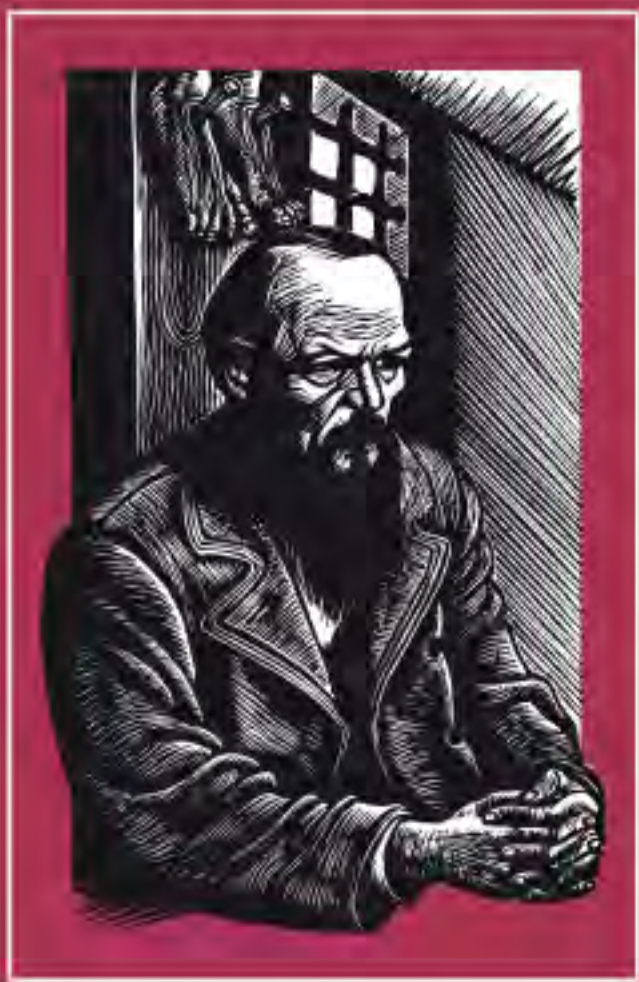


THE GOSPEL IN DOSTOYEVSKY



ILLUSTRATED BY FRITZ EICHENBERG

The Gospel in Dostoyevsky
SELECTIONS FROM HIS WORKS

A WORD FROM

J.I. PACKER

FOREWORD BY

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A Word from J. I. Packer

DOSTOYEVSKY IS TO ME both the greatest novelist, as such, and the greatest Christian storyteller, in particular, of all time. His plots and characters pinpoint the sublimity, perversity, meanness, and misery of fallen human adulthood in an archetypal way matched only by Aeschylus and Shakespeare, while his dramatic vision of God's amazing grace and of the agonies, Christ's and ours, that accompany salvation, has a range and depth that only Dante and Bunyan come anywhere near. Dostoyevsky's immediate frame of reference is Eastern Orthodoxy and the cultural turmoil of nineteenth-century Russia, but his constant theme is the nightmare quality of unredeemed existence and the heartbreaking glory of the incarnation, whereby all human hurts came to find their place in the living and dying of Christ the risen Redeemer. In the passages selected here, a supersensitive giant of the imagination projects a uniquely poignant vision of the plight of man and the power of God. If it makes you weep and worship, you will be the better for it. If it does not, that will show that you have not yet seen what you are looking at, and you will be wise to read the book again.

REGENT COLLEGE, VANCOUVER
14 MARCH 1987

Foreword

LIKE SO MANY OF my generation, I first read Dostoyevsky's novel, *Crime and Punishment*, when I was very young. I read it like a thriller, with mounting excitement. Later, when I came to read Dostoyevsky's other works, especially his great masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov*, I realized that he was not just a writer with a superlative gift for storytelling, but that he had a special insight into what life is about, into man's relationship with his Creator, making him a prophetic voice looking into and illumining the future. I came to see that the essential theme of all his writing is Good and Evil, the two points round which the drama of our mortal existence is enacted.

Dostoyevsky was a God-possessed man if ever there was one, as is clear in everything he wrote and in every character he created. All his life he was questing for God, and found Him only at the end of his days after passing through what he called "the hell-fire of doubt." Freedom to choose between Good and Evil he saw as the very essence of earthly existence. "Accept suffering and be redeemed by it"—this was Dostoyevsky's message to a world hurrying frenziedly in the opposite direction; seeking to abolish suffering and find happiness. Since Dostoyevsky's time, the world has known much trouble and found little happiness, and so may be the better disposed to heed his words.

Dostoyevsky, who normally stayed as far away as possible from museums and art galleries, paid a special visit to the Museum of Art in Basel to see a

painting, “Christ Taken Down from the Cross,” by Hans Holbein the Younger. He had heard about this picture, and what he had heard had greatly impressed him. His wife Anna in her Diary described Dostoyevsky’s reaction to seeing the original:

The painting overwhelmed Fyodor Mikhailovich, and he stopped in front of it as if stricken ... On his agitated face was the sort of frightened expression I had often noted during the first moments of an epileptic seizure. I quietly took my husband’s arm, led him to another room and made him sit down on a bench, expecting him to have a seizure any minute. Fortunately, it didn’t come. Little by little Fyodor Mikhailovich calmed down, and when we were leaving he insisted on going to take another look at the painting that had made such an impression on him.

