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Dostoevsky and the legend of the Grand Inquisitor.
Translated and with an afterword by Spencer E. Roberts.
Ithaca [N. Y.] Cornell University Press [1972]

xi, 232 p. 22 cm. \$9.50

Translation of *Legenda o Velikom inkvizitorŕe*.

"What appears here is the complete text of the third edition [1906] of the book, minus the appendix."

1. Dostoevskii, Fedor Mikhailovich, 1821-1881. *Brat'ia Karamazovy*. Book 5, chapter 5. 2. Gogol', Nikolai Vasil'evich, 1809-1852. I. Title. II. Title: Legend of the Grand Inquisitor.

PG3325.B73R613 1972
ISBN 0-8014-0694-3

891.7'3'3 850

79-37754
MARC

Dostoevsky and the Legend
of the Grand Inquisitor

Dostoevsky and the Legend
of the Grand Inquisitor

by Vasily Rozanov

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Translated and with an Afterword

by Spencer E. Roberts

Cornell University Press

ITHACA AND LONDON

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First published 1972 by Cornell University Press.
Published in the United Kingdom by Cornell University Press Ltd., 2-4 Brook Street, London W1Y 1AA.

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International Standard Book Number 0-8014-0694-3
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 79-37754

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC.

*Librarians: Library of Congress cataloging information
appears on the last page of the book.*

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Acknowledgments

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following publishers for permission to reprint brief excerpts from copyrighted materials: to Hillary House Publishers, Ltd., New York, and Bowes and Bowes, Ltd., London, from Renato Poggioli's *Rožanov* (1962); and to Fink Verlag, Munich, from Dmitrij Tŝiŝewskij's "Neskol'ko slov o myslitele i pisatele Rožanove," the Introduction to Fink's reprint of *Legenda o velikom inkvizitore* (1970).

Thanks are also due to Emilia Häusler, without whose constant encouragement the translation would not have been completed.

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Translator's Preface

That much quoted critic of Russian literature D. S. Mirsky called Vasily Rozanov "the greatest writer of his generation." Few who are well acquainted with Rozanov's work would say that this estimate is far off the mark, although they might prefer simply to call him a writer and thinker of genius. That Rozanov has not been published in his native country since his death in 1919 is no reflection on the quality of his work: He was a political conservative and devoted much of his writing to sex and religion; thus, from the official Soviet viewpoint, he is dangerous and subversive.

In 1891, Rozanov published, in several issues of *The Russian Messenger*, *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*. It was the first serious scholarly attempt to look deep inside Dostoevsky in order to observe the workings of his mind and discover the origins of his ideas. It was also the first time that anyone, while considering Dostoevsky's ideological and artistic development, had placed great stress on *Notes from the Underground*. Indeed Rozanov shows a remarkable understanding here of Dostoevsky's mind and soul, certainly a far deeper understanding than anyone had up till then. (Undoubtedly he had obtained much help in this matter from Dostoevsky's former mistress, Apollinaria Suslova, whom Rozanov had married.) As a critic has noted, one senses in the book almost a spiritual kinship

between the two men. Like his contemporary Lev Shestov, who a few years later was to write his brilliantly perceptive book *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: The Philosophy of Tragedy*, in which the influence of *The Inquisitor* is obvious, Rozanov sees Dostoevsky as a man who is without faith but who longs for it deeply, as a man on the side of his godless heroes.

The book is also noteworthy for its attempts, in the early chapters, to establish Dostoevsky's place in Russian literature and to re-examine Gogol's previously established position. According to Rozanov, Gogol was no realist: He did not portray live human beings in his works, but a long series of "dead souls." Gogol's "soulless dark genius" and strange humor repelled him, as did the writings of the positivists and radicals because of their political views. Tolstoy pleased him because of the atmosphere of domesticity in his works, but displeased him because of his tendency to teach. Chekhov left him indifferent: "He's nothing special. I can understand his success, but I don't approve." But Dostoevsky, who always moved him and whom he called a "pregnant big-loined writer," appealed to him in almost every respect. Russian literature after Gogol, he claimed, did not follow Gogol's methods of character portrayal, but represented a complete rejection of them. Because this idea met with some resistance from the critics, Rozanov included two essays¹ in the book, expanding on his argument and offering some facts to support his earlier conclusions. At any rate, *The Inquisitor*, along with Shestov's book, is one of the better studies on Dostoevsky to come

¹ They, as well as Shestov's book, appear in English in *Essays in Russian Literature: The Conservative View*, translated and introduced by Spencer Roberts (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1968).

out of prerevolutionary Russia. It set the trend, a few years later in the age of symbolism, of interpreting Dostoevsky as a kind of prophet, a source of revelation, and it gave rise to outstanding books in a similar vein, by Merezhkovsky, Berdyaev, Ivanov, and others. Thus, the book was influential, and one finds it difficult to understand why it was not translated into English long ago.

A characteristic of Rozanov's style is his constant use of italics. This is justifiable in his later works, where, along with numerous other typographical devices, it is intended to give the effect of actual speech. But here, where its purpose is merely emphasis, and where it is greatly overworked, it tends to jar. Moreover, to indicate each time in the numerous quotations the origin of the italics would be to scatter the pages with obstacles. Therefore, I have dispensed with most of them.

Here and there, while quoting Dostoevsky, Rozanov omits a word or two. As these omissions are insignificant, I have corrected them without so indicating in a footnote. In a few instances, I have also removed from the footnotes page numbers referring to early Russian editions of Dostoevsky's works, and in one case, I have shortened a long footnote. My own notes are marked [Tr.], to distinguish them from Rozanov's. Otherwise, what appears here is the complete text of the third edition of the book, minus the appendix.

SPENCER E. ROBERTS

Brooklyn College
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Dostoevsky and the Legend
of the Grand Inquisitor

by Vasily Rozanov

And God said, "The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; what if he now reaches out his hand and takes fruit from the tree of life also, eats it and lives forever?"

So the Lord God drove him out of the Garden of Eden to till the ground from which he had been taken.

Genesis 3

In one of his fantastic stories, Gogol tells of an old moneylender, who, as he was dying, summoned an artist and implored him to paint his portrait. Having begun the work, the artist suddenly felt an irresistible disgust for what he was doing, and mixed in with his disgust there was a kind of fear. The moneylender, however, kept a close eye on the progress of the work, his face shone with a kind of longing and anxiety—but when he saw that at least the eyes were finished, his face flashed with joy. The artist backed several steps away to take a look at his painting, but no sooner did he glance at it than his knees began to tremble: the eyes of the unfinished portrait shone with life, with real life, with the very life that was already dying out in his model, and which by some mysterious magic had been transferred to this copy. The palette and brush fell from his hands, and he ran from the room in terror. Several

hours later, the moneylender died. The artist ended his days in a monastery.¹

For some reason or other, this story automatically came to mind when I decided to speak of Dostoevsky's famous "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." Despite all its unreality, there seems to flash in it also a kind of truth, and, most likely, that was what had led it out into the light of my consciousness from a series of other half-forgotten stories and connected the thought of it with the subject that interests us now. Did not Gogol express in it a certain secret of the artistic soul, perhaps after having recognized it in himself? That life which had passed over to the work of art, that yearning desire not to die before such a transfer had been accomplished—all this seems to remind us of something that is of primary importance in the life of artists, poets, and composers themselves. In Gogol's story, however, the embodied and the embodier are separate, and this masks the hidden allegory. Combine the two, and you will get an idea of the fate and personality of every great creative talent.

In that place "from whose bourn no traveller returns," there is, of course, life; but we have never been told anything about it, and, in all probability, it is a life that is quite special, too abstract for our living desires, somewhat cold and spectral. That is why man so clings to the earth, so fears to be separated from it; but, since this is nevertheless inevitable sooner or later, he makes every effort to see that his separation from it is not complete. The thirst for

¹Rozanov is referring here to the original version of "The Portrait," which Gogol had published in 1835, in *Arabesques*. A later revised version, published in 1842, presents this incident somewhat differently. [Tr.]

immortality, for an earthly immortality, is the most amazing feeling in man, and it is one that is quite obvious. Is this not why we so love our children, why we tremble for their life more than for our own, which is already fading? And when we have the joy of living to see their children as well, why we attach ourselves to them even more closely than we do to our own? Even in a moment of complete doubt as to the existence of life beyond the grave, we find here a certain consolation: "Even though we die," we say in our heart, snuggling up to our earth, which we find so dear, "our children will remain behind, and after them, their children."² But this kind of immortality, this life of our blood after we have become a mere handful of ashes, is much too incomplete: it is a kind of severed existence, distributed among countless generations, and it does not preserve the main thing that we love in ourselves—our individuality, the whole of our personality. The life that is attained in great works of the spirit is incomparably more complete; in them, the creator immortalizes his personality with all its special traits, with all the windings of his mind and the secrets of his conscience. At times he does not wish to reveal some side of his soul, and yet the thirst in him for immortality, for an individual life different from all others is so great that he conceals and secretes it among other things, and, all the same, he leaves in his works a reflection of this side of him. Centuries pass, the necessary feature is revealed, and there arises the complete image of one who is no longer afraid of being embarrassed before other people. "Build your pyramid to yourself higher, poor man,"³ says Gogol, as if filled with these feelings.

² F. M. Dostoevsky, *A Raw Youth*.

³ N. V. Gogol, *Arabesques*, Part II, "Life."

At any rate, the feeling of joy experienced during this creative work serves at least as a sort of bright spot in the midst of the darkness that usually surrounds the soul of great poets, artists, and composers. So deeply and so often irrevocably cut off from the living world of people surrounding them, from their joys and sorrows, they feel themselves linked across the centuries with other generations of people; they mentally live in their life, they help them in their work, and they rejoice at their joys. It is a strange and somewhat fantastic life, whose features, however, we observe when we carefully read all outstanding biographies. It was not without reason that the late Professor Usov, a naturalist, but at the same time a connoisseur of art, called Gogol's world "a world of illusion."⁴

It is remarkable that with almost every creator in the field of art, we find one center, now and then several, but always few, around which all his works are grouped: these works represent, as it were, attempts to express some agonizing thought, and when it is finally expressed, there appears a creation that is warmed by the supreme love of its creator and bathed in an unfading light for others, whose hearts and minds are attracted to it by an irresistible force. Such are Goethe's *Faust*, Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony," and Raphael's "Sistine Madonna." They are the supreme products of mental activity; they are loved by mankind and known as what it is capable of in its best moments, which, of course, are as rare in world history as are moments of particular lucidity in the life of every man.

And it is on one such work that we wish to pause. It

⁴ See P. Ivantsov, "Recollections of the Views of S. A. Usov on Art," in Book III of *Problems of Philosophy and Psychology* (Moscow, 1890).

is, however, permeated with a peculiar kind of agony, as is all the creative work of the writer we have chosen, as is his very personality. It is the late Dostoevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." As is generally known, this is but one episode in his last work, *The Brothers Karamazov*, but its connection with the plot of that novel is so slight that it can be regarded as a separate work. On the other hand, instead of an outer tie between the novel and the "Legend," there is an inner one: namely, the "Legend" constitutes, as it were, the heart of the whole work, which is only grouped around it as variations are around their theme; in it is concealed the author's cherished idea, without which not only this novel would never have been written, but many of his other works as well: at least they would lack all their best and most sublime passages.

I

As early as 1870, in a letter to Apollon N. Maikov,¹ dated March 25, Dostoevsky wrote among other things of his plan for a large novel, which he had been turning over in his mind for the past two years and would now like to write, taking advantage of some free time. "The idea of this novel," he said in the letter, "is the same one I already wrote you about. It will be my *last novel*. In length, it will equal *War and Peace*, and I think you would praise the idea of it—at least in so far as I can judge from our earlier conversations. This novel will consist of five long stories (about fifteen signatures each; during these past two years, the plan has completely matured in my mind). The stories will be completely independent of each other, so that they could even be sold separately. The first story I have earmarked for Kashpircv: ² in it, the action takes place in the forties. The overall title of the novel is: *The Life of a Great Sinner*,³ but each story will have a title of its own. The main question that will be discussed in all the parts is

¹ Apollon Maikov (1821-1897), an "imaginist" poet whom Dostoevsky highly respected and whom he found a stimulating correspondent. [Tr.]

² The editor of the magazine *Dawn*, who had invited Dostoevsky to complete a story by autumn of that year.

³ I have given this title (*Zhitie velikogo greshnika*) its usual English translation; I should, however, point out that it does not quite convey the Russian meaning. "*Zhitie*," an Old Church Slavic word, means rather "the life of a saint," his "*vita*," and thus provides a nuance that the English translation fails to convey. [Tr.]

the same one that has tormented me consciously and unconsciously all my life—the existence of God. During the course of his life, the hero is at times an atheist, at times a believer, at times a fanatic and a dissenter, and at times again an atheist. The second story will take place entirely in a monastery. On this second story, I have placed all my hopes. Maybe people will say, finally, that I have not always written trifles. I am confiding this only to you, Apollon Nikolaevich: I want to make Tikhon Zadonsky⁴ the leading character of the second story—of course, under a different name, but there will also be a bishop living in retirement in the monastery. A thirteen-year-old boy, who had participated in the perpetration of a crime, precocious and depraved (I know the type), the future hero of the whole novel, is put into the monastery by his parents (our set, cultured) to be educated. This wolf-cub and boy-nihilist becomes a close friend of Tikhon's (you know Tikhon's character and whole person, don't you?). Here also in this monastery, I shall confine Chaadaev⁵ (of course, also under a different name). Why shouldn't Chaadaev be made to spend a year in a monastery? Suppose that after writing his first article, as a result of which doctors had to examine his state of mind weekly, he could no longer re-

⁴ Tikhon Zadonsky (1724-1783), a hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. From 1767 on, he lived as an ordinary monk, first in the Tolshevsky and later the Zadonsky Monastery, where he was admired for his piety and asceticism. He was canonized in 1860. [Tr.]

⁵ Peter Chaadaev (1794-1856), a liberal aristocrat who fell under the influence of mystical Catholicism. In his first "Philosophical Letter," published in 1836, he rejected the Russian heritage and urged that the country unite with Western civilization and the Catholic Church. Tsar Nicholas I declared Chaadaev insane and had him confined to his home. [Tr.]

strain himself and published, for example, abroad, a pamphlet in French—it could very well have been that the authorities would have confined him for this for a year in a monastery. Guests and various other people could come to see Chaadaev. Belinsky,⁶ for example, Granovsky,⁷ or even Pushkin. (Of course, Chaadaev isn't in my novel; I'm only using his type.) In the monastery, there is also Paul Prusky, there is Golubov, and monk Parfeny (I'm an expert on this world and have known the Russian monastery since childhood). But most important is Tikhon and the boy. For heaven's sake, don't tell anyone the contents of this second part . . . I'm confiding this only to you. To others, this might not be worth a cent, but to me it is a treasure. And don't say anything about Tikhon. I wrote Strakhov⁸ about the monastery, but said nothing about Tikhon. Maybe I'll portray a majestic, *positive*, and saintly figure. It will certainly not be a Kostanzhoglo⁹ or the German in *Oblomov*;¹⁰ nor will it be a Lopukhov or a Rakhmetov.¹¹ To tell the truth, I shan't invent anything at all,

⁶ Vissarion Belinsky (1811–1848), a liberal, the founder of modern Russian literary criticism. [Tr.]

⁷ Timofei Granovsky (1813–1855), a history professor, the father of the original Westerners. [Tr.]

⁸ Nikolai Strakhov (1828–1896), an idealist philosopher, a literary critic, a friend of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, and a contributor to Dostoevsky's magazine *Time*. [Tr.]

⁹ The gentleman-farmer in Part II of *Dead Souls*. Gogol wanted to make him a combination of practicality and all the moral virtues. [Tr.]

¹⁰ How do we know: perhaps it is precisely Tikhon who is the Russian *positive* type that our literature has been looking for, and not Lavretsky, not Chichikov, not Rakhmetov, etc." (A postscript of Dostoevsky's to the letter.)

¹¹ The latter two are the heroes of Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is to Be Done?*

but will merely portray the real Tikhon, whom I took to my heart enthusiastically a long time ago. And if it succeeds, I'll consider even this an important achievement for myself. Now don't let anyone know. But for the second novel, for the monastery, I must be in Russia.¹²

Who does not recognize in the hasty and disconnected lines of this letter the first draft of *The Brothers Karamazov*, with its Father Zosima and its pure figure of Alyosha (evidently the divided figure of Tikhon Zadonsky), with its intelligent and depraved Ivan Karamazov (true, he is no longer a boy, but a young man now), with its trip to the monastery (the landowner Miusov is evidently the altered figure of Chaadaev), with its scenes of monastery life, etc.? But Dostoevsky's customary poverty upset his plans. Bound by urgent commitments that he had made to editorial staffs and booksellers, he was obliged to work strenuously, and although much of what he wrote at this time was excellent, nevertheless, none of it was the realization of his heart's dream and his already mature plan. Evidently, he was always waiting for the leisure time that would give him the opportunity to do his work without haste. In addition to his financial need, his sensitive nature was also a great hindrance in this matter; he could not, even for a short time, shut his eyes to current affairs, to the cares and problems of our life and literature. In 1876, he began to publish *The Diary of a Writer*, creating with it a new, original, and excellent form of literary activity, which will probably be destined to play a great role in all troubled times in the future. One might have feared that the extraordinary success of this publication would make it completely impossible

¹² See *Biography and Letters* (St. Petersburg, 1883), Part II, pp. 233-234.

for him to concentrate on some large, unified project, and, as in the case of many plans, the plan for the long novel that he had carefully thought out several years earlier would little by little be smothered and his very enthusiasm for it disappear.

But fate, so often uncharitable to great people from without, always treats with care whatever in them is inward, profound, and sincere. An idea with a future does not die with its bearers, even when death overtakes them unexpectedly or accidentally. Even if only before its coming, submitting to some unconscious and irresistible urge, they tear themselves away from all that is secondary and do what is necessary—the most important thing of their life.

The disorderly and passionate Dostoevsky suddenly became silent before thousands of expectant eyes¹³ and withdrew into himself, “in order to devote myself to a work of fiction.”¹⁴ He reassured the readers of the *Diary* that he needed no more than a year for the work, after which he would again return to his monthly chat with them. But the presentiment that he had expressed seven years earlier¹⁵ was destined to come true: this piece of fiction that he was undertaking did indeed turn out to be his “last novel,” and even his last unfinished literary work. In 1880 and 1881, only one issue of the *Diary* was published each year—one in a moment of particularly great animation,¹⁶ another during a rest period between the first large

¹³ For the success of *The Diary of a Writer*, see the statistics in *Biography and Letters*, Part I, p. 300.

¹⁴ See *Diary of a Writer* (Dec., 1877): “To the Readers.”

¹⁵ See his letter above to Apollon Maikov.

¹⁶ On the occasion of the Pushkin Celebration, the only issue for 1880. It contained Dostoevsky’s Pushkin Speech and his comments on it.

section of the novel and the second, which was supposed "to be almost an independent whole." During this brief rest period, Dostoevsky was destined to end his days. The final volumes of this novel, which was to equal *War and Peace* in length, were not written. The fourteen books that make up the four parts (with the Epilogue) of *The Brothers Karamazov* are a full realization of the first section of this vast artistic epic. Here is what he writes in the Preface to *The Brothers Karamazov* about its overall plan: "Although there is one biography (of the hero, and which serves as the contents of the novel), there are two novels here. The main novel is the second one: it deals with the activity of my hero in our time, or at this very moment. But the first novel takes place thirteen years ago—and, properly speaking, it is no novel at all, but just a single episode from my hero's early youth. It is impossible for me to do without this first novel, because much in the second one would be unintelligible without it."

Evidently, even the outer plan of this work, which he had nurtured for so long, was retained in *The Brothers Karamazov*. And everything necessary for its execution was also done now; in 1879, Dostoevsky made a trip to the famous Optina Pustyn Monastery to refresh his memory about monastery life. In the Elder of this monastery, Father Ambrosius, whose moral and religious authority guides the lives of thousands of people even to this day, he very likely found several valuable and living features for the positive character that he had conceived. But the original plan underwent some changes and acquired many additions. The positive figure of the Elder, whom Dostoevsky had wanted to depict in his novel, could not become its central character as he had originally intended: set in his ways and mo-

tionless, this figure could be sketched, but could not be brought into the action of the reported events. That is why Father Zosima makes only a brief appearance in *The Brothers Karamazov*: he blesses his favorite novice, Alyosha, before sending him out into the world to accomplish a spiritual feat, and then dies. Instead of Zosima, Alyosha had to become the central character of this whole complex work.¹⁷ The moral characterization of Alyosha, as Dostoevsky depicts it, is in the highest degree remarkable. To see in this character nothing more than a repetition of the type of Prince Myshkin (the hero of *The Idiot*) would be a gross blunder. Prince Myshkin, like Alyosha, is pure and irreproachable, but he knows no inner movement, he is devoid of passions, owing to his sickly nature; he aspires to nothing, he seeks to accomplish nothing, he only observes life, but does not participate in it. Thus, passivity is his distinguishing feature. On the contrary, Alyosha's nature is first and foremost active, and at the same time it is lucid and serene. Doubts,¹⁸ even sensual passions¹⁹ and the susceptibility to anger²⁰—there is everything in this complete human character, and at the same time he has in him a certain deep understanding of the many-sidedness of human nature: he is somehow close to and intimate with every person with whom he has to deal. His brother Ivan and Rakitin, the debauched old man his father, and the boy Kolya Krasotkin—

¹⁷ This is definitely stated even in the Preface to *The Brothers Karamazov*.

¹⁸ See his thoughts and words after the death of Father Zosima.

¹⁹ One of his conversations with Rakitin, where he, "a virgin," admits that the Karamazov "storms of passion" are much too intelligible to him.

²⁰ The conversation with his brother Ivan about the sufferings of children.

are all equally accessible to him. But in trying to understand the inner life of another person, he always remains resolute and independent inside himself. He contains an indestructible nucleus, from which run all-penetrating fibers, capable of attaching themselves to, of struggling against, and of overcoming the inner contents of other people. And yet this person, already so strong, appears before us as a mere adolescent—an amazing figure, making an appearance for the first time in our literature. There is no doubt that with the ending (or, more precisely, the main part) of *The Brothers Karamazov* unfinished, we are robbed of many revelations about the human soul, or that it would have contained words that would indeed clarify our path of life. But that was not destined to be; in the part of the novel that we possess, Alyosha only prepares to accomplish a spiritual feat: he listens more than he speaks, from time to time he inserts remarks into the conversations of others, sometimes he asks questions, but mostly he observes in silence. However, all these features, which outline the character, but do not as yet fully express it, have been drawn so cleverly and accurately that even this unfinished figure already sparkles before us with real life. In it, we already perceive a moral reformer, teacher, and prophet, whose breathing, however, stops the instant his mouth is ready to open—a phenomenon unique in literature, and not only in ours. If we wanted to look for an analogy, we would find it not in literature, but in our painting. It is the figure of Jesus in Ivanov's well-known picture: this figure is also distant, but it is already approaching; for the time being, it is moving inconspicuously among other people standing closely together, but nevertheless it is central and dominant over them. Alyosha's image will be remem-

bered in our literature. His name even now is mentioned whenever people encounter some rare and comforting phenomenon in life; and if we are destined some day to be regenerated to something new and better, it is quite possible that he will be the guiding star of that regeneration.

If Alyosha Karamazov is only outlined in the novel and not allowed his say, then his brother Ivan is both outlined and allowed to have his say ("The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor"). Thus, regardless of Dostoevsky's intentions, in as much as he was unable to complete his novel, Ivan became the central figure of the whole work, i.e., strictly speaking, he did so, because the only other figure (Alyosha) that overshadows him did not have a chance to step forward and engage in a moral and ideological struggle with his elder brother. Thus, *The Brothers Karamazov* is really not yet a novel, its action has not even begun: it is only the prologue, without which "what follows would be unintelligible." However, to judge from the prologue, the whole work was bound to become a powerful one, the likes of which it would be difficult to find in world literature: only Dostoevsky, who was capable of containing in himself "both abysses, the abyss above and the abyss below," could write not a funny parody, but a real and serious tragedy of that struggle which for thousands of years already has been rending the human soul—the struggle between the denial of life and its affirmation, between the corruption of the human conscience and its enlightenment. Only Dostoevsky, who had experienced this struggle both in the sheer enthusiasm with which he worked on *Poor People*,²¹ in the noisy Petrashevsky Circle, in the wilds

²¹ See his recollections of this in *The Diary of a Writer* for January, 1877.

of Siberia among convicts, and in his long periods of isolation in Europe, only he could tell us with equal strength both the "pro" and the "contra"²²—the "pro" without hypocrisy and the "contra" without vain conceit.

The characters of Dostoevsky's previous novels can be regarded as preparatory: Ivan Karamazov, portrayed in *The Brothers Karamazov*, is only the last and most complete spokesman of the type that wavers now to one side, now to the other, and who had earlier flaunted themselves before us, now as Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov (*Crime and Punishment*), now as Nikolai Stavrogin (*The Possessed*), and partly as Versilov (*A Raw Youth*). Alyosha Karamazov has his prototype in Prince Myshkin (*The Idiot*) and partly in the person of the narrator of the novel *The Insulted and Injured*. Old Karamazov, "with the profile of a Roman patrician of the time of the decline," who fathers children and then abandons them, who likes to talk of the existence of God "over a bit of cognac," but who, above all, likes to ridicule everything near and dear to man, is the consummation of the type represented by Svidrigailov and old Prince Valkovsky (*The Insulted and Injured*). Dmitry Karamazov, foolish and yet basically noble, a mixture of good and evil (but not deep-seated evil), is a new character. It seems that only the eternally hurried and excited Captain Lebyadkin (*The Possessed*) can remind us of him, at least slightly—of course, only outwardly. Another new character is the fourth brother, Smerdyakov, that illegitimate offspring of Fyodor Pavlovich and "stinking" Elizabeth, a mere fragment of a human being, a spiritual Quasimodo, a synthesis of everything servile in the human mind and the human heart. But this recurrence of leading

²² The title of the two central books in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

characters not only does not detract from the merit of the Karamazov brothers, it increases our interest in them even more: Dostoevsky is first and foremost a psychologist; he does not depict everyday life, in which we constantly seek novelty, but the human soul, with its imperceptible windings and transitions, and in them, we follow the continuity above all, we want to know how some flow of thought resolves itself, what some frame of mind leads to. And from this point of view, *The Brothers Karamazov*, as a final work, is of inexhaustible interest. But in order to understand it fully, we must say a few words about the general significance of Dostoevsky's work.

II

The view¹ that all of our most recent literature derives from Gogol is well known. It would be more accurate to say that as a whole this literature is a rejection of Gogol, a struggle against him. It does indeed have its origin in him if we look only at the surface aspect of the matter—if we compare the devices of its artistic creation, its forms, and themes. Just as with Gogol, a whole series of subsequent writers—Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Ostrovsky, Goncharov, L. Tolstoy—deal only with actual life, and not with what is created in the imagination (Pushkin's "Gypsies," Lermontov's "Mtsyri"), with situations in which we all happen to

¹ It is, by the way, developed by Apollon Grigoriev in his article "A View of Contemporary Fiction and Its Historical Starting Point."

be at times, with relationships into which we all enter. But if we look at the matter from its inner aspect, if we compare, from the standpoint of content, Gogol's work with the work of his alleged successors, then we cannot help seeing that the two are diametrically opposed. True, his eyes as well as theirs were equally fixed on life: but what they saw in it and what they depicted have nothing in common with what he saw in it and depicted. Could not one say that a keen understanding of the inward impulses of man is the sharpest, the most constant, and most distinguishing feature of all our more recent writers? Behind all the actions, the situations, the relationships, we see everywhere in these writers the human soul as the hidden motive force and the creator of all the visible facts. Its agitations, its passions, its fall and enlightenment—these are the object of their constant attention. That is why their works contain so much that is thoughtful; why we love them so and regard the constant reading of their works as a way of obtaining the best possible humanizing education. Now if we turn to Gogol, after having concentrated our attention on this peculiarity as the most important thing of all, we will immediately sense in his work a terrible lack of this very feature—of this feature alone and in him alone. He called his principal work *Dead Souls* and without any foresight expressed in this title the great secret of his creative work and, of course, of himself. He was a brilliant "painter" of outer forms, and to their depiction (the only thing he was capable of) he gave, through some sort of magic, such vitality, almost a sculpturesque quality, that no one noticed that virtually nothing is concealed behind these forms, that there is no soul, that there is nothing that might carry them. It may very well be that the society he depicted was base and evil; it may

very well be that it deserved to be ridiculed: but surely it consisted of people. Is it possible that the great moments of birth and death, the feelings of love and hate common to all human beings, had already vanished for him? And, of course, if not, then how could these figures he depicted for us as his heroes have responded to those great moments and experienced those universal passions? What was beneath their clothing—the only thing we can see on them—that could ever rejoice, regret, or hate as human beings do? And the question arises, if they were capable neither of love, of deep hate, of fear, nor of dignity, then why, after all, did they labor and acquire things, travel about, and transfer things from one place to another? Gogol once depicted children, and those children are the same ugly figures as their fathers, figures that also are only ludicrous, and which are ridiculed just as they are. Once or twice he described the awakening of love in a person, and we see with amazement that the only thing that kindles it is mere physical beauty, the beauty of the female body when viewed by a man (Andrii Bulba and the Polish girl); it acts instantaneously, and after the first moment, there is nothing more to say about it. There are none of those feelings and words that we hear in the plaintive songs of our folk, in the Greek Anthology, in German legends, and everywhere on the whole earth where people love and suffer instead of merely taking delight in the human body. Is it really possible that this was a dream for all mankind which Gogol had exposed, after having finally stripped away the reveries and shown reality? Perhaps it would be more correct to think not that mankind had dreamed and that Gogol alone saw the truth, but, on the contrary, that mankind had felt and known the truth, which it had reflected in the poetry of all nations

for thousands of years, while Gogol himself had dreamed and told us his morbid dreams as if they were reality?

“And why must I perish like a worm?” asks the hero of *Dead Souls* in a difficult moment after having been forced to leave the Customs Service:

askance ish'fisti

And what am I now? What am I good for? How can I look a respectable family-man straight in the face? How can I help being conscious-stricken when I know that I am burdening the earth for nothing? And what will my children say afterwards? “You see,” they will say, “our father was a beast; he didn't leave us a fortune.”

We already know that Chichikov was greatly concerned about his offspring. It is such a ticklish subject! Many a person would perhaps never have thrust his hand so deeply into another man's pocket if it hadn't been for this question, which, for some unknown reason, automatically arises: “What will my children say?” And so this future father, like a cautious tomcat, looking askance with only one eye to see if the master is watching, quickly snatches everything closest to him, whether it is soap, candles, or suet.²

What horror! What despair! And is this really the truth? Surely we have seen old women in city and country churchyards, sitting and crying over the graves of their husbands, even though those husbands had left them in the rags in which they themselves had lived. Have there really been children anywhere, who, as they saw their father dying, went up to their mother and asked: “Will he leave us a fortune?” Surely it is not possible that all the incom-

² *Dead Souls* (edition of 1873).

parable poetry of our folk lamentations,³ by no means inferior to the poetry of *The Lay of Igor's Campaign*, is nothing but falsehood and fabrication. What images, what heartfelt grief, what hopes and recollections! And what a dull, lifeless view of reality one must have had to miss all this, to fail to hear these sounds, to fail to ponder over these sobs. Gogol had a dead view of life, and he saw nothing in it but dead souls. He did not in the least reflect reality in his works, but only drew with amazing skill a series of caricatures of it: and because of this, they stick in our memory in a way that no living images can ever stick. Look carefully at a number of the best portraits of people who are actually alive, people clothed in flesh and blood—and it is a rare one of them that you will remember; but take a look at a very good caricature—and for a long time afterward, even if you wake up in the middle of the night, you will remember it and burst out laughing. In the former, there is a mixture of various features, of both good and bad tendencies, and as they intersect they mutually soften each other; there is nothing bright or sharp in them that strikes us. But in a caricature, one character trait has been singled out, and the whole figure reflects it alone—both by a facial grimace and by unnatural convulsions of the body. It is false, and it sticks in our memory forever. Such is the method of Gogol.

And herein lies the explanation of his whole personality and fate. Acknowledging his genius, we stop before him in amazement. And when we ask ourselves: "Why is he so

³ See *Lamentations of the Northern Region*, collected by Barsov. "Yaroslavna's Lament," the most poetic passage in *The Lay of Igor's Campaign*, is evidently a folk lamentation transferred to that work. Compare the language, the images, and the turns of speech.

unlike everyone else,"⁴ "What makes him so special," we automatically begin to think that this "specialness" is not a surplus of humanity in him, not a plenitude of strength beyond the normal limits of our nature, but, on the contrary, a deep and horrible flaw in that nature, a lack of something everyone else has, of something no one is deprived of. He was so isolated in his soul that he could not come into contact by means of it with any other soul: and that is why he so sensed all the "sculpturesqueness" of outward forms, movements, appearances, and situations. It is said that Gogol—a friend of Pushkin, a contemporary of Granovsky and Belinsky, a member of the Slavophile Circle during the best and purest time of its existence—"could

⁴In *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, one can virtually find all the information necessary to determine the inner process of his creative work. Here is one of those clear and precise passages: "I have already rid myself of many of my shortcomings by transferring them to my *leading characters*, by ridiculing them in those characters and making other people as well laugh at them . . . This will also explain to you why I have not yet depicted for the reader any comforting phenomena or chosen virtuous people as my heroes. One can't think them up in one's head. Until one begins to resemble them a bit oneself, until one acquires by persistence and by force several good qualities in one's own soul, carrion is all that will come from one's pen." ("Four Letters to Various Persons apropos *Dead Souls*"—from the third letter.)

This is a fairly clear expression of the subjective method by which he created all the characters in his works; features of his own soul are forced outward, and there is no mention at all of copying them from something outside himself. Also defined here is the very process of his creation: he takes a single defect, the essence of which is well-known to him from his subjective life, and he draws an illustration of it, or an illustration "with a moral." It is clear that every feature of this figure reflects in itself, in its own way, this defect alone, for the character being portrayed has no other purpose. And this is the essence of caricature.

not find a positive character as a model for his creations.” And we ourselves sense in him the scalding, much too “visible” tears that he shed for something unrealizable, for some supposed “ideal.” Is there not a mistake here in the choice of words, and once the necessary one is substituted, will we not guess his whole secret? It was not an ideal that he was unable to find and express; he, this great artist of forms, was consumed by his impotent desire to put into at least one of them some sort of a living soul. And when he nevertheless could not overcome this irrepressible need, there appeared in his works fantastic monsters such as the unnatural Ulinka and the Greek Kostanzhoglo, who resemble nothing in either the dream world or reality. And he was finally consumed by his helpless craving to come into contact with a human soul. What we are told about his last days is rather vague: a kind of madness, horrible pangs of remorse, fasting, and death from starvation.⁵

What a lesson from our history we failed to understand! A brilliant artist portrayed man all his life and yet was unable to portray the soul. He told us that the soul does not exist, and in depicting his dead characters he did it with such skill that for several decades we actually believed in a whole generation of walking corpses. We came to hate that generation, we spared no words that man can say about soulless creatures. But he, the perpetrator of this deception, suffered a punishment that still lies in store for us in the future. He died the victim of a flaw in his own nature—and the last image he left us from the whole of his strange

⁵ Note what Ivan Turgenev says of him in *My Literary Memoirs*: “What a clever and what a morbid creature!” See also F. I. Buslaev’s *My Leisure Time* for Gogol’s historic words, addressed a few days before his death to the comedian Shchepkin: “Always remain as you now are.”

and so extraordinary life is that of an ascetic burning his own works. "Vengeance is mine! I will repay, saith the Lord"—it is as if we hear these words from within the crackling in the fireplace into which this madman of genius has thrown his brilliant and criminal slander of human nature.

