

## ABSTRACT

Dostoevsky, Soloviev, and the Problem of Theocracy in *The Brothers Karamazov*

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I examine the relationship between Ivan Karamazov's early article on theocracy and his articulation of theocracy in the parable of The Grand Inquisitor. In this study, I look to Russian Orthodox writings on political ecclesiology, Russian history, the Russian political climate at Dostoevsky's time, and the writings of Dostoevsky's close friend Vladimir Soloviev, an avid proponent of Russian theocracy. Soloviev is a crucial figure in this study because he was influential in Dostoevsky's creation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, most poignantly in Dostoevsky's creation of Ivan Karamazov. Through Ivan's writings, I argue that Dostoevsky is offering a critique of Soloviev's conception of theocracy in "The Grand Inquisitor." Dostoevsky offers an alternative vision of political life, which can be characterized as participation in a community of selfless love of neighbor.

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DOSTOEVKSY, SOLOVIEV, AND THE PROBLEM OF THEOCRACY IN *THE  
BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*

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## DEDICATION

For my Grandmummy, Jean Davlin, for reading books to me as early as I can remember. You have taught me how love books and live with them not just as ideas and stories, but also as friends. I will always be grateful for the way your love of reading and strong feminine character have shaped me.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to identify the relationship between Ivan Karamazov's early essay on Orthodox theocracy and his later portrayal of Roman Catholic theocracy in the parable of the Grand Inquisitor. In doing so, I study the political nature of Eastern Orthodoxy, especially its Russian expression. I also look to the political theological teachings of Vladimir Soloviev, who is widely thought to have influenced Ivan Karamazov more than any other character in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Like Ivan, Soloviev writes widely about the correct way to understand and implement Orthodox theocracy. It is important to note here that many, including Anna Dostoevsky (Fyodor Dostoevsky's wife), affirm that Soloviev's intellectual character influenced Dostoevsky's creation of Ivan.<sup>1</sup> If this is true, comparing Soloviev's own writings on theocracy to Ivan's theocratic principles should reveal significant overlap in their understanding of theocracy. In fact, I find that Ivan's and Soloviev's teachings on theocracy resemble one another closely. Given Ivan's status in the novel as the villain, the brother most responsible for his father's murder, Dostoevsky's decision to make him the articulator of theocracy is likely a radical judgment of Soloviev's theocratic positions.

Having established the significant similarities between Ivan and Soloviev as crucial context the expressions of theocracy in *The Brothers Karamazov*, one can examine how these two expressions are to be understood in relation to one another. I

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<sup>1</sup> Marina Kostalevsky, "Years of Friendship" in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev: The art of integral vision*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 66.

show that Ivan's Orthodox theocracy and the Inquisitorial Catholic empire are twin regimes, both manifestations of a dangerous totalitarianism. Both regimes also have the same effect on their subjects, *de facto* slavery. While the motivations of the two forms of theocracy might differ, Dostoevsky shows the effects are equally destructive in both. Ivan's motivation for Russian Orthodox theocracy in his earlier essay seems innocent enough, just as Soloviev's intentions for seeking theocracy are not a debasement of humankind. Nonetheless, though Ivan we see that unwillingness to wait for the Eschaton and reliance on ecclesial efforts to establish theocracy result in an absolutist theocracy more dangerous than Soloviev anticipated. Dostoevsky offers an alternative political vision where, instead of an absolutist regime enslaving its people, the dignity of all of humankind as image-bearing creatures is celebrated in communion with their neighbors.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Political Theology of Russian Orthodoxy

In this chapter, I seek to establish the rich foundation of Russian Orthodox theological and political thought from which Dostoevsky emerges. Though I do attempt to provide context that will be enlightening for my analysis of Ivan's political views, it is impossible to exhaust the breadth of influences on Dostoevsky and his writings. As Ellis Sandoz declares: "Any attempt to reduce the pattern of Dostoevsky's thought to a single literary or philosophical source is doomed at the outset by the breadth of the author's reading and experience and depth of his creative sensibility."<sup>1</sup> Thus this chapter is not an attempt to exhaust the context of Dostoevsky's thought. Rather, it is an examination of the Orthodox theology surrounding the Russian political and social climate of Dostoevsky's time. This survey will provide a crucial but not comprehensive lens through which to study Ivan's political thought.

Much of Orthodox theology speaks of a universal Church with an essentially political character. Orthodoxy does not aspire for ecclesial political power for the sake of domination over all peoples. Rather, the political character of the Church is rooted in the Orthodox understanding that the entire cosmos is meant to be spiritualized in light of the Resurrection and Second Coming. The intellectual climate of Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was ripe for a spiritual revival and this ecclesial view of politics began to gain prominence in Russian intellectual life. *Orthodoxy: Fundamentally Political Ecclesiology*

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<sup>1</sup> Ellis Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor* (Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 5.

In the Orthodox faith, everything that exists (both material and nonmaterial) is sacred. The Divine Will directly implicates the individual, her social existence, and all nations. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus primarily on the relationship of the Divine to national, social, and political structures within the Orthodox faith. Paul Evdokimov, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox theologian, elaborates the Orthodox understanding of the relationship of the Divine to every level of human existence, including individual, social, and political. Evdokimov says, quoting a teaching of a Church Father, "...one is struck by the realization that *the social teaching of the Church contains the very essence of Christianity*."<sup>2</sup> Thus the study of the relationship of the Church to society is central to understanding the Orthodox faith and the context in which Dostoevsky writes. Though it is certainly true that not all people in the Orthodox faith have a single, unified understanding of God's relationship to human political institutions, my aim is to convey significant principles on which most Orthodox believers, especially Russian Orthodox believers, will agree. This knowledge will provide an essential foundation to examine Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

To those in the West, Evdokimov's account of the Church in the world is rather appalling. He says, "Nowadays, almost everywhere, Christians live under governments founded on the principle of the separation of Church and State. The Church can adapt itself to this new situation only by keeping alive its universal and totalitarian aspirations, which are inherent in its nature...At every moment in history, we are forced to choose between satanocracy and theocracy..."<sup>3</sup> For many in the post-Enlightenment West, words like "totalitarian" and "theocracy" evoke bitter memories of "dark ages" when the

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *In the World, Of the Church: A Paul Evdokimov Reader*, ed. and trans. Michael Plekon and Alexis Vinogradov (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 62.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press), 310-311.

Catholic Church was often sovereign or competing with European nations for power. Another dark image of totalitarianism connected to Dostoevsky's own nation is the tyranny of Stalin. Obviously from Evdokimov's words, the Orthodox understanding of this relationship of the Church to politics is quite different from the Church's history in the modern West. To many Orthodox believers, the Church is not to be one institution among many in society without any significant authority. The Church is destined to be universally sovereign, and anything short of this amounts to "satanocracy." Indeed, the Church is the physical manifestation of Christ's presence in the world, driving the "meta-history" that unfolds under the guidance of Providence.<sup>4</sup> The Church is the most important reality of history precisely because it facilitates the unfolding of God's Kingdom on Earth. The Church is not simply a stationary refuge sitting on the sidelines for the weak and watching while the nations of the world contend with one another. The Church, as the living Body of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, leads all of humanity into redemption.

The Church as the embodied presence of God's Kingdom on earth has significant implications for how the Church ought to relate to the rest of the world. It is worth quoting Evdokimov at length:

The Last Judgment [the Parousia] raises the very real economic problems of hunger, sickness, isolation, and suffering, but these are in fact problems of the soul, of the human spirit... the Church proclaims a social *koinonia*, but this demands sacrifices and suffering for there can be no authentic communication without identification with the suffering of others. This is the radiant meaning of the Cross in history and in each person's own existence... The Church as the *macro-anthropos* includes the cosmos and society and sketches out an immense and forceful image 'before the clear heaven and the free sea.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, 322.

<sup>5</sup> Evdokimov, *In the World*, 90.

The Church fulfills the role that Christ created for it in His Incarnation: it is the continuation of the presence of God on earth. The Church cares for the suffering and ministers to the poor and the lost. Without its identification with the poor and suffering, the Church fails to reveal God's Divine Presence to the world. The Church proclaims to the world The Way and points to the coming Divine Judgment. The Church also encompasses all earthly existence in its sovereignty, being the mediator of the Heavenly Kingdom to the whole world.

*The Church: Lens to Understand History*

History plays a central role in showing why human social existence is central to the Christian faith. Evdokimov says,

No attempt to treat Revelation as history, to 'date its events,' can ever succeed. In our right and left hands we hold the two ends of the chain, providence and progress, meta-history and history... In Eastern thought, the Fall, the Incarnation, and the Parousia are not simply eruptions of the heavenly, but *interior events* which mark the passing (Pasch [another word for Passover and Easter]) of human nature into a different state, and which are mysteriously present and working in history.<sup>6</sup>

The unfolding of historical events has a strict and coeternal context in the Divine dispensation. No event, whether the choice of a single person or the political movement of nations, is outside of this Divine context. With this understanding of immediate Divine presence, it becomes clear why those in the East are intimately concerned with grounding political and international affairs in theology. The work of God in the world involves the direction of both domestic and international politics. Indeed, political life is central to God's work on earth since human beings always exist in a political context. In this

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<sup>6</sup> Italics added, Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, 322.

understanding of the divine presence on earth, Christians are mistaken if they think of national politics as a religiously neutral sphere; political actions of nations indicate a collective response to the spiritual duties required by the Incarnation and the Parousia, God's Second Coming. These duties of each nation include charity, solidarity, and the nation's commitment to its role in accomplishing God's divine purpose on earth that is ultimately revealed in the Parousia.

Evdokimov elaborates further what Divine-oriented political life ought to look like. In doing so, he further elucidates our understanding of the historically-oriented Church:

The Church, which is the presence of the 'Word that judges,' transcends all political regimes and economic orders. The Church can exist under capitalism, indifferent to religion, or follow the path of martyrdom under the atheistic Marxist regime...It is this freedom which gives the Church the power of standing as the moral conscience of humanity and shapes her ministry in society. Such a charismatic ministry seeks approaches to the absolute through the changing and relative forms of history.<sup>7</sup>

The Church is the driving body behind the meta-history that Evdokimov describes. As the Body of Christ, the Church imbues the affairs of human history with ultimate purpose. The Church is the source of spiritual importance in the historical and future affairs of political life. One analogy communicates this well: if the soul is the source of human spirituality to which the body conforms, then the church is the source of social spirituality to which nations conform. But just as the soul is the highest part of the human that ought govern all other parts of the human, so too must the Church guide all nations into the culmination of the Parousia.

The Church transcends all temporal constraints but has distinct purposes in all temporal events and institutions. The Church grounds all history in the Divine presence.

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<sup>7</sup> Evdokimov, *In the World*, 64.

When viewed through the lens of the Church Universal, the purpose of every historical event is revealed. The Church also serves presently as fortress for the suffering and as a powerful moral leader of the world. But the Church's present function points to the End in which the Church Universal fulfills its ultimate purpose and becomes sovereign over all nations, unifying them all under its authority and clarifying each nation's distinctive spiritual destiny.

### *The Political Church and Eschatology*

What gives nations and history their essential meaning is the Parousia. All events have been oriented by the Incarnation and are being shaped by the coming Parousia. Evdokimov says, "The Parousia has already begun; it is present, directing the course of history, and only by it can history be truly interpreted... While its [history's] content is determined by its end, so history becomes sacred."<sup>8</sup> History's end is the Parousia, so all of history unfolds in light of this. This is precisely why history is sacred, because its finality is the consummation of the divine and human through the Church in the Parousia. In the final culmination, all of the world must be deified, including individual people, all the material of the earth, all political institutions, indeed, all of history. The Incarnation prompts the spiritualization of the cosmos, and the Parousia consummates the world's spiritualization.