Anna’s own reaction was one of revulsion. She writes of the painting that, contrary to tradition, Christ is depicted “with an emaciated body, the bones and ribs showing, the hands and feet pierced by wounds, swollen and very blue, as in a corpse that is beginning to rot. The face is agonized, and the eyes are half open, but unseeing and expressionless. The nose, mouth, and chin have turned blue.”

The reason that Anna was so horrified was that Holbein’s picture shows the body of Christ in a state of decomposition. On the other hand, as far as Dostoyevsky was concerned, the picture’s fascination was precisely that it *did* show Christ’s body decomposing. If His body was not subject to decay like other bodies, then the sacrifice on the Cross was quite meaningless; Christ had to be a man like other men in order to die for men. In other words, at the Incarnation, God did truly become a Man.

Dostoyevsky was a truly prophetic figure, plunging down frenziedly into his kingdom of hell on earth and arriving at Golgotha. He had a tremendous insight into the future and foresaw the world we have today. He also proclaimed the coming of a universal brotherhood brought about, not by

socialism and revolution, but by the full and perfect realization of Christian enlightenment.

In the serener circumstances of his last years, Dostoyevsky's essential love of life and joy in all God's creation found a surer expression than ever before. "Beauty", he makes Dmitri Karamazov say, "is not only a terrible thing, it is also a mysterious thing. There God and the Devil strive for mastery, and the battleground is the heart of men."

I continue to marvel at the chance—if chance it was—whereby the works of one of the greatest Christian writers of modern times should have continued to circulate in the world's first avowedly atheistic state—Dostoyevsky's devastatingly penetrating exposition of sin and suffering and redemption. Supposing one were asked to name a book calculated to give an unbeliever today a clear notion of what Christianity is about, could one hope to do much better than *The Brothers Karamazov*?

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

Introduction

THIS BOOK OF EXCERPTS from the writing of Dostoyevsky begins, very rightly, with “The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,” from *The Brothers Karamazov*. This is the high point of the stories he incorporates into his novels and essays. They are similar to the parables told by Jesus. They provide the reader with a practical illustration of a universal truth that can be described in no other way. “The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor” is a superb parable of human existence. It raises the great, or cursed, questions so characteristic of Dostoyevsky’s passion for the *living* Gospel. Only in the light of the Gospel is the complexity of human existence made understandable, purposeful, and hopeful. Without it there is no meaning to the daily round of human life.

One might expect the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor to be narrated by a believer. It is not. It is a prose poem composed by Ivan, the Karamazov brother who is the rationalist and the man of “the Euclidean mind.” He, like the believer, is passionately involved in the Gospel but in terms of its rejection, because it does not conform to his logic or his demand for “justice.” He cannot understand why the world is arranged as it is. The only logical thing left for him to do is to return his ticket to existence. But to whom is he to return it? “And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man, I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It’s not God that I don’t accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return him the ticket.” Thus the idea of God is essential even for someone who is trying passionately to deny Him.

Alyosha, the believing brother, understands this tormented position and classifies it as rebellion; the rebellion of the disbeliever, who must have “justice.” If he cannot have it, then he has no recourse but to destroy himself. In analyzing his brother’s position Alyosha is describing man after the fall, man in rebellion against God, man seeking to be as God. Thus sin is not passive but active; not simply a failure to obey God’s command, but a deliberate refusal to obey; indeed, an act of defiance.

Ivan, in telling “The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,” is thus telling his own story. He rebels against God’s ordering of creation and denies the effectiveness of Christ’s redemption. His Euclidean mind rejects the reality of God, man, and nature because it does not measure up to his formula of justice. Although he agonizes over the suffering of innocent children, he does so nevertheless, not from his love of them, but rather from his idea of its injustice. He confesses, “I never could understand how one can love one’s neighbors. It’s just one’s neighbors, to my mind, that one can’t love, though one might love people at a distance.” “One can love one’s neighbors in the abstract.” Such is the position of the Grand Inquisitor.

For love of humanity he has assumed the burden of its freedom, a freedom too great for the people to bear. In assuming this burden he has chosen the way of the three temptations, which Jesus rejected for the sake of freedom. Thus he tells Jesus, “At last we have completed that work in Thy name... Today people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet.”

The freedom to which the Grand Inquisitor refers is the freedom of illusion. At best it is an idea and no more than that. Thus he believes himself to be justified in giving the masses bread in exchange for its soul. The mystery of his ideology replaces the divine mystery. By means of it the people assume that the bondage enforced by “the sword of Caesar” is indeed the freedom they seek.

The tragic irony of Ivan’s situation is thus reflected in the image of the Grand Inquisitor. Both of them understand the mystery of the Gospel as the

mystery of divine/human freedom, yet they cannot accept it. They are in bondage. In rejecting the deliverance offered to them in the God-man they have chosen to be the man-God; the man who rules the Tower of Babel, or any tyranny in any time and in any place. It is on this note that the Legend ends. Jesus whom the Grand Inquisitor has condemned, kisses “his bloodless, aged lips.” “The kiss glows in his heart, but the old man adheres to his idea.” For the sake of his idea he condemns Jesus who is the Word become flesh. The passion of his Euclidean thinking leaves him with no alternative.