What people do not grasp with their reason, they sometimes grasp all the more strongly with their feelings. After Gogol, all our literature turned to a penetration of human nature. And was not the result of this counterforce that at no other time and with no other people have all the innermost recesses of the human soul been so thoroughly revealed as they have in the last few decades, before the eyes of us all? There is nothing more striking than the change one experiences in turning from Gogol to any of our more recent writers: it is as if one passes from a cemetery into a flowering garden, where everything is filled with sounds and colors, with sunshine, and with the life of nature. For the first time we hear human voices, we see joy and anger on people's faces, we know how funny they sometimes are: and nevertheless we love them, because we feel they are people and, consequently, our brothers. In a number of Turgenev's little stories, we find the same villages, fields, and roads over which the hero of *Dead Souls* perhaps traveled, the same small provincial towns in which he signed his deeds of purchase. But how alive all this is in Turgenev, how it breathes and moves, how it enjoys itself and loves! Before us are the same peasants, but they are no longer a couple of idiots, who, in order to separate the entangled horses climb on them for some unknown reason and hit them on the back with clubs. We see house servants and serfs, but they are not the eternally stinking Petrushka,

and not Selifan, about whom we know only that he was always drunk. What a diversity of characters, sad and joyful, filled with practical cares or delicate poetry. While scrutinizing their lively and individual features, we begin to understand our history, our very selves, and all the life around us, which grew and spread so widely from the depths of this people. What a wonderful child's world unfolds before us in the daydreams of Oblomov, in the reminiscences of Netochka Nezvanova, in *Childhood and Adolescence*, in scenes of *War and Peace*, in the house of troubled Dolly in *Anna Karenina*! Is it really possible that all this is less a part of reality than are Alcides and Themistoklus, those pitiful dolls of Gogol, that vicious mockery of those whom no one has ever mocked before? And what about Bolkonsky's thoughts on the battlefield at Austerlitz, his sister's prayers, Raskolnikov's anxieties, and that whole complex, diverse world of ideas, characters, and situations that recedes into the infinite distance, and which has been revealed to us in the last few decades—what shall we say of it in connection with Gogol? What word can we use to define its historical significance? Should we not say that it is a revelation of the life that had died in Gogol, a restoration in man of the dignity which Gogol had taken from him?

III

Earlier than others, Dostoevsky began to speak about the life that pulsates behind the most stifling of forms, about the human dignity that survives under the most impossible

conditions. In his tiny and charming story "An Honest Thief," we see two figures, the kind we pass by every day without noticing them. A poor little corner of a room, simple speech, an everyday event—all this is like a ray of light falling on our soul from some distant world. For a moment we forget our own thoughts and desires and carefully examine this ray. Characters whom we earlier knew only from without now become translucent before our eyes, and we see the heart that beats in them. Several minutes pass, the ray disappears, and again we return to the usual flow of our ideas. But something in our ideas has already changed, something in them is no longer possible, and something from now on and forever more has become inevitable: inevitable, a concern for human beings, however far from us they are; impossible, contempt for human beings, wherever we meet them. Despite all the wisdom we absorb, despite the high level of our intellect, we now sometimes suddenly stop and ask ourselves: is *our* inner world as pure, *our* heart as warm as the hearts in these wretched and poor folk whom we saw only for a moment and shall always remember? And the words of the Apostle become clearer to us than ever before: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." We understand that in them is found the criterion of good and evil with which we shall never perish and with which we can measure all sorts of wisdom.

He who arouses understanding in us also arouses love in us. Following the author, we descend into the dreary world of human existence, hitherto concealed from us, and together with him we closely observe the living creatures swarming about down there. "You thought that they had

stopped suffering, that they no longer had any feelings," he says to us. "Listen to their talk, examine their faces: can you experience such emotion yourself, have you in a difficult moment received from the people around you such sympathy as that with which they warm each other in this darkness and in this cold? And see what faith lives in them, see how far removed they are from petty complaints, see how little they reproach each other, and see how patiently they bear their cross. Do you think they only work and eat, that they leave thinking and desiring to you? No, all your passions live also in them, and they understand a great deal that you do not. They are people, the very same people as you, people who have retained much of what you have lost, and who have managed to acquire all but a little of what you have acquired. You have seen them: now go, and if you can, forget this world."

And when you pause in doubt, he gives you a piercing look and continues: "Why don't you go? What is holding you back? Remember what has been awakened in you, and never forget conscience in your considerations—it lives in all men, and these are no exception. You see neither hands that are tired, nor feet that are cold, nor stomachs that are empty. You see before you millions of human souls, and when you get the idea that they must only be warmed, fed, and comforted, remember how you just now forgot about the food and sleep awaiting you. I have spoken. Now go and busy yourself with your philosophy or your antiquities. But I shall stay here with them, and if I am unable to share their labor, I shall at least share their sorrows, and sometime I shall perhaps rejoice at their joys."

Since then, in the midst of your philosophical and historical interests, in the midst of the whole glittering world

of beauty which rivets your attention in the arts and literature, you have sometimes experienced a feeling of alarm, and you have recalled the strange man who once led you into that world so different from everything you already knew and who stayed there after having said his gloomy words. Is he strong enough, and what will he do down in that place over which thousands of years have rushed and which has been covered over by our civilization? In free moments, you pick up volumes of his stories the better to study his face, to test the strength of his muscles and the power of his mind.

Before you pass a number of his tales and stories. How much in them is funny and serious, and at times impossibly absurd:¹ he is just like a man who, in preparing to say something, first sputters and makes inarticulate sounds. But gradually his words begin to flow; you forget what is unnecessary and try to fathom the meaning of what he is saying. What a wealth of feeling, what an understanding of all that is most important for a person to understand! Now, there unfolds before you a sad and at the same time an amusing idyll ("A Faint Heart"); now, there is fragrant poetry (*White Nights*); now, the burning passion of an unfinished story, with its insane musician running down the dark city streets accompanied by his young daughter (*Netochka Nezvanova*); and now, a short story full of real gaiety ("The Little Hero"); we inquire and learn that it was written in several weeks, while Dostoevsky was confined to a fortress, awaiting trial, sentence, and perhaps even execution. "Yes, this man is serious," we think automatically. "No matter what is contained in his inner world, that world is stable if creative work can go on in it even

¹ For example, "A Novel in Nine Letters" and "The Landlady."

before the yawning grave." But most curious of all is the fact that he moves not only in that world where we left him; he rises easily to the one above, and here he devotes himself almost exclusively to the world of children (Princess Katya in *Netochka Nezvanova*; the tax-farmer's daughter in "A Christmas Tree and a Wedding"). In looking at that bright and innocent world, he is just as lucid and lively as he is down among the wretched poor folk. And the same concern is evident in him for that world as there is for those people who have been forgotten by everyone else: how mistrustful and gloomy his look becomes when this world of children at play is approached by adults! Here before us stands Julian Mastakovich, counting on his fingers the age of a little girl and the interest on the capital that has been deposited in her name, the amount of which he had accidentally learned at the children's party: "Three hundred, three hundred," whispers this important dignitary, ". . . eleven, twelve, sixteen . . . five years; let's say at four percent, that makes twelve, five times twelve makes sixty, and the interest on those sixty . . . No, he wouldn't invest it at four percent, the rascal, maybe at eight or ten percent . . ."

He interrupts his calculations and steals on tiptoe up to the child, who is busy with her doll, and kisses her on the head:

"And what are you doing over here, my dear child?" he says in an agitated whisper.

The children's party ends with the lively amazement of the guests, watching with tender emotion the friendly conversation of the important dignitary and the child of the rich tax-farmer. The reader's eyes close and in five years open again: a gloomy day (as always in Dostoevsky), a

parish church, a beautiful girl, barely blossomed out, and her bridegroom, who is welcoming her. A whisper passes among the people about the bride's wealth; the bridegroom's somewhat older but recognizable features explain everything to the narrator—and he recalls the children's party on that frosty New Year's Eve five years earlier.

At that same party, among the merry figures of the children, he notes a persecuted little boy, the son of the governess of the house, with his agonizing desire to go up and play with the other children, who have been avoiding him. The child's mind already understands the differences in their social positions, but his childish nature is inclined to surmount them. He is shy and ingratiating—a party as lively will not soon come again—so he presses close to the other children, pretends not to notice their insults, and obsequiously flatters them so they will not drive him away. You feel that all the tinsel and riches are of secondary importance and that the author's gaze is fixed on what lives and moves behind all this—the human soul, its first suffering, its first mutilation.

“But is he strong enough . . . ?” In a somewhat fantastic sketch, whose plot and tone will later be repeated in *The Insulted and Injured*, Dostoevsky tells of the meeting of a lonely dreamer with a jilted girl. What strange meetings, what pensive and fervent confessions, and how tightly these two lonely and pure creatures hold each other's hands! In all our literature, there is no other story that so very, very deeply penetrates the inner world of the human soul to the point where one no longer hears the sounds of human life or sees its noisy bustle. Only the bright, moonless nights of the north look down from above on these two creatures, and they themselves look each with a clear con-

science into the clear conscience of the other. But then a shadow flits past them as he is talking incoherently to her and pointing to the sky. That was on the fourth night, during their fourth meeting. She presses close to him, her hand trembles. A familiar voice, which she had so loved, which she had been accustomed timidly to obey, calls to her: with a cry, she rushes to the one she thought she had lost forever—to her disrupted happiness, believing she can arouse and return ardent love. The dreamer is left alone; he returns home. How old everything seems to have grown in his lonely little corner—the walls of his room, the house next door, even himself. In a passionate and imploring letter, she explains everything, she begs him not to reproach her, not to forget, in the same way that she herself will hold him in her memory forever. The letter falls from his hands, and he covers his face:

Either a sunbeam that had suddenly peeped out from behind a cloud had again hidden itself behind a rain cloud and everything had grown dim before my eyes, or maybe the whole cheerless and melancholy perspective of my future flashed before me, and I saw myself exactly fifteen years hence, the same as I am now, only grown older, in the same room, still alone and with the same Matryona, who had not in the least grown any wiser in all those years.

But that I should nurse my grudge against you, Nastenka! That I should cast a dark shadow over your bright and tranquil happiness! That I should bitterly reproach you and thus cause your heart to anguish, wound it with secret remorse, and make it beat sadly in a moment of bliss! That I should crush even one

of those tender flowers that you entwined in your dark curls when you went to the altar with him . . . Oh, never, never! May your sky always be serene, may your sweet smile be bright and tranquil, and may you always be blessed for the moment of bliss and happiness that you gave to another lonely and grateful heart.²

Don't you agree that these words seem to be woven of moonlight? In them is the same repose, the same self-restraint, the same readiness to reflect only the happiness of another.

And then suddenly this tone:

I'm a sick man . . . I'm a spiteful man. I'm an unattractive man. I think my liver is diseased . . .

—and one hears a muffled grumbling from the underground. We turn over several pages:

I'm convinced that not only a great deal of consciousness, but even all consciousness, is a disease. And nothing can change my opinion about that! But let's put this subject also aside for a moment. Tell me this: Why did it always happen as if on purpose in those very—yes, in those very moments when I was most capable of being conscious of all the niceties of "the lofty and beautiful" that I not only felt, but did such ugly things—things that everyone does, but which as if on purpose occurred to me precisely when I was most conscious that they should not be done at all? The more conscious I was of "goodness" and of all that is "lofty and beautiful," the more deeply I sank

² *White Nights*.

into my mire, and the more ready I was to get completely stuck in it.

A few pages later:

The direct, legitimate result of consciousness is inertia . . . I emphatically repeat: all “direct” people and men of action are active only because they are mentally underdeveloped. How is that to be explained? Well, here’s how: owing to their shallowness, they take immediate and secondary causes for primary ones; thus, they persuade themselves more quickly and easily than other people that they have found an infallible basis for their business at hand, and, as a result, their minds are at ease, and that is surely the main thing. After all, to start to act, you must first have your mind completely at ease and have no doubts left in it. Now how can I, for example, set my mind at ease? Where are my primary causes on which I can lean, where are my foundations? Where am I to get them? I exercise my powers of thought and, consequently, with me, every primary cause immediately draws another one after it—one still more primary—and so on to infinity. That precisely is the essence of every kind of consciousness and reflection. Consequently, these again are the laws of nature.³

Shameful confessions and brilliant dialectics flash by. We see the gold pins that the bored Cleopatra stuck into the breasts of her female slaves. The “poetry” of well-known verses is trampled on:

³ *Notes from the Underground.*

When from the darkness of delusion,
By a passionate word of persuasion
I rescued a fallen soul. . . .

and over the helplessly collapsed body of a girl who had been regenerated and then tormented, there appears a vile figure without a name, without a shape, and cries: "I am a person."⁴

Yes, you think, this man is strong enough. A soul that could produce as many different sounds and figures, and all those thoughts, is capable of overcoming anything that man is able to struggle against. Perhaps he is not listened to, perhaps he is not understood: no prophet can turn the sands of the desert into a rapt audience. But the sands will not lie still forever on the boundless plains of history—and then he will reap his harvest.

Simultaneously with this writer who so attracts us, there came to the fore a group of others. Among them, the pensive and sleepy Goncharov, with his artistic love of man, who wanders through God's boundless world in the bright sunlight and, without paying any attention either to the world or the sun, closely observes just one little corner of it as he slowly draws his genre-pictures. Also among them is the vain and weak Turgenev, a man of such great talent, who pondered over so much; he leads us into the enchanting world of his word, drops ideas that stick in our memory, and depicts a series of characters that are somewhat

⁴ See "Apropos of Wet Snow" in *Notes from the Underground*. The only analogy to this work, one of Dostoevsky's most profound, is *Rameau's Nephew*, by Diderot. The first draft of the character of the "man from the underground," but only from its comic side, is Foma Fomich in *The Village of Stepanchikovo and Its Inhabitants*.

pallid, yet always attractive. And finally there is also Tolstoy, whose strength seems to have no bounds, who reveals to us an immense panorama of human life everywhere that its forms are complete and stable. We hesitate: absorbed in fulfilling their mission, never turning their eyes away from it for a moment, these great artists irresistibly attract everyone to them. In comparison with their creations, how false is everything created by the writer whom we would like to investigate here: his characters are often distorted, his speech lacks harmony; it seems to be a chaos to which measure and number have not yet been applied, or as if all measures and numbers have already been mixed up. Our hesitation is especially great when we look at the world of Tolstoy: it is not only the inexpressible charm of his creations that attracts us here; there is something else, something more profound and arresting. It is obvious to us that he has participated in the Eleusinian Mysteries of nature, that he listens to muffled sounds and peers into dark shadows while pressed close to Mother Earth, from whom all living things grow. He tries to catch the meaning of each birth and each death within the narrow limits of which the poor existence of man is confined. But ancient legends tell us that even in the real Eleusis the meaning of life and death is revealed to the initiated in allegorical images and only from a distance. Evidently it is man's fate to be limited to this for all eternity.

Alluring as this world of beauty is, something else is even more alluring: the moral degradation of the human soul, the strange disharmony of life, which completely drowns its few harmonious sounds. In this disharmony are played out the millennial destinies of mankind. And if we look at world literature, we see that the eyes of no one in it have

been turned with such insight on the causes of this disharmony as were the eyes of the writer whom we have chosen to study. That is why, despite the chaos in his works, we find in no one else such wholeness and fullness. There is something in him that is blasphemous and at the same time religious. He does not choose a single scene from nature in order to recreate it with love; he is only interested in the seams by which all these scenes are drawn together. A cool analyst, he examines them closely and wants to learn why the whole image of God's world is so distorted and false. And in some incomprehensible way he combines this analysis in himself with a feeling of the most ardent love for everything that suffers. It is as if he has experienced the distortion to which the face of God's world has been subjected, as if his own inner world has also been deeply affected by it. Like no one else, he clearly sensed all the suffering that man bears within himself, and he came close to understanding its hidden nature. From this comes the great subjectivity of his works and their passion: not from without does he call us to come and share with him his interests, which we can engage in just like everyone else; his voice reaches us as if from afar, and when we draw near, we see a strange and lonely creature, who has no one at all around him. And this creature tells us of the unbearable suffering of human nature, of the utter impossibility of enduring it, and of the necessity of finding ways out of it. Hence the morbid tone of all his works and the absence in them of an outward harmony of parts. And the world he reveals, a world of inconsolable suffering, is entwined with the thought of its incomprehensible causes, of its unfathomable purposes.

And this is precisely what gives his works an eternal

meaning, an undying significance. It would be an anachronism at the present time to analyze the characters portrayed, for example, by Turgenev, although not so many years have passed since they were created: they corresponded to the interests of the moment, they were understood in their day, and now they have an attraction that is purely artistic. We love them as if they were living people, but there is nothing in them for us to puzzle out. With Dostoevsky, however, it is just the opposite: the anxiety and doubts diffused throughout his works are our anxiety and doubts, and they will remain so for all times to come. In periods when life rolls along with particular ease, or when we are unaware of its difficulty, this writer may even be completely forgotten and unread. But every time something inconvenient makes itself felt on the paths of historical life, every time the nations traveling along them are jolted or perplexed, the name and image of this writer who pondered so much over these paths are resurrected with no loss at all in their strength.

Where he summons us, to a world of distortion and suffering, to an examination of the very seams which hold nature together, there one can indeed go, after forgetting both the world of beauty revealed in the arts and poetry and the cold spheres of science, which are much too distant from our poor earth, a thing we can by no means forget. To go there means to satisfy the deepest demands of our heart, to which suffering is somehow related, for which it has an inexplicable propensity. And to set out with such a goal means to answer the chief demand that the mind repeatedly makes, despite all that science and philosophy do to try to distract it.

IV

In 1862,¹ Dostoevsky left Paris, where he had been passing the time, to visit London and its World Exhibition for a few days.² In an article that seems somewhat disorderly, but that actually is extremely coherent and concentrated, he tells of the impression made on him by this city "vast as the ocean and bustling by day and by night." He describes the screech and howl of its trains, with their railways running above the houses, with their chaotic movement and boldness of enterprise:

The polluted Thames, the air filled with coal dust, the magnificent public gardens and parks, and the terrible sections of the city such as Whitechapel with its half-naked, wild, and hungry inhabitants. . . .³

All of it formed a whole picture for him the parts of which could not be separated. As everywhere else, he omits particular and transitory interests and ponders over the general meaning of the scene, over its eternal significance:

You feel the terrible force that has brought together into a single flock all these countless people, who have

¹ Rozanov writes "1863," but this date is wrong. [Tr.]

² This was his first trip abroad. His first impressions of Europe are described *directly* in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863) and also *indirectly* in many of his novels, where he even more completely and vividly expresses his general feelings toward Europe, as, for example, in parts of *A Raw Youth*, which are of great autobiographical significance.

³ *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*.

come from all over the world. You are conscious of a gigantic idea; you feel that something has already been achieved here, that there is victory and triumph here . . . For some reason or other you become terrified. You think: Can this, in fact, be the final realization of the ideal? Is this the end by any chance? Perhaps this is actually the realization of the "one fold" of the prophecy? . . . It takes your breath away: it is all so grand, so triumphal, and proud. You look at these hundreds of thousands, at these millions of people submissively streaming here from all over the world—people who have come with one thought in mind, calmly, stubbornly, and silently thronging in this colossal Crystal Palace,⁴ and you feel that something final has been accomplished here—accomplished and completed. It is rather like a scene from the Bible, something having to do with Babylon, a sort of prophecy from the Apocalypse being fulfilled before your very eyes. You feel that a good deal of constant spiritual resistance and rejection is needed not to give in, not to succumb to impression, not to bow down before fact, and not to idolize Baal, i.e., not to take the actual for the ideal.

In everything that meets his eye, he looks for what has sprung up independently and which is, consequently, strong; everything borrowed, and, consequently, weak he disregards. In Rome he wanted to see the Pope, but in London he did not even take a look at St. Paul's Cathedral. On the other hand, he visited the "Sabbath of White Negroes," as he called Saturday night in the workers' quarters of the city:

⁴ The Crystal Palace at the Exhibition.

Half a million male and female workers, with their children, spread like the ocean all over the city and celebrate the whole night long until five in the morning, eating and drinking enough to make up for the whole past week. All these people bring their weekly pay with them, everything they have earned by hard labor and cursing . . . Great jets of gas burn brightly, illuminating the streets. It is as if a ball is being given for these white negroes. The people throng in the taverns and in the streets. Here, too, they are eating and drinking. The pubs are decked out like palaces. Everyone is drunk, but without merriment; everyone is grim and gloomy, and everyone is strangely silent. Only now and then do curses and bloody brawls destroy this suspicious silence, which has such a sad effect on one. All these people hasten as quickly as possible to drink themselves unconscious . . . The wives do not lag behind their husbands in getting drunk; the children run and crawl about among them.

Dostoevsky notices that there is something in this loss of consciousness that is "systematic, resigned, and encouraged." With his generalizing mind, he tries to catch the hidden meaning of this observation as well and connect it with what he saw in the city during the day and with what cut such a proud figure with its completeness and perfection: this sweat, this sullen dissipation, this eagerness to forget oneself, if only for several hours a week—it all seems to him as if millions of human souls have been put in a corner of a tower that is being raised. True, this tower almost reaches the sky, but on the other hand, it presses heavily against the earth! For these social pariahs, it will be a long time before the prophecy comes true; it will be

a long time before they will be given palm branches and white garments; and for a long time yet they will have to cry out to the throne of the Almighty: "How long, O Lord?"

This biblical imagery is, after all, only the greatest possible generalization of facts that history and philosophy could think up; and the "palm branches and white garments" are nothing but the thirst of millions of crushed beings for joy and light, of beings who now are the necessary appendages of monstrous machines, with completely useless remnants in themselves of a certain kind of consciousness. Dostoevsky sees only the whole of this matter: he does not see feet that are cold, nor hands that are tired, but a man who is crushed, and he asks: "Doesn't he also thirst for spiritual joy, isn't he worthy of it, in the same way that all of us are who cannot live without it?"

But these creatures are only crushed; they are not yet perverted: God's image has grown dim in them, but at least it is not disfigured. Dostoevsky visited the Haymarket, an area to which thousands of prostitutes flock at night. Brightly lit streets, cafes adorned with mirrors and gilt decorations . . .

There are festival halls and night lodgings. It is terrifying to enter this crowd. And how strange is its composition! There are old women, and there are beautiful girls before whom you stop in amazement. In all the world, there are no women so beautiful as those in England. As there is not room enough for all these people on the sidewalks, they move into the streets and become a dense crowd. They are all on the lookout for prey and throw themselves with shameless

cynicism at the first person they come across. You see magnificent, expensive clothing and what almost amounts to rags, and a sharp difference in age—everything is all mixed together. In this terrible crowd, the drunken tramp strolls along beside the man of wealth and title. You hear cursing, quarreling, touting, and the enticing whisper of a still timid beauty. And what beauty you sometimes see here!

He describes a young woman of striking appearance, with a thoughtful and intelligent face, drinking gin; beside her sits a young man, evidently an unaccustomed visitor to this quarter.

There was something repressed in her beautiful and somewhat proud look, something pensive and sad. She was—she could not but be—above this whole crowd of unfortunate women in her mental development; otherwise what is the significance of the human face?

It was obvious that the young man had sought her out here, that this was a prearranged meeting. Both of them were thoughtful and sad, they spoke in fits and starts, frequently lapsing into silence. Evidently something important remained unsaid between them. Finally, he got up, paid for the drinks, shook her hand, and left; she, her pale face covered with red blotches, mixed in with the crowd of prostitutes and disappeared.

In the Haymarket, I noticed mothers who bring their very young daughters to walk the streets. Little girls of about twelve grasp you by the arm and ask you to go with them. I remember, one time I saw a girl of

about six, no older, all in rags, dirty, barefoot, drunk, and beaten up: her body, visible through her rags, was covered with bruises. She walked along as if unaware of what she was doing, hurrying nowhere. God only knows why she was staggering about in the crowd; maybe she was hungry. No one paid any attention to her. But what struck me most was the fact that she walked along with a look of such sorrow, of such hopeless despair on her face, that to see this little creature, also bearing in herself so much execration and despair, was somehow unnatural and terribly painful. She kept shaking her tousled head from side to side, as if she were discussing something; she would spread her little hands apart, gesticulate with them, and then suddenly clasp them together and press them to her bare little breast. I went back and gave her a sixpence. She took the silver coin, then shyly, with timid amazement, looked me in the eyes and suddenly took to her heels, as if afraid I would take the money from her.

And we can repeat: "How long, O Lord?" The World Exhibition, the Crystal Palace, somewhere in it a lecture by a famous physicist, accompanied by brilliant demonstrations—is all this worth the grief of that tiny creature, beating its thin little hands against its breast, and those women who bring their very young daughters to give to anyone who will toss them a coin? People will say: "That's the way it always was, and even worse." They are saying it already as justification and offer as proof the cannibalism of savages, saying that if we do not wish to return to that, we must put up with the evil in our society, the specific poison of civilization. But that is not true—it was not always like that.

With the nation that lived according to God's commandments, there was neither cannibalism, nor were there mothers who traded in their children's bodies: there, there were mothers who gathered the wheat that the rich had intentionally left behind on the fields for them.⁵ And that would not happen with us, it would not dare happen if we carefully followed the words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you."

But when the night passes and day begins, the same proud and gloomy spirit again sweeps regally over the gigantic city. It is not alarmed over what happened in the night, nor is it alarmed over what it sees around it during the day. Baal reigns, and does not even demand obedience, because he is convinced that he already has it. His faith in himself is boundless; he calmly and scornfully gives organized alms only to be left in peace. He does not close his eyes to the savage, suspicious, and alarming phenomena of life. The poverty, the suffering, the discontent, and the torpor of the masses do not in the least alarm him.

All these facts, as well as concern about their causes, can be formulated as follows: the aim of every normal process of development is the prosperity of the developing beings themselves. Thus, a tree grows in order to realize the completeness of its forms—and the same can be said about everything else. Of all the processes that we observe in nature, there is but one in which this law is violated, and that is in the historical process. Man is the developing element in it, and, consequently, he is its aim; but this is only in theory: in reality, he is a means, while the aim is the in-

⁵ See the Book of Ruth.

stitutions, the complexity of social relations, the flowering of the arts and sciences, the power of industry and trade.⁶ All this grows irresistibly, and it never occurs to the poor man to oppose this trend, to refuse to lie down in front of this triumphant chariot of Baal and to bespatter its wheels with his blood.⁷

⁶ There is a fact in history particularly suitable for an explanation of this idea: in Germany, by the time of the rebellions of the knights and the peasants, Roman law had already spread over a considerable part of the country, having supplanted the local feudal customary law. The burden it placed on the entire population was so great that the insurgents, poor jurists and only simple people, demanded, among other things, the abolition of Roman law in juridical practice. But who would doubt that Roman law was immeasurably superior not only to medieval legal customs, but, in general, to everything that world history had ever known in this field? It did not, therefore, cease to spread. It was natural and, so to say, inwardly necessary. This example shows that the perfection of individual branches of life is by no means necessarily linked with a diminution of human suffering, that it has an inner regularity and is outwardly autonomous; therefore, it is achieved in history independently of all else.

⁷ A specific example can here, too, conveniently explain the general historical process: (1) for a country to maintain its international position, it must have several hundred thousand men engaged specifically in the art of war, and for their greatest possible perfection in it, they must be freed from the cares of family life; (2) it is necessary that the people who keep the country up to the mark in its spiritual and material prosperity prepare themselves as well as possible to carry out their mission and that they enter as deeply as possible into the complex and difficult world of the pure and applied sciences. Thus, a huge contingent of people is formed for whom a family is possible and convenient only at a somewhat late age. For reasons unnecessary to explain, a corresponding contingent of single women arises—the difference being, however, that for the former, a family is something belated, and its temporary absence is a convenience, whereas for the latter, a family becomes impossible forever, and they are an impersonal

And the nations go on stretching themselves out in front of it. After crushing millions in its own country, the chariot is already crossing over into other countries, to those cannibals who thus far have been naïvely devouring each other one by one, and whom Europe is evidently now preparing to devour at a single stroke.

In an amazing way, Dostoevsky's enormous talent for generalization was combined with a keen receptivity to the particular and the individual. Therefore, he not only understood the general and the primary significance of what takes place in history, but also was conscious of its unbearable horror, as if he himself had experienced all the personal suffering caused by violation of the principal law of development. Immediately after *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*,⁸ he published the gloomy *Notes from the Underground*,⁹ which we mentioned above.

In reading it, one is unexpectedly struck by our need for annotated editions—annotated not from the standpoint of the form and origin of literary works, as is already done, but from the standpoint of their contents and meaning—in order finally to decide the question of whether the idea contained in them is true, or whether it is false, and why, and to decide this by joint efforts, to decide it thoroughly

means of a comfortable life for others. In the same way that a large river attracts small rivers and streams and by the evaporation at its basin creates moisture and rain that finally collect in it again, so into this large stream of unmarried life flow many of its smaller streams, which to a considerable extent are produced simply by its massiveness, its easiness, its convenience for everyone, and its habitualness.

⁸ Published in 1863 in the magazine *Time*.

⁹ Published in numbers 1, 2, and 4 of the magazine *Epoch*, which, in 1864, had replaced the suspended *Time*.

and rigorously, in a way accessible only to science. For example, every line of *Notes from the Underground* is important; it is impossible to reduce the book to general formulas. Moreover, no thinking person can pass over the assertions made in it without considering them carefully.

There never was a writer in our literature whose ideals were so completely divorced from present-day reality. The thought never for a moment occurred to Dostoevsky to try to preserve this way of life and merely improve a thing or two in it. Because of the generalizing cast of his mind, he directed all his attention toward the evil concealed in the general system of a historically developed life; hence his hatred of and disdain for all hope of improving anything by means of individual changes; hence his animosity towards our parties of progressives and Westerners. Perceiving only the "general," he passed directly from reality to the extreme in the ideal, and the first thing he encountered there was the hope of raising, with the help of reason, an edifice of human life so perfect that it would give peace to man, crown history, and put an end to suffering. His criticism of this idea runs through all his works; it was expressed for the first time, and moreover in the greatest detail, in *Notes from the Underground*.

The man from the underground is a person who has withdrawn deep within himself. He hates life and spitefully criticizes the ideal of the rational utopians on the basis of a precise knowledge of human nature, which he acquired through a long and lonely observation of himself and of history.

The outline of his criticism is as follows: man carries within himself, in an undeveloped state, a complex world of inclinations that have not yet been discovered—and their

discovery will determine his future history just as inevitably as the existence of these inclinations in him now is certain. Therefore, the predetermination of history and its crown by our reason alone will always be empty talk without any real importance.

Among those inclinations, in so far as they have already revealed themselves during the course of history, there is so much that is incomprehensibly strange and irrational that it is impossible to find any intelligent formula that would satisfy human nature. Is not happiness the principle on which this formula can be constructed? But does not man sometimes crave suffering? Are there really any pleasures for which Hamlet would give up the torments of his consciousness? Are not order and regularity the common features of every final system of human relations? And yet, do we not sometimes love chaos, destruction, and disorder even more passionately than we do regularity and creation? Is it possible to find a person who would do only what is necessary and good his whole life long? And would he not, by limiting himself to this for so long, experience a strange weariness; would he not shift, at least briefly, to the poetry of instinctive actions? Finally, will not all happiness disappear for man if there disappears for him the feeling of novelty, of everything unexpected, everything capriciously changeable—things to which he now adapts his way of life, and in so doing experiences much distress, but an equal joy? Does not uniformity for everyone contradict the fundamental principle of human nature—individuality—and does not the constancy of the future and of the “ideal” contradict his free will, his thirst for choosing something or other in his own way, sometimes contrary to an external, even a rational, decision? And can man really be happy

without freedom, without individuality? Without all this, with the eternal absence of novelty, will not instincts be irresistibly aroused in him such as will shatter the adamant nature of every formula: and man will wish for suffering, destruction, blood, for everything except that to which his formula has doomed him for all eternity; in the same way that a person confined too long to a light, warm room will cut his hands on the glass of the windowpanes and run naked out into the cold, merely so as not to have to remain any longer in his former surroundings? Was it not this feeling of spiritual weariness that led Seneca into intrigue and crime? And was it not this that made Cleopatra stick gold pins into the breasts of her black slave girls, while eagerly looking them in the face, watching their trembling, smiling lips, and their frightened eyes? And finally, will the never-changing possession of the achieved ideal really satisfy a person for whom wishing, striving, and achieving is an irresistible need? And does rationality, on the whole, exhaust human nature? But obviously that is the only thing that its very creator—reason—can give to a final formula.

By nature, man is a completely irrational creature; therefore, reason can neither completely explain him nor completely satisfy him. No matter how persistent is the work of thought, it will never cover all of reality; it will answer the demands of the imaginary man, but not those of the real one. Hidden in man is the instinct for creation, and this was precisely what gave him life, what rewarded him with suffering and joy—things that reason can neither understand nor change.

The rational is one thing; the mystical is another thing again. And while it is inaccessible to the touch and power of science, it can be arrived at through religion. Hence the

development of the mystical in Dostoevsky and the concentration of his interest on all that is religious, something we observe in the second and chief period of his work, which began with *Crime and Punishment*.

V

Dostoevsky is acknowledged the most profound analyst of the human soul. He became so because he saw in the soul a concentration of all the enigmas over which man ponders, as well as a solution to all the difficulties that man thus far in history has not been able to surmount.

Earlier, we called Count Leo Tolstoy the artist of life in its fully developed forms which have acquired stability. The spiritual world of man within the bounds of these forms is exhausted by him with unrivaled perfection: the slightest movements of the heart, all the most imperceptible buddings of thought in these forms of fully developed life and fully developed spiritual types are portrayed in Tolstoy's works with a clarity that leaves nothing to be desired. But two great moments in a historically developing life, its genesis and decomposition, are not touched on by him. These moments undoubtedly carry in themselves something morbid; they often contain something anomalous and sometimes something criminal. Tolstoy turns away from all this with irresistible disgust. Dostoevsky, on the contrary, is irresistibly attracted to it; he complements Tolstoy, and, unlike him, is an analyst of what is unsettled in human life and the human spirit.

How to live!

Dostoevsky's complete aloofness from present-day reality, the absence in him of any organic ties whatsoever with reality or any sympathy for it is, of course, the main reason for his dwelling exclusively on moments of genesis and decomposition. Filled with expectation or regret, he always directs his attention to the future or the past, but never to the present. Therefore, to observe how the present dies while decomposing or how, in the midst of this process of dying, a new life comes into being is always the greatest satisfaction for him. In the long series of his novels, from *Crime and Punishment* to *The Brothers Karamazov*, we see fully developed types only in glimpses, and almost from a distance; in the foreground move people belonging to no definite category whatsoever—they are alarmed, they seek, they destroy, they create.

Because of this, his psychological analysis has certain peculiarities about it: it is the analysis of the human soul in general, in its various states, stages, and transitions, and not that of an individual, discrete, and fully developed inner life (as with Count L. N. Tolstoy). They are not finished characters, each with his own inner center, that move before us in Dostoevsky's works, but a series of shadows of one particular thing; it is as if they are various transformations or inflections of a single spiritual being in the process of being born or dying. Therefore, the characters portrayed by him move us mainly to meditation rather than observation. He reveals to us the innermost recesses of the human conscience, and, I dare say, in so far as he is able he undoes and reveals that mystical knot which is the center of man's irrational nature.

But, in any case, in the order of the emergence of his interests, psychological analysis was only secondary and

conditioned; and it began to develop only with *Crime and Punishment*. The main and all-determining thing for him was: human suffering and its connection with the general meaning of life. It already appears, even if only personified, in his first work, *Poor People*, and it is discussed dialectically in his last, *The Brothers Karamazov*.