Since there is a certain finality towards which all of history is heading, one might question whether the divine immediately directs human affairs. According to Evdokimov, while history is not determined by "non-historical elements," (i.e., heavenly and demonic

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<sup>8</sup> Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, 322-323.

elements), these elements form the essential context for all of history.<sup>9</sup> Evdokimov says, “So it is clear that while eschatology has an essential historical human component, it also explicitly entails the participation of the heavenly, angelic, and demonic powers.”<sup>10</sup> The eschatology of history is not contained within events internal to the world. The entire cosmos is involved in the earth’s destiny.

Dostoevsky’s novel *Demons* reveals the influences of the demonic in pre-Stalinist Russia. Though no demons are explicitly manifest in the novel just as their presence often goes undetected in earthly affairs, demonic activity shapes the rise of modern Western ideologies in a Russian city and in Russia at large. Movements like socialism, materialism, empiricism, relativism, and ultimately atheism are not merely human-constructed philosophies; these “non-historical elements,” become demonic, have a meta-influence in the rise of Russian atheism.<sup>11</sup> Thus Dostoevsky’s account of demonic activity in the world’s affairs in *Demons* demonstrates Evdokimov’s point that the entire cosmos is implicated in the unfolding of the Parousia. The meaning of Incarnation and the Parousia ripples backwards and forwards in time, giving all of history a place in the Divine cosmos.

So how do the moral implications and duties of social and political activity entailed by the Parousia shape our understanding of the Church? Evdokimov says,

History, thus, is a dialectic of the initiatives of God and the responses of humankind, the interaction of the two Adams, the dialogue of the two ‘*fiats*.’ The ascending and descending movements have already found their ultimate synthesis in Christ, and only Christ possesses the key to the meaning of history.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, 323.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), xvii.

<sup>12</sup> Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, 324.

In Evdokimov's commentary, it is clear that the entire cosmos is implicated in the dialectic that he describes. Did not the demonic influence the first Adam? And is not the second Adam the heavenly redeemer of the first? The world is the battleground of trans-earthly realities, though the Parousia already demonstrates Christ's victory over them. The Church, being victorious, is where all of history belongs.<sup>13</sup> No matter the struggles of sin in the world, victory is already present, and the Church is the visible sign of the victory that Christ gave to the world. Christ is the central meaning of the earthly battle with sin, and He is the ultimate unity of the earthly and the heavenly. Christ created the Church as the place of redemption. It is not only Christ's gift to the world, but also the place of His presence. The Church brings the nations of the earth together into anticipation and celebration of the Parousia with it.

### *The Holy Destiny of Russia*

With this picture of the Church in a political, historical, and eschatological context, it remains to be seen how so many Russian Orthodox Christians of Dostoevsky's time come to understand Russia as the spiritual leader of the world. It turns out that throughout much of Russia's history, Russian people have embraced a fundamentally religious identity. Michael Cherniavsky provides a helpful study of Russia's religious identity over time since it became Christian in 988. As we will see, Russia's sacred identity is largely informed by Orthodox theology of a politically sovereign Church.

Throughout much of Russia's history, many have referred to Russia as the "Third Rome." In Cherniavsky's study, Russia is sacred for a similar reason that Jerusalem is sacred. Because Christ was physically present in Jerusalem, it is the first holy place, just

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



as Rome and Constantinople became the second. Similarly; Christ's spiritual presence in Russia is more immediate than it is in any other land, hence also her common self-understanding as the Third Rome.<sup>14</sup> Rome and Constantinople were once the Christian holy land, but the time has come for a third and final destination for God's dispensation.

Pushkin reinvigorated Russia's sacred identity in the modern period.<sup>15</sup> While the notion of Holy Russia was a slogan for the masses in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian educated class picked up the epithet in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This educated group who latched on to Russia's sacred identity are often called Slavophiles, a largely nationalistic movement that rejected the influence of Western ideals on the East.<sup>16</sup> Dostoevsky and his close friend Soloviev are often considered to be associated with the Slavophile movement. Dostoevsky recognizes his Slavophile tendencies and embodies them in his character Shatov in *Demons*.<sup>17</sup> Slavophiles saw in Russia a purpose commissioned by God himself, and the infiltration of Modern Western ideologies were considered by Dostoevsky to be the work of the demonic. This adds an additional layer to our understanding of Dostoevsky's crucial political novel: not only does the demonic strive to impede the Sovereignty of God's Kingdom with Western intellectual movements, but demons are working specifically against Russia's fulfillment of her holy destiny.

'Holy Russia,' however, is an abridged version of the more common and precise epithet. Holy Mother Russia points to Russia as the 'god-bearing' nation, as Shatov says in *Demons*.<sup>18</sup> The Orthodox term *Theotokos* refers to the Blessed Virgin Mary and

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Cherniavsky, "'Holy Russia': A Study in the History of an Idea," *The American Historical Review* 63, No. 3 (1958): 619.

<sup>15</sup> Cherniavsky, "Holy Russia," 627.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Dostoevsky, *Demons*, xvii.

<sup>18</sup> Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 252.

translates as God-bearer. Russia's self-understanding represents the *Theotokos* on the national stage, calling itself Holy Mother Russia, the only God-bearing nation. This fuller epithet provides an additional layer of meaning to Russia as the Third Rome, thus furthering the idea Russia is set-aside as the place of Christ's immediate presence. The Incarnation of Christ begins within the womb of the *Theotokos*, and after receiving nourishment from her His presence reaches all people. Similarly, Christ's post-medieval spiritual presence originates in the Russian Church and then extends to all other nations.

There is another important aspect of Russian spiritual life that is not directly related to its eschatological purpose but that informs the spiritual beliefs and practices of many Russians, including Dostoevsky, and is present *The Brothers Karamazov*. Russia even today has been known to have a 'twin faith' alongside Christianity. The other faith is Russia's pagan religion, which centers on worship of the Sun as well as Mother Earth, and on spiritual distinctions between the aristocracy and the peasantry. This Slavic religion remained central to Russian spiritual life through the twentieth century and is still significant today.<sup>19</sup> Most importantly, however, is that this religion leaves a mark on Dostoevsky's work. Sandoz says,

But the old cosmic religiousness of the *Rus'* is one of the essential keys to the manifold mysteries of the *rod Karamazov*. The immanence of God in material reality, the experience of the divinity of the cosmos, and the consubstantiality of man with all universally divine being are experiences decisive for the Russian mind.<sup>20</sup>

Thus we see a new facet of Russia's holiness: Russia's pagan religion converges with and sometimes shapes Russian Orthodoxy. One can see of the belief in the divinity of the cosmos in Zosima's vision certainly includes the political. God is present in all the

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<sup>19</sup> Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 30.

cosmos, and politics is an important aspect of the cosmos that does not escape divine purpose.

### *Russia's Revolutionary Mindset*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a tumultuous time in Russia. Sandoz says that German idealism of Schelling and Hegel was highly influential in Russia during the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> One Hegelian thinker of radical left in Russian was Belinsky, who was Dostoevsky's close friend and of whom Dostoevsky's was a disciple during his younger years. A former adherent of "idealism and romanticism," Belinsky came to embrace "positivism, materialism, and atheism."<sup>22</sup> Belinsky's position, especially his atheism, ultimately led to Dostoevsky's break with him.<sup>23</sup> Dostoevsky maintained some Hegelian influence, especially Hegel's romanticism and pantheism, though one would be off base to call Dostoevsky a pantheist. On theological matters, Dostoevsky rarely took explicit, dogmatic positions. In *Dostoevsky's Religion*, Steven Cassedy says, "It turns out that the nature of belief itself was a central preoccupation for Dostoevsky, and that the content of religious belief for him often stakes second place to the odd ways in which belief functions."<sup>24</sup> Thus the early pagan religion of Russia influenced Russian Orthodoxy but typically did not necessarily result in deviation from (lowercase "o") orthodox dogma.

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<sup>21</sup> Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Steven Cassedy. *Dostoevsky's Religion*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005, xii.

Sandoz explains the influence of Western ideals emerging in Russia through the one branch of the intelligentsia called the *raznochintsy*. Sandoz gives a helpful description of this group and its influence in Russia:

The *raznochintsy* were the conveyor belt of Western revolutionism, the ideological heirs of Bakunin and Belinsky [who is Dostoevsky's avowed enemy]... Exponents of the most radical doctrines of French positivism, German materialism, and socialism, this segment of the intelligentsia represented the end form of atheist humanism as it gathered in the tidal wave that eventually was to overwhelm the tsarist and Orthodox Russia.<sup>25</sup>

The two branches of the intelligentsia were the *raznochintsy* and the Slavophiles. As mentioned earlier, Dostoevsky is often associated with the Slavophiles, though his thinking is certainly too nuanced to fit neatly into this category. Slavophiles resisted the Westernization of Russia, attempting to preserve its Orthodox national identity. The Slavophiles were not completely untouched by the migration of Western thought, however; German idealism, especially regarding the utopian state, left its mark on Slavophil thinking.<sup>26</sup> For the most part, however, Dostoevsky and other devout Orthodox believers regarded the infiltration of Enlightenment principles in Russia as the work of the demonic.

It is interesting to note Dostoevsky's precision in diagnosing the outcome of Russia's political situation. His character Pyotr Setpanovich in *Demons* embodies the revolutionary attitude willing to expend as many inconvenient lives as possible for the sake of social order. Horribly, the Bolsheviks were to implement this thinking and expend many lives for the sake of their political vision.<sup>27</sup> Dostoevsky's accuracy in diagnosing the social and political climate in Russia underscores his how nuanced his

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<sup>25</sup> Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 17-18.

<sup>26</sup> Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson, *Russian Religious Thought* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 7.

<sup>27</sup> Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 21.

reflections are regarding the Russian people, politics, and human nature and how adept a thinker he is.

*Dostoevsky on Holy Mother Russia*

Dostoevsky's views on Holy Mother Russia largely align with the theology we have examined already. Dostoevsky has a particular understanding of the mechanisms of Russia's spiritual leadership. In order for Russia to fulfill its holy calling, Russian must turn to the common folk within the Russian nation. Cherniavsky explains that, to Dostoevsky, the Russian *people* are the bearers of God. The experiences of the Russian people mirror the life of Christ.<sup>28</sup> The Russian peasant especially bears the mark of God. To be God-bearing is not just a social condition of the common Russian people, however. Individuals must believe in God and become God-bearing persons. Hence deification is not only spiritualization of the social, but also the personal. It is important to note that in the Orthodox understanding, the person becomes deified within the walls of the Church and thus in the communal context of the Church. Therefore both individually and socially all individuals and nations become potentially deified by entering Church. Everything is placed on the path of deification through the Church, including political institutions, all the material of the earth, and indeed, particular persons. Russia reflects this picture of all-encompassing deification: the land of Russia, her political structures, and her people all become deified through the Church. Russia is a leading microcosm of what deification will be for the rest of the world.

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<sup>28</sup> Cherniavsky, "Holy Russia," 634.