Dostoyevsky raises the question about the Gospel: What is it? The answer is that it is the good news of our deliverance. St. Paul’s great affirmation in Galatians 5:1 is the triumphant note of freedom achieved for us in and by Christ, “For freedom Christ set us free.” This is not just an idea invented by scholars. It is the costly action of God in His freedom. This freedom has awful consequences. We have the freedom to defy the living God who has created us. What we term the Fall is an act of freedom. It is a negative freedom, however; it is that of rebellion. This is our condition without God—rebels who are driven by pride to assume what they imagine to be the power of God over others. We claim the freedom to sin, but we are unwilling to assume its consequences. We turn to Satan for justification, as the Grand Inquisitor (or Ivan) did. He is their invention as the justifier of their rebellion. These are the Grand Inquisitor’s words: “The wise and dread spirit, the spirit of self-destruction and nonexistence, the great spirit talked with Thee [Jesus] in the wilderness.” For both him and Ivan the miracle is not our Lord’s rejection of the three temptations, but their own invention and preservation of them. They are “the whole future history of the world and of humanity.” They represent the choice of human pride, the original sin.

Although humankind has chosen to rebel against God, God has not rebelled against it and all its members. His love will not let them go. Makar presents this truth, “I’d be frightened to meet a truly godless man...I’ve never really met a man like that. What I have met were restless men, for that’s what

they should really be called.... They come from all classes, even the lowest... but it's all restlessness." This restlessness describes the situation of all who were called to be pilgrims on the way to the Eternal City but have lost their way because they have lost sight of their destination. They have, therefore, given away their inheritance and lost their destiny, like the Prodigal Son. God, however, is there! He has made us for Himself!

Dostoyevsky seems to be indicating that man without God is nothing. The background for his writing is that of nineteenth century secularism. The "Enlightenment" had surpassed the Reformation to affirm as truth the idea of a godless cosmos, in which the state is supreme and its subjects have lost the dignity of the divine image. Erich Fromm was correct in stating that the intellectuals got rid of God in the eighteenth century and of man in the nineteenth. Dostoyevsky reminds us, however, that God and man cannot be destroyed by this idea. Perhaps two of the darkest rebels are the old father Karamazov, who represents the collective sin of Russia, and Stavrogin in *The Possessed*, who is the second generation rebel and revolutionary. Like Lenin and his successors, Stavrogin had come to the position of assuming that without God all things such as terrorism and murder—are permissible. The Elder Zossima describes such a condition as hell; he reflects upon the question, "What is hell?" and answers it by replying that it is "the suffering of being unable to love." Such is the awful consequence of the freedom granted to us to negate God, and with Him our origin and destiny.

Creative freedom, on the other hand, is an act of Grace. The Gospel bears witness to the only One who was and is truly free. Like the pious people of the peasantry, Dostoyevsky saw the humiliation of God in Jesus, as it is described by St. Paul in Philippians 2:5-11, as the essence of the Gospel. This humiliation as the essence of the Gospel is, however, a phase of the divine exaltation in which we are included. In this respect the teaching of Irenaeus in the second century A.D. had a great deal of influence upon the spiritual life of the Russian Orthodox Church. His teaching is more timely than ever: namely,

God became man that man might become one with God.

In *Crime and Punishment* Dostoyevsky tells the story of Raskolnikov, who believes himself to be liberated from the old morality of Christian culture to the extent that he is free to murder a woman whom he presumes to be a useless member of society. His crime appears to be without purpose and without passion. He is one of those who prides himself upon his inability to love. Yet it is by the love of Sonia, a Russian version of Mary Magdalene, that he is claimed by Grace. He sees in her “a sort of insatiable compassion” which leads him to his first act of repentance. While still trying to believe in his freedom from God he turns to her, bends down, drops to the ground, and kisses her foot. This irrational act adds to his confusion to the extent that he tries to dismiss her as a “religious maniac.” Nevertheless, he asks her to read the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. This she does. In doing so she reads it in such a way that her reading of it is her great confession: “Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the son of God which should come into the world.” By her faith the power of Grace that brought Lazarus from the corruption of the grave is repeated in the experience of Raskolnikov. He has the assurance that by this Grace he will be forgiven at the Last Judgment. He is thus liberated from the bondage of sin, guilt, and fear.

As Sonia, the humiliated woman, is the agent of Raskolnikov’s redemption, so the humiliated people of Russia will be the agent of its deliverance from the consequences of the sin of the nineteenth century intellectuals. This is a prophecy that may well be in the process of being fulfilled at the moment. “But God will save Russia as He has saved her many times. Salvation will come from the people, from their faith and their weakness.” It is those who share in the fellowship of suffering that share in the liberating action of the living God. The eyes of their faith are opened by Grace so that they behold the mystery of God revealed in Christ’s agony on the Cross. They understand, as the intellectuals cannot, that their salvation is beyond rational knowledge. It is of faith, for faith is our response to God’s revelation in Christ.

