots of extraordinary complexity. Each of his four great novels is a stage of tremendous size with many characters and frequent scene-shifting.

Fifth, he frequently puts great truths into the mouths of fools, madmen, and drunkards. For example, in The Possessed, an insane girl says of an aristocratic gathering at which by a combination of circumstances she had happened

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1. Mirsky, op. cit., p. 355.
2. Zernov, op. cit., p. 88.

to be present, "They meet together, and they don't know how to laugh from their hearts."[1] Gide says, "It often happens that his most valuable and daring ideas are attributed to subordinate characters."[2]

Sixth, he often piles his characters in great numbers into a drawing-room, or a verandah, or a public meeting. One can then expect anything to happen.

One can list at least five techniques that especially concern his presentation of Christian truth. First, he identifies his characters with ideas. Mirsky says:

> "His characters are at once saturated with metaphysical significance and symbolism, and intensely individual. Dostoyevsky is as great a master as Tolstoy in giving individuality to the people of his creation. But the nature of this individuality is different: Tolstoy's characters are faces, flesh and blood, men and women of our acquaintance. . . Dostoyevsky's are souls, spirits."[3]

Second, he mirrors his own spiritual struggles. "He dealt in spiritual essences, in emanations of his own infinitely fertile spiritual experience."[4]

Third, he simultaneously develops his plots on two different levels. The lower level is that of sensational events, mystery and intrigue. In each of the four novels dealt with in this thesis, there is at least one murder or suicide. In The Possessed, there are so many that one almost begins to feel that he has stumbled by accident into

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1. Fyodor Dostoevsky: The Possessed, p. 249.
2. Gide, op. cit., p. 92.
3. Mirsky, op. cit., p. 356.
4. Ibid.

a Shakespearian tragedy. Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov can be read simply as detective novels. The preliminary investigation and the trial in the latter run to a total of 164 pages. The upper level is that of religious issues that are being fought out in the lives of his characters. Mirsky says: "This combination of the ideological and sensational elements is, from a literary point of view, the most striking feature of Dosteyevsky's 'developed manner.'"[1]

Fourth, he traces the laws of spiritual cause and effect in relation to the human personality. This is seen especially in Raskolnikov, Nastasya Filippovna, Ivan and Alyosha.

Fifth, he at times blends doctrine and art into magnificent harmonies. "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" is perhaps the greatest illustration of this, but there are others. For example, one can point to the terrible closing chapter in relation to Nastasya Filippovna, to the termination of the great spiritual crisis of Alyosha, to the scene where Ivan is confronted by the Devil, and to the closing scene of The Brothers Karamazov with its stress on the resurrection.

In chapter two, we have considered the complexity of Dostoevsky, have dealt with each of his four main novels both in terms of a preliminary survey and in terms of a consideration of the Christian truth presented therein,

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1. Ibid., p. 355.

and have noted the techniques of the author.

SUMMARY

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

The problem here under consideration is one of importance in view of the popularity of the novel form, and the possibility of using it as a medium for the presentation of Christian truth. Because of the stress that the novel places upon depicting life, character, and action, and the relevance of these to the vital, personal, practical interests of Christianity, we can substitute for the word "possibility" the stronger word potentialities. The novel, we may say, has great potentialities as a vehicle for the presentation of Christian truth.

Dostoevsky was born in St. Petersburg in 1821. At the age of sixteen, he was sent to a military school by his father. The young lad disliked his studies, but persevered and ultimately gained a commission. This he soon resigned in favor of literary work. His first novel, Poor Folk, was a success, but the following one, The Double, was snubbed by the critics. In the meantime, he became a member of a rather mild revolutionary group. In 1849 he was arrested, and after several months' imprisonment, sentenced to death. At the last minute, his sentence was commuted to four years of penal servitude in Siberia.

In the fetid barracks of his Siberian prison,

though surrounded by filth and brutality, he made a tremendous triple discovery, Russia, the people, and the gospel. After his release from prison, he served as an infantryman in the Russian army in Siberia. During this time, he married the widow of an officer. Meanwhile, strings were being pulled in his behalf by high officials, and in 1859 he was allowed to return to St. Petersburg.

The decade that followed was one of contrasting lights and shadows. During this time he ran afoul of government censorship, became saddled with debt, took a mistress, gambled, became a widower, remarried, spent a voluntary four-year exile in Western Europe because of the pressure of his Russian debts, and wrote Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, The Possessed and other works.

In 1871 he and his loyal second wife returned to Russia and began what might be called "The Closing Years of Peace." During this time, he edited a Journal, wrote The Brothers Karamazov, and attained increasing fame as a great Russian teacher.

The question of his religious experience is a fascinating one. It is very obvious that he was long burdened by doubts and tormented by passion, but it seems just as certain that he finally came to a definite faith, unless we define the word "faith" apart from the Eastern Orthodox context of that word. The circumstances surrounding the writing of The Brothers Karamazov, and the magnificent

content of that book serve as indications that he finally arrived at such a haven of faith.

He passed away on January 28, 1881, after a short illness.

A very definite relationship exists between the life and the novels. His poverty, gambling, epilepsy, prison experiences, political intrigue and spiritual struggles, along with still other autobiographical factors, are reflected in his written works.

Crime and Punishment, the first of his great novels, with its stress on the psychological repercussions of a crime and the first stages of the spiritual rehabilitation of the criminal, is rich in Christian significance in terms of the effects of sin, the decisive position of the human will, confession, and cross-bearing.

The Idiot, the second of the major novels, is an abortive attempt to present a Christlike character. Prince Myshkin, "the idiot", is meek, openhearted and a genuine light-bearer, but is epileptic and virtually sexless. His physical passivity is a contributing factor to the doom that finally overtakes him and the two women that he loves. It is not too much to say that instead of conquering the world, he is, himself, in the end conquered by the world. Apart from Myshkin, however, the books present a moving and significant analysis of the effects of sin in the life of Nastasya Filippovna, one of the two women who figured in

the life of the Prince.

The Possessed, the third of the four, constitutes a literary blast at the godless socialism that was gaining a foothold in Russia in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It presents Christian truth through its treatment of the social order and the freedom of the will. The question of the freedom of the will is dealt with through a peripheral character, Kirillov.

The Brothers Karamazov, the last of the four main novels, is a gigantic framework on which the author hangs his religious philosophy. The story centers around old Fyodor Karamazov, a massively evil old sensualist, and his three sons, Dimitri, Ivan, and Alyosha. Dimitri is a sensualist who struggles with his idealistic better self. Ivan is an intellectual rebel who admits the existence of God and the ultimate divine harmony, but who refuses to accept personally a God who allows little children to suffer. Alyosha is a light-bearer, a virile young man, who comes through crisis to a mature faith. The novel presents Christian truth in terms of the struggle between good and evil, the freedom of the will, the nature of belief and unbelief, the effects of unbelief (as seen in the life of Ivan), the effects of insincerity (as seen in old Karamazov), the social order, the Christ, hatred, the Scriptures and immortality.

Dostoevsky uses the general techniques of

character portrayal, suspense, compression of events, complex plot construction, frequent reliance upon lowly characters for the utterance of great truths, and the dramatic piling - up of many persons into single scenes.

He also uses a number of techniques that especially concern his presentation of Christian truth. These are: an identification of his characters with ideas, a mirroring of his own spiritual struggles, a simultaneous development of plots on two different levels, a tracing of the laws of spiritual cause and effect, and a superb blending of doctrine and art.

The novels of Dostoevsky truly demonstrate the potentialities of the novel form for the presentation of Christian truth.

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