Dostoevsky also sees a particular fate for Holy Mother Russia. Russia has a specific moral duty to secure political freedom for all the Slavic nations. Dostoevsky believes that Russia must help the Bulgarians and the Serbs to acquire freedom from the Turks. Dostoevsky also believes that Russia has a sacred right to take Constantinople under her sovereignty.<sup>29</sup> Russia's decision to liberate the Slavic nations from Europe would probably not be met with gratitude. Indeed, Dostoevsky envisions that many people of these nations will long to return to the culture of Europe.<sup>30</sup> Russia does this not out of imperialist lust, but out of the selfless desire to secure freedom for the captive Orthodox peoples. Thus Dostoevsky believes that all nations, especially Russia, ought to have a selfless, moral policy in their relationship to the rest of the world.

Dostoevsky's vision of an "all-Slavic federation," as Hackard terms it, was motivated by a vision of the sovereign Church Universal. Dostoevsky says in his Diary,

We first declare to the world that not through the repression of the character of foreign nationalities do we want to attain our success. On the contrary, we see it only in the freest and most independent development of all other nations and in brotherly union with them, complementing one another, fostering in ourselves their organic particularities and extending, from us to them, our branches for cultivation, communing with them in soul and spirit, learning and teaching until the time when humanity, having been fulfilled with the relations of peoples unto universal unity, like a great and magnificent tree will shade the happy earth.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to note here that Dostoevsky hopes to preserve the distinctiveness of every nation in his final analysis. Even while preserving the identity of each nation, Dostoevsky sees international unity in fraternal communion as the only way for humanity to conduct itself in light of Second Coming. Russia is the forerunner of this unity, and out of

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<sup>29</sup> Nikolai Onufriyevich Lossky, "Dostoevsky and the State" in *The Soul of the East* trans. Mark Hackard, (2014), <https://souloftheeast.org/2014/04/04/dostoevsky-and-the-state/>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Qtd in Lossky, "Dostoevsky and the State," access April 26, 2017. <https://souloftheeast.org/2014/04/04/dostoevsky-and-the-state/>.

charitable love Russia will embrace its God-bearing identity to bring finally the Kingdom of God to earth and serve the one true King with the rest of the world's nations.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Soloviev and Dostoevsky

Is Dostoevsky's vision of God-bearing Russia present in *The Brothers Karamazov*? If so, where and how does it make its appearance? Since Ivan Karamazov makes two explicit references to theocracy, one in the chapter "So Be It! So Be It!" and the other in "The Grand Inquisitor," it is appropriate to examine them in an attempt to discern a teaching from Dostoevsky on theocracy. To do this, it is essential to examine the life and work of Vladimir Sergeevich Soloviev. A generation younger than Dostoevsky, Soloviev and Dostoevsky nevertheless forged a close friendship that influenced the creation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Anna Dostoevsky said, "Fedor Mikhailovich saw in the person of Vladimir Soloviev not Alesha, but Ivan Karamazov."<sup>1</sup> Though Dostoevsky's wife says only Ivan reflects Soloviev, Marina Kostalevsky and others recognize Soloviev's intellectual rigor in Ivan and his earnest spirituality in Alyosha.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Dostoevsky's strong approval of Soloviev's widely acclaimed "Lectures on God-manhood" highlights the significant overlap between Dostoevsky's and Soloviev's opinions about God and the meaning of the cosmos.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, given that Soloviev had a sizable influence on the creation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, a survey of Soloviev's conception of the Church will figure greatly into the question of the relationship between Ivan's account of theocracy in his earlier essay and then his account

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<sup>1</sup> Qtd in Marina Kostalevsky, "Years of Friendship" in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev: The Art of Integral Vision*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 66.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



of “satanocracy” in the “Grand Inquisitor.” Therefore, in this section I examine Soloviev’s treatment of the Church, the State, eschatology, and the East-West dialectic, which are all crucial elements of Dostoevsky’s two opposing political visions in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

### *The Threefold Church Universal*

In Soloviev’s memorial speech for Dostoevsky, he said, “The Church as a positive social ideal was to be the central idea of a new novel or a new series of novels, of which only the first was written—*The Brothers Karamazov*.”<sup>4</sup> If Soloviev is even remotely correct about the Church being the centerpiece of *The Brothers Karamazov*, then we must consider Soloviev’s conception of the Church and its role in the political life. Given the significant overlap in the beliefs of Dostoevsky and Soloviev, as well as Soloviev’s claim that the Church is the central motif of *The Brothers Karamazov*, we would be remiss not to examine Soloviev’s understanding of the Church and its political character.

Soloviev’s account of the Church and its purpose in the world is largely consistent with the Orthodox ecclesiology examined in the previous chapter. He elaborates on the manner in which the Church consists in the unity of the divine and the human. Soloviev says,

The Church Universal... develops as a threefold union of the divine and the human: there is the priestly union, in which the divine element, absolute and unchangeable, predominates and forms the Church properly so called (the Temple of God); there is the kingly union, in which the human element predominates and which forms the Christian State (the Church as the living Body of God); and there is lastly the prophetic union, in which the divine and the human must penetrate

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<sup>4</sup> Qtd in Kostalevsky, “Years of Friendship” in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*. 65-66.

one another in free mutual interaction and so form perfect Christian society (the Church as the Spouse of God).<sup>5</sup>

The Church constitutes the modes in which the Divine and human are linked. The priestly union is the primary union on which the other two forms of unity absolutely depend. By virtue of the divine predominance in the priestly union, it is prior to the other two unions. Because the divine is always the superior element, the priestly union enables the formation of the other two unions. As the predominantly human element, the kingly union follows from the priestly union and presupposes human initiative in its union with God. The kingly union requires that nations by their own free choice submit themselves to the authority and guidance of the Church, thus being unified with it. The Church is the ascendant Body that all nations must either accept as their moral authority, or, as Evdokimov put it, reject in favor of satanocracy. If nations desire a proper relationship to the Church, they must be aligned with the Church to participate in the Church's work in the world.<sup>6</sup> Thus the Church has a fundamentally international and, more precisely, a universal existence in the world. The prophetic union is the final union of the divine and human in perfect harmony, where both elements reign together in perfectly reciprocal love.

Furthermore, Trinitarian theology is one possible elaboration of Soloviev's ecclesial framework. Each of the unions of the divine and human correspond to a particular person of the Trinity. While all persons of the Trinity are active in each of the unions, each union reflects diverse characteristics of a particular person within the Trinity. The distinctiveness of the God the Father is found within the priestly union

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<sup>5</sup>Vladimir Sergeyevich Soloviev, "Part One: The State of Religion in Russia and the Christian East" in *Russia and the Universal Church*, (London: Geoffrey Bles/Centenary Press, 1948), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Soloviev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, 11.

insofar as priests reflect the “fatherhood” of God the Father to members of the Church. The kingly union of the Church reflects the Son because Christ assumed the human element unto Himself in the Incarnation. The Son is the only person of the Godhead with a human element, so Christ is exemplified in the kingly union where the human element is distinct. Finally, the Holy Spirit is the person through whom mutual union of the Godhead and humankind is consummated and through whom humans receive prophetic wisdom (see 2 Peter 1:21 “prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”).<sup>7</sup>

Kostalevsky articulates a fascinating and compelling thesis about three theocratic applications that follow from the threefold ecclesial union. If Soloviev is correct that *The Brothers Karamazov* is imbued with an essentially ecclesial vision, then one possible reading perceives in the novel the three unions of the Church and their corresponding theocratic manifestations in human society. Because Christ designates three distinct roles for humanity in the ecclesial unions, Kostalevsky argues that these three roles are manifest in the three Karamazov brothers. Specifically, Alyosha represents spiritual union, Dmitri represents the kingly union, and Ivan represents the prophetic union.<sup>8</sup> These three roles of the theocratic union also are temporally manifested in the past, present, and future respectively, according to Kostalevsky. Alyosha’s time spent in the monastery points to his characteristic inclination to preserve the tradition of the Church. Dmitri is a military officer whose female counterpart is sometimes called “queen,”

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<sup>7</sup> Some might think my Trinitarian allegorizing is bold and might be skeptical of the connections I draw. However, I think the allegory is faithful to the spirit of Soloviev’s work insofar as he is committed to the notion that Truth is one. See Gustafson and Kornblatt, “Soloviev’s Doctrine of Salvation,” *Russian Religious Thought*, 46. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, where Gustafson shows how Soloviev picks up on Maximus’ idea of cosmological unity.

<sup>8</sup> Kostalevsky, “Years of Friendship,” 124.

implying that he is a king. Furthermore, his impulsive behavior demonstrates that has a charisma rooted in the present. Finally, Ivan's vision in "The Grand Inquisitor" points to remarkable aptitude for prophecy.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Soloviev's articulation of the three unions that unfold in the Church Universal seems to have had an important influence on the structure of *The Brothers Karamazov*. His account entails three sequential unions where the divine is primary element in the first, the human is primary element in the second, and in the final union both elements mutually form a covenant unified by love. It will be fruitful to keep this threefold conception of the Church in mind during our study of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

#### *The Church in Relation to the State as Christology*

The kingly union of the Church, where the human element is the most active element, is to be fulfilled through a proper relationship of the Church and the State. Again, Soloviev's understanding of the Church's relationship to the State is consistent with the Orthodox views articulated in the preceding chapter. Soloviev's elaboration of this relationship is based upon Christological truths. If God the Father corresponds to the priestly union and the Holy Spirit corresponds to the prophetic union, then Christ is the person of the Trinity who corresponds with the kingly union. His dual nature is manifest in the relationship of the Church and the State, the Church reflecting his divine nature and the State reflecting his human nature. One way to describe the union of Church and State is that they should constitute an icon of the person of Christ.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid

Soloviev argues that heresies distorting the full divinity and full humanity of Christ not only constitute a misconception of God, but also a distorted view of the relationship of Church and the State. He says,

The fundamental truth and distinctive idea of Christianity is the perfect union of the divine and the human individually achieved in Christ, and finding its social realization in Christian humanity, in which the divine is represented by the Church, centered on the supreme pontiff, and the human by the State. This intimate relation between Church and State implies the primacy of the former, since the divine is previous in time and superior in being to the human. Heresy attacked the perfect unity of the divine and the human in Jesus Christ precisely to undermine the living bond between Church and State, and to confer upon the latter an absolute independence.<sup>10</sup>

The kingly union entails the superiority of the Church over the State, just as the divine is superior to the human. According to Soloviev, heresies repeatedly emerged in the East that in effect led to a false understanding of the person of Christ. These heresies almost always had political consequences. For example, Monothelitism essentially maintained that Christ's divine nature fully absorbs his human will, thus rendering Christ's human nature a passive instrument of the divine will. The implications of such a heresy is that humanity has no role in the deification of the cosmos. Politically speaking, the implication of Monothelitism renders the Church the only active element in redeeming the social realm of humankind with the state as a mere passive instrument.<sup>11</sup>

Another recurring heresy in the East was Arianism. Arianism also had political dimensions that manifested themselves in the Byzantine Empire. Soloviev addresses Arianism as follows:

The true central dogma of Christianity is the intimate and complete union of the Divine and the human without confusion or division. The logical consequence of this truth – to confine ourselves to the sphere of practical human existence – is the regeneration of social and political life by the spirit of the Gospel, in other words,

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<sup>10</sup> Soloviev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Soloviev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, 15.

the Christianization of society and the State... Just as in the confused thought of the Arians Christ was a hybrid being, more than man less than God, so Caesorpapism, which was simply political Arianism, confused the temporal and spiritual powers without uniting them, and made the autocrat something more than head of State, without succeeding in making him a true head of the Church...<sup>12</sup>

The Incarnation points to the union of the human with the Divine. This union entails a perfection of all things human, including physical bodies, spirit, soul, intellect, relationships, families, and nations with God. The cause, epitome, and perfection of this union all center upon Christ. Therefore, when heresy attempts to distort the harmony of Christ's divinity and humanity, the consequences of false understanding are far reaching. Heresy causes not only individual misconceptions of Christ, but also imbalance in social and political structures. Christ is everything because he the ultimate union of the Divine and human. Heresies therefore result in misconstrued relation of the Divine and Human in political structures: Arianism leads to an elevation of the State and a degradation of the Church, just as monothelism results in the Church's absorption of the State. Maximus the Confessor was the witness against these heresies and shaped the Orthodox doctrine affirming Christ's two wills, one divine one human. According to Gustafson, Maximus's orthodox understanding of the relationship between the human and the divine figures heavily into Soloviev's own theological works.