At this point it may be well to think about Dostoyevskv's free characters. Three in particular are:

1. The underground man—or the equivalent of the ant who lives under the floorboards—is the man who dares to be free no matter how irrational such a claim may be. Despite the rational structuring of society and the attempted abolition of human freedom, he refuses to be a stop in the organ that can be pulled and pressed at the command of some superorganist. He is free to be absurd and to defy the system.
2. Prince Myshkin of *The Idiot* is the aristocrat who disregards the position granted to him by birth and wealth in order to take his place among the people in his freedom to be a fool in the eyes of his peers for Christ's sake. His identity is with the humiliated Christ, and as such he is called upon to engage in His acts of deliverance. In his love for Nastasya Filippovna he is moved to bring—or at least to make the attempt to bring—Christ's salvation to her, mad though she may be. In doing so he is reflecting the image of Christ—thus incurring the wrath of his critics who abuse and despise him and yet inwardly love him, even as the repentant rebel on the Cross turned to Jesus beseeching deliverance. In describing the witness of the Prince, Dostoyevsky seems to be drawing upon the image of the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 52:13—53:12, which in turn is similar to the great kenotic passage in Philippians 2; Prince Myshkin thus is free to suffer. This is the cross he has accepted.
3. Alyosha is the pilgrim, and disciple, who learns that by repentance we participate in the benefits of Christ's deliverance and are thus set free to love and to be responsible. Like Raskolnikov he is captured by Grace. It is not his doing nor even of his seeking. Salvation is a happening beyond the control of church or state. It is an ecstasy of response to the wind of God that blows where it wills.

The miracle of Grace in Alyosha's life is related to Christ's first miracle at the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee. By the narration of this miracle

Alyosha becomes aware that Christ visits people in their gladness to intensify their joy. Again, it is the humiliated who possess the gladness to respond ecstatically to the joy of Christ.

It is the Elder Zossima, who in reflecting the Grace of Jesus, leads Alyosha into His presence. By him he was called to participate in the joy of the celebration. Thus, in his dream, he perceives that the dead Elder Zossima is alive in the power of the resurrection. It is to this life eternal that he is invited as the Elder Zossima takes him by the hand to raise him from his knees. As he rises he hears the starets say, "We are drinking the new wine, the wine of new, great gladness."

Suddenly the mystery is revealed. His soul is filled to overflowing with rapture. In his ecstasy he throws himself down on the earth to kiss it and water it with his tears. By this unprecedented act "He had fallen on the earth a weak boy, but he rose up a resolute champion.... 'Someone visited my soul in that hour'." How similar this is to the humiliation and exaltation of Raskolnikov.

Alyosha not only waters the earth with his tears and loves the stars, he also assumes the responsibility of "all men's sins." By such an act of love he fulfills the purpose of his freedom and participates in God's continuing work of redemption. It is only by such love that he learns to "perceive the divine mystery in things." This exhortation by Zossima is a moving poem of agape. In such love we may understand better the beatitude of the meek inheriting the earth.

Alyosha is the Christian who, in his freedom, responds to the living Gospel. In responding he freely accepts responsibility for the sins and salvation of his fellow sinners. He loves *in* the love of Christ. By such love the condemnation of the ultimate judgment is overcome, and the mystery of the revelation is understood. Behind such a position we may note the good news of John 3:16: God loved, God gave His Son, God gives eternal life, God sets us free from the bondage of sin. Along with it is the testimony of St. John in the fourth chapter of his first letter: "God is love... There is no room for fear in love; perfect love banishes fear... We love because He loved us first." Dostoyevsky's love of the

FAITH IN GOD—MAN'S
VENTURE

The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor

This "prose poem" from The Brothers Karamazov is probably the climax of Dostoyevsky's religious confessions. It is recited by Ivan Karamazov, who refuses to recognize God although he admits God's existence.

HE CAME SOFTLY, UNOBSERVED, and yet, strange to say, everyone recognized Him. The people are irresistibly drawn to Him, they surround Him, they flock about Him, follow Him. He moves silently in their midst with a gentle smile of infinite compassion. The sun of love burns in His heart; light and power shine from His eyes; and their radiance, shed on the people, stirs their hearts with responsive love. He holds out His hands to them and blesses them and a healing virtue comes from contact with Him, even with His garments. An old man in the crowd, blind from childhood, cries out, 'O Lord, heal me and I shall see Thee!' and as it were, scales fall from his eyes and the blind man sees Him. The people weep and kiss the earth under His feet. Children throw flowers before Him, sing, and cry hosannah. 'It is He—it is He!' all repeat. 'It must be He, it can be no one but He!' He stops at the steps of the Seville cathedral at the moment when the weeping mourners are bringing in a little open white coffin. In it lies a child of seven, the only daughter of a prominent citizen. The dead child lies hidden in flowers. 'He will raise your child,' the crowd shouts to the weeping mother. The priest, coming to meet the coffin, looks perplexed and frowns, but the mother of the dead child throws herself at His feet with a wail. 'If it is You, raise my child!' she cries, holding out her

MAN'S REBELLION AGAINST GOD

Rebellion

In The Brothers Karamazov, "Rebellion" immediately precedes "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." Like this legend it is directed by Ivan to Alyosha Karamazov, his younger brother, who is a novice living in a monastery outside the city.

"I MUST MAKE YOU one confession," Ivan began. "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbors. It's just one's neighbors, to my mind, that one can't love, though one might love people at a distance. I once read somewhere of John the Merciful, a saint, that when a hungry, frozen beggar came to him, he took him into his bed, held him in his arms, and began breathing into his mouth, which was putrid and loathsome from some awful disease. I am convinced that he did that in self-laceration, in a self-laceration of falsity, for the sake of the charity imposed by duty, as a penance laid on him. A man must be hidden for anyone to love him, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone."

"Father Zossima has talked of that more than once," observed Alyosha. "He, too, said that the face of a man often hinders many people not practised in love from loving him. But yet there's a great deal of love in mankind, almost Christ-like Love. I know that myself, Ivan."