As has already been noted above, the fundamental evil of history lies in the incorrect relationship in it between the ends and the means: the human personality, regarded as only a means, is sacrificed in order to raise the edifice of civilization, and, of course, no one can determine to what extent and how much longer this can go on. The lower classes have already been crushed by civilization everywhere, it is now preparing to crush the primitive peoples, and there is an idea in the air according to which the present generation can be sacrificed for the good of the future, for an indefinite number of generations to come. Something monstrous is taking place in history; a sort of phantom has seized and perverted it: for the sake of something that no one has ever seen and which everyone is only awaiting, an intolerable wrong is being wrought: human beings—today, as in the past an eternal means—are being sacrificed, no longer individually, but in whole masses, in whole nations, in the name of some general and distant goal that has not yet revealed itself to a single living person and about which we can only guess. And where will it all end? When will man as an end-in-himself appear—he for whom so many sacrifices have been made? No one knows.

It was against this powerful idea, which is never voiced, but which is everywhere governing facts as it is being put into practice, that Dostoevsky began his struggle, perhaps feeling and sensing it more than being fully conscious of it.

W
The criticism of the possibility of a final idea was only the first half of the task that faced him. Having revealed the irrationality of human nature and consequently the imaginary nature of the final goal,¹ he came to the defense not of the relative but the absolute value of the human personality—of every last individual, who never, under any circumstances, must be only a means.

Closely connected with this were a number of his religious ideas. The coincidence that proved to exist between the results of his impartial analysis of human nature and what was required by the tasks of his struggle was remarkable and fortunate. The analysis showed the irrationality of the human being and revealed the existence in him of something mystical, of something that had doubtless been transmitted to him during the very act of creation. And this was in the highest degree in keeping with the view that man is immeasurably superior to what we thought him to be, that he is something religious, sacred and inviolable. As an aggregate of physiological functions, one of which is consciousness, man is, of course, only a means—at least every time a different and greater number of similar physiological aggregates demands it. We see something completely different in him when we acknowledge his mystical origin and his mystical nature: he carries in him a reflection of his Creator, he has in him God's image, which never tarnishes, which never submits, but which is always precious and invulnerable.

It should be noted that the importance of the human

¹ Thus, *Notes from the Underground* is the first cornerstone, as it were, of Dostoevsky's literary work, and the ideas expounded in it form the first basic line in his world outlook.

personality is revealed only in religion. In law, the personality is but a fiction, a necessary center to which contractual obligations, possessory rights, and so on, refer; its importance is neither explained nor proved there, and if it is defined in one way or another, the definition is primary and arbitrary: it is a condition to which we need not agree. The personality in law can serve as the subject of a contract—and slavery, in general, is the natural result of a pure judicial system. In political economy, the personality completely disappears: there, one finds only manpower, to which the individual is an unnecessary appendage. Thus, it is impossible, by means of science and learning, to reconstruct the personality in history: we can respect it, but there is no necessity to do so; we can also ignore it—particularly when it is depraved and evil. But the very introduction of these conditions undermines the idea of an absolute personality: to the Greeks, all barbarians were bad; to the Romans, all non-citizens; to the Catholics, all heretics; to the humanists, all obscurantists; to the people of 1893, all conservatives. But none of this conditionality or these vacillations and doubts are known to religion: in it, every living personality is God's image and thus is absolute and inviolable.

That is why slavery, for example, always increased under religion the weaker or more perverted religion became; on the contrary, under law, it increased the more consistent, pure, and unalloyed law was. In history, it was most terrible with the Romans, the nation with the most thorough understanding of law: they chopped up slaves and fed them to the fish in their ponds. And it was most human with the ancient Jews, who lived according to strict religious laws:

in their jubilee years, all slaves had to be set free, i.e., they were an object of temporary use, but not possessions in the strict sense of the word, not property.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky reveals in detail for the first time the idea of the absolute significance of the individual personality.² Surrounded by hopeless suffering, faced with people who are perishing or about to perish, the chaste soul of the hero of this novel rebels and decides to transgress the law of the inviolability of human life. He underpins his idea with a brilliant dialectic and then carries it out. And as soon as this happens, there begins a mystical interaction between the murderer, the woman he murdered, and all the people around them. Everything that goes on in Raskolnikov's soul is irrational; up to the very end he does not know why he should *not* have killed the old pawnbroker. And we, too, do not understand intellectually or dialectically the various states of his conscience or the nature of his deed. But with our whole being, we quite clearly sense the necessity of all the consequences of the deed. Scarcely had he smashed the reflected image of God (true, it had already been disfigured by its bearer) than he began to feel that this image, and along with it all nature, had died out in himself as well. "I didn't murder the old woman," he says in one place, "I murdered myself." It is as if something had changed in his soul, and with that change, everything took on a different aspect, and what he had formerly known became hidden from him forever. He felt that he no longer had anything in common with or

² Thus, this novel, as far as literature is concerned, Dostoevsky's most severe and, consequently, best work, constitutes the *second* cornerstone in the development of his world outlook. He expresses his idea in this novel positively and defends it, but he expresses it negatively as early as in *The Possessed*.

anything that linked him to any living people who remained on this side of crime; nor would he ever have in the future. He had crossed to another shore; he had left all people, apparently to go to a place where he would have no one with him but the murdered woman. It was as if the mystical knot of his being, which we conventionally call the "soul," had been joined by an imperceptible bond to the mystical knot of the other being whose outer form he had smashed. It seems as if all relations between the murderer and the murdered woman are ended—yet they continue; it seems as if all relations between him and the people around him are maintained, that they are only slightly changed—and yet they are broken off completely. Here in this analysis of criminality, in this display of, as it were, the husks or spiritual shells surrounding every "I," which at times interact and at times cease to interact, it seems that the deepest secret of human nature has been divined, that the great and sacred law of the inviolability of the human being and of its absolute nature has been revealed. In so far as this mystical phenomenon lends itself not so much to explanation as to a simple designation by words, it can be expressed thus: that which we observe in man, his acts, words, desires, everything that others know about him and he knows about himself, do not exhaust his complete being. There is something more in him beyond all this, and, moreover, it is the main thing, something others know nothing about.³ We must attach ourselves to, we must love this most important thing in man: this is why we sometimes love him despite everything that we see in him; on the contrary, we can

³ The fact that atavism occurs or the fact that parents of average intelligence give birth to a genius proves the existence in man of something he is aware of neither in himself nor in others.

only hate in man that which is external and unimportant, a kind of disfigurement to which he has subjected himself. But when we confuse the one with the other, or more precisely, when we know nothing of the existence in man of something beyond what meets our eye, and we smash his image, we smash a whole, the existence of which we never suspected in him. Suddenly we touch the main thing, which we had never thought about before, and we become aware of a change that has unexpectedly taken place inside us and which had never before entered into our considerations. Thus, only after having violated the personality of another do we understand its complete significance: but, too late. By having made such an experiment unnecessary, by having revealed with all the persuasiveness of his brilliant powers of depiction the state of a criminal conscience, Dostoevsky rendered us a great historical service.

As a matter of fact, with the solution of these two problems, he was fulfilling his task, in so far as it related to man as a suffering and scorned being. But immediately thereafter, a theoretical interest developed in him, and in pursuing it, he entered that boundless field that examines what might be called the seams of the universe. We find the first glimmer of this mental tendency as early as in *Crime and Punishment*.

In the unspeakably painful scene between Raskolnikov and Sonya, in the latter's stuffy room, he tells her of the possibility of her becoming infected and diseased and of how her family, for which she had sacrificed herself, would then of necessity perish:

“Isn't it possible to save up something, to put something aside for a rainy day?” he suddenly asked, stopping in front of her.

“No,” whispered Sonya.

“Of course not. But have you *tried?*” he added almost with a sneer.

“I’ve tried.”

“And it didn’t work out! Well, of course not! What’s the use of asking!”

And again he started to pace the room. There was another moment of silence.

“You don’t get money every day, do you?”

Sonya was more embarrassed than before, and the blood rushed to her face.

“No,” she whispered with an agonizing effort.

“It will probably be the same thing with Polechka [her little sister], he said suddenly.

“No! No! That’s impossible. No!” Sonya shrieked loudly, like a woman in despair, as if she had suddenly been stabbed with a knife. “God—God won’t let such a terrible thing happen!”

“But He *lets it happen* to others!”

“No! No! God will protect her,” she repeated, completely beside herself.

“But perhaps there isn’t any God,” answered Ras-kolnikov with a sort of malicious joy. He began to laugh and then looked at her. Sonya’s face suddenly underwent a terrible change.⁴

In the same novel, there is a conversation between Ras-kolnikov and his *alter ego*—his second and worse half, Svidrigailov—about ghosts and life beyond the grave:

⁴ *Crime and Punishment*. The horrible significance of the words about trying to save money lies in the rush and the eagerness for depravity to which this girl, who is only outwardly corrupt, is driven. Here, Dostoevsky, with a sort of diabolical torment, observes how physical need, in striking against the soul, as it were, pierces it and opens the way for the entry of inner vice.

"I agree with you," says Svidrigailov, "that ghosts only appear to sick people; but, after all, that only proves that ghosts can appear to no one but sick people, and not that they *don't exist* in their own right. Ghosts are, so to say, wisps and fragments of other worlds, their beginning. Of course, there is no need for a healthy person to see them, for a healthy person is, above all, a terrestrial being and, consequently, for fullness and for order must live only the life on this side of the grave. But no sooner does he fall ill, no sooner is the normal terrestrial order in the organism upset than the possibility of another world immediately makes itself felt; and the sicker the person becomes the more contact he has with the other world, so that when he dies completely, he passes directly into that other world. I've been thinking about this for a long time now. If you believe in a life to come, you can also believe in this argument of mine."

"*I don't believe in a life to come,*" said Raskolnikov. Svidrigailov sat lost in thought.

"But what if there is nothing but *spiders or something like that* up there?" he said suddenly.

"He's insane," thought Raskolnikov.

"Eternity always seems to us an idea that can't be understood, something vast, incredibly vast! But why must it definitely be vast? What if, instead of all that, there is nothing up there but a little room, such as a village bathhouse—sooty, and with spiders in all the corners—and that is all there is to eternity? You know, it sometimes seems to me as if it is like that.

"Is it possible, is it really possible that you imagine nothing more consoling and just than that?" shouted

Raskolnikov with a feeling of pain [earlier, he had not wanted to say anything at all to Svidrigailov].

“More just? Who can tell, *perhaps that is just*; and, you know, I would definitely make it like that on purpose,” answered Svidrigailov with a vague smile.

A cold shudder seized Raskolnikov at this outrageous answer.

We sense the stifling atmosphere of strange ideas and feelings. If in this same novel there is a dialectic that justifies crime, and, nevertheless, the soul in its entirety is chastised for it, then here we see a dialectic that ascends to an acknowledgment of “new worlds,” while feelings about eternal retribution descend to the level of spiders. The “trembling creature,” as man is several times called in this book, deserves, both on account of the meanness of his crimes and the uselessness of his virtues, neither more nor less than this.

From here on, the religious question never disappears from Dostoevsky’s works: he touches on it in every novel, but in such a way that we keenly feel that he is merely setting it aside until he is able to work on it freely and leisurely, without any outside interference. Finally, that moment came, and there appeared *The Brothers Karamazov*.

VI

The very time when this novel appeared was most remarkable: it was near the end of the reign of Alexander II; conspiracies of the anarchists; vacillation on the part of

the Government; a loud and influential press—everything was spreading anxiety and expectation throughout society. The struggle of the various parties was at its most intense, and of those parties the one that coincided with the trend of Russian history over the past two centuries, i.e., the party of Westerners and advocates of reform enjoyed immeasurable dominance in literature and society. That all the hopes and almost all the demands of this party were destined to be realized was scarcely doubted, even by its opponents, and all the latter tried to do was to delay, at least for a short while, its final victory.

At this time, the three most influential writers—Turgenev, Tolstoy, and last of all Dostoevsky—came out in rapid succession with their final word. Whoever reads these works, even superficially, without even trying to analyze them, immediately senses the uncertainty of the period in which they appeared and the insecurity of the society whose mood called them forth.

As always, Turgenev, in *Virgin Soil*, responded to the trends of the time, having toned them down somewhat and limited them. The many-sidedness and breadth of his education, his lack of primitive strength, and his never-expressed but quite obvious indifference to everything but art—all this made him try now as earlier to enter into a realm of ideas and aspirations with which he obviously had nothing in common. This man, who had once said that there is something more indisputable and lasting about the Venus de Milo than about the principles of the First French Revolution, wanted, in his declining years and despite everything to which he had devoted his life, to share the tastes of people for whom the whole world of art and beauty had no meaning or importance whatsoever. But this unnatural at-

tempt, as was to be expected, turned out to be so forced and pitiful that everyone to whom he had been dear for his earlier works could not regard it with anything but a feeling of the deepest sadness. This sadness could not help being sensed by the author himself, and it was this sadness that gave his last works a liveliness and a special coloring. Everyone, ordinary men and writers alike, carries within himself the gifts that nature has bestowed on him, both the bitterness and the sweetness of his life. Turgenev happened to be the first of our writers to win fame in Western Europe; and after he had won it, and there was no longer any time for him to aspire to anything more, he suddenly saw that he had won extremely little: everything important and valuable had slipped away from him.

On the contrary, the other two writers, who had hitherto been somewhat pushed into the background by Turgenev, began to speak more strongly than ever before, and their voices seemed to contradict everything that society wanted and everything it was thinking. If we should have to look for an example in history where the significance and influence of the individual personality was as incontestable and clear, we would find no better one than that represented by the last phase of the work of these two writers. At the very height of the general passion for external reforms, at a moment when everything in life and in man that is inward, religious, and mystical was being unconditionally rejected, these writers rejected as completely insignificant everything outward and turned their attention to the spiritual and the religious. And society, at first surprised and indignant, but at the same time enchanted by what they had to say, in the beginning singly and then in masses, let itself be dragged along by them in a direction opposite

from the one it had been going in; a fundamental change took place in the life of our society, and we now stand on paths completely different from those we stood on only a short time ago.

In *Anna Karenina*, a deep and austere subject matter was combined with an unrivaled perfection of form. In it, more so than in *War and Peace*, the author's idea dominates all the groups of characters portrayed; it moves them more closely together and gives the entire work more unity and integrity. The groups and the scenes are less widely dispersed, they do not live so freely, and everything seems to be directed toward a single invisible center that lies up ahead. Instead of the epic calm that reigns in *War and Peace*, giving all the events and characters of that novel such a leisurely pace, we sense in *Anna Karenina* the presence of something that is anxiously seeking. This gives the whole work a lyric quality. On laying down *War and Peace*, the reader has a distinct feeling of satisfaction; on the contrary, on laying down *Anna Karenina*, he feels alarmed and confused. A feeling of sorrow, spiritual horror, hatred of life, and pity for man's fate—all this is mixed up in him to the point where it becomes unbearable; lacking the strength to struggle with himself, he looks for help from this great artist who has so disturbed his peace of mind. And the latter does not make him wait long for his answer. *Anna Karenina* proved to be but a great prologue to the doctrine that its author had been developing for ten years, sometimes directly, sometimes in allegories. Shifting from doubt to faith, falling from faith again into doubt, firm only in rejection, and wavering in affirmation, he seems in the whole series of his later works to personify the quest for the answer to skepticism. What he seems to be saying in his

last works is: "I feel that I believe in some sort of God; but I am unclear as to what sort of God I believe in."

Dostoevsky's sprawling and episodic novel, while it differs sharply from *Anna Karenina* in form, resembles it very much in spirit and meaning. It, too, is a synthesis of psychological analysis, philosophical ideas, and the struggle of religious aspirations against doubt. But now the problem is attacked on a broader scale: whereas *Anna Karenina* shows how inexorably and horribly a person perishes once he has departed from paths predetermined for him, *The Brothers Karamazov* discloses the mysterious inception of a new life in the midst of a life that is dying. The old Karamazov is, as it were, the symbol of death and decay. All the elements of his spiritual nature seem to have lost their binding center, and he gives off the smell of putrefaction. There is no longer a regulating norm in him, and everything fetid in the human soul has irresistibly begun to ooze out, soiling everything he touches. There has never been a character in our literature for whom both the inner and outer laws have existed less than they do for him: iniquitous man, reviler of all law, defiler of all that is sacred—such is his name, such is his kind. Our society, advancing without traditions, failing to develop in itself a religion or any sense of duty, and nevertheless thinking that it has outgrown every religion and every duty, broad only because of an inner slackness, is in its basic features accurately, although too severely, symbolized by this character. We are shown his chief characteristic, the lack of an inner restraining norm, and the result of it, his naked lust for everything, his insolent sneer in answer to anyone who would stand reproachfully in his way.

It is in the stench of this decomposing corpse that his

offspring grow up. Between all four of Karamazov's sons, one can find an internal relationship subject to the law of the attraction of opposites. Smerdyakov, that nest of miasmas, that decaying hull from a grain of wheat that "has fallen into the ground and died," is, as it were, the opposite pole of the pure Alyosha, who carries in himself a new life, in the same way that a fresh sprout brings forth from its dark little grave into the sunlight the life and law of the dead mother organism. The mystery of the rebirth of all that dies is beautifully conveyed in this contrast. The third son, Ivan Fyodorovich, is reserved and sullen; he is the opposite of the expansive and garrulous Dmitry, who has good intentions, but who lacks any kind of norm—whereas that norm is to the highest possible degree concentrated in Ivan. Just as Dmitry is strongly attracted to Alyosha, so something in Ivan binds him to Smerdyakov. Ivan "highly values" Alyosha, but only, of course, as his opposite, and, moreover, as his equal. But he has nothing in common with Dmitry. The relations between Ivan and Dmitry are purely superficial, and this is more important than the fact that they finally grow hostile to each other. On the contrary, there is a kinship between Smerdyakov and Ivan: they understand each other at once, on the basis of no more than a hint; they begin to talk with each other as if, even after a silence between them, their contact was never broken. Thus, the bond between them is as obvious as is the bond between Alyosha and Dmitry. And in the same way that the power of affirmation and life stands out in its purest form in Alyosha, so is the power of negation and death, the power of evil, concentrated in its purest form in Ivan. Smerdyakov is merely his outer shell, his decaying offal. Of course, the evil in human nature is not so slight that it

can assume only monstrous forms. It is also strong, it is also charming, and strength and charm are concentrated in Ivan. Dmitry is destined to be regenerated. Through suffering, he will purify himself. Even as he readies himself to face this suffering, he senses a "new man" in himself, and he prepares to strike up "a hymn to God" out in cold Siberia, from the mines to which he has been exiled to hard labor. Along with his purification, there will be an awakening of the life force in him: "In thousands of torments—I *am*; writhing in agony—I *am*," he says on the eve of his trial at which he feels he will be found guilty. In this thirst for life and this insatiable desire to become worthy of it, even through suffering, Dostoevsky has again divined the most profound, vital, and perhaps the central feature of history. Perhaps in this thirst alone has there been preserved in man the preponderance of the good over the evil in which he is so dreadfully immersed and which reveals itself in his every deed, his every thought. But despite them all, despite all the slime through which man has been crawling for thousands of years, there is nevertheless an insatiable desire to crawl farther on in order some day to see the light—and this raises man high above all else in nature and is a pledge that he will not completely perish in the midst of all suffering, of any misfortune whatsoever. Herein also lies the explanation of why we shudder and turn away at the sight of a suicide, why it seems to us even more gloomy than murder. It violates an even higher law—and religion condemns it as a crime for which there is no atonement. From a rational point of view, we should regard it indifferently, leaving everyone to decide whether it is best for him to live or to die. But the universal and supreme law, which is, of course, of mystical origin, forces

us all to live, it demands this as an obligation, whose burden we can never throw off. If the depraved and unfortunate Dmitry Karamazov is restored to life because deep down inside him there is, nevertheless, something good, then Ivan, to whom a broad path of life is open from without, stands, despite his great mental development, despite his strong character, on the edge of the abyss into which Smerdyakov fell and died. A powerful champion of negation and evil, he will struggle long and violently against death, that natural result of negation; and, nevertheless, the eternal laws of nature will overcome his strength; he will grow weary, and he will die in the same way that Smerdyakov died.

The last days of Smerdyakov, known to us from his first, second, and third meeting with Ivan, are striking. Here, too, as in *Crime and Punishment*, we are plunged in a peculiar way, the secret of which was known only to Dostoevsky, into a special psychological atmosphere, stifling and gloomy, and before we can make anything out, even before we come to the deed itself, we experience a mystical horror at the approach of a violation of the laws of nature, the approach of something criminal; and we shudder in expectation. The hatred with which Smerdyakov now regards Ivan, who had suggested to him that "everything is permitted"; the book *The Sayings of the Holy Father Isaac the Syrian*, which has replaced the French vocabulary lists under his pillow; the fits of delirium, of which his alarmed landlady tells although we ourselves notice nothing peculiar about him; the wad of banknotes that he pulls out of his stocking, at the sight of which Ivan trembles and backs up against the wall without knowing why, and the story itself of how the murder occurred, with the victim's unconscious fear of his murderer—his illegitimate son and trusted servant, a weak

coward and idiot—all this is in the highest degree startling and painful, and once again it leads us into the world of criminality. It is remarkable that just as the law of nature violated here is higher than the one violated in *Crime and Punishment*, so the atmosphere surrounding the criminal is somehow more stifling and unbearable than that which we sense around Raskolnikov. This is why the latter did not commit suicide; his life still had some meaning, and after several years of expiation, he could go from this atmosphere into the light and sunshine. But Smerdyakov's life had no meaning; and although there may have been light and sunshine somewhere or other for him, it is quite clear that he did not have the strength to reach the place where they were, and he fell and died at his first steps in that direction. His final parting with Ivan, when he gives him the money for which the murder had been committed, and his words about Providence—all this lets us look into the soul of this man shortly before his suicide: a mystery never before depicted by anyone, never before reproduced by any of the living.

I should say a few words here about the nature of the fits suffered by these two brothers, the one of whom is a parricide, the other an accomplice in parricide. The latter, as we know, complains of having been visited by the devil, "a rotten, insignificant devil"; the former speaks of Providence, of having been visited by God. Earlier, both of them were atheists, and, moreover, quite confirmed ones. In reading Dostoevsky's story carefully, we have no difficulty in seeing that it is precisely hallucinations that are Ivan Fyodorovich's main trouble. Recall what he says to Alyosha: "It was *he* who told you that." And how he becomes animated every time his interlocutor's vague words give him

reason to think that the latter also knows that it is possible for the devil to show himself. ("Who is he? Who's here? Who's the third person here?" he asks Smerdyakov in alarm.) And, finally, recall the icy chill that suddenly grips his heart as he draws near his house after the third meeting with Smerdyakov, when he thinks that the "visitor" is already waiting for him there; and the almost whining tone of his complaints after his hallucination: "Yes, he knows how to torment me . . . he's beastly cunning." "Alyosha, who dares put such questions to me?" "He was the one who frightened you . . . you pure cherub," etc. If we recall the cold and severe tone of this atheist, and his genuinely powerful nature, then this transformation of a strong man into a grumbling child, into a whining woman, can give us the clearest possible idea of how greatly he is tormented by his hallucinations. "Tomorrow the cross, but not the gallows," he decides after this same hallucination, while preparing to tell all at the trial. By analogy, we must assume that Smerdyakov was tormented by something similar. As a matter of fact, Smerdyakov's recollection of the murder and his remorse should have been most intense the first few days after the deed had been committed, and yet at that time, he was still quite calm; his sickness and delirium do not begin until several weeks later. And they, too, as with Ivan Fyodorovich, are not continuous, but intermittent. The only difference is that "the third person," of whose presence he is certain even when his visitor is with him, is God, "Providence" Itself, although he answers Ivan's question of whether he believes in God by saying: "No sir, I've never believed." Evidently, what they had conversed about earlier and what they had agreed on was something completely different from what they experienced after they

violated the law of nature. Therefore, once the one had sensed the presence of what he calls "the devil," and the other of what he calls "Providence," they both experienced something quite unexpected. All their earlier words about life beyond the grave and about God proved to be irrelevant. Continuing the analogy with Ivan, we must imagine that it was precisely the horror of expecting a "visit" that threw Smerdyakov into his frenzied confusion and also drove him to suicide. As always with man, Smerdyakov took the path of least resistance and suffering. To bear the physical pain of strangulation was evidently easier for him than to feel once again the icy touch of the apparition that had been tormenting him.

Smerdyakov's fits, obviously more severe, are not described for us; we are given only a detailed description of Ivan Fyodorovich's. We are told that when *The Brothers Karamazov* was first published, a certain psychiatrist wrote Dostoevsky, expressing his amazement at how closely Dostoevsky's artistic description corresponded to what is revealed during the objective observation of such fits. The psychiatrist did not, of course, know the substance of hallucinations, and this is precisely what is provided by Dostoevsky. The author gives his description a somewhat scoffing tone, but if we read all his works carefully, we will see that he always gave his favorite ideas, at the beginning and the end, a slight touch of irony¹—at least he did so every time he expected them to be subjected to ridicule. Evidently, he did not want to set the great mass of readers

¹ Such, for example, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, is the public prosecutor's speech in court, which is presented with a tone that slightly ridicules the prosecutor. Nevertheless, many of the ideas in this speech are a repetition of ideas expressed by Dostoevsky in *The Diary of a Writer* in his own name.

against him—but he also found it difficult to leave anything unsaid. Ivan Fyodorovich, all during his hallucination, refuses to believe that it really exists, i.e., he does not believe in it when he is sick; on the contrary, he believes in its reality all the time he is well, when he is no longer experiencing it; and it is the only thing he fears, the only thing he thinks of. The sick man's words are overserious precisely when he is in a healthy state, and the author becomes too insistently focussed as soon as he approaches them. All this makes us see the duality and the hidden nature of Dostoevsky when he tells of Ivan Fyodorovich's nightmare. Did he really want to give us only a description of the hallucination? Is it not possible that behind his mocking tone is concealed his true conviction? And Svidrigailov's very clever idea (see above) about the possibility of other worlds, wisps of which are revealed to sick people—is this not Dostoevsky's own idea? At any rate, here is what he has Father Zosima say, and this time without any irony:

Much on earth is concealed from us, but in return for that, we have been given a mysterious inner sense of our living tie with another world, with a higher and heavenly world, and the roots of our thoughts and feelings are not here, but in other worlds. That is why philosophers say that we cannot understand the true nature of things here on earth. God took seeds from other worlds and sowed them on this earth, and He made His garden grow, and everything came up that could come up, but things that grow live only through the feeling of their contact with another mysterious world; if that feeling becomes weak or is destroyed in you, then what has grown up in you will also die.

Then you will become indifferent to life and will even come to hate it.²

These words are striking both for the profundity of the idea contained in them, the beauty of their images (which seem very closely to correspond to the hidden reality of things), and their power of conviction. This is the second time that our fiction, which has so immeasurably outstripped our sluggish science, has risen to a height of contemplation that only Plato and a few others were able to attain. In what a criminal senses, Dostoevsky unquestionably saw this contact with "other worlds" suddenly becoming clear and perceptible, whereas for everyone else, who has not transgressed the laws of nature, this contact, of course, exists, but it is not sensed; it is completely imperceptible and unclear.

That Dostoevsky is far from guilty of making a gross error, and that we, too, are not falling into it by revealing his unexpressed idea, becomes evident from the answer we must give to two questions that automatically arise in a reading of both *Crime and Punishment* and the description of the meetings of the parricides in *The Brothers Karamazov*: why is it that we so clearly sense the accuracy of the depiction of the emotional state of these criminals even though we have never experienced it ourselves? And why is it that a criminal, once he has committed a crime and consequently has suddenly fallen so low in the eyes of the people around him, on the contrary, rises in one respect so high above them all? Smerdyakov is a trembling insect in front of Ivan before the crime; but, once he has committed the crime, he speaks with him as if he has a certain power over

² *The Brothers Karamazov*.

him, as if he is his master. Ivan himself is amazed at this and says: "You're really in earnest, you're more clever than I thought." Raskolnikov, who is only *primus inter pares* among other people before the crime, definitely rises above them all after it. Only Svidrigailov, also a murderer, speaks with him as an equal, derisively pointing out that they have a certain point of contact between them. This all demands an explanation, and I shall now give the one that seems most likely to me. If we who have never committed murder clearly understand the mental state of the criminal, and if in reading Dostoevsky we wonder not at the whimsy of his imagination but at the skill and depth of his analysis, then is it not perfectly clear that we have a means of evaluation with which we pronounce our judgment on the plausibility of depicting something that should be completely unknown to us? Is it not obvious that such a means can only be *a priori* knowledge of this state, although we are not aware of it in ourselves? Someone depicts feelings for us that we have never experienced—and in response to what he says, there is awakened in us a knowledge that was previously hidden. And only because this newly awakened knowledge merges and coincides with what has been provided us from without are we able to draw a conclusion about the plausibility, about the truthfulness of these new feelings. In case it does not coincide, we say it is false—we say this of something about which we apparently can have no idea whatsoever. This strange fact reveals to us a most profound mystery of our soul—its complexity: it consists not only of what can be clearly observed in it (for example, our mind consists not only of knowledge, thoughts, and ideas of which it is conscious); in it is much that we do not even suspect in ourselves, but all this begins to function perceptibly only at certain very exceptional moments.

And, for the most part, we do not until our very death know the true contents of our soul; we do not even know the true image of the world in which we live, in as much as it changes in accordance with the thought or the feeling that we apply to it. With crime, there is revealed one of these dark sources of our ideas and feelings, and we immediately become aware of the spiritual threads that bind the universe to everything living in it. It is precisely the knowledge of this, something that is still hidden from all other people, that in a certain sense raises the criminal above everyone else. The laws of life and death become perceptible to him as soon as he transgresses them, and suddenly he feels that in one place he has severed one such thread, and, having severed it, he himself has strangely perished. What destroys him, what can be felt only by violating a law of nature, is in its way another world with which he has come into contact. We, however, have only a presentiment of it, we guess at it with our rather vague knowledge.

We said that in *The Brothers Karamazov* a great analyst of the human soul depicted for us a new life emerging from an old one that is dying. According to certain inexplicable and mysterious laws, all nature is subject to such regeneration; and the main thing that we find in this is the inseparability of life from death, the impossibility that one can come about before the other has occurred. And here is the explanation of the epigraph that Dostoevsky took for his last work: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12:24.) The fall, death, decay—this is merely a pledge of a new and better life. This is how we must look at history. We must accustom ourselves to this point of view in watching the elements of decay in the life around us: it alone can

save us from despair and fill us with the firmest of faith in moments when it seems that the end of all faith has come. It alone is in keeping with the real and powerful forces directing the flow of time, and not the weakly glimmering light of our mind, not our cares and fears with which we fill history and by which we do not in the least guide it.

But Dostoevsky's broadly conceived canvas remained unfinished. With this understanding of darkness, chaos, and destruction, there was undoubtedly connected in the soul of the artist himself a certain lack of harmony, order, and consistency. As a matter of fact, *The Brothers Karamazov* shows only how the old dies; the regeneration is, of course, outlined, but only briefly, and from without. But just *how* this regeneration comes about—that is a secret Dostoevsky took with him to the grave. To judge from the last page of *Crime and Punishment*, it was his life-long intention to depict this, and it was finally to appear in the subsequent volumes of *The Brothers Karamazov*; but, because of the author's death, that was not to be. Dostoevsky had outlined the most important task of his life but had failed to complete it.

But what stood on its threshold he executed with a breadth of plan and a depth of understanding unequaled both in our literature and in those of other countries. We mean "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." It was already noted above that each life is a combination of good and evil, and as it dies, it precipitates in itself, in pure form, both the good and the evil. It is precisely the latter that will, of course, perish, but not before it wages a stubborn struggle against the good, and this is what is depicted in the "Legend" with unparalleled strength.

VII

Behind a partition in a small inn, the two brothers get together for the first time: the dreamy and religious Alyosha, Father Zosima's favorite novice, who had so calmly turned from the beaten track of life to the path of monastic reclusion, and Ivan, older than he in both years and experience. Of all four brothers, only these two were born of the same mother; Dmitry and Smerdyakov are their brothers only through their father. Four months have passed since Alyosha and Ivan met for the first time after a long separation—and only now, on the eve of a new separation, perhaps forever, do they get together and speak privately. During those months, Alyosha had observed his brother with curiosity; he already knew of his convictions and superior education. And, for his part, he had sometimes noticed Ivan's searching look on him. Up to now, both of them had remained silent, although it was only to one another that they had anything of moment to impart. With the others, they had spoken either indifferently or submissively (Alyosha with Zosima) or domineeringly (Ivan with Miusov). They were bound together by a certain point of departure, and although they had separated at its very beginning to go in opposite directions and later had no contact with each other at all, still their friendship through this common point of departure was more significant and more vital than their friendship through lateral branches of the family or through the heights of their

spiritual development, the only thing they had in common with everyone around them. This is well expressed in the following introductory episode of their conversation:

“Why are you worried about my going away?” said Ivan to Alyosha. “We have God only knows how much time before I leave. A whole eternity of time, immortality!”

“But if you’re going away tomorrow, what kind of eternity is it?”

“Of what concern is that to you and me?” said Ivan, laughing. “We’ll have time to talk over what we have to say to each other, the things we’ve come here to talk over, won’t we? Why are you looking at me with such surprise? Tell me: for what purpose did we meet here? To talk about love for Katerina Ivanovna, about the old man and Dmitry? About travel abroad? About the disastrous situation of Russia? About the Emperor Napoleon? Was it for that?”

“No, not for that.”

“So then you do know for what purpose it was. The others have one subject of conversation, and we greenhorns have another; we have first of all to decide the eternal questions. All young Russia is talking about nothing but the eternal questions now. Especially now, when the old men have all suddenly begun to occupy themselves with practical questions. Why have you been looking so expectantly at me all these three months? To ask me: ‘What do you believe in, or don’t you believe in anything at all?’ That’s what your glances have meant these last three months, isn’t it?”

“That’s probably what it was,” Alyosha smiled. “You’re not laughing at me now, are you, brother?”

“I, laughing at you? As if I would want to distress my little brother, who has been looking at me expectantly for three months now. Alyosha, look me in the eye: after all, I’m exactly the same sort of little boy as you, only I’m not a novice. What have Russian boys been doing up to now—that is, some of them? For example, take this stinking tavern—they get together here and sit in a corner for hours on end. They haven’t known each other all their lives, and when they leave the tavern, they won’t know one another again for forty years. Well, what will they talk about, now that they have seized the opportunity in a tavern? Naturally about nothing but questions of world importance: is there a God, is there immortality? And those who don’t believe in God—well, they will talk about socialism and anarchism, about the transformation of all mankind in accordance with some new order. So you see, it will be the same damned thing, the same questions, only they start from the other end. And an enormous number of the most original Russian boys do nothing today but talk about eternal questions. Isn’t that so?”

“Yes for real Russians, questions as to whether there is eternity, or, as you say, questions from the other end, of course, take precedence over all else, and so they should,” said Alyosha, looking intently at his brother with the same peaceful and searching smile.

And on this “so they should” the brothers agreed. The passage just quoted will always remain an historic one.

It seems there really was a time when people became close friends or parted company because of "eternal questions." And these mutual interests brought them closer together than did their ties of kinship, not to mention a similar status or wealth. Happy times, happy people: how far they were from moral corruption! But it seems that all this has passed, and possibly for good. How it could happen with us that the most interesting thing could so quickly turn into the least interesting of all will be learned when future history pronounces its judgment. Only one thing is certain: that intellectual indifference, indifference to all questions, has never been so brazen as it is with the generation that will soon replace ours.

The two brothers, sensing that they see eye to eye about the most important thing, lose all shyness before each other in regard to everything else, and Ivan reveals his true nature to the novice Alyosha: the main thing he finds in himself is a thirst for life.