Soloviev attributes these recurring heresies to the East's persistent jealousy of Rome's power. Indeed, he is unreserved in his criticism of Byzantium heresies in the early Church. He says,

History has passed judgment upon the Second Empire and has condemned it. Not only did it fail in its appointed task of founding the Christian State, but it strove to make abortive the historic work of Jesus Christ... The Byzantines believed that

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<sup>12</sup> Soloviev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, 23.

true Christianity meant no more than guarding the dogmas and sacred rites of Orthodoxy without troubling to Christianize social and political life.<sup>13</sup>

Thus the Byzantine's Empire constitutes a failure for Soloviev, leaving a vacuum for a Third Empire. Russia, according to Soloviev, is the only nation suited to fill this Christian State-vacuum. We will see Russia's role in Soloviev's political-theological framework in the sections below.

### *The Union of Eastern and Western Nations*

Soloviev like Dostoevsky is a harsh critic of the West, but he anticipates a reunion of the two Christian expressions. Soloviev looks to Poland and its relationship to Russia in addressing the politico-spiritual climate of the East and West. Russia is the caretaker of Poland. In the Congress of Vienne, Russia liberated the serfs from the lords while protecting the lords from a peasant uprising. If the peasants had annihilated the Polish lords, then either German or Russian culture would have filled the culture vacuum created by the absence of a learned class in Poland.<sup>14</sup> Russia's intervention saved Poland from such a fate. However, despite Russia's patronage, Poland favors close allegiance to Germany and Rome and is thus scornful of Russia. Soloviev explains the Polish skepticism about Russia, saying Poles have anxiety about the dangers and darkness of Russia's Eastern Orthodoxy. Therefore, the source of Poland's enmity harkens back to the schism of the East and West in 1054. Poland's objection to Russian intervention in its

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<sup>13</sup> Soloviev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Soloviev, Vladimir Sergeevich, 1853-1900, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk 2000. *Politics, Law, and Morality: Essays*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 15.

affairs is not based upon the Poles' nationalistic antagonism towards Slavs, but rather the Western Church's resistance to the Eastern Church's influence.<sup>15</sup>

According to Soloviev, many dynamics of international politics are at root the West's resistance to the Third Rome's (Russia's) inheritance of the Latin empire. The West opposes Russia's acquisition of Constantinople (an acquisition Dostoevsky also favors) and Russia's status as a new Christian empire. Peter the Great's implementation of Enlightenment principles in Russia in the seventeenth century makes Russia the only nation fitted to be Third Rome, according to Soloviev.<sup>16</sup> Soloviev says,

The single fact that Peter the Great's reform could be accomplished successfully and could create a new Russia demonstrates that Russia is not to be called *only* Eastern: that in the great East-West dispute she must not stand on one side representing one of the disputing parties—that in this matter she has an intermediary and conciliatory obligation and must be in the highest sense an arbitrating judge in that dispute... A real and intrinsic reconciliation with the West consists not in a slavlike subjection to western form, but in an unfettered *covenant* with the spiritual principle on which the life of the western world is based.<sup>17</sup>

Soloviev envisions a reunion of the East and West, and Russia is the only nation suited to lead these two expressions of Christianity to reunion. Yet this reunion does not eradicate the distinctions between the East and the West. Instead, the distinctions serve as complements to one another unified by a permanent covenant and sealed by charitable relations. In a broad sense, Soloviev's understanding of Christian empire resembles Hegel's historical dialectic formula. The Roman Empire constitutes the thesis and is epitome of the Christian West while the Second Rome, Constantinople, is the antithesis and the epitome of the Christian East. The synthesis of these two empires is the Third

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<sup>15</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that Dostoevsky was deeply skeptical of Peter the Great's embrace of Enlightenment thought, which is a prominent theme in his novel *Demons*. This is an area where Dostoevsky and Soloviev differ significantly.

<sup>17</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 17.



Empire, Russian, serving as the conciliation between the East and the West. Peter the Great's Westernization of Russia is the key to Soloviev's formulation because Russia to be the synthesis of the both forms of Christianity. Soloviev's embrace of Western culture and thinking is not only evident from the fact that Hegel figures heavily into his works, but also that he seeks to preserve the distinctive features of the West in global unification.

In a separate essay, Soloviev gives an example of how the eastern and western political thought might converge under a covenant unified by their Christian faith. In pre-Christian times, political rule in the East consisted in compromises between strong parties seeking power whose "balance was expressed in *law*."<sup>18</sup> Therefore the aim of politics in the East was limited to despots' struggle for power, while Orthodox society cared more for the eternal and the afterlife than political conquest. In the West, the State was "the embodiment and personification of human reason and human truth, [and] was *everything*."<sup>19</sup> The Western State was the pinnacle of human accomplishment, so that society could be expected to derive a definite, eternal purpose from the State. In light of Christian Truth, however, both the eastern and western understandings must be modified while maintaining elements of their character. The East was correct to not to derive ultimate meaning from the State. The State is meant to be the subordinate principle, receiving guidance from the Church. The Western understanding of the State also correctly recognized that the State must fulfill temporal obligations which have eternal significance. When Eastern and Western attitudes are synthesized in light of Christian revelation, they reflect a harmoniously ordered relationship between the Church and

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<sup>18</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 23.

State. Both the Eastern and Western understandings of the State receive a fuller meaning in the context of Divine Truth.

While the Third Rome is the synthesis of the Eastern and Western elements, individual nations within the East and West also have distinctive roles in Soloviev's vision for international unity. Soloviev expounds on the ethics of nationalism and the role of nationalism in global unity. He compares the particular character of a nation to organs of a body. Soloviev says,

Although a peculiarity in the structure and function of a certain organ, for example, the eye, distinguishes it from other organs, it does not separate it from them and from the entire body. On the contrary, it constitutes the basis of its positive participation in the life of the whole body and its irreplaceable significance to all other organs and to the organism. So, too, in the "Body of Christ" the individual peculiarity does not separate each from all, but unites it with all, being the basis of its special significance for all and positive cooperation with all. Panhumanity (or that which the Apostle preached) is not an abstract concept, but a harmonious plentitude of all the positive attributes of the new or reborn creation- and not only of individual but also of national attributes as well... The national character differs from the individual in size and durability, but not in principle, and if Christianity does not require *impersonality*, then neither can it require *nationality-lessness*.

Soloviev sees a role for national distinction within the unified Body of Christ, and it is especially within unity that the distinctive character of each nation is given its proper context and thus fully realized. Unity does not imply uniformity.<sup>20</sup> This same notion is true of the unification of the East and West: each maintains its cultural and theological identity with forming a covenant with the other.

Soloviev's ideal of the unification of all nations as well as the East and West stems from his metaphysical principle, "unitotality." Kostalevsky describes it thus:

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<sup>20</sup> To illustrate this point, Soloviev points out that Dante and Cimabue's works are not motivated by nationalist sensibilities but by desire to contribute to universal human understanding. They do so with a distinctly Italian style thus bringing glory to Italian culture, but nonetheless they seek human understanding.

One must not forget that the correlation of positive and negative elements in Soloviev's philosophical system always occurs under the badge of unitotality, understood as a teleological principle. "The eternal and divine world," says Soloviev in the *Lectures on God-manhood*, "as the ideal plenitude of everything and the realization of good, truth, and beauty, appears to the reason as that which in and of itself must be, what is *normal*." Therefore, the violation of the norm "is only another, improper, *interrelation* of the very same elements which also make up the existence of the divine world."<sup>21</sup>

Thus according to Soloviev, the sum of the cosmos consists in the divine and the eternal.

The whole of the being is unified in truth, beauty, and goodness, all of which are epitomized in God. Everything in accordance with this divine, eternal truth is normal, and everything otherwise is abnormal. Unitotality is the principle that informs Soloviev's vision for Church unification: all constituent parts of the Church find unity in the fact that they are all reflections of the divine. Both the East, the West, and nations of the world are all reflections of the unified Divine truth.

### *The Christian State*

Soloviev also treats the proper relationship between the Church and State. As outlined above, Soloviev sees Christology as the principle for Church-State unification, with the Church being the superior element. Soloviev says,

In order to regenerate all of humanity Christianity must not only permeate individual elements, but also societal elements. The God-man connection must be renewed not only individually, but also collectively. As the divine element has its collective expression in the Church, so the purely human element has a similar expression in the State; and consequently, the God-man connection would be expressed collectively in the free combination of Church and State, the latter now appearing as the *Christian State*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kostalevsky, "Years of Friendship" in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, 142.

<sup>22</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 21.

Here one again sees Soloviev's Christological conception of the human society. The Christian State rests on the State's freely chosen unity with the Church. In order to accomplish the spiritual renewal of humanity, not only individuals must become personally divinized, but their social existence must also become deified.

How is this spiritualization of society to be accomplished? First, it is important to note that the State must freely choose union with the Church. Soloviev says, "State authority, according to the nature of its activity and according to its origin, is completely independent of spiritual authority. Therefore, their relationship can only be free, (and) moral *according to faith* and conscience."<sup>23</sup> Just as the human is endowed with a free will, so too does the human society have independent authority. It must voluntarily submit to the Church's authority, just as individual people must voluntarily submit to the will of God.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the degree of the State's union with the Church depends on the State's willingness to comply with Christian principles as established by the Church. As Soloviev says, "...the Church would descend to worldly reality according to the degree to which the State ascended to the Church ideal."<sup>25</sup> Dostoevsky is largely in agreement with Soloviev on the union of the Church and State. He says, "*The state is the Church*. Our difference from Europe. The state is above all a Christian society and strives to become the Church [*khristianin-krest'ianin*, Christian-peasant]."<sup>26</sup> Thus Soloviev understands the State's claim to be Christian as valid only insofar as it strives towards the perfect Christian ideal that the Church embodies.

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<sup>23</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 24.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 25.

<sup>26</sup> Qtd in Kostalevsky, "Years of Friendship" in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev* 135.

However, the State's elevation to the Church does not mean that the distinct identity and freedom of the State dissolves. Rather, the state becomes deified so that its distinctiveness becomes worthy of union with the Church. A good example of this is the Christian State's response to crime. When a citizen commits a crime, the State is responsible for punishing the criminal and protecting the society. The Church, however, has responsibility over the criminal himself. The Christian State's primary concern is over the criminal's spiritual state. Soloviev says, "...it is necessary to acknowledge that the *ultimate* goal of a Christian State in relation to criminals is their own moral healing, that is, the kind of goal for the achievement of which only the State can serve the Church. A similar service is required from a Christian State with respect to other aspects of its activity."<sup>27</sup> Thus with crime one sees that the Church does not evaporate the State's role; the criminal still must be punished and society must be kept safe. The Christian State maintains legal activities but does so in light of the higher purpose that it serves, a purpose which the Church hands down to the State. Soloviev makes this ultimate purpose explicit: to make everything and everyone restore the image of Christ.<sup>28</sup> The moral healing of the criminal is inseparable from the restoration of his *Imago Dei*; hence the Christian's State primary duty lies primarily with spiritual wellbeing of the criminal.