"Well, I know nothing of it so far, and can't understand it, and the innumerable mass of mankind are with me there. The question is whether that's due to men's bad qualities or whether it's inherent in their nature. To my thinking, Christ-like love for men is a miracle impossible on earth. He was

The Devil

This is a delirious dream or nightmare of Ivan Karamazov. It is probably unique in world literature as an attempt to portray how the uncontrolled ego of a conscious atheist expresses itself, an atheist who knows a great deal more about God than most believers. The dream has only an inner connection with the novel as a whole. Ivan is physically ill as well. His illness ("brain fever") was caused by outer circumstances, but its hallucinations come from the deepest emotional content of his subconscious.

Ivan had just had a bad inner shake-up after the onset of his illness. Smerdyakov, the servant and illegitimate son of Ivan's murdered father, had confessed to him that it was he who had murdered the older Karamazov, not Ivan's half-brother Dmitri, who was in prison for the crime. To prove the truth of his confession, Smerdyakov handed over to Ivan the 3000 rubles for the sake of which the murder had been committed. He went on to tell Ivan, that it was actually Ivan himself who had mainly incited him, Smerdyakov, to commit this crime. This he had done not only through his godless talking, his continual denial of God's existence; but even more, Smerdyakov had been firmly convinced after an exchange with Ivan before the murder that in committing it he would be acting completely according to Ivan's wishes. Ivan cannot possibly doubt the sincerity of these confessions. Accordingly, he suddenly sees himself as his father's murderer. To escape despair, he now needs God, whom he was unwilling to recognize before.

I AM NOT a doctor, but yet I feel that the moment has come when I must of necessity give the reader some account of the nature of Ivan's illness. Looking ahead, I can say at least one thing: he was at that moment on the very eve of an attack of brain fever. Though long affected by it, his health had offered a stub-

The Failure of Christendom

Toward the end of the novel The Idiot, Prince Myshkin is being introduced (to a party in high society at the home of General Epanchin) as the possible fiancé of the youngest Epanchin daughter, Aglaia. Unexpectedly, Myshkin hears of the conversion to Roman Catholicism of his guardian and protector, Nikolay Andreyevitch Pavlishtchev. Myshkin's outburst against Roman Catholicism comes as an embarrassment to the respectable gathering but is laughed off when he breaks an enormous china vase.

This passage reflects Prince Myshkin's strong passion for the soul and heart of Russia. Is his indignation not a reflection on the failure of the whole of Christendom after Constantine and the third century: "universal political supremacy" grasped by "the sword" supplanting faith, "the most holy" bartered for the most unholy. Dostoyevsky's Myshkin might be grieving for the original Church of Jesus Christ set right into this world to make it a place of justice and love, the Church of Jesus' own prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth...!"

"PAVLISHTCHEV WAS A CLEAR-HEADED man and a Christian, a genuine Christian," Myshkin brought out suddenly. "How could he have accepted a faith... that's unchristian? Catholicism is as good as an unchristian religion!" he added suddenly, looking about him with flashing eyes as though scanning the whole company.

"Come, that's too much!" muttered the old man, and he looked with surprise at General Epanchin.

"How do you mean Catholicism is an unchristian religion," said Ivan Petrovitch, turning round in his chair. "What is it then?"

ON THE WAY TO GOD

The Story of Marie

The story is told by Prince Myshkin in The Idiot. The prince tells it to his new acquaintances and distant relatives, the women of the Epanchin family, who are questioning him about his past. He has just returned to Russia on business after a long period of medical treatment in Switzerland under Professor Schneider, a specialist in illnesses such as Myshkin's. Schneider had taken over full responsibility for him after his benefactor Pavlishtche's death two years earlier. The story of the tragic Marie and the children reveals Myshkin's character — his love quietly accepts ridicule and the taunt of idiot.

VERY WELL," ADELAIDA INTERPOSED hurriedly again, "but if you are such an expert on faces, you certainly must have been in love...Tell us about it."

"I haven't been in love," answered Myshkin as gently and gravely as before. "I...have been happy in a different way."

"How? In what?"

"Very well, I'll tell you," said Myshkin, as though meditating profoundly.

"You are all looking at me with such curiosity," began Myshkin, "that if I didn't satisfy it you might be angry with me. No, I am joking," he added quickly, with a smile. "There were lots of children there, and I was always with the children, only with the children. They were the children of the village, a whole crowd of schoolchildren. It was not that I taught them. Oh, no, there was a schoolmaster for that — Jules Thibaut. Perhaps I did teach them too, but for the most part I was simply with them, and all those four years were spent in their company. I wanted nothing else. I used to tell them everything;

A Fool for Christ

In the same novel, The Idiot, "A Fool for Christ" describes Prince Myshkin's first meeting with Nastasya Filippovna. She arrives unexpectedly at the home of Ganya (Gavril Ardalionovitch), who has asked her to marry him. His motive is not love for her but of the money offered him by the wealthy landowner Totsky. Totsky wants to free himself of her, whom he had reared as an orphan and then had groomed to be his mistress. Ganya's family is opposed to the match because of her ill repute.

At the family gathering, among others, are Nina Alexandrovna, Ganya's mother; Varya, his sister (fiancée of Ptitsyn, the money lender); and Kolya, his younger brother. Ferdyshtchenko is a lodger in the house. The day is Nastasya Filippovna's birthday, and she has promised to announce her decision about the proposed marriage during the evening, at a party.