"Let's suppose that I didn't believe in life," he says, "that I lost faith in the woman I loved, that I lost faith in the order of things, even that I was convinced that everything was, instead, disorderly, damned, and perhaps, devilish chaos,¹ even that I was stricken by all the horrors of man's disillusionment—I would still want to live!² And having

¹ In *The Possessed*, Kirillov says just before his suicide: "Our whole planet is a lie and rests on a lie and stupid mockery. The very laws of the planet are a lie and a vaudeville of devils. What's the point in living? Answer me, if you're a man!" It is obvious from the repetition and the passionate tone that Dostoevsky has injected into his passage his own doubt, against which he had struggled long and hard.

² In *Biography and Letters*, one can find a great many indications of Dostoevsky's own unusual tenacity of life. It was the only thing that gave him the strength to bear all that fell to his

once tasted of the cup, I would not tear myself away from it until I had drained it to the dregs. However, when I reach thirty, I'll probably cast the cup aside even though I haven't emptied it, and I'll turn away . . . where, I don't know." This thirst for life is spontaneous and instinctive: "There is still a lot of centripetal force in our planet," he remarks, finding it difficult to explain. "I have a longing for life, and I go on living, even if it is contrary to all logic."

There is something in man that is related to the life of nature and to that other life which unfolds in its bosom and which we call history. And man sticks to all this: threads much stronger and more vital than the cold ties of reasoning bind him to the earth, and he loves it with a love inexplicable and deep:

"The sticky little leaves that come out in spring are dear to me; so is the blue sky; so are some people—you know, you sometimes love people without knowing why; so are some great deeds of man in which you have perhaps lost faith long ago, but which your heart still reveres by force of habit . . ."

"I think that everyone must love life more than anything else in the world," says Alyosha thoughtfully.

"Love life more than the meaning of it?"

Alyosha says "yes," that a spontaneous love of life is always followed by an understanding of its meaning—sooner or later.

Ivan's love for the life of slumbering nature, for "the sticky little leaves that open in spring," is inseparably connected with his love for that other nature which is fully

lot during his life. "I have in me a cat's tenacity of life, don't I?" he says at the end of one of his letters.

conscious: i.e., man and the wonderful world created by him.

"I want to make a trip to Western Europe," he says.

He has two thousand rubles that have been bequeathed to him by the woman who had raised him and Alyosha out of pity and love for their mother after their father had abandoned them. Now, having graduated from the university, Ivan is planning to use this money for a trip abroad.

"I'll be going abroad from here," he continues. "And yet I know I'll be going to a graveyard, but it's the dearest graveyard there is, of this I'm certain. Dear are the corpses that lie there; each stone over them speaks of such an ardent life in the past, of such a passionate faith in one's own great deeds, in one's own truth, in one's own struggle, and in one's own knowledge that I know in advance I'll fall on the ground and kiss those stones and cry over them³—at the same time convinced with all my heart that all this has long been a graveyard and nothing more. And I shall cry not from despair, but simply because I'll be happy about my tears."

These moving words reveal to us a man with a great heart and a great mind, as well as all the sadness that such a soul must inevitably carry within itself. The sadness here results from a powerful love and, at the same time, from a deep intellectuality, which is inseparable from it and which, nevertheless, contradicts it. Dialectical rejection without attachment or unconscious attachment without under-

³ Here, too, Dostoevsky has inserted his own feelings toward Europe. Compare this with Versilov's words in *A Raw Youth* (pp. 453-454, edition of 1882) and Dostoevsky's remark on p. 295 of *Biography and Letters*.

standing—these are the two equally simple attitudes toward Europe that almost exclusively predominate with us in Russia. Very few people are able to combine the one with the other, and, of course, such a combination cannot help causing the deepest possible suffering. But in it alone is the truth, and however difficult it may be, everyone who wants to be right must try to develop in himself a capacity for both this feeling of love and for an awareness of the fact that what one loves is already dying.

Anyone who has a great interest in something outside himself, in something not directly connected with himself personally, cannot help being sincere and truthful. Such a person's thoughts are too strongly focussed on this interest for him to concern himself with all the petty things with which a person usually tries to surround himself in order to hide his own insignificance. For that reason, true greatness is always so very simple; and also for that reason, of course, it never in its lifetime wins the recognition that always falls to the lot of false and, therefore, feigned greatness. Spiritual loneliness, the impossibility of sharing one's thoughts, is merely the necessary result of this state of affairs, and ultimately it turns even into reticence, into a reluctance to share them. And yet the need to speak one's mind nevertheless exists—and herein lies the explanation for those meetings and deep confessions that even a moment before could not have been foreseen, and which leave in one's interlocutors an impression for the rest of their lives.

"I'd like to be friends with you, Alyosha," says Ivan, "because I have no friends."

Everything that had caused such an unbridgeable gap between him and everyone else now suddenly disappears. Alyosha jokes with him, with this person with whom no

one has ever joked before, and Ivan himself tells him, laughing "like a meek little boy:"

"My dear little brother, I don't want to corrupt you or push you from your firm foundation; perhaps it is I who would like to be cured by you."

Alyosha looks at him in amazement. He has never seen him like this before.

VIII

"Well, what are we to begin with? With God?" asks Ivan—and he develops his idea of the incompatibility of a compassionate God with suffering humanity and of a just God with unavenged crime.

"An old sinner said in the eighteenth century," begins Ivan, "that if God did not exist, He would have to be invented." "*S'il n'existait pas Dieu, il faudrait l'inventer.*"¹ And man indeed invented God. The fact that God really exists is not strange—that would not be so amazing. What is amazing is the fact that such an idea, the idea of the necessity of God, could have entered the head of such a savage and vicious animal as man: it's so holy, so touching, and so wise, and it does man such great credit."

Thus, what Ivan is trying first of all to establish is the corruption of man and the sanctity of religion. Religion is something lofty: and to make it accessible to man, for him to be able to penetrate its world outlook—this is the highest

¹ This idea was first attributed to Voltaire.

goal, the greatest satisfaction he can ever achieve. But he can truly and sincerely achieve this, not despite his learning capacities, but only by acting in accordance with them as they have been arranged for him by the Creator, about Whom religion itself teaches.

Thus, there is not even a trace here of hostility, arrogance, or scorn for what will soon be so vigorously contested; and therein lies the very profound originality of the method itself. In world literature, we find frequent attempts to deny the existence of God, but here we feel that we are approaching something special, something that has never before appeared in any literature, a point of view that has never been taken by any man. And we also feel that this point of view is the only serious one for the attacking side and very likely the only menacing one to the side being attacked.

And this originality of thought is maintained farther on as well: God's existence, the indemonstrability of which is usually considered (in both science and philosophy) as the first stumbling-block to the human mind on the path to a religious outlook, is here passed over as if it were no hindrance at all. That which religion tries most of all to defend, that which it finds difficult to defend, is not in the least subjected to attack, but is conceded without dispute. And it is impossible not to acknowledge the strictly scientific nature of this method: the relativity and conditionality of human thought is a most subtle and profound truth that for thousands of years remained hidden from man, but now it has finally been revealed. A striking and graphic illustration of this relativity in recent times was the doubt as to whether real space is confined solely to what man

knows, solely to what is thinkable and imaginable for him. The rise of so-called non-Euclidean geometry,² which is now being worked out by the best mathematicians of Europe and in which two parallel lines intersect and the sum of the angles of a triangle is somewhat less than two right angles, is an indisputable fact clear to everyone and a sure proof that the reality of being is not covered by what is conceivable to the mind. And God's existence, the indemonstrability of which is no refutation of its reality, can also belong to those things that are inconceivable, but which, nevertheless, exist. Proceeding from this relativity of human thinking, Ivan refuses to judge whether the claims of religion are correct or not about Him who is the source of all being and the determiner and legislator of all thought. "I humbly admit," he says, "that I have no faculty for settling such questions. I have only a Euclidean, an earthly mind, so how am I to judge about something that is not of this world? And I advise you, too, my friend, never to think about that, and particularly about God: whether He exists or not. All those are questions that are quite inappropriate to a mind created with an understanding of just

² It was first discovered by Lobachevsky, and Kazan University, where he was a professor, honored his memory by publishing in its own name and at its own expense his complete works (in one volume, Kazan, 1883). Contained in it are his "Hypothetical Geometry," "New Principles of Geometry with a Complete Theory of Parallels," and "Pangeometry." For a detailed discussion of non-Euclidean geometry and information on its literature, see Professor Vyashchenko-Zakharchenko's *Euclid's Principles, With an Explanatory Introduction and a Commentary* (Kiev, 1880). [Translator's note: Contemporary mathematicians would be quick to point out that J. Bolyai (1802-1860) and K. Gauss (1777-1855), each working independently in Hungary and Germany respectively, developed the theory of non-Euclidean geometry almost simultaneously with N. Lobachevsky (1793-1856).]

three dimensions. And so I accept God, and not only with willingness—no, it's more than that—I accept both His infinite wisdom and His purpose—which are utterly beyond our comprehension; I believe in the underlying order and the meaning of life; I believe in the eternal harmony into which it is said we shall all merge someday; I believe in the Word, to which the universe is striving, and which itself was 'with God' and which is God. . . ."³

IX

"But I do not accept God's world," says Ivan, as he ends his confession.

Again we encounter a completely unfamiliar turn of thought: the creature does not reject its Creator—it knows and acknowledges Him; but it revolts against Him, it rejects what He has created, and along with it, its own self, having sensed in the underlying order of this creation something incompatible with the way in which it is created. The supreme and wise will that has been poured over the universe from an inscrutable source, rebels in one of its tiny particles called man—it rebels against its own self and grumbles about the laws according to which it functions.

"I must make a confession to you," says Ivan. "I never

³ The reference is to the opening words of the Gospel according to St. John: "In the beginning was the Word [*logos*—reason, sense, word as an expressed thought], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1).

could understand how people can love their neighbors. In my opinion, it is precisely their neighbors they can't love; at most, they can love those who live far away. I once read somewhere about John the Merciful (a saint), who, when a hungry and frozen passerby asked him to warm him, lay down with him in his bed, put his arms around him, and began to breathe into his mouth, which was festering and which stank from some terrible disease. I am convinced he did so from anguish that originated in a lie, for the sake of love arising from a sense of duty, for the sake of a self-imposed penance. In order to love a person, it is necessary that he be hidden. . . . In theory, of course, it is possible to love one's neighbor, and sometimes even at a distance, but in proximity, almost never."

In these words, one detects a terrible hatred, at the base of which lies a great bitterness. No one will hate one's own flesh; everyone will feed and warm it—this is said to be a general rule of man's nature. But here we see that very hatred of one's flesh, the desire not to feed and warm it, but, on the contrary, to lacerate and destroy it. The example is an unhappy one, chosen in confused haste: of course, John the Merciful did his deed happily and joyfully; this needs practically no explanation. But this error in a character who appears only for a moment changes nothing; we skip it, and listen further:

"I had to make you see my point of view," continues Ivan. "I wanted to speak about the suffering of man in general, but maybe it's better if we limit ourselves to the sufferings of children. . . . First of all, it is possible to love children even in proximity, even those who are dirty, even those with ugly faces (however, it seems to me that children never have ugly faces); secondly, I won't speak

about adults, because, in addition to their being disgusting and unworthy of love, they have a compensation: they have eaten the apple, and know good and evil, and have become 'like gods.' And they continue to eat it, even now. But the children have eaten nothing, and for the time being are guilty of nothing. Do you like little children, Alyosha? I know you like them, and you will understand why I want to speak only of them. If they, too, suffer horribly on earth, it is, of course, because of their fathers; they are punished for their fathers, who have eaten the apple—but that is an argument from another world, and, of course, it is incomprehensible to the human heart here on earth. An innocent person must not suffer for another, and, moreover, not such innocent ones! Go on, Alyosha, be surprised at me—I, too, am terribly fond of little children. And take note, cruel people, passionate ones, carnal ones, in short Karamazovs, are sometimes very fond of children. Children, as long as they are children, up to the age of seven, for example, are extremely different from other people: it is as if they are a different type of creature, with a different nature. I knew a robber in prison; during his career, he happened to murder whole families in houses he had broken into at night to rob, and among his victims were, of course, several children. But when he was in prison, he had a strange affection for them. He would spend his time at the window of his cell watching the children playing in the prison yard. He got one little boy accustomed to come up to the window, and the boy even became friends with him . . . You don't know why I'm telling you all this, do you, Alyosha? I have a headache, and I feel sad."

"You look so strange as you speak," observed Alyosha uneasily, "as if you were almost mad."

The desire to cause suffering in order to be able to show compassion is a mysterious and inexplicable feature of the polarity of the human soul, and Dostoevsky reveals it to us here. He himself, as is well known, frequently and with extreme agony dwells in his works¹ on the sufferings of children, portraying them in such a way that it is always obvious that he too is suffering what they suffer and that he has a keen insight into their suffering: the scene depicted, with all its windings, is like a knife piercing a trembling body; it sinks deeper and deeper into the struggling, innocent creature, whose tears burn the artist's heart in the same way that blood burns the hand of a murderer. One can feel the criminality of all this, one can long to lacerate one's body, which has been disposed like this, but so long as this flesh is not completely lacerated, so long as the perversion of the human soul is not corrected, it would be a useless endeavor to close one's eyes to the fact that all this exists, or at least that one encounters it through some inexplicable law of nature. But, of course, once one acknowledges this, one can go mad realizing that the history

¹ In *The Insulted and Injured*, the character and fate of Nelly; in *The Possessed*, Stavrogin's conversation with Shatov, as well as his conversation with Kirillov, when the latter is playing ball with the little child; in *Crime and Punishment*, Marmeladov's children; in *The Brothers Karamazov*, in two chapters: "Heartache in the Hut" and "In the Open Air," where the child's suffering is almost unbearable, even in reading about it. ("Papa, papa, dear papa, how he humiliated you!" Ilyusha says hysterically to his father.) There is something burning and passionate in this pain. In this same chapter, people are constantly called "invalids" and "children." Immediately following these scenes begins "Pro and Contra," the great dialectic of every religion, Christianity included, which, although it had been conceived by the author many years earlier, suddenly seems to pour out of him here with no connection whatever to the course of the action in this novel.

of mankind is not yet complete and that this “unsettled” flesh will have to live on, to torture, and to suffer for thousands of years to come.

“People sometimes speak of man’s bestial cruelty,” continues Ivan, recovering himself, “but that’s terribly unjust and insulting to the beasts: a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically, so cleverly cruel. A tiger only gnaws and tears its victim to pieces—that’s all it knows how to do.”

On the contrary, man puts a refinement, a secret, voluptuous, and malicious joy into his cruelty. Neither nationality nor education rid him of this trait, nor, on the contrary, does primitiveness or even religion; it is eternal and ineradicable in man. When Cleopatra, a refined Greek woman,² grew weary of the monotony of an eternally happy life, she varied it, sometimes with a page from Sophocles or Plato, sometimes with the changing smile on a slave girl’s face, into which she would look and which would look her in the eyes as her hand stuck a pin into the girl’s black breast. The Turks, Mohammedans and barbarians, even when busy with a troublesome rebellion, would still snatch the time to enjoy man’s greatest pleasure—the pleasure of seeing another suffer greatly. In the example quoted here, they enter a hut and find a frightened mother with her suckling child.

“They fondle the child,” says Ivan, “and laugh to amuse it. They are successful: the child begins to laugh. At that moment, a Turk points his pistol a few inches from the child’s face. The baby laughs with joy and holds out its little hands to grasp the pistol, when suddenly the artist pulls the trigger, right in the baby’s face and blows its little

² She is said to have been able to converse in seven languages. [Tr.]

head to bits. Artistic, isn't it? By the way, they say the Turks are very fond of candy." ³

"Brother, what is the point of all this?" asks Alyosha.

"I think that if the devil doesn't exist, and, consequently, that man created him, he created him in his own image and likeness."

"In the same way as he did God?" observed Alyosha.

"It is amazing how good you are at 'cracking the wind of the poor phrase,' as Polonius says in *Hamlet*," laughed Ivan. "You've caught me there. All right, I'm glad. Yours must be *some* God if man created Him in his own image and likeness."

And Ivan goes on to develop the picture of human suffering. In peaceful, industrious, and Protestant Switzerland, just five years earlier, an execution had taken place, remarkable for its details. A certain illegitimate child, Richard, had been given away by his parents to some shepherds when he was still a baby. The shepherds took him so as to have additional manpower in the future. He was given to them as a thing, and he was treated by them as a thing. In wet and cold weather, almost naked and always hungry, he would tend their cattle in the mountains.

"Richard himself testified how in those years, like the prodigal son in the Gospel, he longed to eat the mash given the pigs that were being fattened for sale. But he was not even given that; and when he stole some of it from the pigs, he was beaten. Thus, he spent his whole childhood and youth, until he grew up, became strong, and went out to

³ The reference to the Turks' fondness for "candy" has a more general meaning: everywhere that Dostoevsky depicts man's propensity to cruelty he connects it with that which is sensual and depraved.

steal. This savage began to earn his living as a day laborer in Geneva. He drank up what he earned, lived like an animal, and ended up by killing and robbing an old man. He was caught, tried, and condemned to death."

Once he is condemned and lost, society, the Church, and the State surround him with attention and care. Clergymen come to visit him in prison, and for the first time the light of Christ's teaching is revealed to him. He learns how to read and write, he confesses his crime and writes to the court, saying he is a monster and that finally it has been vouchsafed to him by the Lord to see the light and to obtain grace. Society is touched and disturbed; people go to him, they kiss and embrace him: "And you have been visited with grace, you, too, are our brother in the Lord!" Richard weeps. New impressions that he had never before experienced enter his soul, they soften and move it. This savage, this young beast, who had stolen food from pigs, suddenly learns that he, too, is a person, that he is not a stranger to everyone and completely alone, that he, too, has friends who love, warm, and console him. "I, too, have been visited with grace," he says, moved with emotion. . . . "I am dying in the Lord." "Yes, yes, Richard, die in the Lord. You have shed blood and must die in the Lord. Even though it was not your fault, because you did not know the Lord when you coveted the pigs' food, and when you were beaten for having stolen it (what you did was very bad, because it is forbidden to steal), but you shed blood and must die." And then comes the last day: "This is my best day," he says. "I am going to the Lord." "Yes," they tell him, "this is your happiest day, for you are going to the Lord!" The cart on which he is brought to the square is surrounded by countless people, all of whom look

at him with tender emotion and love. Now they stop before the scaffold: "Die, brother, die in the Lord, you who have been visited with grace," say the people surrounding him. They take leave of him and cover him with kisses; he mounts the scaffold and lays his head on the guillotine; the knife slides down, and his head, which had for so long been in darkness, but which had finally been enlightened, falls severed at the feet of his weeping brothers, who had enlightened him.⁴ This combination of a feeling of love with warm blood, which warms and excites the people even more, is a delight to man's unsettled soul, and, in its way, just as refined as the combination of playful innocence with the jeering scheme in a moment to smash this innocence to bits.

⁴ A pamphlet was prepared in Geneva with a detailed description of this event. It was translated into foreign languages and distributed in various countries, Russia, by the way, among them, as a free supplement to newspapers and magazines. Dostoevsky remarks that such an incident was to the highest degree a local one (so far as nationality and religion are concerned) and would be completely impossible in Russia: "Although," he shrewdly mentions later on, "it seems that it has begun to take root here, too, ever since Lutheranism has begun to be propagated in our high society." This remark is profound: there is a certain correlation between the various faculties of the human soul, and once any one of them is affected by progress, education, or religion, all the others are, without fail, changed in conformity with it, according to the new form that it has assumed under this outside influence. Tearful pietism, that typical offspring of Protestantism, also needs to be aroused by crime and suffering, but only in its own way, as do other types of mentality produced in other historical conditions. In Catholic countries, for example, it would be impossible to have a case such as the one with Richard; on the other hand, in Protestant countries, it would be impossible to have the refined, varied, and sinuous system of torture devised in Catholic countries by the Inquisition. Everywhere, in one's own special way, but, nevertheless, everywhere, man is tortured by man.

Man not only suffers and is corrupt himself, he introduces corruption and torture everywhere he can into all of nature. In adapting animals to himself, he has perverted their very instincts;⁵ he has forced unheard-of forms out of both them and plants by subjecting them to unnatural interbreeding,⁶ all of which would have known no bounds, had he not met with stubborn resistance on the part of the mysterious laws of nature. A villainous transgressor, he stands before these laws, still trying to devise ways of violating them, ways of extending all limits, so that his depravity and evil can overstep them. He quickly grasps at every deformity and every sickness in nature; he guards and cherishes all this and increases it even more.⁷ He has intermixed climates, changed all our living conditions, mixed that which is incompatible and has separated that which is related, removed God's image from nature and replaced it with his own distorted face. And in the midst of all this destruction, he composes poetry about the works of his hands.

Shifting from distant lands and different types of suffering to our native soil and our own suffering, Ivan also dwells in passing on this poetry. True, if one does not understand the deformity that man introduces into nature, one can also fail to understand the great evil that he carries within himself. "Although we Russians may find it absurd to cut off the head of a brother merely because he has become our brother and has been visited with grace, we

⁵ Byron in one place, quite rightly and with great insight, calls tamed and domestic animals perverted.

⁶ See the startling details about this, for example, in Bogdanov's *Medical Zoology*, I (Moscow, 1883).

⁷ See Danilevsky, *Darwinism: A Critical Study* (St. Petersburg, 1885), (on pigeon breeds).

have something of our own that isn't much better. Our historic, direct, and dearest pleasure is torture by beating. Nekrasov, in one of his poems, tells of a muzhik who whips his horse across the eyes, 'its gentle eyes.' Now who has not seen this happen? It is typically Russian. He describes how a weak nag, whose overloaded cart becomes stuck in the mud, tugs and tugs, but is unable to move it. The muzhik beats it, beats it in a frenzy, beats it finally without realizing what he is doing, and, intoxicated by the very act of beating, he whips it mercilessly, a countless number of times. 'Even if you are too weak, go on and pull, even if you die doing it!' The nag strains—and then he starts to lash the poor defenseless thing across its weeping 'gentle eyes.' Beside itself with pain, it finally tugs with all its might, pulls the cart out of the mud, and starts off down the road 'trembling all over, hardly breathing, moving sideways, with a sort of skipping motion, unnaturally and shamefully.' ”

The horror here is precisely in the unnaturalness and shame that man has introduced into a child's nature. But if the beating of a horse across its "gentle eyes" can make one's blood boil, then it will boil all the more at the cries of a child, of one's own child seeking protection in one from the punishment that one is meting out to it. An intelligent, educated gentleman and his wife flog their own daughter, a child of about seven. The father chooses birch rods with twigs on them: "It will sting more," he says. "They flog the child for a minute, they flog it for five minutes, they flog it for ten minutes; the longer they flog it, the more stinging the blows become. The child screams; finally, when it can scream no longer, it gasps: 'Papa, papa, dear

papa.’ ”⁸ Another time, most respectable and well-educated parents of high social standing had for some reason or other grown to hate their child, a five-year-old girl; they would beat her, kick her, and finally they even went so far as to “lock her up all night in the cold and frost in the outhouse; and all because she had not asked for the chamber pot during the night (as if a five-year-old child, sleeping its sound, angelic sleep could be trained at such an age to ask for the pot)—and for that they smeared her face with excrement and even made her eat it: and it was her mother who made her do it! And this mother could sleep, hearing in the night the groans of her poor child locked up in that foul place!”

“Do you understand,” says Ivan, “what it means when a little creature, not yet able even to comprehend what is being done to her, beats her aching breast with her tiny fist, in that foul place, in the dark and cold, and cries her agonizing, forgiving, and gentle tears to ‘dear, kind God,’ asking Him to protect her—do you understand this nonsense, my friend and brother, you humble servant of God—do you understand why such nonsense is so necessary and why it has come about? They say that without it man could not even have existed on earth, for he would not have known good and evil. But why must we know that devilish good and evil when it costs so much? Surely, the whole world of knowledge isn’t worth this child’s tears to her ‘dear, kind God.’ I’m not saying anything about the suffer-

⁸ This is obviously a reference to the trial of M. Kroneberg and Mme. Jesing, an analysis of which, as well as of M. Spasovich’s speech for the defense, was made by Dostoevsky in the February, 1876, issue of *The Diary of a Writer*.

ing of adults—they have eaten the apple, and to hell with them, let them all go to the devil, but the children, the little children! Am I tormenting you, Alyosha? You don't seem yourself. I'll stop if you want me to."

"That's all right; I, too, want to be tormented," murmured Alyosha.

"One small scene more, just one," continues Ivan irrepressibly, and he tells how, in the darkest days of serfdom, a boy of about eight, the son of one of the house servants of a retired General, threw a stone and accidentally hurt the foot of the General's favorite hound; and for that, the General ordered the boy torn to pieces by the hounds, before the very eyes of the boy's mother.⁹ The General went out the next morning to go hunting with his countless hounds and their keepers. The entire staff of servants had been assembled in the cold "for their edification." The boy's mother was made to stand in front: the child himself had been taken from her the night before. He was led out and stripped naked. "He shivers, panic-stricken, not daring to utter a word." "Make him run," shouts the General. "Run, run," cry the huntsmen. And when the boy, beside himself with fear, begins to run, the General sickens the whole pack of wolfhounds on him. In a moment, they tear him to pieces.

"Well, what should be done with this man? Should he be shot? For the satisfaction of our moral feelings—should he be shot? Tell me!"

"Yes, shot," Alyosha said quietly, raising his eyes to his brother with a pale, distorted sort of smile.

⁹ This incident actually happened, as, by the way, did all the others mentioned here. It was reported in one of our historical journals.

“Bravo,” shouted Ivan, delighted. “If even you say so, then . . .”

“What I said was absurd, but . . .”

“That’s just it, that ‘but’ . . .” shouted Ivan. “Let me tell you, novice, that absurdities are only too necessary on this earth. The world is founded on absurdities, and without them, perhaps, nothing would come to pass in it.¹⁰ I know what I know!”

“What do you know?”

“I don’t understand anything,” Ivan continues, as if delirious. “I don’t even want to understand anything now. I want to stick to facts. Long ago, I decided not to understand. For if I’d want to understand something, I’d immediately be false to the facts, and I’ve decided to stick to the facts.”

“Why are you testing me?” exclaimed Alyosha sadly, as if his heart were breaking. “Will you finally tell me?”

“Of course, I’ll tell you. That’s what I’ve been leading up to,” says Ivan. And he draws his conclusion: “Listen, if I chose children only, I did it to make everything absolutely clear. I’m not saying a word about all the other human tears that soak the earth from crust to core. I limited my subject on purpose. I’m a bedbug, and I confess in all humility that I can’t understand why everything has been arranged as it is. . . . Oh, all that my pitiful, earthly, Euclidean mind can grasp is that suffering exists, that no one is to blame, that effect follows cause, simply and directly, that every-

¹⁰ For a similar passage in *The Brothers Karamazov*, see the chapter “Ivan Fyodorovich’s Nightmare,” where the devil jokingly explains that he exists “solely so that events will happen,” and as much as he would like, he simply cannot join in the chorus and shout “Hosannah” with the rest of nature—for after that, things would stop happening.

thing flows and finds its level—but surely this is nothing but Euclidean nonsense—I know it is; moreover, I just can't agree to live by it!¹¹ What do I care that no one is

¹¹ This is an extraordinarily elevated passage, one of the sad and great confessions of the human spirit, the truth of which cannot be denied. Its meaning is that there is a disharmony between the laws of outward reality, according to which everything in nature and human life happens, and the laws of moral judgment that are hidden in man. As a result of this disharmony, man is faced with either renouncing the laws, and along with them his own personality, the spark of God in him, and then merging with external nature, blindly submitting to its laws, or with retaining the freedom of his moral judgment—of being in conflict with nature, of being in eternal and impotent discord with it. We find the first glimmer of this idea in Dostoevsky in 1864, in *Notes from the Underground*, Part I, Chapter IV, where it is expressed nervously and confusedly, but most characteristically: “Good Lord, what do I care about the laws of nature and arithmetic, when for some reason or other I don't like these laws and this business of two times two equaling four? To be sure, I won't be able to break through such a wall by butting my head against it if I really don't have the strength to knock it down, but I won't reconcile myself to it, merely because it is a stone wall, and I don't have the strength.

“As though such a stone wall really were a comfort, and really did contain some word of conciliation, merely because it is as true as two times two equals four? Oh, absurdity of absurdities! How much better it is to understand everything, to acknowledge it all, all impossibilities and stone walls; not to reconcile yourself to a single one of those impossibilities—those stone walls if it disgusts you to reconcile yourself to them; to come by means of the most inevitable, logical combinations to conclusions about the everlasting subject that you yourself are, as it were, to blame even for the stone wall, although again it is clearly evident that you are not in the least to blame for it, and consequently, silently grating your teeth, to sink voluptuously into inertia, brooding over the fact that you do not even have anyone to be angry with; that there is not, and perhaps never will be, an object for your spite; that it is a sleight of hand, but despite all these un-

to blame, and that I know it—I need retribution, or I'll destroy myself.¹² And retribution not somewhere and sometime in eternity, but right here on earth, so that I myself can see it. I have believed, and I want to see for myself; and if I'm dead by then, let them resurrect me, for if it all takes place without me, it will be too great an outrage. I certainly didn't suffer so that with myself, my crimes, and my sufferings I would provide manure for the soil of someone else's future harmony. I want to see with my own eyes the deer lie down with the lion and the murdered man rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly finds out what the point of all this has been. All religions on earth are based on this desire.¹³ And I believe. But then there are the little children, and what am I to do about them? That is a question I cannot answer. . . . If all must suffer, so that by their suffering they can purchase eternal harmony, then tell me, please, what have

certainties and jugglings, it still hurts you, and the more you don't know, the more it hurts."

In the mockery and suffering of these last words is already the germ of the idea of "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor."

¹² I.e., if, in the case of suffering and criminality, there is no retribution, and along with it satisfaction, then I, in seeking satisfaction, will destroy my own flesh, as it is criminal and suffering. Here we have an explanation of suicide. There are parallel passages in *The Diary of a Writer* (October and December, 1876).

¹³ In these words, it is acknowledged that all religions, without exception, had their origin in the depths of the human soul, in the contradictions inherent in it and in the desire in some way or other to resolve them, and that they were not provided man from without. I.e., their origin is acknowledged as mystical only to the extent that man's soul itself is mystical, and no more. This view contradicts all the usual theories of the origin of religion—both those that say it was absolutely mystical, as well as those that say it was natural.

the children to do with it? It is completely incomprehensible why they, too, must suffer, and why they must purchase harmony with their suffering. Why should they, too, be material to fertilize the soil for someone else's future harmony? I can understand the solidarity in sin among men; I can also understand their solidarity in retribution, but there can't be solidarity in sin with children! And if there is indeed righteousness in their being jointly responsible with their fathers for all their fathers' crimes, then, of course, that righteousness is not of this world, and it is beyond my comprehension. Some joker would probably say that it is all the same—that this child would grow up and would certainly sin;¹⁴ but you see he did not grow up, he was torn to pieces by hounds at the age of eight. Oh, Alyosha, I'm not blaspheming! I certainly understand what a cataclysm of the universe there is bound to be when everything in heaven and on earth blends in one hymn of praise and everything that lives and has lived exclaims: 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed!' And when that mother embraces that tormentor who had her son torn to pieces by the hounds and all three cry out in tears: 'Thou art just, O Lord,' then, of course, the crown of knowledge will be reached, and everything will be explained. But there's the rub—that is just what I can't accept. And while I am on earth, I hasten to take my own measures. You see, Alyosha, if it actually happens that I live to that moment,¹⁵

¹⁴ In philosophy and so-called moral theology, there is such an explanation, but, to tell the truth, it is totally unsatisfactory.

¹⁵ For a parallel passage, see the chapter "Ivan Fyodorovich's Nightmare," where the devil says: "I, of course, know that there is a secret here, but they won't tell the secret for anything . . . After all, I know that I shall finally be reconciled, and that I, too, shall walk my quadrillion miles and shall learn the secret. But until

or rise from the dead to see it, I myself will perhaps cry aloud with all the rest, looking at that mother embracing her child's torturer: 'Thou art just, O Lord!' But I do not want to cry aloud then. While there is still time, I hasten to protect myself against it, and, therefore, I absolutely renounce the supreme harmony. It is not worth a single tear of that one tortured child who beat herself on her breast with her tiny fist and prayed in that stinking toilet, with her unexpiated tears to 'dear, kind God!' It is not worth it, because her tears remained unatoned for. They must be atoned for, or there can be no harmony. But how, how are you to atone for them? Is it really possible? Surely not by the fact that they will be avenged? But why do I need them to be avenged? Why do I need a hell for torturers? What can a hell put right when they have already been tortured? And what harmony is there if there is a hell? I want to forgive, and I want to embrace. I do not want there to be more suffering. And if the suffering of children goes to make up the sum of the suffering necessary to pay for the truth, then I insist in advance that the whole truth isn't worth such a price. Finally, I do not want that mother to embrace the torturer who had her son torn to pieces by his hounds! How dare she forgive him? If she wants, she can forgive him for herself, she can forgive the torturer for her boundless suffering as a mother; but she does not have the right to forgive the suffering of her tortured child; she dares not forgive the torturer, even if the child itself were

that happens, I'll sulk, and I'll reluctantly fulfil my destiny: namely, to destroy thousands for the sake of saving one . . . No, until the secret is revealed, there are two sorts of truths for me: one that is theirs, and which for the time being is completely unknown to me, and the other my own."

to forgive him! And if that is so, if they dare not forgive, then where is the harmony? Is there in the whole world a being who could or who would have the right to forgive? I don't want harmony; I don't want it out of my love for humanity! I prefer to remain with suffering that is unavenged. I prefer to remain with my suffering unavenged and my indignation unappeased, *even if I am wrong*. They've put too high a price on harmony. It is beyond our means to pay so much for admission. And therefore I hasten to return my entrance ticket. And if I am an honest man, I'm bound to return it as soon as possible. And this I am doing. It isn't God I don't accept, Alyosha; only I most respectfully give Him back my ticket."

X

"This is rebellion," says Alyosha quietly, with downcast eyes.

The words of Ivan just quoted are the most bitter to have been forced from man in his entire history. Without rejecting God, he turns his face from Him; without doubting ultimate retribution for his suffering, he no longer wants that retribution. Something so precious in him has been perverted, something so sacred in him has been outraged that he raises his eyes to heaven and, filled with sorrow, prays that in the end this outrage not be atoned for, that this perversion not be removed. "You, who have implanted in my nature the lust for torturing my neighbor, and because of that lust have had my children snatched

from me and had them tortured—why have You given me a love for them that has even begun to murmur against You? Why have You confounded my soul, torn asunder all its beginnings and endings, so that I can neither love nor hate, neither know nor remain in ignorance, neither be only righteous, nor only sinful? And if You have confounded the issue of my soul which entered into me from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, why did You create that tree to tempt me? Or why did You not surround it with an insurmountable barrier? And finally, why, when You created me, did You give me less firmness of obedience than lust for temptation? Most likely so that You could later forgive me; but look here, my children have perished—so let your forgiveness pass me by. Extinguish the consciousness in me, and with it give me oblivion; return me to the dust from which You took me. But if my consciousness is not extinguished, then I prefer to weep over my tortured children rather than to see the triumph of Your righteousness. I want no comfort; I prefer in the torments of my heart to share for all eternity the torment of my children who have perished.”

We see here the inadequacy of human strength, man's inability to continue along the path down which he is led by Providence from an unknown beginning to a dark end. He has been travelling this path for thousands of years, submissively enduring all in the hope that ultimate knowledge and the ultimate triumph of God's righteousness will some day bring comfort to his heart. But finally this suffering has grown so great that he stops involuntarily, and can go no farther. He looks back over all this path that he has already covered, he recalls everything, he weighs his burden and the remainder of his strength, and asks: “Where

am I going, and am I able to get there? My hope was folly, and the will that instilled it in me, evil.”