In Dostoevsky's short story, "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," he gives a utopian vision of society that in some respects resembles Soloviev's. In this tale, a man finds himself on a sinless, perfect planet where all of humanity is bound together in perfect love and devotion to one another. Though Christianity is not explicitly present in the story, the inhabitants' perfect love for one another and their view of their world as a

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<sup>27</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 30.

temporary provision that anticipates higher truth, beauty, and goodness in the afterlife indicates that this story serves as an ideal theocratic vision.<sup>29</sup> Dostoevsky says,

They had no temples, but they did have a kind of essential, living, and continuous union with the Totality of the universe; they had no religion; instead they had a certain knowledge that when their earthly joy had fulfilled itself to its limits there would ensue—both for the living and for the dead—an even broader contact with the Totality of the universe.<sup>30</sup>

Dostoevsky's story reveals that in a society untainted by sin, there is no need for temples that are relegated to particular places and times of worship because all space and time is sacred and constitutes a participation in Divine Liturgy. Furthermore, no religion is necessary because all of humanity lives their lives in light of and in perfect consciousness of Divine Truth, hence their perfect devotion to one another. Soloviev's image of theocracy aims at a similar ideal, where all Truth is unified hence the free union of the Church and State.

In order for the Christ's image to be the primary aim of the Christian State, according to Soloviev, Christ delegates to one person the authority of the State. This person is subject to obey only his conscience, which has been formed by the Church, through which he ultimately follows the spirit of Christ. Soloviev describes the authority of such a figure:

...Christian monarchy is *autocracy of conscience*. The bearer of supreme authority, which has been commissioned to him from the God of Truth and Mercy, is not subject to any limitations besides moral ones; he can do everything that accords with his conscience, and nothing that is against it... he is a subject, a servant, and a representative only of that which in essence cannot be bad—the will of God, and the grandeur of such a position is equal only to the grandeur of its responsibility.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Kostalevsky, "Years of Friendship" in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev* 127

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 62.

With a singular person ruling as monarch, the monarch is responsible only to his conscience and is insulated from the whims of popular opinion. In the Christian State, a monarchy enables to the political society to strive towards its essential purpose: bringing out the image of God in everything.

*Soloviev and the Three Temptations of Christ*

In “The Grand Inquisitor,” the Inquisitor examines the three temptations of Christ and designates them as temptations of miracle, mystery, and authority. Soloviev also examines the three temptations of Christ in a way somewhat similar to Dostoevsky’s account. The similarities and differences of their approaches to the temptations will allow us in our later analysis of Ivan’s two visions to determine what degree Soloviev’s interpretation of theocracy aligns with Dostoevsky’s. In his final lecture on God-manhood, Soloviev gave an elaborate account of the three temptations of Christ and how the West had succumbed to each.<sup>32</sup> Marina Kostalevsky analyzes Soloviev’s treatment of the temptations, and she compares it to Ivan’s version in “The Grand Inquisitor.”

Kostalevsky says that the three temptations of Christ in the Gospel of St Matthew correspond to three elements of the person and of collective humanity. These three elements are the spirit, the intellect, and the sensual soul.<sup>33</sup> The third temptation corresponds to a temptation of the spirit, as Dostoevsky’s and Soloviev’s treatment of it resemble one another. Both recognize the spiritual need for unitotality, so that the Devil tempts Christ with the universal power to satisfy this inner longing of the spirit through the establishment of a universal kingdom.<sup>34</sup> Dostoevsky also says this is temptation of

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<sup>32</sup>Kostalevsky, “Years of Friendship” in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, 132.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

authority, which through the imperialism of the Inquisitorial regime ultimately restricts the freedom of political societies to freely seek union of the Church.<sup>35</sup>

The second temptation, that of the intellect, for Soloviev centers on intellectual pride. The Devil tempts Christ to cast himself off the Temple to extinguish any doubt that God would protect him. He evokes the Protestant Reformation in the West, arguing that its supposition that the Christian no longer needs the Church as a social expression of the faith is an abomination. The notion that individuals have ample reason to interpret scripture without assistance led to the rise of hyper rationality and misguided faith in the power of unaided reason. Dostoevsky views this temptation as at root one of metaphysical freedom, whereby Christ is tempted to assert his “exclusivity” as the sole, universal God through the use of miracle, mystery, and authority. In doing so, He deprives humanity its true freedom. Finally, both Dostoevsky and Soloviev understand the temptation of the flesh as the temptation of materialist socialism. Dostoevsky nuances this temptation by adding that humanity is tempted to give allegiance for the sake of material comfort that is propagated by miracle.<sup>36</sup>

### *An Apocalyptic Tale*<sup>37</sup>

At the end of his life, Soloviev authored a cryptic tale called “A Short Story of the Anti-Christ.” Given the apocalyptic references in “The Grand Inquisitor,” Soloviev’s tale provides a counter-story through which to examine Dostoevsky. In his story, Soloviev describes the international climate. In it, Asian nations led by Japan gradually conquer

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<sup>35</sup> See Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 257.

<sup>36</sup> Kostalevsky, “Years of Friendship,” 134.

<sup>37</sup> Soloviev, Vladimir, “A Short Story of the Anti-Christ,” 1900.



Europe; however, Europe soon overthrows this yoke and regains its sovereignty.

Meanwhile we meet a young man who was friendly to Christian faith but who was entirely self-serving and prideful. This man was conscious of his powerful mind and saw for himself a special role from God. This belief in his own messianic destiny strengthened until one day he encounters Satan, who imparts in him dark powers, designating him as Anti-Christ. Through his intellectual powers, this man writes a book that shows the way to global peace, winning him international fame.

The global political climate shifts, and because of the world's trust in this man he is elected by the national powers to be the world emperor. He is a "kindhearted philanthropist" who strives to end hunger and clothe the cold. In an international meeting of global powers, he invites heads of the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Churches to be present along with other representatives of these Churches. Soloviev gives the name Peter to the pope, John to the Orthodox leader, and Paul to the Germanic Protestant leader. The Anti-Christ attempts to lure these leaders into submission under his authority. He tempts the Catholics with authority and restoration of the Catholic throne in Rome under his "autocratic power." He tempts the Orthodox Christians by feigning reverence for "sacred tradition." Finally, he tempts Protestants with expanding opportunities for the free examination of Scripture. Many members from each Church succumb to the Anti-Christ's offers, but the leaders of the Church's disdain the authority of this world emperor. After rampant violence and many martyrs, the Anti-Christ is eventually slain in a volcano eruption, and Christ returns to the earth and restore the Kingdom of God.

It is important to note that in Soloviev's tale, all three expressions of the Christian faith unite in opposition to the Anti-Christ and in affirmation of the creeds. Soloviev

establishes his view of the ecumenism of the Church in the Eschaton. For Soloviev, Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians alike have a legitimate role in the establishment and rule of universal theocracy. Dostoevsky is less committed to the principle of ecumenism; in his poem “The Grand Inquisitor,” the Catholic Church is the birthplace of the Anti-Christ. Thus Soloviev’s commitment to unitotality expressed in his ecumenism is more comprehensive than Dostoevsky’s, although Dostoevsky does seem inclined to the notion in his “The Dream of a Ridiculous Man” about the sinless world where humanity unites the Totality of the Universe.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the Inquisitor in Ivan’s poem also acknowledges the human longing for the universality of truth.<sup>39</sup> Regardless, Soloviev’s short story serves as a key basis to examine the eschatological elements Dostoevsky’s political vision in “The Grand Inquisitor.”

Both Dostoevsky’s Inquisitor and Soloviev’s Anti-Christ are false philanthropists who attempt to subject the world to slavery through the use of miracle, mystery, and authority. Both figures tempt the world through the promise of material comfort through the use of miracles.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, both use miracles to enslave humanity. Soloviev’s Anti-Christ designates as head of the Church (though a false) a magician named Apollonius who uses demonic powers to create mystical spectacles such as manipulation of weather. He thus uses mystery to enslave human beings under his yoke. Finally, Soloviev’s Anti-Christ parodies the authority of the Church in his self-appointment as head of the Church from whom the Church is supposed to seek guidance. Similar, the Dostoevsky’s Inquisitor admits to deceiving humanity based on false authority in the

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<sup>38</sup> Kostalevsky, “Years of Friendship” in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, 127.

<sup>39</sup> Kostalevsky, “Years of Friendship” in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, 132.

<sup>40</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 253.

name of Christ.<sup>41</sup> Thus given Dostoevsky and Soloviev's close friendship, Soloviev's tale serves as a key counterexample of apocalyptic vision through which to study "The Grand Inquisitor."

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Ivan's Theocracy

In the chapter of the *Brothers Karamazov* called “So Be It! So Be It!,” Ivan Karamazov articulates his published defense of theocracy. In this chapter, I discuss the relationship between Soloviev’s conception of theocracy and the view that Ivan defends. Through this study, I consider Dostoevsky’s stance on universal theocracy and how it relates to Ivan’s (and Soloviev’s) own position. This will set me up in my next chapter to examine the connection between Ivan’s defense of theocracy and the politics involved in his poem, “The Grand Inquisitor.” Again, Anna Dostoevsky says that Fyodor Dostoevsky had Soloviev in mind as he created Ivan, so comparison of Ivan’s and Soloviev’s intellectual work is justified.

#### *Ivan's Ecclesiastical Courts*

Ivan’s essay centers upon his endorsement of the establishment of ecclesiastic courts. After contending that the Church ought not to occupy only a corner of the State but wholly absorb the State, Ivan says,

But if even now there were only ecclesiastical courts, even now the Church would not sentence criminals to hard labor or capital punishment. Crime and the whole way of looking at it would then undoubtedly have to change, little by little, of course, not all at once, not immediately, but still quite soon...<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 63.

Ivan goes on to explain how ecclesiastical courts provide disincentives for crime. It is easy to clear the criminal's conscience when he is convicted in a criminal court even if his heart remains hardened; externally the State recognizes his crime without healing his spirit. But when the Church finds him guilty of a crime, the realization of his sin and the spiritual rehabilitation of the Church will remove his criminal inclinations. Unlike the State, the Church does not see the criminal as a faceless nuisance to society. Instead, as Zosima says, the Church is "like a mother, tender and loving, withholds from active punishment." He continues, "[T]he Church...never loses communion with the criminal, as a dear and beloved son..."<sup>2</sup> Thus the Church nurtures the criminal's spirit so that he can restore his likeness to God.

Soloviev's understanding of the Church's duty to the criminal's spirit is similar to Ivan's. In an essay called "On the Christian State on Society," Soloviev says, "...[T]he task of the moral recovery or correction of criminals belongs (in model order) not to the courts and prison but to the Church and its servants, to which the State must give the material resources to influence the criminal."<sup>3</sup> Soloviev qualifies this vision by pointing out that criminal courts and policing are still legitimate uses of State powers insofar as they protect society and administer justice, but they are only of secondary importance compared to the Church's responsibility to revive the criminal's spiritual wellbeing. Thus Soloviev and Ivan differ on a crucial particularity; Ivan wants to eliminate all criminal courts as they are taken over by the Church while Soloviev relegates them to a secondary, auxiliary function. Still, the resemblance is striking, and it is highly unlikely that Dostoevsky gave to Ivan such a view without having Soloviev in mind.

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<sup>2</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 65.