Rogozhin is a newly rich ruffian who is insanely in love with Nastasya Filippovna. He brings in a rowdy group of supporters, including Lebedyev.

Prince Myshkin has just moved into this house as another lodger.

MYSHKIN **CROSSED** THE DINING room into the hall on the way to his room. As he passed the front door, he heard and noticed someone outside making desperate efforts to ring the bell. But something seemed to have gone wrong with the bell; it moved a little without making a sound. Myshkin unbolted the door, opened it, and stepped back in amazement, startled. Nastasya Filippovna stood before him. He knew her at once from her photograph. There was a flash of annoyance in her eyes when she saw him. She walked quickly into the hall, shouldering him out of her way, and said angrily, flinging off

The Awakening of Lazarus

Raskolnikov, the main character of the novel Crime and Punishment, has murdered both an old woman who is a money-lender and a youthful relative of hers called Lizaveta, who had just happened to come in and who is mentioned several times. Raskolnikov committed the murder "to prove to himself that he was a man and not a louse." Now, right after the deed, his inner collapse begins. He admits that the act itself was wrong, even though he is still trying to persuade himself that it wouldn't have been wrong if only he had measured up to it. He intends to turn himself in and has basically done so already through careless remarks. But first he wants to assure himself of at least one sympathetic and forgiving soul, since he cannot bear the loneliness caused by his unconfessed deed.

Sonia Marmeladov, whom he then visits, had become a prostitute so as to be able to help her tubercular stepmother Katerina Ivanovna and Katerina's sick children. (All women's work in those days received extremely low pay.) Her father, formerly a minor official and also an incurable drunkard, had been run over and killed just the day before. Raskolnikov had once met this man in a low-class tavern or bar and after hearing from him the whole story of his family had then taken him home. Right after Marmeladov's death he had given the widow all the money he had.

RASKOLNIKOV WENT STRAIGHT TO the house on the canal bank where Sonia lived, It was an old green house of three stories. He found the porter and obtained from him vague directions as to the whereabouts of Kapernaumov, the tailor. Having found in the corner of the courtyard the entrance to the dark and narrow staircase, he mounted to the second floor and came out onto a gallery that ran round the whole second story over the yard. While he was

Hymn of the Men Underground

These words are spoken by Dmitri (Mitya) Karamazov who was unjustly accused of murdering his father and sentenced to twenty years of forced labor in Siberia. (More fully explained in the introductory paragraphs on page 31.) Precisely through this terrible fate he found the way back to God. He had never actually denied God; his sinful passions had only kept him far from Him. This passionate outburst is poured out to Dmitri's half-brother Alyosha (Alexey) when Alyosha visits Dimtri once more in prison just before he is deported to Siberia. Rakitin, the seminary student mentioned here, plays only the role of adversary in the novel; that is, an unscrupulous, career- and material-minded person.

DMITRI WENT UP TO Alyosha excitedly and kissed him. His eyes glowed.

“Rakitin wouldn’t understand it,” he began in a sort of exaltation, “but you, you’ll understand it all. That’s why I was thirsting for you. You see, there’s so much I’ve been wanting to tell you for ever so long here, within these peeling walls, but I haven’t said a word about what matters most; the moment never seems to have come. Now I can wait no longer. I must pour out my heart to you. Brother, these last two months I’ve found in myself a new man. A new man has risen up in me. He was hidden in me, but he would never have come to the surface if it hadn’t been for this blow from heaven. I am afraid! And what do I care if I spend twenty years in the mines, breaking out ore with a hammer? I am not a bit afraid of that—it’s something else I am afraid of now: that that new man may leave me. Even there in the mines, underground, I may find a human heart in another convict and murderer by my side, and I

Reprieve and Execution

These two extracts are also from The Idiot. "Reprieve" is a description by Prince Myshkin of the near execution of a political prisoner. Such a last-minute reprieve began Dostoyevsky's own ten-year period of imprisonment and exile with the drastic effect on his life described in the Introduction, page 17. "Execution" follows with an utter realism stemming from the inner experience of his own reprieve.

REPRIEVE

“**THERE MAY BE TWO** opinions about life in prison,” said Myshkin. “A man who spent twelve years in prison told me his story. He was one of the invalids in the care of my professor. He had fits; he was sometimes restless, wept, and even tried to kill himself. His life in prison had been a very sad one, I assure you, but not at all petty. Yet he had no friends but a spider and a tree that grew under his window... But I'd better tell you how I met another man last year. There was one very strange circumstance about it strange—because such things rarely happen. This man had once been led out with others to the scaffold, and a sentence of death was read over him. He was to be shot for a political offence. Twenty moments later a reprieve was read to them, and they were condemned to another punishment instead. Yet the interval between those two sentences, twenty minutes or at least a quarter of an hour, he passed in the fullest conviction that he would die in a few minutes.

“I was always eager to listen when he recalled his sensations at that time,

The Onion

In The Brothers Karamazov this little story is told by Grushenka to Alyosha, whom she had tried to seduce but who not only had resisted her but even respected her sincerely as his equal and thus brought about her conversion and spiritual self-examination. This is typical of how redemption comes about in Dostoyevsky.

Grushenka had been seduced as a young girl, abandoned, and then driven out of her parents' home. She lived in this town with her expenses paid by a rich old merchant whose mistress she had been. She had matured to rare beauty and from then on, until this experience with Alyosha, had sought to avenge herself at random on the whole world of men. The older Karamazov pursues her and so does Dmitri, who then succeeds just before his arrest in winning her sincere liking.