Without a doubt, the loftiest contemplation of the destinies of man on earth is contained in religion. Neither history, philosophy, nor the exact sciences have in them even a shadow of the unity and the completeness of presentation contained in religion. That is one of the reasons why it is so dear to man, why it so ennobles his mind and so illuminates it. If we know the “whole” and the “universal,” it is easier to orient ourselves, to define ourselves in the details; and, on the contrary, no matter how many details we may know—and this is all that is provided by history, science, and philosophy—it is always possible to meet new ones that perplex us. Hence the steadfastness of life, its stability, when it is religious.

Three great mystical acts¹ serve in religious contemplation as points of support to which the destinies of man are, as it were, fastened, on which they are mounted. These are the fall: it explains what is; redemption: it helps man to bear what is; and eternal retribution for good and evil, the ultimate triumph of righteousness: it attracts man to the future.

Only by shaking one of these supports can one shake the destiny of man. Without that, no matter what misfortunes may befall man—war, famine, pestilence, the annihilation of whole nations—he endures it all, because in it all, his very essence is preserved; *people* may perish, but *man* remains, and people will be revived; the change touches mani-

¹Rozanov uses the word “act” in a rather strange way, both here and throughout the remainder of the book. I have retained the word only because there seems to be no adequate substitute. [Tr.]

festations, but it does not touch the manifested essence. The leaves may be torn off, but the ovary and pistil will remain. But there is one thing that man will not stand, and that is the severance of his being and his consciousness from these three mystical acts, by faith in which he lives. Without any misfortunes, completely content, he would somehow become confused and would perish; manifestations that had existed for some time would disappear, because the essence concealed behind them would disappear; people would not revive, because man would die.

Hence, one can understand the hatred with which man views every hostile approach to these bases of his existence. "Don't touch that—it's my life," he seems to say to everyone who tries to approach them, to anyone who wants to weigh, measure, improve, supplement, or purify them. In this feeling of instinctive hatred lies the explanation of all the religious persecutions that have taken place in history—persecutions that have aroused the greatest sympathy among the broad masses of the people, no matter how cruel they were.

And it is precisely these three acts, these three bases of man's earthly destinies—the source of his knowledge about himself, the source of his strength—that are shaken by the dialectic, a part of which we already cited above. The act of redemption, the second act linking the first and third, has not yet been touched on here. But the first act—the fall of man—is subjected to doubt, and the last one—the act of eternal retribution for good and evil, the act of the ultimate triumph of divine truth—is completely rejected. It is rejected not because it is no longer needed, but because it will not be accepted by man.

It should be noted that a dialectic has never before been

directed against religion in so powerful a way as here. Usually it has come from a feeling of malice toward religion and has been peculiar to a few people who have fallen away from it. But here it comes from a man obviously more devoted to religion than to anything else in nature, life, or history, and it rests on the positive and good sides of human nature. One can say that what rises up against God here is the divine element in man: namely, his feelings of justice and his consciousness of his own dignity.

And that is what gives this dialectic a dangerous, a somewhat satanic nature. It has been said that the first fallen angel was "higher than all the rest," that he stood "closer than they to God," that is, he bore a particularly close resemblance to Him—of course, in his purity and holiness. This dialectic has a certain religious nature about it, and the feeling of devotion that every religion inspires for itself, and the hatred that everyone arouses for oneself who touches it with intent to harm become, as it were, an integument over this dialectic too, even though it is directed specifically against religion. It seems that the only one who could try to destroy this dialectic, which comes entirely from a trembling love for man, would be someone who does not love him. It undermines the foundations of human existence, and it is done in such a way that one finds it impossible to defend those foundations without arousing in man a bitter feeling of outrage. Man himself is involuntarily drawn into the defense of his own destruction, and it is not one that is individual or temporary, but universal and final.

To construct a refutation of this dialectic as profound and severe as it is will undoubtedly be one of the most difficult tasks of our philosophical and theological literature in

the future—of course, if this literature ever recognizes its duty to resolve the troubling doubts that are wandering through our society instead of serving only as a certificate of literacy in German for a few people who for some reason or other are indeed obliged to be acquainted with it. Without attempting such a refutation, I should like to make a few remarks in this connection.

Ivan Karamazov's refusal to accept retribution or even only to see the triumph of God's truth is actually based, in the words cited above, on a true and shrewdly noted peculiarity of the human soul: whenever its suffering is too great and its outrage unbearable, there is aroused in the soul a desire not to part with that suffering, not to be relieved of that outrage. There is some consolation in the awareness that the suffering is undeserved (the sufferings of children, it is assumed) and that it is not compensated for; and as soon as the compensation appears, the consolation disappears, and the pain of suffering becomes unbearable. Thus, the compensation is accompanied by a new and different kind of joy; but it by no means takes the place of the earlier bitterness, it does not in the least force it out. And this is a law of the human soul, this is its nature. One cannot deny that this characteristic has a good deal that is noble about it and that it results from man's awareness of his own dignity, from a certain pride, and at the same time from humility, but it is without the slightest admixture of anything evil.

Thus, as long as man remains in those forms of his spiritual and physical being in which he is now confined, he will indeed "prefer to remain with his suffering unavenged" than to accept retribution for it and reconcile himself to it. But to think that these forms of his being are something

absolute and eternal, that they are not conditioned by anything, would be a gross error. The human spirit, with its ideas, notions, and feelings, is closely, much too closely linked up with the mysterious organization of its body; it is fixed to it, fettered and conditioned by it as a foetus is by its mother's womb. But this constrained state is only temporary, and if the flow of our ideas changes with every change in our organization, then we find it difficult even to imagine what our spirit will feel and what it will think when it is freed from that organization and is pure. In the same way as reconciliation is impossible, truly impossible, for it now, so perhaps will it be necessary and automatic for it then. There will be "a new heaven and a new earth," it is said of the last day, on which "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,"² and these words indicate a solution to this difficulty which, for the time being, we find insurmountable.

Furthermore, the suffering of children, apparently incompatible with the functioning of a higher justice, can be somewhat more understandable if we take a stricter view of original sin, the nature of the human soul, and the act of procreation. We said earlier that in addition to what is clearly and distinctly expressed in the human soul, there is also contained in it a whole world of what is unexpressed and unrevealed. When man commits a crime, his action is only a secondary act of lesser importance, whereas what is primary and of greatest importance is the spiritual impulse that preceded it and from which the criminal act was born. It makes an indelible mark on the human soul and subjects it to a certain mutilation. The question now arises: is this mark and are the effects of this mutilation made only

² Revelation 21:1, 4.

on what is clearly expressed in the soul: on the memory and all the information contained therein, on the routine desires and transient feelings? Obviously not: the evil enters the whole of it, and its entire contents are mutilated—both the part that is perceptible, as well as that which is not yet revealed. We know that everything criminal originates in man in ways that are unclear, that it comes from the darkest depths of his soul. Furthermore, during the act of procreation, there is doubtless transmitted by the procreator to the future child not only its organization, but also that which serves, as it were, as its law and its binding center, i.e., the soul itself. The inheritance of character, of special talents, or of depraved tendencies is too well-known a fact now for us to doubt it even slightly. The multiplicity of the acts of procreation and the individual characteristics of the children born give us reason to think that in every separate act of procreation, there is transmitted a certain part of the complex contents which enter the soul of the child being created. Moreover, when perceptible parts are transmitted, the heredity is noticeable; when nonperceptible ones are transmitted, the heredity, apparently, is lacking. Every part, precisely by virtue of its nature, has in itself the ability to restore itself to the whole, to cause the appearance of the missing parts, which, just like their order of succession, are all pre-established in the part precisely by its earlier relation to the whole from which it came; thus, for example, in the smallest arc remaining from a circle all its missing parts are predetermined, and from it, they can be restored. These restored parts of the psychical make-up of each new organism can be regarded as something new; but among them is undoubtedly also an earlier part that is not newly-developed, but merely transmitted. This part bears

within itself the general distortion that was inherent in the soul of one of the parents, and at times also some special deep evil, some crime that had been a part of that soul and which had been lost among all the rest, but which now stands alone and has reconstructed about itself the "whole." Bearing the crime within itself, it also bears its guilt, and the inevitability of retribution. Thus, the purity of children, and consequently their innocence, is only seeming: in them the depravity of, say, their father is already concealed, and along with it, the father's guilt. However, this does not manifest itself in any destructive acts, i.e., it does not bring new guilt with it: but the old guilt remains in the child so long as there has been no retribution. And the children receive this retribution through their suffering. Their father's offense may be so serious that it cannot even be atoned for by him, not even through his death: he has, let us say, seduced a child, a pure creature who had approached him trustingly. Can he answer for this crime with his life? No, and his crime remains hidden and unpunished. Generations come and go, and finally the retribution appears—in suffering that apparently is incomprehensible and which violates the laws of righteousness. But in reality it complements righteousness.

One very profound phenomenon in man's spiritual life finds its explanation here: the purifying significance of all suffering. We carry within ourselves a great amount of criminality, and along with it a terrible guilt that has not yet been atoned for; and although we do not know it exists in us, although we do not clearly sense it, we are deeply oppressed and our soul is filled with inexplicable gloom. And every time we experience suffering, a part of our guilt is

atoned for; something criminal leaves us, and we have a feeling of joy and light, we become nobler and purer. Man should praise each sorrow, for he is visited in it by God. On the contrary, he whose life passes without difficulty should worry about the retribution that is postponed for him.

The possibility of such an explanation did not occur to Dostoevsky, and he thought that the sufferings of children are something absolute, something that has sprung up in the world without any previous guilt; hence his question is understandable: "Who can forgive the perpetrator of this suffering?" This difficulty is connected with the question of redemption, the second and central of these mystical acts, and with it are connected the destinies of man. Our very religion is named "Christianity" after the Redeemer; and it, too, is drawn into the discussion here, in the dialectic that follows. Redemption is called into question in the same way that the fall and eternal retribution were earlier. This second part of Dostoevsky's dialectic, which, in contrast to the first or biblical part, can be called, after its subject, evangelical. And it has been put in the somewhat odd form of "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor."

With the criticism of the act of redemption in Dostoevsky, there has been combined an account of the hidden idea of Catholicism.³ Namely, this idea, in revealing its contents, pronounces in it its judgment on the life and teachings of Christ and at the same time proves the necessity of its own appearance on earth. In analyzing man's nature and contrasting it with Christ's teachings, the aged Inquisitor re-

³ Perhaps the first draft of this idea is found in *The Idiot* (1868), and Dostoevsky returns to it very often in *The Diary of a Writer*, for example, in the May-June issue, Chapter III, 1877.

veals the idea of his Church; and between the former and the latter, he finds a discrepancy. The gifts that Christ bestowed upon the world are too elevated and cannot be grasped by man; therefore, man is unable to accept them; i.e., he can neither comprehend Christ's word nor carry out His precepts. Because of this discrepancy between demands and capabilities, between the ideal and reality, man must eternally remain unhappy: only a few who are strong in spirit have been and are able to seek salvation by following Christ and understanding the mystery of redemption. Thus, Christ, who treated man with such great respect, acted "as if He did not love him at all." He overestimated man's nature; He did something great and holy, but at the same time impossible and impracticable. Catholicism is a correction of His work, it is a reduction of the heavenly doctrine to an earthly understanding, an adaptation of the divine to the human. But, this done, Catholicism kept the secret of the change to itself: and the various peoples who follow it think that they are following Christ. It costs great suffering to bear the secret of this deceit, one side of which is directed toward God, the other toward man; and a few leaders of the Western Church have taken it on themselves in order to save all the rest of mankind from suffering, to settle mankind's earthly destinies. Here, too, love for man is the motive principle of the whole dialectic, and its instrument is an analysis of his nature.

But the general meaning of all this lies in the fact that there was no act of redemption: there was only an error. And there is no religion as the custodian of religious mysteries; there is only an illusion, by which it is necessary that man be deceived in order that he can in some way or another establish himself on earth.

And the final implication of all this dialectic is that religion lacks reality and is absolutely impossible because it lacks an outer basis: the mystical acts of the fall, redemption, and the Last Judgment.

Now let us turn to a detailed consideration of this idea, only the theme of which we have stated. To Alyosha's exclamation: "This is rebellion," Ivan answers earnestly:

"Rebellion? I'm sorry to hear you call it that. One can't live by rebellion, and I want to live. Tell me frankly, I beg of you—answer me: Imagine that you yourself are raising the edifice of human destiny⁴ with the purpose of making people happy, of giving them peace and quiet at last, but that in order to do it, it was necessary and unavoidable to torture to death just one tiny creature, for example, that same little child who beat her breast with her little fist, and to found this edifice on her unavenged tears, would you agree to be the architect on these conditions? Tell me, and don't lie!"

"No, I wouldn't agree," Alyosha said quietly.

"And can you admit the idea that the people for whom

⁴ In the Pushkin Speech (*Diary of a Writer*, 1880), Dostoevsky examines Tatyana's character and her refusal, for the sake of gratifying her own feeling of love, to hurt her elderly husband, and he asks, this time in his own name: "Is it really possible for a person to base his happiness on the unhappiness of another? Happiness . . . lies in the greatest possible spiritual harmony. How can one calm one's spirit, if behind this happiness stands a contemptible, ruthless, and inhuman deed? . . . Now just imagine that you yourself were raising the edifice of human destiny for the purpose of finally making people happy, of giving them peace and quiet at last. And then also imagine that in order to do this it was necessary and unavoidable to torture only one human being. . . . Would you agree to be the architect of such an edifice on this condition?" From this comparison, it is obvious that everything that Ivan Karamazov says represents Dostoevsky's own views.

you are building it would themselves agree to accept happiness based on the unjustly shed blood of a little tortured child, and, having accepted it, would remain happy ever after?"

Thus, it is to such a great and noble feature of the human conscience, the one thing that raises its possessor above merciless nature to merciful God, that the question of rebellion against God Himself is reduced. There must be no hesitation in one's answer: if humanity says: "Yes, I can accept it," then it immediately ceases to be humanity, "the image and likeness of God," and turns into a pack of wild animals; but a negative answer approves and justifies the rejection of eternal harmony—and thus turns everything into chaos . . .

Alyosha is confused; he rejects the possibility of accepting universal harmony on this condition, and suddenly says with flashing eyes: "Brother, you just said: Is there in the whole world a being who could or who had the right to forgive? But there is such a being, and He can forgive everything, everyone and everything, and for everything, because He gave his innocent blood for everyone and everything. You forgot about Him, but it is on Him that the edifice is built, and it is to Him that people will call out: "Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are now revealed."

"Ah, so it is the only one without sin and His blood," says Ivan, and instead of an answer, he offers to tell his brother a legend that came to mind as he was pondering over these questions. Alyosha is ready to hear it, and Ivan begins.

XI

The scene shifts to a distant land in the far West of Europe, the centuries draw apart and reveal the sixteenth century, a period when various elements of European civilization were mingling with and struggling against each other. It was the time of the first journeys to recently-discovered America, the religious wars, Luther and Loyola, the noisy humanists, and the first Generals of the Jesuit Order. The tumult and disorder of this struggle take place, however, in the center of the continent, while down beyond the Pyrenees in Spain, the people see the struggle only in the distance; they shrink further into themselves and remain motionless. Still farther back in the dark depths of time, one sees the poor sun-parched land where the great mystery of redemption took place, where blood was shed on the earth for the sins of that earth, for the salvation of suffering mankind. Fifteen centuries have already passed since that mystery took place; an enormous empire has fallen, and on its ruins, there has sprung up a world of new and different nations and states, who were enlightened by a new faith and strengthened by the redeeming blood of their God and Savior. With unquenchable thirst and hope, they await His coming; they await the fulfilment of the promise made them by His disciple: "And, behold, I come quickly,"¹ and they recall that His disciple, while on earth,

¹ Revelation 21:12. "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

had said that only His Father in heaven knew the day and hour. They await Him with ever greater faith, because "fifteen centuries have passed since the pledges given to man from heaven had ceased:

Believe what your heart may tell you,
There are no pledges from above . . ."

And the only thing that sustains them is their infinite trust in the sanctity of the Word. "But the devil does not slumber, and men were already beginning to doubt the truth of those miracles. And at that very time, a terrible new heresy appeared in the North, in Germany. A huge star, resembling a lamp, fell upon the fountains of waters, and they were made bitter.² But those who remained faithful were all the more ardent in their faith. The tears of mankind rose up to Him as before; the people awaited His coming, they loved Him, they relied on Him, they longed to suffer and die for Him as before. And for so many centuries they called on Him that He, in His infinite mercy, longed to come down to His worshipers."

The scene shifts, and the story becomes more focussed. We see Seville, on whose hot streets a quiet evening is descending. Crowds of people move here and there; and suddenly He comes quietly, unnoticeably, and in the same human form in which He had walked for thirty-three years

² "I.e., the Church," remarks Dostoevsky. The image of a star falling from heaven is taken from Revelation 8:10-11, as are some of the later comparisons by which the fate of the Christian Church on earth is represented. The passage above expresses the view that the Reformation was a likeness of the Church and attracts people by its apparent similarity to it, thus drawing them away from the true Church. The "fountains of waters" here represent the purity of faith contaminated by this "likeness" of the Church.

among the people fifteen centuries ago. In appearance, He in no way differs from the rest, but, strangely enough, everyone recognizes Him. The people are drawn to Him by an irresistible force, they surround Him, their number around Him grows larger and larger, they follow Him. "He silently walks among them with a gentle smile of infinite compassion. The sun of love burns in His heart, rays of Light, Enlightenment, and Power stream from His eyes, and as they pour over the people, they move their hearts with responsive love. He stretches out His hands to them, blesses them, and from contact with Him, even with His garments, there comes a healing force. An old man in the crowd, blind since childhood, calls out: 'O, Lord, heal me that I, too, may see You'—and it is as if scales fall from his eyes, and the blind man sees Him. The people cry and kiss the ground on which He walks. Children throw flowers before Him, sing, and cry out to Him: 'Hosannah! It is He.' 'It is Himself,' repeats everyone. 'It must be He! It can be no one but He!' He stops on the steps of Seville Cathedral at the very moment when weeping mourners are carrying into the Cathedral a child's little white open coffin: in it is a seven-year-old girl, the only daughter of a prominent citizen. The dead child lies covered in flowers. 'He will raise your child from the dead,' people call out from the crowd to the crying mother. A priest, who has come out to meet the coffin, gives them a puzzled look and knits his brows. But suddenly there is a cry from the dead child's mother; she throws herself down at His feet, stretches out her arms to Him, and cries, 'If it is You, then raise my child from the dead!' The procession halts. The little coffin is set on the steps at His feet. He looks at the child with compassion, and His lips once again say quietly:

‘*Talitha cumi*’—‘and the damsel arose.’ The little girl raises herself in the coffin to a sitting position; smiling, she looks about her³ with astonished, wide-open eyes. In her hands is a bouquet of white roses that had been placed in the coffin with her. There are cries, sobs, and commotion among the people.”

³ It is amazing how much vitality Dostoevsky has instilled in this wonderful scene: it is as if we are not reading lines of print, but seeing a vision of the second coming of Christ to the people, and almost in our own time. In Dostoevsky’s *Biography*, there are certain passages that to a certain extent can explain the strange, incomprehensible vitality of this imaginary supernatural scene. “Once,” it is said there, “Dostoevsky was with a group of people who were alien and even hostile to every religion. Unexpectedly, one of the conversants referred to Jesus Christ, and he did it without sufficient respect. Dostoevsky suddenly grew terribly pale, tears came to his eyes. This was still in the days of his youth, and evidently even then he was deeply pondering the image of Christ.” Subsequently, during his exile, the only book he was allowed to have was the Gospel. In constantly rereading the Gospel stories, he evidently acquainted himself with them to the point where he had a clear perception of everything told in them. Finally, the resurrection of the little girl, which is described in such a way that we seem to see the performance of the act itself, also has a biographical explanation. Here is what we read in his biography: “The birth of a daughter (February 22, 1862) brought great happiness to both husband and wife and very much cheered up Fyodor Mikhailovich. He would spend every free moment at her baby-carriage, he rejoiced at her every movement. But this went on for less than three months. The child’s death was a terrible and unexpected blow to him. For the rest of his life, Fyodor Mikhailovich could not forget his first little daughter; his heart ached whenever he thought of her. Once, when he was staying in Ems, he made a special trip to Geneva in order to visit her grave.” Undoubtedly, when he was writing the scene quoted above, he vividly imagined what his own feelings would be if his beloved little daughter were, through some miracle, to rise suddenly from the dead.

At this very moment, an old man of ninety, with an emaciated face, and dressed in a coarse hair cassock, walks past the Cathedral. Although he is a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and also the country's Grand Inquisitor, he stops and from a distance watches everything that takes place; his face darkens. The cries of the people reach his ears, he hears the sobbing of the old men and the shout of "Hosannah" from the lips of the children, he sees the child raised from the dead; and then, turning around, he summons with a gesture the sacred guard and points to the one responsible for the commotion and exultation. And the people, "cowed into submission and trembling obedience to him" make way for the guards, who go up to Christ, seize Him, and lead Him away. The crowd bows down to the ground before the gloomy old Inquisitor. He blesses it and passes by. The prisoner is taken to the dark dungeon of the Sacred Court and locked up.

The evening draws to a close, and night follows, "a quiet and breathless" southern night. The air is still hot and suffused even more with the fragrance of the blossoming laurel and lemon trees. In the silence of the night, the rusty hinges of the prison door suddenly begin to creak; the door opens, and into the dungeon comes the old Inquisitor. The door is immediately locked after him, and he is left alone with his prisoner. For a long time he looks into His face; then he sets the dim lamp on the table, approaches the prisoner and whispers:

"Is it You? Really You?' But, receiving no answer, he quickly adds: 'Don't answer, keep quiet. And what could You say anyhow? I know well enough what You would say. And what is more, You have no right to add anything to what You said when You were on earth before.

Why, then, did You come to hinder us? For You did come to hinder us, and You know You did. But do You know what is going to happen tomorrow? I don't know who You are—I don't want to know whether it is You or only a likeness of You, but tomorrow I am going to condemn You and burn You at the stake as the worst of heretics, and those very people who today kissed Your feet, will, at the mere beck of my hand tomorrow, rush to rake up the hot coals about Your bonfire—do You know that? Yes, maybe You do know it,' he added, deep in thought, without tearing his eyes from his prisoner for a moment."

In these tense, vehement words are anticipated all the variations of the ensuing dialectic: there is an acknowledgment of the divine that amounts to a clear perception of it, to contemplation, and, on the other hand, a hatred for it that amounts to a threat—to destroy it on the following day, to burn and trample it under foot. Never before has there been a greater union, and a simultaneous disunion, of the human soul with its Eternal Source. In the distance, as if in the background, one notices a rather strange attitude toward the people, toward those millions of shepherded souls; in this attitude, there is undoubtedly an anxious feeling of concern: there is, of course, love, but at the same time, there is scorn, and also a kind of deceit, something concealed. In the Prisoner's silence and in the words: "Yes, maybe You do know it," there is a hint of the blasphemous idea that in this opening scene something new and unexpected is being revealed to the Savior, some great secret that He did not know before and which He is beginning only now to understand. And it is man who wants to tell Him this secret: the "trembling creature" feels in himself such a

strength of conviction, gotten from all of his past fate, that he is not afraid to rise up with it and for it before his Maker and God.

In all of the remainder of the Inquisitor's confession of faith, there is revealed the motive idea of the Roman Catholic Church. One finds it very difficult to dismiss the thought that this idea is at the same time the confession of all mankind, the wisest and most penetrating acknowledgment of its destinies, and moreover of both those past and, mainly, those future. The Western Church is, of course, only the Latin conception of Christianity, in the same way that the Orthodox Church is its Greek and Slavic conception, and Protestantism its Germanic one. But the fact is that of these three branches into which the Universal Church has split, only the first has developed to its full strength; the other two are still in the process of development. Catholicism is complete, it is well-rounded in its inner make-up, it is clearly aware of its significance, and up to now has been irresistibly striving to put it into practice, to subject history to it. On the contrary, the other two Churches lack such a clear awareness of themselves.⁴ That is why, I repeat, it is

⁴ Protestantism, the first to allow an individual interpretation of Christianity, not only is not final and complete at present, but it evidently never will become so in the future. As for Orthodoxy, it has found itself up to now in such difficult historical circumstances, being at one time hampered from without by barbarism (the Tatar Yoke), at another by Mohammedanism (the Turkish Yoke), and finally by Catholicism itself, that it has had to direct all its efforts throughout history toward defending its existence and somehow doing everything necessary to save the souls of its insulted and injured peoples; it has not yet had the means to concern itself with bringing its hidden inner contents into the light of clear consciousness. The attempts of the Slavophiles (Khomya-

impossible to refrain from generalizing to an extreme degree and having the strange confession made by the Grand Inquisitor in private to Christ cover all of mankind and all of history.

He begins with the assertion that all of the teaching bequeathed to us by Christ, as it has been preserved by Providence, is something eternal and fixed, and in the same way that nothing can be removed from it, so can nothing be added to it. It has become a cornerstone of that edifice of world history that has already been raised; and it would be too late now to correct, explain, or limit it in some way or other: that would shake fifteen centuries of constructive work. And that is not only in relation to mankind, which cannot constantly reorganize itself, but also in relation to God. What would a new revelation or an addition to what was already said be but an acknowledgment of the inadequacy of what was said before—and by whom? By God Himself! Finally, and this is the most important thing of all, such a supplementation would be an infringement of human freedom: Christ left mankind His image, which it could follow with a free heart as an ideal in keeping with its (secretly divine) nature and answering to its confused inclinations. This decision of whether or not to follow Him must be a free one, and it is precisely in this freedom of choice that its moral virtue lies. But every new revelation from heaven would appear as a miracle, it would introduce compulsion into history, and would take this freedom of

kov and Yu. Samarin, for example) and of Dostoevsky himself to explain the peculiarity and the idea of the Orthodox Church in history can be explained by this condition and would have been impossible in any other state of affairs.

choice away from man, and along with it its moral virtue. Therefore, as he looks at Christ and thinks of His promised second coming, the Inquisitor says: "Now go, and come no more . . ." "at least do not meddle for the time being," he corrects himself, thinking of his own work on earth which he has not yet completed.

He is strangely thoughtful all the time. Before the face of the Savior, the contrast between reality and His great precepts seem to him particularly striking, and this arouses in him a sad feeling of irony. He reminds Christ of how often the latter had said to men fifteen centuries ago: "I want to make you free," and he adds: "So now You have seen these free people." The irony of this remark relates not only to those whom Christ wanted to ennoble with his teachings, but also to Himself: "This business has cost us dear," he continues, "but we have finally completed it—in Your name. For fifteen centuries, we have been tormenting ourselves with this freedom, but now it is finished, and finished for good."

He is speaking here of the principle of authority which has always permeated the Roman Catholic Church and which has been the reason for its being much more intolerant of all deviations from its dogma than that which was inherent in the other Churches. In the sixteenth century, the time the scene being depicted takes place, the necessity for authority and unquestioning submission was especially strongly understood by Rome in view of the threatening movement of the Reformation, which had destroyed a thousand years of spiritual unity in Western Europe. Phenomena in which it displayed itself were the introduction of the Inquisition and the censorship of books. Champions

of these ideas were the Council of Trent and the Jesuit Order, with its doctrine of unconditional submission⁵ to one's superiors and of the complete suppression of the individual will.⁶ But, as everywhere in the legend under consideration, reference is made to the main feature of Catholicism only because it answered one of mankind's eternal needs and, consequently, expressed in itself an everlasting and necessary feature of man's history. This becomes clear from the Inquisitor's subsequent explanations. He says:

"Only now that we have conquered freedom has it become possible to think for the first time of man's happiness. Man was created a rebel; and how can rebels be happy?" he asks.

Christ brought truth into the world; but the Inquisitor says that man's earthly life is governed by the law of suffering, of perpetually running away from it, or when that is not possible, of eternally following the path of least suffering. Between the truth, which is absolute and characteristic only of an absolute God, and this law of suffering to which man is subjected as a result of his relative nature lies an unbridgeable gap. Whoever can, let him attract man to the first path; man himself will always take the second. And this is precisely what the Inquisitor says: without denying the sublimity of the truth given man by the Savior, he denies only that this truth corresponds to man's nature and, at the same time, he denies the possibility of man's following it. In other words, he rejects the possibility of basing man's earthly destiny on the Savior's precepts and there-

⁵ "Be as submissive in the hand of a superior as is the staff in the hand of a pilgrim," etc.

⁶ "*Cadaver esto*," i.e., be as impersonal and inert as a corpse.

fore asserts the necessity of basing them on some other principles.

And it is to them that he immediately shifts his words. But before turning to a consideration of them, let us note that a fundamental change had taken place in Dostoevsky's attitude toward human freedom after publication of his *Notes from the Underground*. There, as here, man's free will is advanced as the chief obstacle to the final arrangement of man's destinies on earth; but, because of that, only the necessity and possibility of such an arrangement are denied, while freedom of will itself is defended as man's most precious feature. In his view of this freedom in *Notes from the Underground*, there is something approbatory, and in this approbation, Dostoevsky with obvious pleasure draws a picture for himself of how, at the moment when universal prosperity is finally achieved, a man "with a retrograde and sarcastic physiognomy will suddenly appear and say to his happy, but somewhat bored, brothers: 'Well, what about it, shall we give all this rationality a good kick and smash it to pieces—with the sole purpose of sending these logarithms to the devil and letting us again live according to our own stupid will?'"⁷ After that, a good deal in Dostoevsky's views changed; there was no longer the cheerfulness in his tone, nor was there the mockery or the jokes. How much suffering for man he endured and at the same time how much hatred for him! This is attested to

⁷ *Notes from the Underground*, Part I, Chapter IX. See also Chapter X, regarding the preference for a temporary "chicken coop" in the socio-historical system, precisely because it is not final and does not do away with freedom forever, to the "Crystal Palace," which is detestable precisely because of its indestructibility.

by the whole series of his later works, among them *Crime and Punishment*, with its meek martyrs and its senseless tormentors. Fatigue and sorrow replace his earlier confidence, and there is a desire for peace, which is evident most of all in the "Legend." The sublime gifts of freedom, truth, and moral heroism—all this is now pushed aside as burdensome and unnecessary, and one thing only is called for: some kind of happiness, some kind of rest for the "pitiful rebel," for this creature who is nevertheless weary and sick, and for whom compassion stifles all else in his heart, every aspiration to the superhuman and the divine. The "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" can to a certain extent be regarded as his idea for a final arrangement of man's destinies, something that had been unconditionally rejected in *Notes from the Underground*—the difference being that in the latter he spoke of a rational settlement based on a subtle and detailed study of the laws of physical nature and social relations, but in the "Legend," he speaks of a religious settlement coming from the deepest possible penetration of man's psychical make-up.

"You were warned," says the Inquisitor to Christ. "You had no lack of signs and warnings, but You did not heed them, and You rejected the only way by which men might be made happy." And then he tells his idea, which, if seriously pursued, could not help arousing a feeling of horror in man; and this horror would become greater and greater the more clearly man sensed the idea's irrefutability. The threads of world history, as it has already been played out; the future destinies of man, as they might be foreseen; the mystical demimonde, and the incomprehensible combination of an unquenchable thirst for faith with a despair of there being any object for it—all this has been interwoven

here in an amazing way and as a whole forms a statement that we cannot help taking as the wisest, the most profound, the most penetrating that, from the only point of view possible for man, man has ever thought up about himself.

XII

“That terrible and wise spirit, the spirit of self-destruction and non-being,” so begins the Inquisitor, “the great spirit spoke with You in the wilderness, and we are told in the books that he supposedly tempted You . . . Is that so? And could anything truer have been said than what he revealed to You in three questions and what You rejected and in the books are called temptations? And yet if ever there was on earth a genuine prodigious miracle, it took place that day, the day of the three temptations. And the miracle was precisely the statement of those three questions. If it were possible to imagine, just for the sake of argument, that those three questions of the terrible spirit had been lost without leaving a trace in the books and that they would have to be restored and invented anew so that they could again be set down in writing, and if in order to do that, we had to assemble all the sages of the earth—rulers, pontiffs, scholars, philosophers, poets—and set them the task of thinking up and formulating three questions, and moreover ones that would not only be in keeping with the magnitude of the occasion,¹ but, in addition, would express in three

¹ How vividly one senses its reality! We note this quality because, in varying, it changes in different places of the “Legend” to

words, in just three human sentences, the whole future history of the world and of humanity—do You think that all the great wisdom of the earth, combined, could have thought up anything equal in depth and force to those three questions which were really asked of You at that time by the wise and mighty spirit in the wilderness? From those questions alone, from the miracle of their statement alone, one can see that we have to do here not with a human, commonplace mind, but with one that is absolute and eternal. For it is as if all the further history of mankind is combined into one whole and foretold in those three questions, and in them are revealed three images in which all the irresolvable historical contradictions of human nature in the whole world will meet. At the time, it could not be so clear, for the future was unknown; but now that fifteen centuries have passed, we see that everything in those three questions was so accurately divined and foretold and has proved to such an extent to be true that nothing can be added to them or taken from them.”

Only because the conversation of the Inquisitor with Christ is presented as taking place in the sixteenth century are fifteen centuries of past history mentioned here; but it was written in the nineteenth, and if it could have been done without grossly violating plausibility, the Inquisitor should have agreed to all nineteen centuries: everything he speaks of later and which he referred to in the words “at the time, it could not be so clear” has been completely revealed only in our present century. There were not even any harbingers of it in the period when this scene takes place. Strange as that may be, the transference of historical the point where one has a completely clear feeling that the “event” never happened.

contradictions that were revealed only in the nineteenth century to a conversation taking place in the sixteenth does not make a bad impression at all; it is not even noticed: everything transitory in the "Legend" recedes into the background and to the foreground come features only of what is deep and eternal in man, so that the mixture in it of past, present, and future—as it were, a combination of all historical time in one moment—not only seems not monstrous, but, on the contrary, completely appropriate and, apparently, necessary. In the Inquisitor's words quoted above, we feel that he himself seems to forget that he is addressing his words to another: they sound like a monologue, like the confession of faith of a ninety-year-old man, and the more they develop the more clearly there emerges from behind his "tall and erect figure" the small and emaciated figure of a man of the nineteenth century, who had borne in his soul much more than this old man ever could have, even though the latter had "fed on honey and locusts in the wilderness" and afterward burned heretics by the hundreds "*ad majorem Dei gloriam.*"

From the standpoint of the three temptations, which figuratively represent the future destinies of man, the Inquisitor begins to speak of those destinies and to analyze the meaning of the temptations themselves. Thus, the revelation of the meaning of history and, as it were, the measurement of man's moral strength is presented here in the form of an extensive commentary on a brief text from the Gospel. Here is what is written by the Evangelist Matthew about the temptation itself and the spirit's first question:

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered.

And when the tempter came to Him, he said: If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

But he answered and said: It is written, a man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:1-3)

“Now decide for Yourself who was right,” says the Inquisitor. “You or the one who questioned You then? Recall the first question; its meaning, although not in these words,² was as follows:

“You want to go into the world, and You are going with empty hands, with some sort of promise of freedom which men in their simplicity and innate unruliness cannot even understand, which they fear and dread—for never was there anything more unbearable for man and human society than freedom!³ Do you see these stones in this naked and

²It is indeed remarkable that the spirit tempted the God-man not during His ministry of saving mankind, but before He had entered upon that ministry, and consequently this ancient fighter against God and enemy of mankind tried, as it were, to lure Him to other possible methods of salvation, he pointed out ways of achieving this other than through His divine teaching and His death on the cross. The temptations related precisely to Jesus’ ministry as a whole, and therefore the bread, miracle, and authority offered by the tempter are actually three modes of a different kind of salvation—one that is neither heavenly, divine, blessed, nor mysterious.