<sup>3</sup> Soloviev, Vladimir Sergeyevich, 1853-1900, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk 2000. *Politics, Law, and Morality: Essays*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 25-26.

### *Church-State Relationship*

In a broader analysis of the proper relationship of politics and religion, Ivan rejects the claim that the Church and State are separate essences and the notion that the Church ought to occupy a particular place within the state. Ivan says,

Thus (that is, for future purposes), it is not the Church that should seek a definite place for itself in the state, like ‘any social organization’ or ‘organization of men for religious purposes’ (as the author I was objecting to refers to the Church), but, on the contrary, every earthly state must eventually be wholly transformed into the Church and become nothing else but the Church, rejecting whichever of its aims are incompatible with the Church. All of this in no way will demean it, will take away neither its honor nor its glory as a great state, nor the glory of its rulers, but will only turn it from a false, still pagan and erroneous path, onto the right and true path that alone leads to eternal goals.<sup>4</sup>

According to Ivan, the Church ought to absorb the State entirely until it is fully aligned with the character of the Church and becomes a functionary of the Church in a theocratic state.

This articulation is similar (though not identical) to Soloviev’s own understanding of the relationship between Church and State. In an essay called “On the Christian State and Society” Soloviev says,

State authority, according to the nature of its activity and according to its origin, is completely independent of spiritual authority. Therefore, their relationship can only be free (and) moral—*according to faith* and conscience. The major question is whether earthly government believes in the Church or not. The government of a Christian State is obliged to believe in the Church. By virtue of this purely moral, and not legal, duty it must voluntarily subject its activity to the higher authority of the Church, not in the sense that this authority would interfere in worldly State affairs, but in the sense that the State itself would subordinate its activity to higher interests, and not lose sight of the kingdom of God... Here the church would be embodied in the State only insofar as the State itself *were inspired* by Christian

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<sup>4</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 62.

principles; the Church would descend to worldly affairs according to the degree to which the State ascended to the Church ideal.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than the State dissolving into the Church, as Ivan recommends, the State still has authority independent of the Church. The State by its own volition ought to subject itself to the Christian principles as embodied by the Church. Soloviev's notion that State authority is "completely independent of spiritual authority" is different than Ivan's argument that the State becomes nothing else but the Church. Still, Soloviev and Ivan share the belief that the Church ought secure sovereignty over the State.

Kostalevsky affirms the striking similarity between Ivan's and Soloviev's understanding of theocracy. For Soloviev, she points out, the distinction between ideal and reality is blurred. All historical phenomena have their basis in ideal reality, and ideal reality that exists only in thought does actually exist, but its temporal status is in a state of becoming rather than being. This is why Soloviev thinks that the Second Coming, an ideal perfected state that will finally be realized on earth, necessitates political action on the part of Orthodox emperors and Patriarchs now in order to prepare for the perfected ideal state.<sup>6</sup> Thus Soloviev's theocratic ideal is not subject to a prophetic Church critique but depends on the willingness of the Orthodox Church to sanctify politics for itself.

Ivan's idea of theocracy would seem to be echoed by Father Zosima, for he agrees with Ivan about the effectiveness of ecclesiastical courts and the union of Church and State for theocracy. But the essential difference between the two is that Zosima qualifies his view with the idea that even the Church itself is subject to the will of God. In *Dostoevsky's Political Thought*, John P. Moran points out that Father Zosima knows society is ill-prepared for theocracy and theocratic policies (such as ecclesiastical courts):

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<sup>5</sup> Soloviev "On the Christian State and Society," *Politics, Law, and Morality* 24-25.

<sup>6</sup> Kostalevsky, "Years of Friendship" in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, 66.

“In principle, Zosima agrees with Father Paissy’s assertion that the state should become the Church, but he disagrees with the notion that political reform should make this happen; it should only happen when society itself is ready for it.”<sup>7</sup> Moran is right to point out Zosima’s central claim:

...Christian society itself is not yet ready...[but is] awaiting its complete transfiguration from society as still an almost pagan organization, into one universal and sovereign Church. And so be it, so be it, if only at the end of time, for this alone is destined to be fulfilled! And there is no need to trouble oneself with time and seasons, for the mystery of times and seasons is in the wisdom of God, in his foresight, and in his love. And that by which human reckoning may still be rather remote, by divine predestination may already be standing on the eve of its appearance, at the door. And so be that too! So be it!<sup>8</sup>

Zosima’s claim here underscores the crucial difference between his own and Ivan’s understanding of theocracy. Whereas Ivan is willing to implement ecclesiastical courts “now” and hope for a gradual change, Zosima says that such policies and structures await the wisdom of God for their implementation. Thus, in “So Be It! So Be It!,” Ivan’s impatience to establish courts “now” and Zosima’s declaration that all is according to God’s timing stand in opposition.

### *Ivan’s Theocracy as Heresy*

Dostoevsky’s decision to bestow upon Ivan a political theory resembling Soloviev’s theocratic work calls for an explanation. If Dostoevsky intended to have Ivan faithfully adhere to Soloviev’s understanding of theocracy, he might have intentionally represented Soloviev’s views of theocracy in order to offer a critique of them. This view should not be dismissed, though given that Soloviev wrote many of his works on

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Avramenko and Lee Trepanier, trans., *Dostoevsky’s Political Thought*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 67.

<sup>8</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 66.



theocracy after the publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*. As Kostalevsky points out, “Soloviev analyzes the historical aspect of the theocratic idea in an analogous way in the *Critique of Abstract Principles*, which, incidentally, was published at the same time and in the same journal, *Russkii vestnik*, as *The Brothers Karamazov*.”<sup>9</sup> In his *Critique*, Soloviev argues that the divine and human realms are only artificially distinct and that the divine must subject the earthly to itself.<sup>10</sup> One can gather from this that by the time of publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Soloviev’s theocratic ideals were mature.

Hence the likelihood that Dostoevsky intentionally articulated Soloviev’s views of ecclesiastical courts and the Church’s relationship to the State intentionally in order to demonstrate the shortcomings of Soloviev’s theocratic view. Both Ellis Sandoz and John Moran point out Dostoevsky’s tendency to believe that theocracy is an ideal to be fulfilled only in eschatological times. Thus through Zosima, it seems that Dostoevsky tempers Ivan’s (and Soloviev’s) more radical views of theocracy. Zosima implicitly cautions against Ivan’s political and religious absolutism by showing that the culture is not yet ready for measures such as ecclesiastical courts.

### *Dostoevsky on Theocracy*

In order to clarify Dostoevsky’s implicit critique of Soloviev’s theocratic vision, we must turn to Dostoevsky’s understanding of theocracy. Although Dostoevsky certainly envisions a distinctly Christian identity for Russia, his theocratic ideals find their realization only in the Parousia.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, theocracy for Dostoevsky is not

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<sup>9</sup> Kostalevsky, “Years of Friendship” in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev* 121-122.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Ellis Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*. Baton Rouge, (LA: Louisiana State University Press 1971), 235.

something to be accomplished by Ivan's notion of ecclesiastical courts. In *The Diary of a Writer*, Dostoevsky says,

What's the use—it may be said—of juggling with words: what is this “Orthodoxy?” And wherein, here, is there a peculiar idea—a special right to the unification of peoples? And would it not be a purely political union like all other similar ones, founded upon the broadest principles, akin to the United States of America—or even broader?... No, this [true idea of Orthodoxy] would be a genuine exaltation of Christ's Cross and the final word of Orthodoxy, which is headed by Russia. This would precisely constitute a temptation to the might of this world, to those who thus far have been triumphant in it and who have always looked upon such “expectations” with disdain and derision; to those who are even unable to understand that one may seriously believe in the brotherhood of men, in the general reconciliation of the nations, in a union founded upon the principles of common service to mankind, and, finally, in man's regeneration based upon the true principles of Christ... [H]ave there not arisen before our eyes immense powers which have reigned in Europe, one of which has been swept away by God's tempest in a day, and in its place a new Empire has come into being—an Empire which, seemingly has never before been surpassed in strength... [Can] the human mind unmistakably predict the fate of the Eastern question? What are the real grounds for despair in the resurrection and unity of the Slavs? Who knows the ways of Providence?<sup>12</sup>

Dostoevsky clearly sees a distinct role for Russia in the unification of humankind in final times. He affirms that Russia is the only God-bearing nation, the political *theotokos*.

However, essential to Dostoevsky's formulation is that Russia's political leadership is subject to “the ways of Providence.” Furthermore, Dostoevsky does not call for the Church to establish universal theocracy, just as Zosima affirms that society is not ready for the reign of the Universal Church through the leadership of Russia; such times are subject to the will of God. In the chapter “So Be It! So Be It!”, Ivan and Paissy's (and Soloviev's) mistake is their attempt to force the union of Church and State prematurely, when it is in fact the completely entirely subject to the will of God and reserved for.

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<sup>12</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, 1949. *The Diary of a Writer*, trans. Boris Brasol (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1949), 364-365.

Though Dostoevsky adheres to an eschatological understanding of theocracy, he is not a strict separationist otherwise. It would be a grave mistake to say that Dostoevsky adopts the Lockean model of absolute separation between the civil and ecclesial sphere in politics. Dostoevsky recognizes that religious neutrality in politics is an atheistic fallacy.

He says in his *Diary*,

...[I]t is necessary that in political organisms the same Christ's truth be recognized as by any believer. Somewhere at least this truth must be preserved; some nation at least must radiate. Otherwise what would happen? Everything would be dimmed, distorted and would be drowned in cynicism. Otherwise you would be unable to restrain the morality of individual citizens, too, and in this event how is the entire organism of the people going to live? *Authority is needed.* It is necessary that the sun shine. The sun appeared in the East, and it is from the East that the new day begins for mankind.<sup>13</sup>

Dostoevsky recognizes the need for the manifestation of Christian truth in politics.

Darkness falls upon nations who lack the influence of Christ's truth. However, his resistance to absolute authority contrived by the Church outside of eschatological intervention is quite clear.

Sandoz also confirms that Dostoevsky's theocratic vision is primarily eschatological:

The emphasis upon the freedom, rationality, and inherent worth of every man, the inviolability of every human person as a unique bearer of the divine image, arises from a range of experience that is inevitably shattering to institutions and inimical to conventions pretentiously claiming plenary authority. It is, therefore, inconceivable that [Dostoevsky] should seriously have expected Russia to gain world dominion and establish the Third Rome as the providential climax of *secular history*. He knew there would always be a "Rome," for indeed men must be governed; and he also knew, unless great precautions were taken, this political dominion could totally absorb the life and spiritual freedom of the human being, thereby essentially maiming him. As powerful as are the elements of apocalyptic eschatology in the work of Dostoevsky, they remained symbolic of hope in the universal redemption of man through grace, emblematic of the open horizon evoked by his philosophy of man and history, the axiological component of his faith; *but they did not form the goal of a concrete program of political*

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<sup>13</sup> Italics added. Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, 609.

*activism*... The eschatological element [of theocracy] is introduced and given pronounced emphasis, but never is it suggested that the free universal theocracy can be achieved either *without providential intervention* or at any particular time.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps Sandoz slightly exaggerates in claiming that apocalyptic eschatology is only a symbolic hope for Dostoevsky and that Dostoevsky resisted absolute authority in institutions for the sake of individual freedom. As we saw from the passage of Dostoevsky's *Diary*, he certainly sees a distinct role for Russia in human redemption. However, Sandoz is right to point out that Dostoevsky does not seek to establish this reality through political absolutism or outside the confines of eschatological intervention. Sandoz says that free universal theocracy is subject to providential intervention, and Dostoevsky similarly says, "Who knows the ways of Providence?"