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a peasant woman, and a very wicked woman she was. And she died and did not leave a single good deed behind. The devils caught her and plunged her into the lake of fire. So her guardian angel stood and wondered what good deed of hers he could remember to tell to God. 'She once pulled up an onion in her garden,' said he, 'and gave it to a beggar woman.' And God answered: 'You take that onion then, hold it out to her in the lake, and let her take hold and be pulled out. And if you can pull her out of the lake, let her come to Paradise, but if the onion breaks, then the woman must stay where she is.' The angel ran to the woman and held out the onion to her: 'Come,' said he, 'catch hold and I'll pull you out,' And he began cautiously pulling her out. He had almost pulled her right out, when the other

The Last Judgment

This is a section of the description from Crime and Punishment of Raskolnikov's meeting with Semyon Zaharovitch Marmeladov, father of the prostitute Sonia. The place of these main characters in the story is given in the introductory paragraphs to the story "The Awakening of Lazarus."

MARMELADOV STOPPED AGAIN in violent excitement. At that moment a whole party of revelers already drunk came in from the street, and the sounds of a hired concertina and the cracked piping voice of a child of seven singing "The Homestead" were heard in the entry. The room was filled with noise. The tavern-keeper and the boys were busy with the newcomers. Marmeladov, paying no attention to the new arrivals, continued his story. He appeared by now to be extremely tipsy, but as he became more and more drunk, he became more and more talkative. The recollection of his recent success in getting his position back seemed to revive him and was reflected in a radiance on his face. Raskolnikov listened attentively.

"That was five weeks ago, sir. Yes...As soon as Katerina Ivanovna and Sonia heard of it, mercy on us, it was as though I stepped into the kingdom of Heaven, it used to be: "You can lie there like a beast"—nothing but abuse. Now they were walking on tiptoe, hushing the children. 'Semyon Zaharovitch is tired with his work at the office, he is resting, shh!' They made me coffee before I went to work and boiled cream for me! They began to get real cream for me, do you hear that? And how they managed to get together the money

The Crucifixion

Holbein's painting, "Christ Taken Down From the Cross," inspired this description taken from The Idiot. A copy of the painting hanging in Rogozhin's house is first mentioned in an exchange between him and Prince Myshkin over its effect on their faith. The impression the original made on Dostoyevsky's is more fully told in the Foreword.

The question of faith also ends this extract about the painting, a description taken out of a long statement written by Ippolit (the young consumptive protégé of Myshkin). He entitled his statement "A Necessary Explanation" and read it aloud to a gathering in Lebedyev's house just before making an unsuccessful attempt to shoot himself.

THE PICTURE DEPICTED CHRIST who has only just been taken down from the cross. I believe artists usually paint Christ, both on the cross and after He has been taken from the cross, still with extraordinary beauty of face. They strive to preserve that beauty even in His most terrible agonies. In Rogozhin's picture there's no trace of beauty. It is in every detail the corpse of a man who has endured infinite agony before the crucifixion; who has been wounded, tortured, beaten by the guards and the people when He carried the cross on His back and fell beneath its weight, and after that has undergone the agony of crucifixion, lasting for six hours at least (according to my reckoning). It's true it's the face of a man *only just* taken from the cross—that is to say, still bearing traces of warmth and life. Nothing is rigid in it yet, so that there's still a look of suffering in the face of the dead man, as though he were still feeling it (that has been very well caught by the artist). Yet the face has not been spared

From the Life of the Elder Zossima

These are episodes from The Brothers Karamazov, entirely independent and complete in themselves. Zossima is a very strict and most highly esteemed monk, a recluse, of the kind called starets (elder), and at the same time the spiritual father and eternal example for Alyosha (Alexey) Fyodorovitch Karamazov. Just before Zossima dies, he tells his friends, the monks, how he found the way to God, and this is taken down by Alyosha.

FATHER ZOSSIMA'S BROTHER

BELoved FATHERS AND TEACHERS, I was born in a distant province in the north, in the town of V. My father was a gentleman by birth but of no great consequence or position. He died when I was only two years old, and I don't remember him at all. He left my mother a small house built of wood, and some capital—not much but sufficient to keep her and her children in comfort. There were two of us, my elder brother Markel and I. He was eight years older than I was, of hasty, irritable temperament but kindhearted and never ironical. He was remarkably silent, especially at home with me, his mother, and the servants. He did well at school but did not get on with his schoolfellows, though he never quarrelled—at least so my mother has told me. Six months before his death, when he was seventeen, he made friends with a political exile who had been banished to our town from Moscow for freethinking and led a solitary existence there. He was a good scholar who had gained distinction in philosophy in the university. Something made him take a fancy to Markel,

The Wedding at Cana

Alyosha Karamazov had experienced a deep shock. The body of his starets or elder Zossima, whom he had loved above all, had not resisted corruption after death in an odor of sanctity, as was definitely expected and had been observed in the case of almost all the others who had died like him. On the contrary, very soon after his death a pronounced smell of death had come from his body, very much to the malicious pleasure of the many monks who had opposed and envied Zossima. This had made such an impression on Alyosha that suddenly nothing on this earth mattered to him anymore, and he allowed Rakitin to take him along to see Grushenka. (The relationships of these three characters is told more fully in the introductory paragraphs on pages 110 and 101.) He withstood her efforts to seduce him, however, brought her to her senses, and returned, inwardly renewed, to the monastery where he took on the death watch with the dead man so beloved by him. Here begins his vision or dream.