³This profound idea was first expressed by Dostoevsky in 1847, in one of his most disorderly works, “The Landlady.” Here is what he says: “A weak person cannot hold out alone. Give him everything, and he will come and give it all back; give him half the kingdoms of the earth to possess, just try it—and what do you

parched desert? Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after You like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though eternally trembling with the fear that You might take away Your hand and cut off Your supply of bread. But you did not want to deprive man of freedom, and You rejected the offer; for, You reasoned, what kind of freedom is it if obedience is bought with bread? And Your answer was: 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' But do You know that for the sake of that earthly bread, the spirit of the earth will rise up against You, and will fight You, and overcome You, and everyone will follow him, crying: 'Who is like this beast? He has given us fire from heaven!' ”

Here in this apocalyptic image is presented the rebellion of everything earthly, of everything in man that gravitates downward, against everything in him that is heavenly and which is directed upward. And we are shown the victorious outcome of this rebellion, of which we all are the sad witnesses. Poverty, anguish, the pain of unwarmed limbs and of an empty stomach will smother the divine spark in man's soul, and he will turn away from all that is holy and bow down before some new "sacred" thing, before something crude and even base, so long as it feeds and warms him. He will ridicule his former righteous men as unnecessary people and will bow down before new ones, and from them he will begin to compile new calendars of

think? He will then and there hide himself in your boot—so small will he make himself. Give a weak man freedom—and he himself will tie it up and bring it right back to you, etc.” This shows how early all of Dostoevsky's basic ideas were conceived, and it was only in accepting or rejecting them that he later hesitated for several decades, but he did not discover anything in them that was essentially new.

saints and celebrate the birthdays of these "benefactors of mankind." Auguste Comte, for example, tried to devise in place of Christianity, which he considered moribund, something like a new religious cult, with feast days and the honoring of the memory of great men. And the cult of service of mankind is spreading more and more today as the service of God declines. Mankind idolizes itself, it now considers only its own suffering, and with weary eyes it looks around for someone who might bring it comfort, help, or at least relief. Timid and trembling, it is ready to rush after anyone who will do something for it, ready to bow down reverently before the one who will lighten its work with successful machines, fertilize its field with a new compound, or ease its temporary pain, even with something that will poison it for life. Confused and suffering, it seems to have lost its sense of the whole, it is as if it does not see behind the petty details of its life the main and monstrous evil approaching it from all sides: that the more man tries to overcome his suffering the more the suffering grows and the more all-embracing it becomes—and people are already perishing not just individually, not by the thousand, but by the million and by whole nations, faster and faster, more and more inexorably, having forgotten God, and cursing themselves.

I should like to quote here the majestic scene from the Revelation of Saint John—a revelation of the destinies of God's Church on earth and also of mankind in agitation around it, trying to devour it. The imagery here expresses allegorically the stages in the development of those destinies and by its nature determines the general meaning of those stages, free of all details:

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. . . . and the dragon ⁴ gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

And they worshiped the dragon ⁵ which gave power unto the beast: and they worshiped the beast saying, who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

If any man have an ear, let him hear.

He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the

⁴ According to Revelation, the first spirit to renounce God.

⁵ We should expect here "the beast"—but how wonderfully sustained is the accuracy of the apocalyptic images, their conformity with their true sense!

sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.
(Revelation, 13)

A knowledge that feeds but no longer enlightens man, a great exchange of spiritual gifts for material ones and of a clear conscience for a full stomach—this is what is represented in those amazing words. With this concern for “bread alone,” churches will close, the great regulating force will disappear, and people will again set about raising buildings on sand, constructing with their own strength and their own wisdom the Tower of Babel of their life. It is to all this that the Inquisitor refers in his moving words, and at the same time he predicts how it will all end: “Do You know,” he says, “that ages will pass and mankind will proclaim through the mouths of its representatives of science and wisdom that there is no crime and, consequently, no sin, that there are only hungry people. ‘Feed them, and then ask virtue of them’—this is what will be written on the banner that they will raise against You and with which Your temple will be destroyed.⁶ In the place where Your temple stood, a new building will rise;⁷ the terrible Tower

⁶ The reference is to the theory of the relativity of crime, according to which it in no way differs from any of the rest of man’s deeds, for like them all it is caused by the influence of environment, upbringing, and external circumstances in general. The will, completely determined by these circumstances, is incapable of not performing some act, in the given instance a criminal one; therefore, it is not free, and, consequently, “there is no sin.” *Crime and Punishment* (in certain of its episodes) and finally *The Brothers Karamazov* can be regarded as an artistic-psychological critique of this idea of the nineteenth century, to which the greatest minds in it are somehow attracted, and also as its rejection, for being contrary to the nature of things and untrue.

⁷ Because of the theory of the innocence of the individual will, all crimes, as well as all evil, are attributed to an incorrect social

of Babel will be raised again, and although, like the first one, it will not be finished, yet You could have prevented this new tower and have reduced men's suffering by a thousand years; for, as You know, they will come back to us after having tormented themselves for a thousand years with their tower! ⁸ Then they will seek us out again, underground, hiding in the catacombs—for we shall again be persecuted ⁹ and tortured; they will find us and cry out to us: 'Feed us, for those who promised us fire from heaven ¹⁰ did not give it to us.' And then we shall complete the construction of their tower, for the one who feeds them will complete it. And we alone shall feed them, in Your

order. Therefore, the question of the struggle against evil boils down to the question of the best possible organization of human society—and this introduces into history a theoretical idea as the creative principle, in place of the unconscious forces operating in it.

⁸ Dostoevsky frequently and persistently pointed out (for example, in *The Possessed*) how science, by rejecting free will in man and absoluteness in crime, will drive people to cannibalism—and then, in despair, "the earth will begin to cry for its old gods," and the people will again turn to religion. Thus, their turning to God, he thought, would crown history, and the greater the misfortunes awaiting man in the future the more certain this would come about.

⁹ The reference here is to a period of unbearable persecutions to which self-determining and unhappy mankind will subject religion for a certain time, precisely just before it turns to God. The persecutions—not against the Church, but against the religious principle itself in man—which occurred at the end of the eighteenth century in France, and which even now flare up here and there, can be regarded as the first mild harbinger of an attempt to eradicate religion completely, to eradicate it everywhere on earth.

¹⁰ I.e., the rationalist theoreticians who propose to arrange man's life on earth without religion, and particularly the theoreticians of new organizational forms of labor and property.

name, declaring falsely that it is in Your name. Oh, they will never, never feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. But it will all end by their laying their freedom at our feet and saying to us: 'It doesn't matter if you enslave us, just give us enough to eat.'¹¹ They themselves will finally understand that freedom and earthly bread sufficient for everyone are inconceivable together: for they will never, never be able to share with each other!¹² They will also be convinced

¹¹ Despair from economic catastrophes will lead (it is already leading) to the neglect of all other ideals that were originally inseparable from the ideal of an even distribution of wealth: thus, even now, the radical democrats are growing indifferent to the precepts of political and social freedom (constitutionalism), as well as to the progress in the sciences and education, and are ready to join up indifferently with both military despots and the Church triumphant over the State, as long as some force, be it military or ecclesiastical—it is all the same to them—solves the economic problem and “feeds everyone.”

¹² With this concern “about bread alone,” the conscience dies out in man, and along with it, compassion; for it is impossible either to trace these feelings to “bread” or to derive them from “concern about it.” Everyone will take for himself as much as he has a right to according to the quantity and quality of his work, and the genius will demand that the untalented be removed from the banquet, because they take too much from him. As for the question of the organization of society according to economic principles, the distribution of the products of production according to right—“*suum cuique*”—and according to the justice of the human heart—“God is for all”—presents the main and, in a strict sense, an unsolvable difficulty. It precisely is already the subject of endless disagreements among theoreticians of society, and if they are so irreconcilable in their thinking, so incompatible in their books, then it is difficult even to imagine the chaos of conflict to which the unsolvability of this question will lead in reality, where passions prevail, where indignation and anger fail to subside when necessary and pity has its cogency, and, finally, where every dialectic is shattered against the honest failure to understand

that they can never be free, because they are weak, vicious, worthless, and rebellious. You promised them the bread of heaven, but, I repeat again, can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, the eternally vicious, and the eternally ungrateful¹³ race of man? And if for the sake of the bread of heaven, thousands and tens of thousands will follow You, then what will become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to give up the earthly bread for that of heaven?"

XIII

"Or is it only the tens of thousands of the great and the strong that are dear to You," continues the Inquisitor, "and the millions of others, numerous as the sands of the sea, who are weak but who love You, are to serve only as material for the great and the strong?"

These words mark a turning point in his thought: its shift to the eternal meaning of history, which is incompatible with absolute truth and mercy. For the time being, this

men of good heart. Even now it is possible to foresee that if the social crisis is solved in accordance with the inner wishes of these theoreticians, then a new one will arise with two diametrically opposed slogans: "Do away with the untalented; hide them, reduce them to zero, enslave them" and "We don't need geniuses, geniuses are superfluous, they insult our poverty with their spiritual beauty, and they are dangerous." Nietzsche's philosophy, now being propagated in Europe before our eyes, is an early, but a very bold expression of the first slogan.

¹³ The word in Dostoevsky is *neblagorodnogo*—ignoble. [Tr.]

meaning is only pointed out in passing, but later the Inquisitor will base his rejection precisely on it.

It is a well-known view that the greatest flowering of culture is brought about by only a few select people of great ability; and in order that they be able to carry out their mission freely and leisurely, they are provided with security and spare time by the labor and suffering of the vast masses of the people. We shall pass over this view, as it is too crude to dwell on, and in order to make clear what the Inquisitor says next, quote the words from the Revelation of St. John 14:1-5, about the small number of the chosen and justified on Judgment Day. Evidently, it is this sublime and heart-piercing image that the Inquisitor has in mind as he further develops his idea:

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

What a wonderful, alluring ideal is in this image; how it arouses yearning desire in us; how little we are surprised, after merely a glance at it, at the profound and quick upheaval the Gospel brought about during the transition from the ancient world to the modern one.

And yet, precisely because the beauty of this ideal is so great that the mere desire to achieve it provides happiness, there is immediately aroused in us an irresistible feeling of pity for those human beings "as numerous as the sands of the sea," who, after separating off from themselves those "hundred and forty and four thousand," remain somewhere behind, forgotten and trampled under foot in history.¹

This feeling of pity also fills the soul of the Inquisitor, and he says firmly: "No, we cherish the weak, too," and the thought quickly flashes across his mind of how he and

¹ In the chapter "Ivan Fyodorovich's Nightmare," which on the whole can be regarded as variations on "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," the devil says: "How many souls it was necessary to ruin . . . in order to obtain just one righteous Job!" Leaving aside the superficial idea that for the free leisure time of the few who would "cultivate the arts and sciences" (they are really cultivated by poor people whose lives are filled with hard work), it is necessary to have the back-breaking and excessive work of everyone else, we should like to point out another correlation that does indeed exist between the salvation of one at the expense of the destruction of many. . . . Higher education, for example, is a fine thing, it is respected by everyone, and it attracts everyone to it, but, as it is impossible in childhood to tell whether someone has a talent for it, thousands and tens of thousands of children are crippled by difficult and complex schooling, in order that from their number can be separated a score or so of truly educated people. The others crowd around them not only as an uneducated mass but as a corrupted one.

those who will understand him must regulate the lives of those weak ones: and they will do it completely alone, without *Him*, although, for the lack of another organizational idea, it will be done in His name:

“They are depraved and rebellious,” he says, “but in the end, they, too, will become obedient. They will marvel at us and look on us as gods because, having become their leaders, we agreed to endure freedom and to rule over them—so terrible will it finally become for them to be free! But we shall say that we are obeying You and are ruling in Your name. We shall deceive them again, for we shall never again let You come to us. In this deceit will be our suffering, for we shall find it necessary to lie.”

And then he shifts to the unquenchable desires of the human soul, by means of which, if one knows and answers them, one can and should raise the final and everlasting edifice of man's earthly life: “In the first question in the wilderness,” he says, “lay the great secret of this world. Had You chosen the bread, You would have satisfied man's universal and everlasting yearning—both that of the individual and that of mankind as a whole: to know whom he should worship. Once man is free, he has no more incessant and agonizing anxiety than to find as soon as possible someone to worship. But man seeks to worship what is indisputable, so indisputable that all people at once agree to worship it together. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only with finding something that I or another person can worship, but with finding something that *everyone* will believe in and worship; and it must without fail *be done by all together*. This longing for *community* of worship has been the chief torment of every person individually as well as of mankind as a whole since the beginning of time. In

the name of common worship they have destroyed each other with the sword.² They have created gods and have called out to each other, 'Abandon your gods and come worship ours, or else it will be the death of you and of your gods.' And so it will be to the end of the world, even when the gods have disappeared from the world, the people will just the same fall down before idols. You knew, You could not help knowing this fundamental secret of human nature; but You rejected the only absolute banner that was offered You in order to make everyone worship You incontestably—the banner of earthly bread; and You rejected it in the name of freedom and bread from heaven. And look what You did further—again all in the name of freedom! I tell You man has no more excruciating anxiety than to find someone to whom he can as quickly as possible turn over the gift of freedom with which the unfortunate creature is born. But the only one who can take possession of man's freedom is he who can soothe his conscience. With bread, You were given an incontestable banner: if You give him bread, man will worship You, for there is nothing more in-

² In *A Raw Youth*, Makar Ivanovich, an old man and a type similar to that of Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, says: "Man cannot exist without worshipping something, such a person couldn't put up with himself, no person could at all. And if he rejects God, he will worship an idol, a wooden one, a golden one, or one that exists only in his imagination." By "idols" that people fall down before after rejecting the true God are understood here imaginary ones: intellect deified and its products—philosophy and the exact sciences; or, finally, idols that are completely crude, such as certain individual ideas of that same intellect, that science, or that philosophy: for example, the idea of utilitarianism. In this passage of the "Legend," however, is meant the mystical or religious worship of, for example, Christ, Mohammed, and so on.

contestable than bread; but if at the same time, someone other than You gains possession of his conscience—oh, then he will even give up Your bread and set out after him who has seduced his conscience. You were right about that. For the secret of human existence is not only to live, but to have something to live for. Without a clear idea of the object of life, man will not consent to go on living, and will rather destroy himself than remain on earth—even if there is bread all around him.³ This is so. But what came of it? Instead of taking possession of man's freedom, You increased it more than ever! Or did You forget that peace of mind and even death is dearer⁴ to man than freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more enticing to man than the freedom of his conscience, but nothing is more agonizing either. And so instead of firm foundations for soothing man's conscience once and for all You chose everything that is unusual, conjectural, and vague; You chose everything that was beyond man's strength; therefore, You acted as if You did not love him at all—and who was it who did that? You, who came to give Your life for him! Instead of gaining possession of man's freedom, You increased it and burdened man's spiritual kingdom with its torments forever. You wanted man's freely-offered love; You wanted him to follow You freely, charmed and captivated by You. Instead of relying on the firm ancient law,⁵

³ A characteristic correctly noted, and the only one, with its idealism, that balances all the baseness attributed to man in this "Legend."

⁴ This is undoubtedly a slip of the tongue, which should read: "more convenient, more advantageous, more necessary, and better."

⁵ I.e., the law of the Old Testament, which does indeed differ from that of the New in the detail, clarity, and firmness of its instructions and the precision of its punitive measures for violation

man in the future was supposed to decide for himself with a free heart what is good and what is evil, having only Your image before him as his guide.⁶ But did You not think that he would finally question even Your image and Your truth, and reject them, too, if he were oppressed by such a terrible burden as freedom of choice? They will at last cry out that the truth is not in You—for they could not have been left in greater confusion and torment than that caused by You in giving them so many cares and unsolvable problems. Thus You Yourself laid the foundation for the destruction of Your own kingdom, so don't blame anyone else for it."

In other words, the doctrine that came to save the world has through its very loftiness destroyed it; it has brought into history not reconciliation and unity, but chaos and of what is fixed by it (see Deuteronomy). One can say, transposing everything to legal terms, that in the Old Testament are given rules, and in the New, principles.

⁶ In these three lines is expressed Dostoevsky's conception of the nature of Christianity and is indicated the guiding principle for a Christian's actions: always mentally connect each of your intended acts with Christ and ask yourself if He would have done it, or, if He had seen it, would He have approved of it—and do this without violating in your mind the totality of His image as passed on to us by the Evangelists, or the aggregate of all His features. I think this principle is the true one, and if it had been observed, His Gospel could never have been subjected to those forced applications to which it has been subjected in history by those who have singled out individual statements from it. Thus, on the expression *compelle intrare*—"compel them (the invited) to enter" to the marriage feast, in the "Parable of the Invited and Uninvited"—the Catholic Inquisition based its right of existence. On the expression "My Kingdom is not of this world," many, even now, base their demand that the Church take an indifferent attitude toward sin, toward the crime of the "world" (the entire socio-historical system).

hostility. History has not yet come to an end; and yet it must come to an end. This is precisely what the nations are seeking in their thirst to find an object of common and harmonious worship. They are even destroying one another so that, even if by means of the destruction of the many who are irreconcilable, the remainder can finally be united. Christianity did not satisfy this need of the human heart by leaving everything to be decided by the individual and by falsely relying on man's ability to distinguish between good and evil. Even the ancient law, which was not so lofty, but which was precise and strict, satisfied this need more than Christianity does: all who deviated from it were stoned and cast out, and the people remained united, even if by force. An even better way to satisfy this need—true, it is quite a crude one—would be by “earthly bread,” the concealment from man's eyes of everything heavenly. By satisfying his hunger, it would lull the anxieties of his conscience.

We will probably not depart very far from the truth if we say that with the attempt to resort to “earthly bread” in gaining control over the destinies of mankind, there is understood here a terrible, but a really powerful way out of the contradictions of history: namely, the lowering of the psychical level in man. By extinguishing in him all that is vague, disquieting, and tormenting, and by simplifying his nature⁷ to the point where it will know only the serenity of short-lived desires, by making him know in

⁷ In *The Possessed*, one of the characters who appears only in passing (Shigalyov) expounds the idea of this simplification of human nature and the lowering of its psychical level. This can be regarded as an early and more thoroughly motivated account of the given passage in the “Legend.”

moderation, feel in moderation, and desire in moderation—this is the way to satisfy him finally and to set his mind at rest.

XIV

In shifting his words more and more from the chaos into which Christianity and its doctrine of freedom have plunged man to a description of man's future and final pacification on earth, the Inquisitor turns to an analysis of the two remaining temptations of the devil. Here are the words in which they are recorded by the Evangelist Matthew:

Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple,

And saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands, they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Again the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

And saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan,

for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him. (Matthew 4:5-11; see also Luke 4:5-13.)

Having spoken of the elements of self-destruction with which Christianity is filled, the Inquisitor continues, addressing himself again to Christ: "And yet, is that what was offered You? There are three forces, the only three forces on earth that can conquer and hold captive forever the conscience of these weak rebels for their happiness. Those forces are: *miracle*, *mystery*, and *authority*. You rejected all three, and You Yourself set the example for it. When the wise and terrible spirit set You on a pinnacle of the temple and said that if You want to know whether You are the Son of God, You should cast Yourself down, for it was said concerning Him that angels would take and bear Him up, and He would not stumble or fall;¹ then You would know whether You are the Son of God, and would prove how great is Your faith in Your Father. But You listened and then rejected his offer. You did not succumb and did not cast Yourself down from the pinnacle. Oh, of course, You acted in this instance proudly and splendidly, like God. But what of men, that weak, rebellious race of men—are they gods? Oh, You understood very well then that if You had taken just one step, had made just one move to cast Yourself down, You would immediately have tempted God and would have lost all Your faith in Him, and would have been dashed to pieces against that earth

¹ In Dostoevsky, this word is *rasshibyotsya* ("injure Himself").
[Tr.]

which You came to save. And the wise spirit, who was tempting You, would have rejoiced.”

Surprising here is the disbelief in the mystical act of redemption, expressed in the *first* words we noted, and its combination with a complete belief in the temptation of Jesus and even in the mystical importance of that temptation, in the devil’s attempt to prevent His coming into the world as the Savior, which is expressed in the *last* words we noted.

“But, I repeat,” continues the Inquisitor, “are there many like You? And could You really assume, even for a moment, that man, too, could withstand such a temptation? Is human nature so constituted that it can reject a miracle, and at such terrible moments of life, the moments of its most terrible, fundamental, and agonizing spiritual difficulties² remain with only the free decision of his heart? Oh, You knew that Your spiritual feat would be preserved in the books, that it would be remembered to the end of time³ and reach the farthest ends of the earth, and You hoped that man, following You, would stay with God without the need of a miracle. But You did not know that as soon as man rejects miracle, he immediately rejects God as well,⁴ for man seeks not so much God as miracles. And

² This refers to man’s attitude toward the mystical act of redemption, by faith in which man lives, and the fact that this faith and this life would have to be supported by something more than what is provided by merely the sublime image of Christ.

³ Again, what astonishing faith resounds in these words!

⁴ Dostoevsky is speaking here, and with justifiable contempt, of how in history—even to this day—the struggle against religion has almost been identified with the struggle against the miraculous, and vice-versa; and of how man had no sooner puzzled out something in nature that had previously seemed supernatural than he cowardly deserted faith for unfaith.

as man is unable to remain without a miracle, he will create for himself new miracles, miracles of his own,⁵ and will worship the miracle of the sorcerer and the witchcraft of old women,⁶ even though he is a rebel, a heretic, and an infidel a hundred times over. You did not come down from the cross when they shouted to You, jeering You: 'If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe that Thou art He.' You did not come down, for, again, You did not want to enslave man by a miracle, and You thirsted for a faith that was given freely, and not based on miracle. You thirsted for freely-given love and not for the servile raptures of the slave before the might that has once and for all terrified him.⁷ But here, also, You rated men too highly, for they are, of course, slaves, although they are born rebels. Look around and judge for Yourself: fifteen centuries have gone by—go and take a look at them. Who is it You raised up to Yourself? I swear, man is weaker

⁵ This refers to the latest discoveries of science and, even more, to the technological inventions that man so marvels at in our day and likes to repeat over and over to himself, scarcely believing that they actually exist and that he discovered them himself.

⁶ The reference here is to the particular interest with which people in godless times listen to everything strange and exceptional, in which the law of nature seems to have been violated. One might say that in such times nothing is so avidly sought after by man as precisely the miraculous—but only with the indispensable condition that it not also be divine. The craze for spiritualism, referred to derisively in *A Writer's Diary*, was undoubtedly called to Dostoevsky's mind by the universality and constancy of this psychic trait in man. Compare the superstitious state of Roman society when it lapsed into total atheism in the second and third centuries.

⁷ The reference here is to the ineffable superiority of Christianity, with its simplicity and humanity, to all the other religions of this earth, in which the element of the miraculous so predominates over everything else and which arose historically out of a fear of that "miraculous."

and baser by nature than You believed him to be! ⁸ Can he, can he really do what You did? By respecting him so much, You acted as if You had ceased to feel any compassion for him, for You demanded too much of him—and who did that? You, who loved him more than Yourself! If You had respected him less, You would have demanded less of him, and that would have been more like love, for then his burden would have been lighter.”

Because the Savior’s precepts were too lofty, they were misunderstood by man, whose heart is perverted and whose mind is darkened. He scoffs and jeers at their great purity, at their wonderful simplicity and holiness—and he does this at the same time that he worships what is vulgar and coarse, but which impresses his timid imagination. With powerful words, the Inquisitor draws a picture of the rebellion against religion, only a small segment of which has as yet been seen by world history, and with a penetrating eye he notes what will follow it:

“Man is weak and base. What does it matter that he is now ⁹ rebelling everywhere against our authority and is proud that he is rebelling! It is the pride of a child and a

⁸ The basic idea of the “Legend.” Later we shall also mention several sentences in which its meaning seems to be concentrated, or more precisely, in which its points of departure are indicated.

⁹ He is not speaking here of the Reformation movement, which was contemporary with the dialogue of the “Legend,” for the spirit of deep faith that permeated that movement was too great to be referred to contemptuously (see the few words about that spirit in Dostoevsky’s Pushkin Speech, apropos the lines: “Once while wandering in the savage wilderness,” etc.). Undoubtedly, the words of the “Legend” were called forth by the antireligious movement, partly of the eighteenth, but mainly of the nineteenth century, in which as few efforts and as little seriousness were expended on the struggle against religion as were on the struggle against some superstitions or other.

schoolboy. They are little children who have rebelled in class and driven out the teacher. But an end will also come to the enthusiasm of the children,¹⁰ and it will cost them dear. They will tear down the temples, and drown the earth in blood.¹¹ But they will see, at last, the stupid children, that although they are rebels, they are impotent rebels, unable to bear their own rebellion.¹² In a flood of

¹⁰ And it is happening, for example, in our time in respect to the recent antireligious movement, just as it happened in every other more serious time in respect to every previous rebellion against religion. Thus, the Reformation itself, as a personal quest for the Church, came into being after the age of humanism and its blasphemous attitude toward religion. And after the period of the French Revolution came the times of Chateaubriand, Joseph de Maistre, and others, with their bizarre ideas and confused feelings. The true attitude toward those and analogous movements is correctly pointed out by Dostoevsky: in their followers, there is no genuine faith, simple and strong, but the fear and confusion of yesterday's blasphemous schoolboys; this is not a case of God acting in man, but of man imitating outwardly the words and impulses of those in whom He truly acted, those whom He at one time called to Himself (the righteous).

¹¹ This refers not to the time of the First French Revolution, as one might think, but to what will definitely happen in the future—an attempt forcibly to suppress the religious consciousness in all of mankind. These words correspond to certain of the passages of the “Legend” already quoted above.

¹² Dostoevsky, who always stands above his heroes (whom he never portrays out of admiration, but rather to express one of his ideas), likes to observe how, despite their great strength, they weaken under the pressure of spiritual torment, how they cannot bear their own “breadth” and criminality, although they had earlier made a theory of it (for example, Stavrogin's last conversation with Liza in *The Possessed* and Ivan Karamazov's last meeting with Smerdyakov). Almost everywhere in Dostoevsky the depiction of a very strong man, if he does not finally end by repenting (as with Raskolnikov), ends with a description of a sort of weakening of his strength and the humiliation and mockery of the “former strong man.”

silly tears, they will finally admit that He who created them rebels must, without doubt, have wanted to ridicule them. They will say this in despair, and their words will be blasphemy which will make them even more unhappy, for human nature cannot bear blasphemy, and in the end always avenges it on itself.”

Then, summing up world history, the Inquisitor turns to the disclosure of his secret, which consists in correcting the act of redemption through acceptance of all three counsels of the “wise and powerful spirit of the wilderness,” which, in turn, he does out of love for mankind, in order to settle its earthly destinies. His justification of this criminal correction derives from the image of the few who are redeemed, which we cited above from Revelation 14. Recalling it, he says: “And so unrest, perplexity, and unhappiness—this is the present-day lot of man after You suffered so much for his freedom! Your great prophet tells in a vision and an allegory that he saw all the participants in the first resurrection and that there were of each tribe twelve thousand.¹³ But if there were so many of them, they, too, must have been not like men, but gods. They had borne Your cross, they had endured scores of years in the hungry and naked wilderness living on locusts and roots—and, of course, You can point with pride to those children of freedom, of freely-given love, of free and splendid sacrifice in Your name.¹⁴ But remember that there were only a few

¹³ In Revelation 7, there is a preliminary enumeration of those who are saved—twelve thousand from each of the tribes of Israel, who, in chapter 14, are named in the overall figure of 144,000.

¹⁴ What an amazing, profound, and correct understanding of the true meaning of spiritual freedom—freedom from ourselves, from the baseness in our nature, in the name of what is higher and sacred, and which we felt and acknowledged to be our better side. This is the freedom referred to here, in contrast to the crude un-

thousand of them, and what is more, they were gods—but what about the rest? And how are the others, the weak ones, to blame for not being able to receive such terrible gifts? ¹⁵ Did You really come only to the chosen and for the chosen? If so, there is a mystery here, and we cannot comprehend it.”

XV

With this inability to comprehend why the mystery of redemption took place in such elevated forms and why it failed to include the innocently weak, the Inquisitor's dialectic enters a new and higher sphere: the rejection of redemption itself. As above, in the confession of Ivan Karamazov, the rejection of a future life and the Last Judgment is based on the incomprehensibility of the mystery of innocent suffering. The Inquisitor does not deny the existence of these acts; ¹ on the contrary, he has a dazzlingly keen perception of them. There is rather a *rebellion* against them, a *fall* from God—the second, near the final arrangement of man's destiny, at the close of history, but in every way similar to the first fall, which took place at the very beginning of man's destiny—however, with a deeper consciousness of all its burden.

derstanding of it, according to which the baseness in ourselves is independent of guidance by or subservience to some higher principle lying outside us.

¹⁵ The second central idea of the “Legend.”

¹ That is, redemption and retribution. [Tr.]

“And if it is a mystery,” says the Inquisitor, “then we, too, had a right to preach a mystery and teach them that it is not the free decision of their hearts that is important,² nor is it love, but a mystery to which they must submit blindly, even against their conscience. And that is what we have done. We have corrected Your great work and founded it on *miracle, mystery, and authority*. And the people rejoiced that they were again led like a flock of sheep and that their hearts had finally been relieved of the terrible gift that had brought them so much suffering.³ Were we right in teaching and doing that? Tell me! Didn’t we love mankind when we so meekly acknowledged its weakness, when we lovingly lightened its burden, and permitted its weak nature even to sin, so long as it was with our permission? Why have You now come to interfere with us? And why are You looking so silently and searchingly at me with Your meek eyes? Get angry! I don’t want Your love, because I don’t love You myself. And what do I have

² This thesis, as is generally known, is indeed a feature of Catholic doctrine, and it is what has led to all the formalism in the Western Church and to the moral corruption of the nations shepherded by it. From it came the so-called doctrine of “good works,” which, no matter how they are done, even if quite mechanically, are equally salutary for the soul. Thence the Indulgence, i.e., the forgiveness of sins, at first to those who participated in the Crusades in order to lay down their lives for their faith and Church, later to those who in some way or other supported the Crusades, and finally to those who, in general, contributed money for the needs of the Church: whence it was but one step to the sale at various prices of Letters of Indulgence. And it was precisely over this means of absolution that Protestantism parted company with the Old Church: to the latter’s formal method of saving men’s souls through dead works it opposed absolution through faith, i.e., through an act of live inner movement.

³ I.e., freedom and the free distinction between good and evil.

to hide from You? Or don't I know to whom I am speaking? Everything I have to say to You is known to You already—I can read it in Your eyes. And would I hide our secret from You? Maybe You really want to hear it from my lips. Then listen: we are not with You, but with *him*—that is our secret! For a long time now we have not been with You, but with *him*—eight centuries already. Just eight centuries ago, we took from him what You rejected with scorn: that last gift he offered You after showing You all the kingdoms of the earth: we took from him Rome and Caesar's sword . . .”

With just these words begins the disclosure of the special Catholic idea in history. Everything said earlier is of general significance, i.e., it represents the dialectic of Christianity in its basic idea, which is the same for all believers in connection with the revelation of human nature, condemnation of it, and compassion for it. But as it develops further and further and finally ends with the idea of a religious arrangement of human destinies on earth, one that is final and universal, this dialectic, hitherto completely abstract, coincides with a historical fact that answers to it; and it automatically draws it into itself, clinging with its turns of thought on to outstanding features of reality. That historical fact is the Roman-Catholic Church with its universal aspirations, with its external power of unification—a Christian seed that germinated on the soil of ancient paganism.

Pointing out that their work “has not yet been brought to completion,” that it “has only begun,” the Inquisitor, nevertheless, expresses his firm belief that it will be completed: “We shall have to wait a long time for that,” he says, “and the earth will suffer a great deal in the meantime, but we shall achieve our goal and be Caesars, and then we

shall think about the universal happiness of man.⁴ And yet You could even then have taken up Caesar's sword. Why did You reject that last gift? If You had accepted that third counsel of the mighty spirit, You would have accomplished everything that man seeks on earth, that is, whom to worship, whom to hand his conscience to, and how to unite everyone finally in one unanimous and harmonious anthill.⁵ Because the need for a world-wide union is the

⁴ An idea exclusively Dostoevsky's and by no means one of Rome's. Even if Rome, both in ancient and modern times, did aspire to world supremacy, it was certainly not for "the happiness of man." From this example, one can best of all see how Dostoevsky intertwines his own particular and personal idea into historical fact, making it, as it were, its soul.

⁵ The language and the ideas here were specially worked out by Dostoevsky, and they sound somewhat strange in the mouth of the sixteenth-century Inquisitor. The "anthill," the "Crystal Palace," and the "chicken coop" are three metaphorical expressions of the idea of a world-wide union of men and of their pacification, first discussed by Dostoevsky in *Notes from the Underground*. The "chicken coop" is poor and unpleasant reality; it is, however, preferable to all else, because it is fragile, it can always be changed or destroyed, and, consequently, although it fails to answer the secondary requirements of human nature, it does answer its chief and most essential feature—free will and capricious desire, which do not die out in the individual. The "Crystal Palace" is the artificial edifice of human life, raised on the principles of reason and art, and it is worse than any reality, for, while it satisfies all human needs and demands, it does not answer the most important one—the need for individual, particular desire; it crushes the personality. In *Notes from the Underground*, the second formula is rejected and the first retained, in the absence for man of the third—the "anthill." By it is understood the universal and harmonious union of all living creatures of one species, based on the presence in them of a general and infallible instinct for constructing a common dwelling. All animals living in societies (ants, for example) are endowed with such an instinct, but man lacks it; therefore, whereas they always build alike, everywhere the same and always

third and final torment of man.⁶ Mankind as a whole has always aspired to organize itself into a universal state. There have been many great nations with great histories, but the higher those nations stood, the more unhappy they were, for they were more acutely aware than other people of the craving for a world-wide union of men. The great conquerors, the Tamerlanes and Genghis-Khans, swept like a whirlwind over the earth, trying to conquer the universe; and they, too, although unconsciously, expressed the same great craving of mankind for universal and world-wide unity. If You had accepted the world and Caesar's purple, You would have founded the universal kingdom and given universal peace. For who is to rule over men if not those who possess their conscience and in whose hands is their bread? And so we have taken up Caesar's sword, and having taken it up, we have, of course, rejected You and followed *him*."

Thus, the counsels of the "wise and powerful spirit," who tempted Jesus in the wilderness, contain the secret of universal history and the answer to the deepest aspirations

peacefully, man everywhere builds different things, eternally changing his desires and notions. And no sooner does he set about building a common dwelling than he disagrees over his representatives, individual persons, and, moreover, he does it with deadly animosity and hatred. One must constantly keep these three formulas in mind when reading Dostoevsky's works.

⁶ One must distinguish this "union" from the "common worship" of something or other by the human conscience, about which we spoke earlier. That was an internal, spiritual union of men, but this refers to their external union, to a harmonious socio-historical life. There is a relationship between these two ideas, but they are not identical; corresponding to each other like body and soul, they are two parts of a third—the universal harmony of human life.

of human nature. Those counsels were criminal, but that is because man's very nature is already perverted. And there is no means except through crime to answer its aspirations; there is no other possibility of satisfying, protecting, and pitying this race of perverted creatures than by accepting this very perversion as its basis—by gathering together their scattered flock by means of a perverted idea, the falsity of which would answer the falsity of their nature.