Conversely, Soloviev places the burden almost entirely on Orthodox theocracy to complete the work Christ left for all Orthodox. For example, the end of Part One of *Russia and the Universal Church*, Soloviev calls to mind the parable of the master who leaves work for the world to be accomplished in his absence, suggesting that the task of the Orthodox Church is to establish a theocratic regime prior to the Eschaton. Soloviev says,

Therefore we must all unite to complete the building upon the existing foundations. Shall we have time to finish before the Master's return, or not?...[H]e did tell us explicitly to do everything to continue his work; and, moreover, that we should do more than he had done... After these two provisional incarnations [of the Church: the Greco-Roman world and the Romano-German world], she [the Church] awaits her third and last incarnation [Russia]... Your word, O peoples of the world, is free and universal Theocracy, the application of Christianity to public life, the Christianizing of politics...<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Italics added. Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 234-235.

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Sergeyevich Soloviev, "Part One: The State of Religion in Russia and the Christian East" in *Russia and the Universal Church* (London: Geoffrey Bles/Centenary Press, 1948), 22-23

Soloviev quite explicitly calls Christianity, particularly the Russian Orthodox Church, to reform and divinize politics prior to the coming of Christ. According to Soloviev, Christ left to Christians the task of establishing the politically sovereign Church. Soloviev even goes so far in his political writings to suggest that a Christian monarch ought to govern the state, being subject only to his inward Orthodox conscience while subjecting his outward reign to the Christian principles of the Church.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that near the end of his life Soloviev became somewhat disillusioned with the practicability of establishing theocracy within the confines of secular history. He arrives at a similar position as Dostoevsky's, where Russian theocracy becomes primarily an eschatological reality. Kostalevsky says, in part quoting Soloviev,

"As I accumulated life experience without any change in the essence of my convictions, I came more and more to doubt the usefulness and feasibility of those external designs to which my so-called best years were devoted. To be disappointed with this meant to return to philosophical pursuits, which for a time had been pushed far aside." If, ignoring Trubetskoi's advice, we accept Soloviev's self-appraisal, we must acknowledge that the philosopher became disappointed with "external designs," that is, with a historiosophic utopia, but not with the philosophical ideal of a theocratic conception...<sup>17</sup>

Soloviev became disillusioned with the prospect of bringing theocratic rule within the scope of human historical phenomena. It would require providential intervention, an idea which Dostoevsky has endorsed in his *Diaries* and likely in the mouth of Zosima.

Soloviev's disillusionment with pre-eschatological Orthodox theocracy seems to be evident a short story he wrote towards the end of his life in 1900. "A Short Story of the Anti-Christ" has substantial overlap with the theocratic totalitarianism of Ivan's Inquisitor. Like the Inquisitor, Soloviev's Anti-Christ seeks to enslave humanity. In both, there is a false Church that manipulates the masses through miracle, mystery, and

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<sup>16</sup> Soloviev, *Politics, Law, and Morality*, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Kostalevsky, "Years of Friendship" in *Dostoevsky and Soloviev*, 118.

authority. In Soloviev's tale, the Anti-Christ is universally sovereign until the Second Coming, when Christ finally fully restores Himself as head of the Church, living and reigning in peace with Jews and Christians. The establishment of a peaceful, sovereign Church comes only after Christ's return to earth. The sovereign Church that exists prior to Christ's arrival, however, is demonic. It seems that Soloviev eventually aligned himself with Dostoevsky's position, a position criticizing the institution of absolute ecclesial sovereignty prior to the Eschaton.

Thus the opposition between Ivan and Zosima resembles Soloviev's and Dostoevsky's positions on theocracy, respectively. Ivan's desire to establish theocracy via Church control and Soloviev's belief in humanity's ability to install a theocratic regime are implicitly absolutist and totalitarian. In the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoevsky shows what such thinking leads to: a fearful correction of God's alleged mistakes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Grand Inquisitor: Totalitarian Theocracy Epitomized

Part of the genius of the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor is the multiplicity of ideas it treats and the questions it poses within a few pages. Though multiple, the objections that the Inquisitor raises are not isolated and incoherent. The Inquisitor's multifaceted indictment of Christ is informed by its absolutist politics, especially as he attempts to make a political regime the *summum bonum* of human existence. In this chapter, I show how Ivan uses human suffering as a justification for elevating politics to a totalitarian status. An absolutist politico-Church regime, according to the Inquisitor, extinguishes humanity's freedom so that they can no longer torment one another. This Inquisitorial regime echoes Ivan's earlier article on theocracy and turns inside out the totalitarianism of absolutist Orthodox theocracy proposed in his earlier essay. In doing so, I suggest that through Ivan Dostoevsky is offering a critique of Soloviev's notion of theocracy. In his essay "This Star Will Shine Forth from the East," John P. Moran notices that Ivan's article about Orthodox theocracy reeks of Inquisitorial authority:

In point of fact, Dostoevsky is primarily opposed to any Christian Church that attempts to exercise the type of Inquisitorial authority we see in this chapter ["So Be It! So Be It!"]. To illustrate this, Dostoevsky provides a Russia-based analogy in chapters 3 through 5 of Book I with the narrative dealing with Ivan Karamazov's ideas about the appropriate role of the ecclesiastical courts within the Russian state... The point is that for Dostoevsky, even within a Russian Orthodox Monastery, one finds the dangerous temptation of authority.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John P. Moran, "The Star Will Shine Forth from the East," in *Dostoevsky's Political Thought*, eds. Richard Avramenko and Lee Trepanier, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 64.

Thus Moran recognizes that Ivan's defense of ecclesiastical courts is analogous to the Inquisitorial regime. I explore this relationship in detail and attempt to show that the Orthodox regime Ivan proposes and the Inquisitor's Catholic regime are inverse manifestations of the same totalitarianism. I also discuss Dostoevsky's account of freedom as it is set against Ivan's, an account revealed not discursively through the exposition of ideas but narratively through events and characters.

### *Ivan's Euclidean Indictment*

In the chapters of *The Brothers Karamazov* leading up to "The Grand Inquisitor," Ivan reveals to Alyosha his rigid either/or logic concerning the incommensurability of divine goodness and human suffering. He begins by telling Alyosha about his Euclidean mind, an explanation that at first seems a bit out of place. He says,

...[I]f God exists and if he indeed created the earth, then, as we know perfectly well, he created it in accordance with Euclidean geometry, and he created human reason with a conception of only three dimensions of space. At the same time there were and are even now geometers and philosophers, even some of the most outstanding among them, who doubt that the whole universe, or, even more broadly, the whole of being, was created purely in accordance with Euclidean geometry; they even dare to dream that two parallel lines, which according to Euclid cannot possibly on earth, may perhaps meet somewhere in infinity... I [on the other hand] have a Euclidean mind, an earthly mind, and therefore it is not for us to resolve things that are not of this world.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Ivan insists on Euclidean geometry as the governing method for understanding all phenomena. He admits that there are some who think outside of a Euclidean paradigm, but he is unable to do so. In explaining his reasoning to Alyosha, Ivan demonstrates that he takes evidence at face value and is unwilling to look beyond immediate circumstances of the temporal world. For Ivan, using Euclidian geometry to assess phenomena is the

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<sup>2</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 235.



only way to acquire certain knowledge. Using mathematical systems as an epistemological method is a characteristic of the Enlightenment search for absolute certainty. Ivan is therefore influenced by Western philosophic methods and is only informed by the tangible in constructing his theories.

But as Ivan continues to disclose his inner life to Alyosha, the reason for his insistence on Euclidean logic becomes clear. Ivan says,

I myself will perhaps cry out with all the rest... 'Just art thou, O Lord!' but I do not want to cry out with them. While there's still time, I hasten to defend myself against it, and therefore I absolutely renounce higher harmony. It is not worth one little tear of even that one tormented child who beat her chest with her little fist and prayed to 'dear God' in a stinking outhouse with her unredeemed tears... I'd rather remain with my unrequited suffering and my unquenched indignation *even if I am wrong*. Besides, they have out too high a price on harmony; we can't afford to pay so much for admission. And therefore I hasten to return my ticket.<sup>3</sup>

Here, Ivan defines the two parallel lines that cannot meet. One line is divine goodness, while the other is the gruesome suffering that children undergo, as Ivan powerfully illustrates with horrific news stories. Thus to Ivan, there is no way the two lines of human suffering (especially children) and godly goodness can meet. A good God and suffering children cannot exist with in a single cosmic whole.

Already a red flag emerges in Ivan's indictment of God by means of second-hand stories collected from newspapers instead of citing the misery of people he knows personally. Ivan preys upon stories of people who are faceless to him in order to make his case. He neglects the foundational premise necessary for a true humanitarian, i.e., he fails to recognize the image of God in those who suffer. Without insistence on the inherent dignity that characterizes all God-bearing beings, Ivan and his Inquisitor demonstrate

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<sup>3</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 245.

their false humanitarianism. Thus Ivan's use of human suffering in his indictment of God is founded upon on a one-sided manipulation of horrific stories for his own purposes.

### *The Inquisitor's Indictment of Christ*

After Ivan makes his case, Alyosha responds to Ivan's powerful articulation of how human suffering, particularly the suffering of children, makes it impossible to accept the goodness of God's world. Alyosha points out that Christ is the one and only being who has the right to heal the suffering human beings inflict on each other, even children. He alone has taken the world's suffering onto himself, thus enabling his followers to embrace it, even if in agony.<sup>4</sup> Alyosha's invocation of Christ leads Ivan to recite his parable to Alyosha. In it, he attempts to justify a theocratic and totalitarian regime that removes human suffering.

The Inquisitor indicts Christ for granting to humanity freedom that they ultimately cannot maintain. Humanity, according to the Inquisitor, is too feeble and wicked for the sort of freedom Christ grants to them. He says,

They will finally understand that freedom and earthly bread in plenty for everyone are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share among themselves. They will also be convinced they are incapable of being free, because they are feeble, depraved, nonentities and rebels.<sup>5</sup>

Earlier Ivan established the problem that human suffering poses: it makes God's world unacceptable. Now, the Inquisitor identifies freedom as the specific cause of humanity's torments. Freedom, according to the Inquisitor, is an unfitting *modus vivendi* for a race so feeble and fearful. According to the Inquisitor, humanity is incapable of participating in a

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<sup>4</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 246.

<sup>5</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 253.

communal life together and thus “sharing,” even when there is plenty of bread. Freedom within community is unsuitable for such a race.

In identifying freedom as the root cause of humankind’s torments, the Inquisitor sets himself up to impose a remedy to the ills plaguing the human race. If freedom is the reason for humanity’s misery, then the only appropriate solution is to eradicate freedom. He says,

With us everyone will be happy, and they will no longer rebel or destroy each other, as in in your freedom, everywhere. Oh, we shall convince them that they will only become free when they resign their freedom to us, and submit to us... They themselves will be convinced we are right, for they will remember the what horrors of slavery and confusion your freedom led them... They will become timid and look to us in fear, like chicks to a hen.<sup>6</sup>

The Inquisitor’s solution to the plight of humanity is its enslavement so that it becomes virtually animalistic. The Inquisitor recommends a regime absolutely sovereign over the human race’s entire existence until it becomes an anthill of fixed and mindless activity. Ironically, in claiming to be a humanitarian, the Inquisitor deprives humankind of its humanness.