IT WAS VERY LATE, according to monastery order, when Alyosha returned to the hermitage; the door keeper let him in by a special entrance. It had struck nine o'clock—the hour of rest and repose after a day of such agitation for all. Alyosha timidly opened the door and went into the elder's cell where his coffin was now standing. There was no one in the cell but Father Païssy, reading the Gospel in solitude over the coffin, and the young novice Porfiry, exhausted by the previous night's conversation and the disturbing incidents of the day, was sleeping the deep, sound sleep of youth on the floor of the other room. Though Father Païssy heard Alyosha come in, he did not even look in his direction. Alyosha turned to the right from the door to the corner, fell on his

LIFE IN GOD

Talks With an Old Friend of God

This passage is taken from The Adolescent (A Raw Youth), Dostoyevsky's too little esteemed psychological novel, which he wrote immediately before his last work, The Brothers Karamazov. Makar Evanovich Dolgoruky is a former serf and the legal husband of the mother of the "adolescent," the illegitimate son of the onetime landowner Versilov, who is also spoken of here. Arkady Dolgoruky, "the adolescent," is narrator in this exchange with Makar.

AH, IT'S BAD TO be old and sick," he sighed. "One wonders why the soul should hang on like that in the body and still enjoy being alive. It seems that, if I were given a chance to start my life all over again, my soul wouldn't mind at all, although I guess that's a sinful thought."

"Why sinful?"

"Because it's a wish, a dream, while an old man should leave life gracefully. Murmuring and protesting when one meets death is a great sin. But I guess God would forgive even an old man if he got to love life out of the gaiety of his soul. It's hard for a man to know what's sinful and what's not, for there's a mystery in it that's beyond human ken. So a pious old man must be content at all times and must die in the full light of understanding, blissfully and gracefully, satisfied with the days that have been given him to live, yearning for his last hour, and rejoicing when he is gathered like a stalk of wheat unto the sheaf when he has fulfilled his mysterious destiny."

"You keep talking about 'mystery'? What does it mean 'fulfilling one's mysterious destiny'?" I asked, looking around toward the door.

Conversations and Exhortations of Father Zossima

This passage from The Brothers Karamazov follows immediately after the biographical notes of the Elder Zossima. (See introductory paragraph on page 120.) There is no doubt that here we have before us Dostoyevsky's religious testament.

THE RUSSIAN MONK AND HIS POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE

FATHERS AND TEACHERS, WHAT is the monk? In the cultivated world the word is nowadays pronounced by some people with a jeer, and by others it is used as a term of abuse; and this contempt for the monk is growing. It is true, alas, it is true, that there are many sluggards, gluttons, profligates, and insolent beggars among monks. Educated people point to these: "You are idlers, useless members of society, you live on the labor of others, you are shameless beggars." And yet how many meek and humble monks there are, yearning for solitude and fervent prayer in peace. These are less noticed, or are passed over in silence. And how surprised men would be if I were to say that from these meek monks, who yearn for solitary prayer, the salvation of Russia will perhaps come once more. For they are in truth made ready in peace and quiet "for the day and the hour, the month and the year." Meanwhile in their solitude 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

Afterword

Extracts From the German Edition

By Karl Notzel, Editor

LIKE TOLSTOY, DOSTOYEVSKY HAD been a religious church member when a child, but already as a young man he had turned to the progressive beliefs of Russian intellectuals of the time. Later he gained a very deep insight into the horrors of human misery and called God himself into question, the God who allowed it all. Dostoyevsky, champion of the innocent sufferer, still lacked the selflessness needed to accept God without rebellion. Spiritual pride seems to have held him back, plus injured self-esteem.

All this lost its importance for him before the firing squad and most of all during the near decade in Siberia, first in prison and then in exile.

In his last great masterpieces Dostoyevsky shows the wounded soul the way to healing, which is to be unavenging. Such a person is thereby immediately immune to attack — to the helpless amazement of all, and is most clearly portrayed in the character of Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*.

So he passes beyond revenge. By doing so he is now able to see all of the reality that is not God, in a relationship to God that will never be lost.

In Dostoyevsky, the search for the meaning of life turns into the question of faith in God—not of God's existence. For knowledge of God is simply inescapable. And faith in God really means only acknowledging Him. For if God is God, the spiritual origin of all that is, there is an absolute chasm

Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Biographical Sketch

November 11, 1821, born in Moscow, son of a staff doctor at a charity hospital.

1838, entered army engineering college in St. Petersburg (Leningrad). Did not like this training, read much literature.

June 1839, his father was murdered by his own serfs, who had been brutally mistreated.

October 1844, gave up army commission to finish first novel, *Poor Folk*, in April 1845. Praise by the critic Belinski brought immediate success.

1849, his participation in a revolutionary group was punished by four years in a Siberian prison.

1850s, epilepsy developed.

1854 to 1858, stayed on in Siberia. Wrote "Uncle's Dream" and "Friend of the Family" while there.

February 6, 1857, first marriage a failure.

1859, returned to St. Petersburg. Published a monthly periodical called *Time*.

1866, *Crime and Punishment* put Dostoyevsky in the front rank of Russian writers.

February 15, 1867, three years after his first wife's death, Dostoyevsky married a young stenographer, who proved to be a good manager of his finances.