XVI

Never has there been a greater despair than that with which this strange and almost irrefutable idea is infused. One might say it is the saddest thought ever to pass through human consciousness and that the page just quoted is the most painful in all of world literature. And it ends with complete despair—with the fall of the lie, behind which stands no truth, with the annihilation of the deceit, the only thing that people can live by. This is said in explanation of the mysterious words of the twelfth, seventeenth, and eighteenth chapters of *The Revelation of St. John*, in which, according to the interpretations of theologians, the earthly destinies of the Old and New Testament Churches are allegorically represented by the figure of the "woman." Here are those words:

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. . . .

A few lines later the fate of the dragon is described:

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and satan, which deceiveth the whole world. . . .

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. . . .

And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

And to the woman were given two wings, a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the Commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Then the images change; a new vision appears: from the waters of the sea comes a beast to which the dragon gives its strength and power. Evidently it is through this strength and power that the beast rises up against those who "keep the commandments of God." The whole earth watches it with wonder; the nations bow down before its marvelous strength, for it does all sorts of wonders and even makes fire come down from heaven. It puts its mark on people, and it is accepted by all "whose names are not written in the book of the Lamb." The vision changes again: the Lamb appears, "slain from the foundation of the world," and with it are one hundred and forty-four thousand "having his Father's name written in their foreheads." They were redeemed by its blood, for they were not defiled by the filth of the earth. An angel, in whose hands is the everlasting gospel, flies by in order to preach unto them that dwell on earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. After it

comes another angel, saying: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This is the first harbinger of the great fall, the depiction of which still lies ahead, but it is already imminent. There appears a bright cloud, and on it is one "like unto the Son of Man," holding a sharp sickle. The angel says to Him: "Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." And a great harvest was reaped. Thereupon begins a new vision: "And them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.'"

After this come seven angels holding seven vials of the wrath of God, which they pour upon the earth. All sorts of torments are inflicted on those people who had worshiped the beast's image and accepted its mark; all nature is altered, and the suffering continues to grow. "And they blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give Him glory." After the fifth angel had poured out his vial, the kingdom of the beast "was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." When the last vial of God's wrath is poured upon the earth,

there comes a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done." And after that begins the vision of the judgment of the whore:

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall

ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

After this comes a vision of the judgment of the triumphant whore, by whose "sorceries were all nations deceived," (18:23), and who "corrupted the earth with her fornication" (19:2). The kings of the earth who have committed fornication with her and the merchants who grew rich from her "shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing" and beating their breasts, saying in sorrow and amazement: "What city is like unto this great city!"

In order that all these words may be clearer, let us note that after the judgment of the whore, the "Lord of lords and King of kings" descends for the final struggle with the beast and the nations who worshiped it. (Although they were covered with sores, they were still not vanquished.) And the same words are repeated about Him (19:15) that were said about the child whom the dragon wanted to devour, but who was taken to God.

Now we shall continue with the Inquisitor's words, this time almost without interruption. Having said that he and those of the same opinion as he, who had rejected Christ and accepted the counsels of the devil, will gain possession of the consciences of men by both the word and the kingdom of Caesar, he describes as follows the attitude toward him of mankind, for whom all this was done.

"There will yet be ages of the excesses of their free thought, of their science and cannibalism, for, having begun to put up their Tower of Babel without us, they will end with cannibalism."

Science, as the exact knowledge of reality, does not con-

tain any insuperably restrictive moral principles, and in raising with its help the final edifice of human life, one can by no means deny that when necessary it will take some measure that is cruel and criminal. Malthus's idea (shared even by a thinker such as John Stuart Mill), according to which the only way for the working classes to maintain their wages at a certain level is for them to abstain from marriage and having a family, so as not to increase their number—or in other words, for them to degrade the huge mass of women to the extent that they become merely an adjunct of a certain male function—can serve as an example of the cruelty and immorality that theoretical thought can lead to when unrestrained by firm religious laws. And in fact, since science has already found painless ways of dying (increased doses of anesthetics), why shouldn't a second Malthus appear, one just as inspired by the "love of one's neighbor" as the first, one who will say "let there be marriages, but let the children from them be eaten." This can be done "not necessarily by the parents," it will cause no suffering, and it will be "of benefit to all mankind."

"But then the beast will crawl up to us," continues the Inquisitor, "and will lick our feet and spatter them with tears of blood. And we shall sit upon the beast and raise the cup, and on it will be written: 'Mystery.' But then, and only then, will the reign of peace and happiness come to men. You are proud of those You have chosen, but You have only Your chosen ones, whereas we will give solace to everyone. And that is not all: how many of those chosen ones, of those mighty ones, who could have become the chosen ones, have finally grown weary of waiting for You and have carried and will continue to carry the powers of

their spirit and the fervor of their heart to another camp, and will end up by raising their *free* banner against You? But You Yourself raised that banner.”

What striking words, what a profound understanding of the whole antireligious movement of great European minds of recent centuries, with an acknowledgment of their power and magnanimity, with a feeling of sadness for them, but at the same time with an indication of their fallacy.

“But with us, all will be happy and will no longer rebel, nor will they destroy each other as they do everywhere under Your freedom. Oh, we will convince them that they will become free only when they have renounced their freedom in our favor and have submitted to us. Now tell me: will we be right or will we be lying? They themselves will be convinced that we are right, for they will recall the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Your freedom had led them. Freedom, a free mind, and science will lead them into such a labyrinth and bring them face to face with such wonders and unsolvable mysteries that some of them, the refractory and fierce ones, will destroy themselves,¹ others, refractory but weak, will destroy one another,² while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl to our feet

¹ The theoretical idea justifying “self-destruction,” which Dostoevsky expounded in *The Diary of a Writer* apropos a certain suicide.

² For a corresponding idea, see Kirillov’s words to Peter Verkhovensky just before the former’s suicide in *The Possessed*: “To kill *another* would be the very lowest point of my self-will. And this [suggestion] is something that could only come from a person like you. But I am not you: I want its highest point, and therefore I shall kill *myself*.”

and will cry out to us: 'Yes, you were right, you alone possessed His mystery, and we are returning to you: save us from ourselves!' ”³

In the absolute submission and the weak will of the masses, this salvation will reveal itself. Nothing new will be given them by the wise men who have taken away their freedom; but what was previously unattainable to them, they will attain, by having their will guided and their labor distributed:

“In receiving bread from us, they will, of course, clearly see that we take from them the bread made by their own hands, in order to distribute it among them, without any miracle; they will see that we do not turn stones into bread, but, in truth, they will be more glad to get it from our hands than they are about the bread itself! For they will remember only too well that previously, without us, the bread they made turned into stones in their hands, but when they returned to us, the very stones turned into bread in their hands.”

This is a reference to our times, when, under free competition, despite the vast amount of goods produced, the vast number of the popular masses are scarcely able to eke out a meager existence, and everything slips away, is squandered, disappears on account of a lack of coordination between man's desires and actions. On the contrary, when the desires of those now living on the fat of the land are curtailed and the labor of all mankind coordinated into one

³ The basic problem of history, and one which, with its merging of the subject and object into one (both the “saved” and the “savior” are man), is unsolvable. It can be solved only when they are separated (in religion, where the “saved” is a person and his “savior,” God).

whole, even if it is not as burdensome as it now is everywhere, there will be sufficient goods produced for a comfortable existence for all.

“Too, too well will they appreciate what it means to submit once and for all! ⁴ And until people understand this, they will be unhappy. Now, tell me, who contributed most to this lack of understanding? Who scattered the flock and sent it astray on unknown paths? But the flock will come together again and will submit, and this time it will be for good. Then we shall give them quiet, meek happiness, the happiness of weak creatures, such as they are by nature.⁵ Oh, we shall finally convince them not to be proud, for You exalted them, and this taught them pride; we shall prove to them that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that a child’s happiness is sweetest of all. They will become timid and will snuggle up to us in fear as chicks to a brood hen. They will marvel at us and be terrified of us, and will be proud of our being so powerful and intelligent that we could subdue such an impetuous flock of thousands of millions. They will tremble impotently before our anger, their minds will grow timid, their eyes will be as tearful as those of women and children, but at a sigh from us they will just as easily shift to merriment and laughter, to radiant joy and happy childish song.⁶ Yes,

⁴ “There’s one thing lacking in this world of ours, there’s one thing that has to be established, and that is obedience,” says Dostoevsky in *The Possessed* (through the mouth of Peter Verkhovensky).

⁵ These words and the ones immediately following constitute the third central idea of the “Legend.”

⁶ This “weakening” of human nature is virtually identical with the artificial “reduction” of its psychic level; it will, however, be brought about not forcibly, but peacefully.

we shall make them work, but in their leisure time, we shall make their life like a child's game, with children's songs, choirs, and innocent dances. Oh, we shall also allow them to sin;⁷ they are weak and helpless, and they will love us like children because we allow them to sin. We shall tell them that every sin will be expiated if it is committed with our permission; that we allow them to sin because we love them, and as far as the punishment of these sins is concerned—well, so be it, we shall take that upon ourselves.⁸ And we shall take it upon ourselves, and they will adore us as benefactors who have taken on ourselves their sins before God. And they will have no secrets from us. We shall permit or forbid them to live with their wives and mistresses, to have or not have children—always according to whether they have been obedient or not—and they will submit to us gladly and cheerfully. The most agonizing secrets of their conscience—everything, absolutely everything—they will bring to us, and we will decide everything, and they will gladly believe in our decision, for it will relieve them of great anxiety and the terrible torments they now experience in making a free decision for themselves.”

The last words contain a hint of the possibility even of regulating the population, its increase or diminution, all depending on the needs of the current historical moment. But the general idea of this passage is that the whole range of passion will be removed from mankind, that men will be left with only the details and trivia of sin, and that only

⁷ The criminal element in history, once it is provided for and permitted within the bounds of the “necessary,” will immediately lose its dangerous and menacing character.

⁸ This whole picture of a future semi-sinless life had earlier appeared in Dostoevsky's *A Raw Youth*—in Versilov's conversation with his son.

those able to endure every range and every burden will take sin on themselves. Thus, both the unsolvable contradictions of history and the incomprehensible secret impulses of the human soul—everything that hinders man's life on earth—will be concentrated on the shoulders of a few, who will be able to bear the knowledge of good and evil. One might say that history will lapse into silence, and there will remain only the secret history of a few great souls, which, of course, is never destined to be told.

XVII

“And everyone will be happy,” concludes the Inquisitor, “all the millions of creatures, except the hundred thousand who rule over them. For only we, we who guard the mystery, only we shall be unhappy. There will be thousands of millions of happy infants and one hundred thousand sufferers, who took on themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil. They will die peacefully, they will pass away peacefully in Your name, and beyond the grave they will find nothing but death.¹ But we shall keep the secret, and for their happiness we shall entice them with the reward of heaven and eternity. For even if there were anything in the next world, it would not, of course, be for the likes of them.”

The pride of these words, spoken so simply, is ineffable: behind them one senses a power that indeed freely surveys

¹ Compare this with the tone and ideas of the passage from *A Raw Youth* already pointed out above.

the endless paths of history and resolutely weighs in its hand the measure of the human heart and the human mind. And we are not surprised when we subsequently hear the following words referring to the passage from the Revelation of St. John quoted above:

“It is said and prophesied that You will come and again triumph, that You will come with Your elect, with Your proud and strong ones, but we shall say that they have saved only themselves, whereas we have saved everyone. It is said that the whore, who sits upon the beast and holds in her hands the *mystery*, will be disgraced, that the weak will again revolt, that they will tear to pieces her purple mantle and strip naked her ‘vile’ body. But I will then stand up and point out to You the thousands of millions of happy infants who have known no sin. And we, who have taken their sins upon ourselves for their happiness, will stand before You and say ‘Judge us if You can and dare.’ Know that I do not fear You. Know that I, too, was in the wilderness, that I, too, lived on locusts and roots, that I, too, blessed the freedom with which You blessed men, and I, too, was preparing myself to join the number of Your elect, the number of the strong and powerful, eager to ‘complete the number.’ But I recovered my senses and did not desire to serve madness. I went back and joined the multitude of those *who had corrected Your work*. I left the proud and returned to the humble for the happiness of the humble. What I am telling You will happen, and our kingdom will be built. I repeat, tomorrow You will see that obedient flock, which at the first sign from me will rush to rake up the hot coals about the stake on which I shall burn You because You came to hinder us. For if

ever there was someone who deserved our fire, it is You. Tomorrow I shall burn You. *Dixi.*"

The Inquisitor pauses. In the deep silence of the arched dungeon, he looks at his prisoner and awaits His answer. He is distressed by the silence and distressed by the sincere and gentle way in which the prisoner continues to look at him, the same way He looked at him during his speech. He might at least say something, even something bitter, something terrible—so long as He does not leave him without any answer at all. Suddenly the prisoner draws near to him and silently kisses him on his pale, aged lips. "This is His only answer." The Inquisitor shudders, his lips move as if trying to say something. He goes to the door, opens it, and says to Him: "Go, and come no more . . . come never again . . . never, never!" The prisoner goes out into the "dark streets of the city." The Seville night still holds its breath. From the dark skies, the bright stars pour down their gentle light on the tranquil earth. The city sleeps; only the old man stands at the open door with the heavy key in his hand, looking at slumbering nature. The kiss burns in his heart, but . . . "he persists in his idea," and . . . his kingdom will be built.

With this, the "poem" ends. The centuries again move together, the dead return into the earth, and before us once more is the little tavern where the two brothers an hour earlier had begun to speak about various disturbing questions. But no matter what they say now, we shall listen to them no longer. Our hearts are filled with other thoughts, and our ears all the time seem to ring with a kind of Mephistophelian song, sung from a celestial height above our poor earth.

We have broken the work up into parts and pondered its every word; but now that they have all resounded we are left with only a memory of the whole, of which we have not yet rendered an account.

Above all, we are struck by its unusual complexity and variety, combined with a very great unity. A most ardent love of man merges in it with a complete disdain for him, boundless skepticism with fervent faith, doubt about man's unsteady strength with a firm belief in the adequacy of his strength for any heroic deed, and finally, a scheme for the greatest crime ever committed in history with an inexpressibly great understanding of what is righteous and holy. Everything in it is unusual, everything is strange. It is as if those unsteady streams of good and evil that flow and overflow in history, weaving its complex pattern, had suddenly come together and merged; as if at that first moment when man for the first time learned to distinguish them and began his history, we again see them undivided—and just as he had been then, so are we now struck with terror and doubt. “Where is God, the truth, the way?” we ask ourselves, because suddenly, as never before, we sense our irresistible destruction. We sense the approach of a terrible and disgusting creature about which so much had been told us in prose and poetry that we had seriously begun to regard it as a mere play of fancy; but now we suddenly feel its icy touch and hear the sound of its voice. One man, who lived among us, but who, of course, resembled no one of us, sensed in an incomprehensible and mysterious way the actual nonexistence of God and the existence of another, and before he died, he reported to us the horrors of his soul and of his lonely heart, feebly beating with love for the One who is not, and feebly fleeing from the one

who is. All his life he preached God, and of those who heard him, some laughed at his constancy and were indignant at his importunity, while others were moved by it and pointed him out in admiration. But it was as if he noticed neither the indignation nor the sympathy. He always said one and the same thing, and the only thing that surprised everyone was why he, who had such a joyous and comforting idea in his heart, was so desperately gloomy, so melancholy and troubled himself. He spoke of the joy in God, he pointed to religion as the only salvation for man, and his words rang out fervently and passionately, and although he usually never mentioned nature, it was as if he was beginning to love it then, to understand its trepidation, its beauty, and life.² It was as if it withered from the breath of some icy feeling in his soul and would revive when he forgot about it, at least in the sound of his words. There were also confessions in his words, but they were all misunderstood. He let slip that a man who does not really have God in his heart is terrifying, because "he comes to you with God's name on his lips."³ People read these words, but no one understood their meaning. And he went to the grave unknown, but he did not take the secret of his soul with him. As if urged on by some instinct, not at all sensing the approach of death, he left us an amazing image, one look at which and we finally understand all. "You, too, are with him." These words, which Alyosha sorrowfully addresses to his brother after hearing the story

² Compare the description of nature (or more precisely the scanty words about it) in *Poor People*, *Notes from the Underground*, etc., with the words about it of Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* and of Makar Ivanovich in *A Raw Youth*.

³ *A Raw Youth*.

of the Grand Inquisitor, we irrepressibly address to the author himself, who so obviously stands behind him: "You, too, are with *him*, with the wise and powerful spirit, who offered the tempting counsels in the wilderness to Him who came to save the world—counsels that you understood and explained so well that one might think you had thought them up yourself!" The confession that Dostoevsky made in a private letter long before writing this novel and which we pointed out above, the words he wrote in his notebook shortly before his death: "*My hosannah has passed through the crucible of ordeal,*" the reference on that occasion specifically to the "Legend," and finally the complete independence of the "Legend" from the novel itself, and at the same time its central position not only in it, but also in the long series of his other works—all this leaves no further doubt in our mind as to its true meaning. The author's soul evidently became interwoven in all those amazing lines that we quoted above, before our eyes the characters become mixed up with each other, the one becoming visible behind the other, we forget the person speaking behind the Inquisitor, we do not even see the Inquisitor—before us stands the evil spirit with his fluctuating and nebulous image, and just as two thousand years ago, he unfolds his tempting idea, which had been expressed so concisely then. But, as a matter of fact, he must speak in greater detail: he is being listened to now by men, and before them, one must not cover all of world history in just two or three words.

XVIII

His subtle, tempting, and powerful dialectic begins exactly as it should. He is called a "slanderer"—and it is with slander of man that his words begin.

Is human nature fundamentally good and merely perverted by evil added to it from without, or has it been evil from the very start and only feebly tried to rise to something better? This is a difficult question that he has decided in one specific direction, and on it he now bases his whole idea. Is man a dying spark, or is he cold ashes that can be ignited only from without? What is he in his heart of hearts? This is what we must answer before deciding to struggle with his nature further.

Only once does the Inquisitor falter, only once does he make a slip of the tongue: when he remarks that man will even give up his bread and run after the one who entices him with truth. "You were right about that," he says. Is it not possible that in this momentary confusion, the truth revealed itself, only to conceal itself immediately again? And if so, are there ways of bringing it out into the light of our clear consciousness?

His dialectic develops temptingly: he takes what is most important—man's attitude toward God—and by that attitude measures man's baseness and the permanence of his fall. Standing before the face of God, between Him and mankind in its millennial destinies, he points to His holy image, and after showing that man was able to jeer even at Him,

he asks what could the measure of his true worth be? It seems that to defend oneself means here not to sense the sanctity of the image, that the mere attempt to justify oneself means to forfeit every right to justification; just as in a similar way, earlier in the book, the mere failure to repudiate God's justice seemed a horrible insult to those who suffer innocently. The words before us are indeed strange: the Deity and man, who is bound up with Him, are irrevocably separated, and every effort to prevent this seems a rebellion precisely against the Deity or against man himself.

But, by facts showing man's temporary apostasy from God, one cannot decide the question of whether his nature is fundamentally good or evil. Are there not just as many facts showing man's irresistible attraction to God? Did not those martyrs whom the Inquisitor burned at the stake on the eve of his monologue die for the very reason that they refused to submit to his diabolical idea and to the end remained loyal to the truth? Do not the sobs that rang out in the crowd, when it seemed to them that "He Himself had come down to see their sorrows and suffering," tell us anything about the human heart? Do not fifteen centuries of unwavering expectation mean anything? Who dares, after considering the moments of man's fall, even if they had lasted for centuries—or let us put it more clearly, directly answering the author's veiled question: who dares, in seeing the degradation and baseness of one's century and, raising this indignation to law, slander all of human history and deny that as a whole it is a wonderful and sublime manifestation, if not of human wisdom (which one might doubt), at least of an unselfish striving for truth and a powerless desire to realize some sort of justice?

But even by facts showing the sublimity of the human spirit, no matter how many of them we assemble, we can only shake the conclusiveness of the facts pointing to the contrary, but by no means can we decide the question of what exactly man's nature is, the thing to which all these series of contrary and mutually negating phenomena rise as if to their common node.

There is another sound way to shed the clearest possible light on this difficulty, on the solution of which in one direction or another depend so many of our hopes and beliefs. By eliminating the mixed and contradictory facts of history, by removing, as it were, their incrustation from man, we can capture his nature in its primordial purity and determine its necessary relation to eternal ideals, the aspiration to which can never be questioned: to truth, to good, and to freedom.

What was the order of precedence in man's consciousness: first falsehood and then truth, or truth and then falsehood? This is a simple question, the answer to which marks the beginning of an irresistible solution of the general question of human nature as well. We can have no doubt here: falsehood in itself is something secondary, it is a violation of the truth; and it is clear that before truth could be violated, it certainly had to exist. Thus it is protoplasmic, something that has existed from the very beginning; but falsehood was introduced from without, something that appeared later. It has its origin entirely in history; but truth has its origin *in man himself*. It proceeds from him, and it alone would eternally proceed from him if he did not encounter on his path obstacles diverting him from it. But this shows only that the origin of every falsehood lies outside him. Man's first impulse is always an impulse toward

truth, and we cannot imagine it otherwise if he is free, i.e., if he is free from all outside influences, and he acts only in accordance with his abilities. Can we possibly imagine that when the first man looked at the world around him and for the first time experienced delight he told a falsehood about that world: that he pretended not to see it, or that he suppressed in himself his feeling of awe and said that he felt disgust? And also, every time man is not afraid, when he is not trying to achieve some end, when no outside influence distracts him from simple contemplation, does he not tell only the truth about that contemplation? And when, influenced by fear or yielding to some impulse, he tells a falsehood, does he not each time experience a certain distress, a certain inward pain, which comes from the fact that his thought, on its way to its outward expression, was subjected to a certain distorting influence? And in order to produce this in himself, in order to suppress something about the truth or to add something to it, does it not each time require a certain effort? And from where would that come if human nature from the very beginning was indifferently inclined to both falsehood and truth?

Thus, between man's reason on the one hand and truth, as an eternally aspired-to object on the other, there exists not a simple relation, but a *correlation*. Truth is just as imperceptibly pre-established in reason as there is imperceptibly pre-established in a line toward which another line has been deflected a point of distant junction with it. Falsehood and error, i.e., evil, are merely a hindrance to this junction or a deflection from it; but they are not something independent, self-contained, or whole, which would be torn asunder by truth. Truth is absolute; it is the simple and normal interaction between man's reason and the

world in which he lives. On the contrary, falsehood is always relative and partial: namely, it has to do with some particular thought, the truthfulness of which it violates. Therefore, in the same way as the world is a whole, so can a world outlook, i.e., a system of harmoniously combined truths, be a whole. On the contrary, falsehood cannot be arranged into any system whatever, and particularly not into one in which the principles on which the system is constructed would also be false. With every attempt to create thoughts that are definitely false and definitely to combine them falsely, the mind experiences unbearable suffering—and even if the mind manages to overcome its suffering, it will still not be able to achieve its goal: somewhere into the system, it will automatically introduce truth. On the contrary, the creation of true thoughts and their combination into a true system has always given reason the greatest of pleasure, and the closer that which is being constructed by it comes to the irreproachable truth, the greater it becomes. This suffering and this joy is an indication of the true nature of man; they define it as lofty and good, but only in its primordial state; on the contrary, in its present state, after it has been changed by history, they show it to be tarnished.

That is why, when we sometimes find something in science or philosophy that appears to be evil, something that our nature irresistibly opposes, we can without preliminary investigation assume that the part of it that arouses such indignation in us contains something false. And a more careful study of that part, a study of the way in which it originated, will always certainly reveal that behind it lay not a pure thought, but one distorted by some feeling introduced from without, by some fear or inclina-

tion. Thus, in Malthus's Law, mentioned above, the only thing that is true is its basis, according to which in *certain* periods the population increases in geometric progression, whereas the goods produced increase only in arithmetical progression; but what is completely false is the antinatural demand that the working classes refrain from marriage. Behind this demand lies the anxiety that those living on the fat of the land might lose the right to luxury and also the fear that the poor might finally begin to die from starvation. One can say that the first fear is vain and the second, rash, because other and deeper laws, those governing the birthrate itself, apparently guard people against such a misfortune; and although a sufficient amount of historical time has already elapsed for Malthus's Law to begin to function, nevertheless, parents have never eaten their children, nor have they remained unmarried, but have always and everywhere found food for themselves and their children as well.

But pure thought, in its abstract activity, can create only "good"; and every science and philosophy, in so far as it does not betray its own nature, is perfect and good before God and man. The mixing of the fields of thought and feeling, the distortion of the former by the latter or vice-versa, is what produces all the evil that has ever been able to cause dissatisfaction even with one's own nature, to complain about the excessive depth of consciousness or the intractability of one's own passions.

On the contrary, when these fields are not distorted by interference from one another, they seem to us to be free of evil. Having examined the first of them, the field of thought, we shall now proceed to the second.

Does feeling in its primordial nature aspire to good, is

it inclined to do good, or does it aspire to evil and seek out evil? This is a question the answer to which will continue the disclosure of man's primordial nature begun by us above. And here again the solution of the difficulty cannot give rise to doubt. The thirst to do evil to another is always responsive, it is provoked by suffering caused us by another. Thus, the nature of a bad feeling is as necessarily secondary and derivative as is the nature of falsehood. Just as it is impossible to imagine that the first man took a look at nature and then lied about it, so is it impossible to assume that that same first man, having become aware of a second human being near him and having in some way or other learned what pain and suffering are, would want to subject him to them; that he would not push him away from a tree that was threatening to crush him, warn him of the depth of the water in which he himself almost drowned, or invite him to share the shade of the only bush in the neighborhood during the parching noonday heat. And everywhere, as in these examples, where we find someone who has not yet absorbed evil from his environment or from some previous evil, we find that his nature is *inclined only to "good."* It is the *first thing* to which human feeling is attracted, whereas evil is always the second, something always brought in from without. Feelings of inner suffering or inner joy can here, too, serve as the same infallible signs of truth as they do in the field of consciousness. Suffering vaguely and irresistibly takes possession of man and grows as his soul is possessed by evil; on the contrary, radiant joy accompanies a benevolent life, no matter how many physical misfortunes have oppressed it. Suffering, here, comes from the incompatibility of evil with human nature, while serenity of spirit comes from their harmony.

On this retaliatory origin of all evil is also based the profound doctrine of nonresistance to it: and indeed the more this doctrine is carried out the more evil disappears from life. By not returning evil for evil, we eradicate it. Little by little this calms at individual points the agitation of passions that latch on to each other and with which all life is filled and by which the will of each individual is ensnared. Difficult at first and completely unnoticeable so far as its results are concerned, this doctrine becomes easier with every step and its results more perceptible. The passions, ceasing to arouse one another, gradually subside, and every evil caused by some other person, since it fails to provoke a response, inevitably dies. For those accustomed to think that history and all the charm of life consist precisely in the play of passions, and that it is better to suffer evil than to be deprived of its free and fascinating beauty, one might point out that the joy of sensing one's inner purity and sensing one's spirit in harmony with all life around it will more than compensate the human heart for the loss of what it now so painfully and blindly enjoys.

As for the third side of human nature, the *will*, we can settle the question of its original purity or depravity by the following investigation: by deciding whether it is in keeping with the last great ideal to which man can aspire—freedom. Here, too, mental experience provides a clear solution. Freedom is outward action that corresponds to inward action, and it is fully realized when the former is completely the result of the latter. It is clear that if man could be separated from the past and from his environment, then his outer activity, which must, of course, have its cause, could have it only in inner psychic activity: that is, without outside influences, his will is absolutely free. But

in reality, since he is connected with the past and his environment, his outer activity ceases to be in harmony with his inner activity, and moreover always in proportion to the force acting on him from without. This means that a decrease in human freedom, its curtailment or suppression, comes not from within his nature, but from without. The suffering that always accompanies this feeling of suppression, here, too, shows the true nature of this side of the human spirit.

Truth, goodness, and freedom are the main and the constant ideals toward the realization of which human nature in its chief elements—reason, feeling, and will—directs itself. Between these ideals and man's primordial constitution, there is a correspondence, by virtue of which human nature irresistibly aspires to them. And as these ideals can by no means be regarded as bad, human nature, as originally constructed, must be regarded as benevolent and good.

XIX

And this undermines the foundation of the Inquisitor's dialectic. "For my yoke is *easy*, and my burden is *light*" (Matthew 11:30), said the Savior about His teaching. Indeed, since it is filled with the loftiest truth, since it summons all men to unity through love, and since it leaves it to man freely to follow good, it corresponds in its entire purport to man's primordial nature and awakens it again from the thousand years of sin that had burdened it with an odious and oppressive yoke. To repent and follow the

Savior means to remove this odious "yoke" from oneself; it means to feel as joyful and free as man felt on the first day of his creation.

And herein lies the secret of the moral regeneration that Christ brings about in each of us when we turn to Him with all our heart. There are no other words but "light," "joy," and "rapture" by which one can express this special state experienced by true Christians. And because of this, despondency is regarded by the Church as so grievous a sin: it is the outward seal of estrangement from God, and no matter what the lips of a man who has fallen under its influence may say, that man's heart is remote from God. That is why all losses and all outer misfortunes are the same for a true Christian and a society of people leading Christian lives as the howling of the wind for people sitting in a sturdy, well-heated, and well-lit house. Society is immortal and indestructible so long as and to the extent that it remains Christian. On the contrary, every life that once became Christian and then turned to other sources of being and life is permeated with elements of destruction. Despite its outward success, despite all its outward power, it is filled with the spirit of death, and this influence inexorably puts its seal on each individual mind and each individual conscience.

"The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," so far as history is concerned, can be regarded as a great and powerful reflection of that peculiar spirit. Whence, all its sorrow; whence, the utter darkness that it casts over the whole of life. If it were true, man could not go on living; after he had pronounced this harsh judgment on himself nothing would remain for him except to die. And it is with despair that the "Legend" ends. One can imagine the horror that

seizes man when, after finally arranging his life in the name of a higher truth, he suddenly learns that this arrangement was based on a deception, and that this had been done because there is no truth at all except the truth that one must nevertheless save oneself, but there is nothing to save oneself by. In effect, this is precisely the gist of the Inquisitor's last words, which he is preparing to address to Christ on the day of the resurrection of nations: "Judge me if You can and dare." The darkness and despair here is the darkness of ignorance. "Who am *I* on this earth? What is this *earth*? *Why* do *I* and *everyone else* do what we do?" These are the words that are heard coming through the "Legend." And this is what is expressed at its end. When Alyosha tells his brother: "Your Inquisitor simply doesn't believe in God," the latter answers: "You've finally guessed it."

And this determines the "Legend's" historical position. For more than two centuries the people of Europe have been acting directly counter to the Savior's great precept: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Yet these people continue to call themselves Christians. One cannot and should not conceal from oneself the fact that underlying this phenomenon is a secret unvoiced doubt about the divinity of the precept itself: one believes in God and submits to Him blindly. But that is just what we do not find: the interests of the State, even the progress of the arts and sciences, and finally the mere increase in productivity—one gives all this precedence, without any thought of opposition to it; and everything in life that stands above it—religion, morality, the human conscience—is pushed aside or throttled by those interests that are re-

garded as most important for mankind. All of Europe's great progress in the field of outward culture is explained by this change. The attention paid to what is outside man, once it became undivided, naturally grew more intense and more refined; discoveries followed which were not even dreamed of earlier; inventions came along that rightly dumbfounded the inventors themselves. All this is much too explainable, too clear, all this was to be expected as far back as two centuries ago. But something else indissolubly combined with it is also much too clear: the gradual obscuring and finally the loss of a higher meaning of life.

A vast number of details and the lack of something primary to bind them together—this has been the characteristic peculiarity of European life as it has taken shape in the last two centuries. No common idea binds the nations together any longer, no common feeling guides them—everyone in every nation works only at his own particular job. The lack of a coordinating center in our incessant work, in our eternal creation of parts that are meant for nothing in particular, is merely the outer result of this loss of the meaning of life. An inner result is the universal and inexorable disappearance of an interest in life. The grand image of the Apocalypse, where it tells of something “burning as it were a lamp” and falling on the earth at the end of time, as a result of which the earth's waters become wormwood, is not so much applicable to the Reformation as to the civilization of the most recent centuries. The result of so many efforts on the part of the loftiest minds of mankind, this civilization no longer satisfies, and least of all does it satisfy those who toil at it. Just as the flame that has burnt brightest leaves the greatest number of cold ashes, so does this civilization increase the amount of inexplicable

sorrow the more eagerly one applies oneself to it at the beginning. Hence the deep sadness of all new poetry, which alternates with blasphemy or spite; hence the peculiar nature of the prevailing philosophical ideas. Everything sad and gloomy inexorably attracts contemporary man, for there is no longer any joy in his heart. The tranquility of the old short story, the gaiety of early poetry, whatever the beauty that may have accompanied it, no longer interests or attracts: people strangely shun everything like that; they cannot bear the disharmony between the bright impressions that they receive from the outside and the absence of any light in their soul. And one after the other, with spiteful or jeering remarks, they "abandon" life. Science records the number of those "abandoning" life, it shows in which countries and in which periods the figures rise or fall, and the contemporary reader in his lonely corner automatically thinks to himself: "What does it matter if they rise or fall, when I haven't the wherewithal to live—and no one wants or is able to give it to me!"

Hence the turn to religion, troubled and sad, combined with an ardent hatred of all that impedes it, and at the same time a sense of being unable to join in a religious mood with millions of people who have not been touched by the enlightenment of the last few centuries. Ardor and skepticism, muffled despair and high-flown words by which, for want of something better, the longing of the heart is stifled—everything is amazingly intermixed in these outbursts of enthusiasm for religion. Life dries up at its sources and falls apart, irreconcilable contradictions appear in history and unbearable chaos in the individual conscience—and religion seems to be the last untried way out of it all. But the gift of religious feeling is acquired with perhaps greater

difficulty than all other gifts. There are already hopes—the countless windings of the dialectic sustain them; there is also love, with a readiness to give everything to one's neighbor, to sacrifice for his slightest joy all the happiness of one's own life; and yet there is no faith. And the whole edifice of arguments and feelings, which are piled one on top of the other and fastened the one to the other, proves to be something like a beautiful dwelling in which there is no one to live. Centuries of excessive clarity in concepts and relationships, the habit (already a need) of occupying one's mind solely with what is demonstrable and clear, have so destroyed every capacity for mystical perceptions and feelings that even when salvation depends on these perceptions and feelings, they are not aroused.

All the aforementioned features are deeply imprinted on the "Legend"; it is the only synthesis in history of a most ardent thirst for religion with a total incapacity for it. Along with this, we find in the "Legend" a deep awareness of human weakness verging on contempt for man, and simultaneously a love for him that is ready to abandon God and to share man's degradation, his brutality and stupidity, but at the same time his suffering as well.

XX

It remains for us to note the last feature of this "Legend": its attitude toward the great forms that have been assumed by the religious consciousness of the European nations. In character and in origin, this attitude is highly

independent: it is very much like a man who, after having broken away from the religious forms of every nation and every period, develops a religion of his own based solely on his own troubled feelings. Strictly speaking, this religion contains only a passing reference to Christianity and Catholicism; but from the former there has been taken for criticism the lofty concept of man, and from the latter, disdain of him and the horrible attempt to fetter his destinies and will through individual wisdom and force. The idea, developing tempestuously and inexorably, as if having sensed in these two facts of history something similar to itself, drew them to itself, twisting and grinding them up in the convolutions of the dialectic, governed by nothing but the laws of the soul in whose depths it originated.

The abstract, generalizing nature of this soul reveals itself in the fact that the "Legend" only rests on the inward needs of human nature, but instead of answering them, it answers the historical contradictions. Its plan is to fashion the destinies of mankind on earth by taking advantage of man's weaknesses. And this side of it coincided with what could be assumed to be a feature of one of the established forms of religious consciousness—that of the Roman-Catholic Church. Hence the story of the "Legend" is merely the fabric in which its ideas are woven. But, here, having begun to speak of the attitude of the "Legend" toward an assumed Catholic idea, we must give our opinion in general of the interrelation of the three main Christian Churches. In it will also be revealed the final viewpoint from which one should regard the "Legend" as a whole.