A crucial feature of the Inquisitorial regime is that it is theocratic. In the parable, the Roman Catholic Church embodies this Inquisitorial theocracy. The Inquisitor declares to Christ, “...[W]e shall say that we are obedient to you and rule in your name.”<sup>7</sup> The Catholic Church thus poses as the true Church in order to justify its absolutist rule over the masses. In speaking of authority (the third temptation posed by Satan in the wilderness), the Inquisitor says that the Catholic Church took “that last gift he [the devil] offered you when he showed you all the kingdoms of the earth: we took Rome and the

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<sup>6</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 258-259.

<sup>7</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 253.

sword of Caesar from him [Christ], and proclaimed ourselves sole rulers of the earth...’’<sup>8</sup>

Thus the theocratic regime is not only absolute in the sense that it exercises complete authority over individuals, but it also absorbs all nations and political regimes under its reign, making Roman Catholicism the true universal theocracy.

In recalling Ivan’s earlier essay on theocracy, one can see the irony that Ivan’s article and his poem are the perfect inverse of one another. The Inquisitor calls for the State to become the Church, subsuming all political and moral authority unto itself. But in doing so, the Church’s allegiance is with the devil, and it thus with a secular, anti-theist regime.<sup>9</sup> The Inquisitor’s regime is essentially a religious State that has absorbed the Church into itself, using its power to reduce the masses to abject submission. On the other hand, in his earlier article defending Orthodox theocracy, Ivan describes the Church’s absorption of the state into itself until it becomes “nothing but the Church.” These two regimes are inverse: the deep irony is that they are a mirror of one another. In mirroring each other, the Orthodox theocracy and Catholic theocracy are but counter embodiments of the same thing: a radically totalitarian theocracy.

Both regimes share an underlying impatience. The Orthodox regime seems Christian because it is motivated by an impatient longing for the Kingdom of God to come on earth by way of redemptive forgiveness. The Inquisitor’s Catholic regime, on the other hand, is impatient with the wretched human condition that cannot handle freedom. Both, however, are fed by a deep dissatisfaction with the fallen condition of humanity and they both attempt to cure it through totalitarian political measures.

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<sup>8</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 257.

<sup>9</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 258.

This is a place where Dostoevsky's prophetic insight has given pause because of the horrors of that would later occur in his own native Russia. After the introduction of Enlightenment principles to Russia, political unrest began to ferment throughout the great nation. In an effort to remedy the unrest, Russia became a totalitarian Communist state. Some, especially the Slavophiles of Russia, sought a remedy in the form of Russian Orthodox theocratic totalitarianism. Instead, Russian politics embraced an atheist absolutism resembling in many ways the regime of the Grand Inquisitor. The risky freedom of the people was taken away and replaced by the "guaranteed" security of bread, work, and protection provided by the omniscient Soviet state.

Thus in turning inside out Soloviev's conception of totalitarian Orthodox theocracy through the Inquisitor's Catholic totalitarian regime, Dostoevsky proved to be prophetic. The Inquisitor makes explicit what is implicit in Ivan and Soloviev's teachings on absolutist theocracy. He shows that any political solution involving an absolutely sovereign regime prior to the Eschaton is doomed to commit evils worse than those it seeks to remedy. Absolute power accumulated within a political regime, even when it is the Church exercising this power, extinguishes the freedom of its people.

Initially, it might seem odd that Ivan gives a seemingly well-intentioned defense of Orthodox theocracy but later gives a much more demented image of Catholic theocracy to mirror his earlier vision. Was he being deceptive during his earlier defense of Russian Orthodox Theocracy? How could a well-intended effort to establish Orthodox theocracy translate to an intentional degradation of humanity? After all, when Soloviev wrote about theocracy he surely did not intend for the disturbing debasement of humanity of the Inquisitorial regime. Like Ivan during his earlier defense of theocracy, Soloviev

seems to have the best interest of humanity and the Church in mind. One reason for this could be that through Ivan's original well-intended portrayal of theocracy, Dostoevsky might be showing that regardless of intentions, any attempt to establish theocracy prior to the Eschaton through the magisterium of the Church is doomed from the start. Both Soloviev and Ivan (initially) seem to have a well-intended approach to theocracy, but this does not negate the totalitarian, despotic result of such implementing such a vision of theocracy. This inevitable result of human degradation under the yoke absolute despotism is exactly what the Inquisitor's regime demonstrates.

### *Dostoevsky's Alternative*

Before showing how true freedom is essential to the rich communal life that Dostoevsky recommends, it is necessary to show where the Inquisitor went wrong in his conception of freedom, as he denounces Christ:

“Instead of taking over men's freedom, you increased it and forever burdened the kingdom of the human soul with its torments. You desired the free love of man, that he should follow you freely, seduced and captivated by you. Instead of the firm ancient law, man had henceforth to decide for himself with a free heart what is good and what is evil, having only your image before him as a guide.”<sup>10</sup>

The Inquisitor frames freedom as absolute, individual autonomy over oneself as one determines what is objectively true about good and evil for oneself. And rather than envisioning Christ as the incarnate Son of God who reorients human freedom so that it makes his followers radically accountable to every other human being, the Inquisitor reduces Jesus to a slightly larger version of oneself—a mere “guide.” Such a view of freedom grants powers to the individual that the individual does not actually possess in

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<sup>10</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 255.

isolation from communal life deriving from faith in the communal God. The Inquisitor's justification of his totalitarian theocracy depends upon it, for according to him this freedom is the central cause of human misery. Though he does not take his argument to its logical conclusion, Ivan's earlier defense of an Orthodox theocracy would also have enslaved the people, albeit a slavery in the name of and for the sake of the church rather than the state.

Yet Dostoevsky offers an alternative account of human freedom, one conducive to redemption of humanity from its sinful condition. It is found in bearing complete responsibility for the sins of one's neighbor. Zosima says:

If the wickedness of people arouses indignation and insurmountable grief in you, to the point that you desire to revenge yourself upon the wicked... go at once and seek torments for yourself, as if you were guilty for their wickedness. Take these torments upon yourself and suffer them, and your heart will be eased, and you will understand you, too, are guilty, for you might have shone to the wicked, even like the only sinless One, but you did not. If you had shone, your light would have lighted the way for others, and the one who did wickedness would perhaps not have done so in your light.<sup>11</sup>

Father Zosima's exhorts Madame Khokhlakov to embrace an active love of neighbor, a love that necessarily underlies one's decision to assume responsibility for the sins of neighbors. He explains the transformative powers of this radical love:

[You will be convinced of God] by the experience of active love. Try to love your neighbors actively and tirelessly. The more you succeed in loving, the more you'll be convinced of the existence of God and the immortality of your soul. And if you reach complete selflessness in the love of your neighbor then undoubtedly you will believe, and no doubt will even be able to enter your soul. This has been tested. It is certain.<sup>12</sup>

Here, freedom is not a sovereign individual forced to determine what reality is, but is found in submitting oneself by her own free will into a communion of love with her

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<sup>11</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 323.

<sup>12</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 56.

neighbor. In doing this, she will come to know truth by knowing God in service of others. The Inquisitor misreads humankind's free condition as one that must lead to self-enslavement, and he frames his entire totalitarian regime as a corrective to it. Instead of treating people as nonentities and using newspaper stories of strangers to indict God, as Ivan does, Dostoevsky calls for people to situate themselves in communities allowing us to embrace an active love of neighbor.

Grushenka and Dmitri powerfully demonstrate this *modus vivendi*. Though he was not his father's murderer, Dmitri wanted to go to Siberia in order "to suffer and be purified by suffering!"<sup>13</sup> Dmitri demonstrates the selfless love of neighbor by fully identifying himself with those who suffer, placing him in stark contrast with Ivan who uses those who suffer as trump card in his argument. Grushenka also demonstrates this radical love of neighbor when she decides to join Dmitri in Siberia and share in his suffering. She is willing to give up her life in Russia so that she might suffer with Dmitri and be transformed with him. Ironically, they acquire true freedom in their willingness to enter the prison in Siberia. Before their conversion, they had been enslaved by their self-absorption and lack of love for another. Dmitri had been enslaved by lust for Grushenka, and she was absorbed by her pride in taunting Dmitri and Fyodor. Once they submit to one another in mutual love, however, they become free in true communion with one another.

Alyosha's friendship with the schoolboys offers another counterexample to the Inquisitor's false account of freedom. The schoolboys had previously scorned Ilyusha and threw stones at him. Eventually, however, they surround Ilyusha in a community of deep

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<sup>13</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 509.



love for one another, especially evidenced in their care for Ilyusha and his family as he is dying. In the final scene of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Alyosha is Dostoevsky's Christ figure, exhorting the boys to hold tightly to the memories they share. The beauty of this scene is moving, and it demonstrates that individuals are not born into utter obscurity, grappling in the darkness to find reality; rather, the *Imago Dei* stamped upon each individual enables all to bear their light to one another. This understanding in love is precisely what occurs in the community of schoolboys whom Alyosha shepherds.

David Walsh describes such communal love in the context of Dostoevsky's political thought. He says,

Indeed it can be said that he [Dostoevsky] remained from first to last a "Christian socialist." What changed completely was his conception of how a Christian socialism was to be realized. From an advocacy of change in the institutional structure of society as paramount, he came to insist on the primacy of an inner spiritual regeneration of the person as the principle and goal. In place of a change through revolution, he sought a transformation through conversion.<sup>14</sup>

Walsh later adds:

Its foundation is the recognition that "individual self-betterment" is the beginning and the end of all political organization, that the regeneration of the inner person is more important than institutional reform and that the suffering appeal of individual example is the way toward it.<sup>15</sup>

Walsh emphasizes too strongly the individualism of political engagement in *The Brothers Karamazov*; to Dostoevsky, any conception of transformation, whether personal or political, occurs in the context of communal brotherhood. Nonetheless, he is right to point out that Dostoevsky does not rely on ecclesial totalitarianism for the spiritual regeneration of humankind. Thus Dmitri, Grushenka, Alyosha, and the boys embody this

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<sup>14</sup> David Walsh, "Dostoevsky's Discovery of the Christian Foundation of Politics," in *Dostoevsky's Political Thought*, eds. Richard Avramenko and Lee Trepanier, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Walsh, "Dostoevsky's Discovery," 29.

personal transformation. They transform the world around them through their spiritual conversions. Rather than suggesting an eradication of the human free will and reducing humanity to animals, as the Inquisitor suggests, Dostoevsky shows through these characters that human beings become fulfilled by such radical transformations. This latter approach to communal life is more potent because, unlike the Inquisitor's, it affirms the *Imago Dei* of each human. These fictional examples of communal love reveal the brotherhood of Christian socialism that is the foundation of Dostoevsky's political thought.

### *Conclusion*

If a western student attempts to study Dostoevsky's evaluation of theocracy in *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is crucial to realize that theocracy is a fundamental feature of eschatology and ecclesiology in Russian Orthodoxy. Politics and religion are not naturally separate categories within the Orthodox framework. Vladimir Soloviev's zeal in dealing with theocracy is based upon this understanding, but his conception of Orthodox theocracy tosses off the eschatological context that Dostoevsky sees as essential and takes on an absolutist form whose consequences are born out in the Inquisitor's totalitarian regime. Dostoevsky turns inside out the conception of Orthodox theocracy and narratively offers an alternative political solution: immersion in a community of radical love of neighbor. In our own time of political turmoil rife with party antagonism, Dostoevsky's alternative to totalitarian theocracy leaves his readers to ponder the

question, “Are there ways to incorporate this radical vision of brotherhood and sisterhood bonded by selfless love in our own political community?”

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