The tendency to strive for the "universal" is the most common and most constant feature of the Catholic Church, in the same way that the tendency to strive for the "in-

dividual" and the "particular" is the basic feature of Protestantism. But if we were to assume that these fundamentally different features are characteristic of these Churches themselves, or that they in any way derive from the spirit of Christianity, we would be deeply mistaken. Universality is a characteristic feature of the Latin *races*, in the same way that individualism is a characteristic feature of the Germanic ones; and only because of this did Christianity, as it spread through Western Europe and came into contact with these two contrary types of people, acquire these particular features. No matter what we take, whether we examine individual facts or the general trend of history, whether we turn to law, science, or religion, we shall everywhere note that the leading idea is in one case the tendency toward the "general" and in the other the tendency toward the "particular." The legal formulas of ancient Rome, as abstract as its gods, are also valid for every nation and every period, as are the principles of 1789, with their appeal to man, with their desire to establish on human law the law of the French as well. The striving of the "general" boldly to underpin itself with the "particular" is clearly evident here. The philosophy of Descartes, the only great one developed by the Latin races, also tries to reduce all the variety of living nature to two great modes of being, "extension" and "thought"; in the same way that Horace and Boileau tried to reduce fits of poetic rapture to simple and clear rules; in the same way that Cuvier reduced the animal world to a few eternal types; in the same way that a number of the great mathematicians of France who considered even geometrical drawings too concrete reduced the knowledge of nature

to the knowledge of algebra. It is the interest in and the attraction to the universal, plus a certain blindness toward the particular, that have produced all these great facts in the intellectual world of the Latin races; and no less in keeping with them are the great facts of their political history. The thirst to unite, first by embracing and finally by wiping out what is individual, is the undying wish of Rome and of all that grows from its soil. It was this deep, unconscious, and inexorable instinct that made the Roman legions, contrary to clear calculations, cross from country to country, farther and farther, and finally to a point that neither the eye nor the mind could grasp; and this was what led the Roman missionaries first to Germany and England, and several centuries later to the distant and unknown countries of Central Africa, to the interior of China, and to remote Japan. The Roman Catholic Church itself, because of its irresistible aversion to all that is particular, dispersed, and solitary, rolled itself up, as it were, into great monastic orders—a phenomenon completely exceptional in world history, not connected with any feature of Christianity, and one that sprang up in all its various forms and at various times on Latin soil alone. It was as if the spirit of monasticism, the spirit of asceticism and retirement from the world, once it was transplanted to this soil, decided to go out into the world to subject it to its demands, its ideas, the forms of its outlook and of its way of life. While the ascetics of all countries, of all times, and of all nations turned their backs in disgust on sinful mankind and fled from it into the wilderness to seek salvation there, the ascetics of the Catholic Church united amicably into a single unit and went out among this same mankind

to lead it to what it could never hope to arrive at by itself. Inseparably combined with this striving of the Latin races for the universal was a failure to understand all that is individual, a sort of blindness to it, an inability closely to examine its nature or to sympathize with its suffering. The words of the Roman Legate who told his soldiers: "Kill them all; God at the Last Judgment will separate the Catholics from the heretics" were perhaps said with too great thoughtfulness; at least, we know for certain from the chronicles that the army of crusaders that set out for Languedoc¹ was inspired by such religious fervor and fanaticism and that it was so serious that every desire on our part to take these words as cynical blasphemy must be abandoned. The teachings of Calvin, which spread with difficulty through France, threatened it much less than the flame that was kindled by Luther threatened Germany; and, nevertheless, "Bartholomew's Night" occurred precisely in France. Members of one and the same family destroyed each other so that the French would all be the same; in the same way that three centuries later, for different principles, but with the same brutality, members of the National Convention destroyed those French people who differed from themselves and later even those in their own ranks as well, feeling that the slightest difference of opinion was a crime. Contempt for the human personality, only a feeble interest in the conscience of another, force used against man, against the race, against the world—all this is a fundamental and indestructible characteristic of the Latin races, and it has revealed itself in the great facts of the Roman Empire, French centralism, the wars of ag-

¹ A reference to the Crusade proclaimed in 1208 by Pope Innocent III against the Albigenses. [Tr.]

gression of the Catholic Reaction and the First Revolution, the Jesuit Order, the Inquisition, and socialism.²

At all times and in all places, with the cross or with cannons, under the banners of the Republic or under the eagles of Caesar, in the name of various truths in various periods, these nations have sensed the Roman blood in their veins and have attacked other peaceful nations in order, without looking deeply into their soul, to make them accept the forms of their thinking, their faith, and their social order. A ruthlessness toward man and an inability to understand him, together with a great talent for organizing mankind, have made these nations a sort of cement that binds together into a great whole other parts which are sometimes immeasurably more valuable, but always smaller. Nothing in itself great, true, or holy has ever been produced by the Latin genius; except for one thing: the bond between everything great, true, and holy that was created by other nations, but which in its entirety makes up history. Hence the magnetic force of the forms of all Latin civilizations; hence the lyricism, the endless yearning for something or other which strikes us, for example, in Catholic music. Other nations, even those that are by nature

² We mean here the ideas of Fourier, Saint-Simon, Cabet, Louis Blanc, etc., in which socialism arose as a dream, as an ardent and yearning desire before it was subsequently founded scientifically, thus justifying that dream. One can, in general, say that in the same way that the Republic of the Fabians and the Empire of the Augustans was a Latin attempt to unite mankind by law, so Catholicism was a Latin attempt to unite it through religion; and socialism is the desire, also originating in the Latin races, to unite it on an economic basis. From this it is clear that even though the means have changed, the goal of the Latin spirit has remained the same over a period of two thousand years, or throughout the whole period of these races' historical existence.

more profound and richer in content, are irresistibly attracted to these civilizations, to this Church, science, and literature. In all of them is aroused a secret instinct for unity; and with a feeling of sadness, they stifle their superior genius and go to merge with this strange edifice, eternal, ever-growing, cold, but also beautiful.

The spirit of the Germanic race, on the contrary, everywhere and always, no matter what it is engaged in, is directed toward the particular, the specific, the individual. In contrast to the all-embracing view of the Latin man, the view of the Teuton is penetrating—hence all the peculiarities of his law, science, Church, and poetry. The human conscience instead of the destinies of mankind, family life instead of political conflicts, contemplation of the depths of one's own "I" instead of cognition of the world—all these are different results of a single fact. One can regard the fact that the Germanic peoples belonged to the Catholic Church as the result of a great misunderstanding. And they did so for so many centuries only because they did not see the true aspirations of Rome, nor did Rome examine in too great detail or at close hand what went on on the other side of the Alps. The Reformation movement, which covered two centuries and divided Europe into two camps blazing with hostility, was only the discovery of this misunderstanding; and the misunderstanding was equally surprising to both sides, who since then have parted company forever. When Luther, a poor Augustinian monk, forgetting his Order, the Empire, the Universal Church, and heeding only the anxieties of his own conscience, said firmly that he would not admit he was wrong until this was proved to him "by the word of God," the German essence manifested itself in him for the first time, in this

stubborn opposition of his "I" to the whole world, and it became an indomitable factor in history, no longer submitting to others, but making them submit to it. The world of religious sects that sprang up from this, that strange profession of faith in God in one's own way in almost every locality, without any desire to adapt one's faith to the faith of others, is, in the sphere of religious consciousness, the same thing that feudalism³ was earlier in the socio-political sphere—another strange desire everywhere to make one's personal "I" the center of one's ideas and interests, to make it something absolute, which adapts itself to nothing at all, but which makes everything else adapt itself to it. Finally, the third great factor that the Germanic race introduced into history—its special way of looking at nature, its philosophy—is also a result of this mentality. As in the religious and political spheres, so in this purely intellectual one the individual's own "I" was acknowledged by the greatest spokesmen of that race as the source of the norms, bounds, and ties that we observe in nature. And that deeper study

³ The essence of feudalism is perhaps best of all expressed in this medieval saying: *Chaque seigneur est souverain dans sa seigneurie*, in which not political or economic relations, but the provincialism—if one can put it that way—of the will is shown to be the main feature of this whole system of life. It is remarkable that this formula was expressed in French, i.e., it originated in a mind especially capable of generalization, capable of discerning the unifying traits in a complex of heterogeneous phenomena, although its subject is an institution of indisputably Germanic origin. (The territory over which feudalism had spread was at the same time the territory on which the Germanic people had settled. In the early centuries A.D., they had wandered into countries that had hitherto been exclusively Latin ones.) Feudalism, which has disappeared in all countries of predominantly Latin blood, has, however, survived to this day in purely Germanic ones as political particularism.

of the world, which for all peoples from the beginning of history was a curious examination of the world and reflection on what had been seen, became for a number of great German scholars, beginning with Kant, only the cognition of the innermost movements of one's own inner being. "Reason dictates its laws to nature," "the world is *my* idea," it is "the development of my idea, of my cognition"—all these words which Europe listened to with amazement and then repeated, were deeply predetermined by the special mentality of the Germanic race. Examining them and the long series of arguments on which they apparently impartially rest, we finally lose complete sight of the boundary between objective knowledge and subjective illusion and ask: "What means then does man have to break through the limitations of time, place, and race? And how, when he is so bound even by these limitations, can he ever hope to surmount the limitations of his own human organism and to acquire a knowledge of absolute and complete truth?"

And no matter what else we single out, even if it is less significant, we shall everywhere note in it this same gravitation of the Germanic spirit toward the particular. Its poetry, in contrast to the heroic poetry of the Latin peoples, has chosen as its subject the world of private relations—the family instead of the forum, the heart of the simple bürger instead of the lofty duty and the complex cares of a king, a conqueror, or their advisers. Bourgeois drama, the novel of manners, the work of Lessing and Addison, bordering on them, and finally even Goethe and the world of vague inner anxieties of his Faust—all this, on which we would like to see the stamp of personal genius, bears on itself only the stamp of the genius of its people.

The understanding of the "individual" in law created in the remote darkness of the Middle Ages the court of twelve jurors, who decide their verdict in the depths of their conscience, instead of finding it in a pre-established norm of a law the same for all cases. For the same reason, the English people refused to codify their laws, which went as far back as a thousand years, and the German scholars made deep studies of medieval law and its historical development and finally of the law of all nations, where side by side with the most sublime things the most primitive are carefully considered. When the great Herder said: "Each time and each place lives for itself alone," he inaugurated the era of the true understanding of history, by having pointed out the world of the "individual" and "particular" that must be discerned in it. And how wonderfully in keeping with those words are the words of another German thinker addressed to the conscience of all that lives: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or that of another, in every case as an end in itself, never as a means." This realm of "ends in themselves," this ethical monadology of Kant (what a striking connection it has with the ideas of Leibniz!), and the whole of it, this Germanic world, which seems to have been dispersed into myriad centers, each of which is aware only of itself and which through itself perceives everything, believes everything, and acts on everything—how wonderfully this world corresponds to that other world⁴ about which we said earlier that it envelops everything, dominates everything, and determines forms, but is incapable of creating any sort of contents. It is as if these two opposite and congruent races represent the edges of a huge foot, the move-

⁴ I.e., the Latins. [Tr.]

ments of which make history, drag the centuries behind it, and separate nations, who, in their free genius only reflect the will of something higher, whose thinking they are never destined to get to know.

The boundless mysticism of Protestantism, the thirst to still the great sorrow of one's heart by means of a spiritual feat somewhere among savages—this is the same yearning in the Germanic race that we find in the sounds of Latin music, its poetry, and in the indefatigable activities of its great politicians. Unbridgeably separated, each eternally conscious of the shortcomings of the other, they are full of inner discord, and this discord they carry from the depths of their spirit into life and into the history that they make. Their eternal struggle and indefatigable creation is only the struggle of opposites, who will never be able to understand each other, and the preparation of form and content, which never merge to produce a living whole. Hence the feeling of dissatisfaction which is diffused throughout all of history; hence the eternal striving and the discontent with all that is finally achieved.

XXI

The introduction of harmony into life and history, a combination of the paints and the canvas into a living picture—this is what man has not accomplished on earth, and something that he terribly needs. He needs the “palm branches” and “white garments,” the inner peace and joy to praise God and his own destiny, to praise his fellow man, and every work of his own hands.

Through what inner impulse this will be achieved, how one will feel the rapture of the soul that will suffice to soothe every sorrow and to reconcile every hate—this we cannot tell. We can only long for it and look forward to it; and it is already being longed for and looked forward to by all nations as something right and necessary.

The race last to enter the historical arena and to which we Russians belong has in the peculiarities of its mentality the greatest capacity for carrying out this important task. Alien equally to the desire for the external unification of heterogeneous elements and to the unlimited withdrawal of each element into itself, it is filled with serenity, harmony, and a desire for inner harmonization of itself with all things surrounding it, and also of all things surrounding it with each other and through itself. Instead of the forcible tendency of the Latin races to unite everything through unity of form, without considering the individual spirit and without showing mercy for it, and instead of the stubborn tendency of the Germanic races to separate themselves from the whole and withdraw into the endless world of details, the Slavic race enters as an inner unity into the most diverse and apparently irreconcilable contradictions. A spirit of compassion and endless patience and simultaneously an aversion to all that is chaotic and gloomy makes it, without any force, slowly but also perpetually, create harmony that will sometime be felt by other nations as well; and instead of those nations destroying that harmony, and with it themselves, they will submit to its spirit and set out, weary as they are, to meet it half-way.

An awareness of the inadequacy of those ideals pursued by the other races can most of all concentrate our energies

on our own ideal. Finally, we must understand that the incalculable amount of suffering man has borne in history and which was a blessing to him because it supposedly gave him "the knowledge of good and evil," has actually been borne in vain, and he is just as far from that knowledge as he was on the day when he first stretched out his hand for it. Unexceedable limits, by which he is defined and fettered, let him have only a tiny glimpse of that knowledge that worries and teases him; but it is no more than a glimpse, and therefore he is never destined to look directly at the "sun" of truth. And we must also understand that the tireless striving to "unite the scattered flock" of mankind has only divided it even more with irreconcilable hostility, and the more passionate and forcible have been the attempts at unification the more violent this hostility has always become. Once we understand this, we shall realize how deceptive is that greatness to which man has aspired in his history. Once we tame our spirit, we shall see that its tasks on this earth are more limited. Once we stop eternally directing our thoughts and desires toward something distant, we shall again sense a fullness of strength, which has returned to us after its fruitless wandering. And as soon as this happens, we shall understand the sublimity of those tasks we had earlier thought so insignificant and uninteresting. We shall realize that to calm a single troubled heart, to soothe someone's anguish is greater and loftier than to make the most brilliant discovery or astonish the world with some useless spiritual feat. Our spiritual feats will become dear to us, they will lead to an alleviation of that sorrow in which the world has drowned itself in its fruitless quests. And at the same time as our pride is conquered, our true dignity will increase.

Having realized how weak is our strength when confronted with great goals, we shall stop sacrificing the human personality to them. We shall no longer pile suffering on suffering in order to rise to a height from which we may be seen by the most distant peoples and the most distant times of the future. We shall understand the absolute significance of man, we shall understand that the joy and light in his heart and on every individual face is the most sublime, the most precious, and the best thing in history.

To bring about this harmony and to spread it throughout life is by no means now acknowledged as man's loftiest task on earth. It will be a long time before "swords will be beaten into ploughshares," and, of course, when that is done, it will be done through the power of inner joy and not by means of outer logical reasoning. The latter, even though it prefers the "ploughshares," will first make swords in order to drive the people to the ploughshares. But let us not turn again to disquieting thoughts—they were exhausted by the "Legend." Instead, in searching for something by which we can overcome them, let us turn to an examination of the third great branch into which the Christian world is divided.

In the same way that Catholicism is the Latin conception of Christianity and Protestantism the Germanic conception, so is Orthodoxy its Slavic one. Although its roots lie in Greek soil,¹ and it was on that soil that its dogmas were formed, nevertheless, the whole of the special spirit it radiates in history reflects vividly the features of the Slavic race. And precisely this spirit is what is significant in the

¹ We must, however, keep in mind the extent to which this soil in the early centuries A.D., in the period of the migration of peoples, was saturated with Slavic elements.

historical destinies of nations, and not the dogmatic differences, which, to all appearances, is the only thing that separates the Churches and seems so easily eliminable. Undoubtedly it was not *filioque*² that gave rise to the Inquisition, even though the Inquisition existed only where there was also *filioque*. The dogmatic difference coincided with a character, tendency, and a spirit that had no connection with it and which came solely from the racial peculiarities of the Latin peoples. Even if that difference had not existed, one could be certain that the Germanic and Slavic peoples would still have differed irreconcilably from the Latin peoples over their interpretation and practice of Christianity and would then have disagreed among themselves as well. Even now, each Church stubbornly resists union with the other, not essentially because of dogma, but because of the fact that each one inwardly, in every feature of its character, is something highly original and completely different from the other Churches. And that is why the life that pulses in them pulses in each one in a special way.

Still, there is but one Gospel and but one spirit that shines in it. If we look deeply into the matter of which of these three types of life most closely corresponds to Christianity, we shall automatically say that it is the spirit of Orthodoxy. If we are shown the ineffable grandeur of Catholicism, the unlimited amount of thought with which it is filled, with which it is entwined, and on which it has been based since the earliest days of Scholasticism down to the present, we shall agree with all that and also admit that our Church and its history has nothing like it. If we

² A controversy about whether the Holy Spirit came from the Father and the Son, or from the Father only. The Western Church took the former position, the Eastern, the latter. [Tr.]

are shown all the fruits of Protestantism, its God-fearing life, its freedom of criticism, and the great enlightenment that has resulted therefrom, we shall say we see all that, that we have never closed our eyes to it. We shall only ask: "But what about Christianity, what about the evangelical spirit, what about that which the Savior taught us in word and deed?" We have nothing, neither lofty spiritual feats, nor the glitter of intellectual achievements, nor schemes to determine the paths of history. But here before us stands a poor church; on all sides, close to it, are small scattered houses. Enter it, and listen to the discordant singing of the Deacon and some boy who has come from God knows where to help him. A tall, grey-haired priest is celebrating evening mass. In the middle of the church, on a lectern, lies an icon toward which several old men and women are slowly moving. Look closely at the faces of all these people, listen closely to their voices. And you will see that what has already been lost everywhere else, what no longer comes to the aid of love and no longer sustains hope elsewhere—*faith*—continues to live in these people. That treasure, without which life inexorably dries up, which wise men never find, which flees from those impotently thirsting and perishing, still shines in these simple hearts; and those terrible thoughts that trouble us and press heavily on the world apparently never trouble their minds and consciences. They have faith, and with it they hope, with its help they love. What does it matter that the Deacon reads the prayers from the choir indistinctly: he believes in their meaning, and those who listen to him do not in the least doubt that he would if necessary die for his faith, and that he would enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Like everyone else, they will die, and according to their

deeds, they will receive the reward for which they are now preparing themselves.

Can the exaltation of Protestantism and the universal designs of the great but declining Catholic Church be compared with this peace of heart, with this stability of life? Are not the despondency of the former and the yearning desire of the latter symptoms of the loss of something, without which a church is only a building and a crowd of worshipers only a gathering of people? And is not all the glitter of the arts with which they surround themselves—those incomparable paintings, that enchanting music, those majestic cathedrals—is not all this the result of a desire to arouse in oneself something that never went to sleep in those poor worshipers? To find something that has been lost, but which in that wretched little church was never lost at all? Are not all those unbounded transports of longing with which Europe is filled and with which it throbs merely the desire to drown a great sorrow, which it wants to overcome but cannot? And all the beauty, majesty, and diversity of its life and civilization—does this not remind you of a magnificent chasuble in which our priest would never array himself?

Thus, that profound and inexplicable phenomenon occurred in history, according to which “it was taken from the poor and given to the rich.” In the wonderful evangelical image of Mary and Martha, who welcomed the Savior into their home, it seems as if those inscrutable destinies of the Church have been expressed. When Jesus entered, Mary “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.” And

then Jesus uttered those words in which the meaning of all life and history resounds: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Through the inscrutable ways of Providence, our Holy Church was destined to choose this "one thing that is needful." It has only believed in the Savior and heeded His word. Let us pray that this faith will never be taken from us, and let us not, in accordance with the precept of the Savior, regret that our busy sisters have managed to accomplish so much.

XXII

The more the treasure of our faith dries up in us the more we are alarmed about the ideals by which the other Churches live¹—the boundless development of inner feeling and subjective thinking or anxieties about the destinies of mankind and its outer organization. With these anxieties we try to fill the emptiness that forms in our heart from the loss of faith, and this happens every time we for some reason or other lose close ties with our people. "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" is an expression of such an anxiety—the loftiest ever to make an appearance—because the emptiness that it fills is a yawning abyss whose bottom

¹ Here we see an explanation for that irrespressible urge to unite with the other Churches which some of our people express from time to time.

is not only very deep, but apparently does not even exist at all. (Recall Ivan's words: "You've finally guessed it," when Alyosha tells him: "Your Inquisitor simply doesn't believe in God—that is his whole secret.")

In this sense, i.e., in respect to our historical life, the "Legend" is the most poisonous drop ever to fall to earth after having finally separated itself from that phase of spiritual development through which we have been passing for two centuries already. We not only have never before experienced greater bitterness, despair, and, let us also add, greatness in the denial of our own foundations of life, but, and there can be no doubt about this, we shall never experience it again. The "Legend," on the whole, is something unique in its kind. The facetious and equivocal words that Faust uses in evading Margarete's questions about God, the darkness of the religious consciousness in Hamlet—all this is but poor prattle in comparison with what was said and what was asked behind the partition in that little tavern into which our great artist had whimsically led the spokesmen of his thoughts. And then, having pushed aside the centuries, he showed us that wonderful scene of Christ's appearing "to stinking and suffering mankind"; then, having led Him into the dark dungeon of the Inquisitor, he showed from there that distant wilderness of fifteen hundred years earlier, and in it, Christ, ready to set about saving mankind; facing Him is the Tempter, saying that that is not necessary, that Christ will not be able to save men without knowing their true nature, and that sooner or later he himself will have to undertake that salvation, as he knows their nature better, and . . . he loves them no less than Christ does.

Truly satanic features—not something man might think

up about the evil spirit lying in wait for him, but something the evil spirit might say about himself—manifest themselves in this “Legend” in an amazing and incomprehensible way. Alyosha—poor, trembling Alyosha, still in the process of growing, helplessly raising his hands to heaven, the true personification of a small shoot springing from that huge decaying seed of life—is as if defeated and crushed by this powerful profession of evil, by these confessions of “the clever spirit of the wilderness, the spirit of death and destruction.” Let us repeat, the images of the Inquisitor, the student, the artist himself, and the tempting spirit, who stands behind them all, flash, the one from behind the other; they lose the sharpness of individual contours, and finally merge into one being, whose voice we hear and understand, but whose face and name we are unable to make out. As if confused, finding support in nothing at all, Alyosha clutches at his heart, at the life that pulses in him, whose laws he does not know—he only knows that it is good. In the incomprehensible strength and beauty of life that has been given us and which is praised by us, but which also remains incomprehensible and mysterious to us, he finds that support against the evil spirit:

“But, brother, how will you live?” he asks.

In this cry lies the whole meaning, the whole strength of the refutation: the recognition of the limited nature of our mind, which not only cannot understand, but also come anywhere near understanding even such a near and dear phenomenon as life. How could it comprehend the organization of the universe and sources of good and evil? Fettered to life, unable even to grasp its meaning, we irresistibly begin to think that there is something in it immeasurably deeper than the pitiful meaning that we would

like to see in it, and that if only we could find it, we would be ready to reconcile ourselves to it, to "accept it." The sense of the mystical, in which our life is rooted, even though we cannot see it, fills our heart, calms our mind, but also gives us back again the strength to live. "Thou art righteous, O Lord, and inscrutable are Thy ways," we involuntarily say in our heart when, after all the inexplicable anxieties and torments of our consciousness, we again return to the peace of a simple faith, the stable result of our acceptance of the incomprehensible.

With the stability of this faith, our hopes are also connected. In the "Legend," which we have been analyzing, there is one omission: while it speaks of the "justified," it says nothing of the "forgiven." Yet, immediately after the words in Revelation, where it is said that there will be one hundred forty-four thousand of the former, a joyous promise is made also about the rest. We should like to quote that promise, and may its holy words overcome the darkness and despair that have surrounded us for such a long time while we have been speaking of the "Legend." St. John says of his vision:

After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

And all the angels stood round about the throne,

and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God.

Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

In this great image is displayed the end of all the earthly destinies of man. In the words of the book of Genesis quoted by us in the epigraph of our book is shown the starting point of man's wandering. The "Legend" itself is his bitter cry when, after losing his innocence and having been abandoned by God, he suddenly realizes that now he is completely alone, with his weakness, with his sin, with the struggle of light and darkness in his soul.

To overcome this darkness, to help this light—this is all that man in his earthly wandering can do, something he must do in order to soothe his troubled conscience, which is so burdened, so sick, incapable any longer of bearing its sufferings. A clear knowledge of whence this light and whence this darkness come can best of all strengthen him in the hope that he is not destined to remain the arena of their struggle forever.

About Rozanov: An Afterword

by Spencer E. Roberts

Rozanov was born in 1856, in the small Russian town of Vetluga. A few years later the family moved to Kostroma, where the father soon died, leaving only a small pension of three hundred rubles a year. According to Rozanov, the atmosphere in the house was one of unrelieved gloom. Disgruntled and weary, the mother paid little attention to the upbringing of her children, and they in turn regarded her with hostility, especially after she invited her lover, an impoverished artist, to move in with them. Rozanov was thirteen when she died, and one of his first thoughts afterward seems to have been that now he could smoke openly. Later he realized that the children's negative feelings toward her had not been justified, for she had worked hard and selflessly to feed and clothe them on her scanty income.

As a child, Rozanov read a great deal and daydreamed. He completed the gymnasium and attended the University of Moscow, where he ridiculed the professors, slept through the lectures, and cheated in the examinations. At this time he also made an error he was to regret for the rest of his life by marrying Apollinaria Suslova, a former mistress of Dostoevsky. She was forty, Rozanov twenty-four.

What mainly intrigued Rozanov about Suslova was her intimacy with Dostoevsky, a writer whom Rozanov had

long idolized; and marrying Suslova, he thought, would be a way of getting to know him, if only vicariously. But whatever knowledge was acquired through this union was paid for dearly. Suslova, who had bedeviled Dostoevsky and then abandoned him when he refused to leave his dying wife, made Rozanov's life a constant hell: besides tormenting him, she even beat him at times, and when she finally left him for good, six years after they were married, she refused to give him a divorce. Even her father seems to have been at her mercy, for when Rozanov asked for help, he wrote back: "The enemy of the human race [Suslova] is settled here in my house, and I can stay in it no longer myself." Rozanov characterized her as a regular Catherine de' Medici, who would have calmly shot at the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Eve, and he used the following passage from Dostoevsky's *Insulted and Injured* to describe her more fully: "My lady is so perverse that the Marquis de Sade could have taken lessons from her . . . yes, she was the devil incarnate."

What attracted Suslova to this awkward and undistinguished student is difficult to understand. She still had vestiges of her once dazzling beauty; she was intelligent, sophisticated, and financially independent; and she was always active, engaged in either writing, study, or social work. What she probably lacked at the time was a person she could dominate, someone she could make submit to her strong, proud will. In this respect, Rozanov was an ideal partner, for his own will was exceedingly weak, and, as he tells us later in regard to his life in general, he often longed for nothing so much as humiliation.

Meanwhile, Rozanov was teaching history and geography in a gymnasium in the provinces. There he fell in love with

Varvara Rudneva, a simple, uneducated petty bourgeoisie, who, he felt, could give him peace after his bout with the tempestuous Suslova. At Varvara's insistence, he agreed to a secret marriage ceremony. Fortunately the Government never learned about this bigamy, for if it had, the consequences would have been grave indeed. Nevertheless, Rozanov was right in his judgment of Varvara: she provided him with a comfortable home, bore him five children (he had to adopt them, since they were illegitimate in the eyes of the State), and gave him the peace of mind so necessary for his writing.

Rozanov began to write soon after leaving the university. By 1886, he had published his first book, *On Understanding*, a long, anti-rational philosophical study and a bitter polemic against the University of Moscow. It was a failure, but at least it attracted the attention of the conservative critic Nikolai Strakhov, who recognized Rozanov's talent and took it upon himself to act as a sort of mentor to him. The book's lack of success did not discourage Rozanov. His words flowed on and on, article followed article, and thanks to Strakhov's efforts, they were published, for the most part in *The Russian Messenger*. Some of them, particularly those attacking the Russian system of education—under which, he argued, everything was done by rote, no attempt was made to pay attention to individuality, the students were turned into automata, and so forth—did not go down at all well with the Minister of Education, and Rozanov was reprimanded. But even if he had lost his job over this, it would not have mattered very much, for teaching had always been little more than torment for him: he was never at ease before audiences, he felt stifled by having to follow rigidly set

methods, and most of all he was bored with living in the provinces. The only advantage of the job was that it gave him time to write.

His talent continued to mature, and when, in 1891, he published *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, it attracted considerable attention. Two years later, he brought it out at his own expense in book form, and it soon went through the edition. What struck the public about the book was its fresh critical approach to Dostoevsky.

The earlier criticism of Dostoevsky, particularly that which appeared during his lifetime, had either praised or damned his works according to the social or political views they supposedly advocated. This method of evaluation had, of course, been started by Belinsky in 1846, when he hailed *Poor People* as a humanitarian work that inspired sympathy for the "insulted and injured"; and it was continued by Dobrolyubov, Pisarev, and later by other radical critics, the difference being that as Dostoevsky's views shifted to the right, the radicals gradually came to regard him as more of an enemy of the people than the people's friend. Moreover, they considered Dostoevsky's characters too aberrant to be understandable to the average Russian reader. The characters could be of interest only as clinical cases to psychiatrists.

To this social and political approach, the noted populist Nikolai Mikhailovsky added a new dimension when, in 1882, he published his article "A Cruel Talent." While acknowledging Dostoevsky's genius, Mikhailovsky bitterly attacked his personality, which, he insisted, determined the themes of his work and his treatment of them. He called

Dostoevsky a sadist who enjoyed the humiliation and suffering to which he subjected his characters, and he argued that the social protest of the early works had given way to meekness and passivity, and the former humanitarian sympathy to gratuitous violence and the praise of suffering.

A year later, the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov gave three lectures in which he presented Dostoevsky as a mystical seer, thus temporarily removing him from the social-political arena and placing him on a religious pedestal. In very general terms, such was the background of Dostoevsky criticism when Rozanov's book appeared.

Strakhov was pleased with *The Inquisitor*. It, along with various articles that appeared soon afterward, showed that he was right in his earlier judgment of Rozanov. Therefore, in 1893, he made it possible for Rozanov to give up his teaching job, to move to St. Petersburg, and to work there as a very minor official of the Civil Service. The salary was small, but Rozanov had free time to write and the opportunity to meet stimulating people. He seems to have gravitated toward the conservatives and arch reactionaries, and in many of his articles he reflected their views and supported the die-hard policies of the Government. Unfortunately, much of what he wrote at this time was so obviously hypocritical and fawning that it incensed not only the liberals but some of the conservatives as well. For instance, after an article in which Rozanov had opposed religious toleration, Solovyov labeled him a new Porfiry Golovlyov (the sentimental, unctuous hypocrite in Saltykov-Shchedrin's *The Golovlyovs*) and added that there was not a word of truth in what he had written. To a considerable extent Solovyov was right at the time, but

when Rozanov laid polemics aside, as he did for the most part in his more serious works, even his detractors such as Ivanov-Razumnik had to admit his greatness.

Rozanov's big opportunity came in 1899, when he was appointed to a well-paid job on the staff of the popular, and reactionary newspaper *New Times*. Here one of the many paradoxes about the man becomes clear: for a time, while he was publishing article after article supporting the conservatives, he was also contributing articles expressing totally opposite views, under a pseudonym, to the liberal *Russian Word*. Moreover, after the Revolution of 1905, he published in his own name *When the Authorities Went Away*, a book in which he derides the impotence of the Government and hails the power of the revolutionaries. It was not surprising that the liberal Peter Struve accused Rozanov of "moral insanity."

What was the reason for Rozanov's ambivalence? One critic says it was probably because Rozanov's mind was so broad that he had to consider all sides of a question; another attributes it to his disintegrated personality; another to his skepticism and cynicism; and still another wonders whether Rozanov may not have simply wanted to remain a completely free individual.

Rozanov was indeed enigmatic. Nevertheless, he does provide us here and there in his works with clues to his behavior. For one thing, he says that he had no convictions, that he "spat on convictions." For another, he says that his duty was to write, and it made no difference for whom he did it. And late in life, he explains that he never worried about having accommodated himself to falsehood, for it was none of anyone's business exactly what he thought; but, he added, there was one area in his life where

truth always prevailed: "My deep subjectivity . . . had the effect that I went through my whole life as if behind a curtain, immovable, untearable. No one dared touch that curtain. There I lived, there with myself I was truthful." Thus, it is futile to try to determine from any of Rozanov's individual works just what his true views were. Unlike most writers, who ponder their subject for years on end and then come to firm conclusions which they publish, Rozanov seems to have jotted down his ideas and to have published them hurriedly. That they frequently contradicted one another did not bother him at all. For example, while preparing the third edition of *The Inquisitor*, he wrote an introduction, drawing partly on the introduction to the second edition. But he decided not to include it, for some of his ideas had changed, and to publish the introduction in the new edition, he said, would cause literary cacophony. Nevertheless, he had no compunction about publishing this same introduction, now called an afterword, almost simultaneously in one of the leading magazines. But we need not, as a matter of fact, be too concerned about the fluctuation of Rosanov's ideas. Each of his books may be taken on its own terms, without consideration of what he says elsewhere. Regarded in this way, as individual entities, the books stand up well indeed.

By the time Rozanov began to work for the *New Times*, he was a highly controversial and widely known figure in Russian cultural life. But he was eager to reach an even wider audience than that provided by the newspaper and also to increase his earnings; therefore, he collected some of his earlier articles and had them published in book form under the title *Literary Sketches* (1899). The success of

this project led him to republish other of his articles in *The Twilight of Enlightenment* (1899), *Religion and Culture* (1899), and *Nature and History* (1900).

By the end of the nineties, Rozanov had struck upon the themes to which he would devote most of his later work. Motivated by his own personal conflict with the stringent divorce and illegitimacy laws, he began to reflect upon marriage and the family in Russia; this in turn led him to question the reaction of the Church to these matters, and ultimately to examine Christianity in general. The first of his books devoted to these themes, *In the World of the Obscure and Uncertain* (1901), was an assemblage of earlier articles, plus letters from his readers and his detailed comments on them. It was promptly banned because of the last few pages, in which one of the correspondents describes how he rescued his marriage and found new happiness through circumcision. A book of earlier articles dealing mainly with divorce came out under the title *The Family Problem in Russia* (two volumes, 1903), and articles on Jesus and Christianity followed a few years later in the books *Around the Church Walls* (1906) and *The Dark Face* (1911). *Moonlight People* (1913), dealing with Christianity, monasticism, and sexual anomalies, was held up for several years by the censor.

The central point around which these matters revolved for Rozanov was sex, which he discussed with an openness unknown in the Russia of the time (and, for that matter, in the Russia of today). Although the censor periodically made excisions, much of what Rozanov wrote, both on sex and the equally sensitive matter of the Church, managed to be published. Since these themes dominated Rozanov's

work more or less to the end of his life, since they embrace ideas for which he is usually remembered today, and since *The Inquisitor*, coming as it does at the beginning of Rozanov's literary career, contains not even a hint of them, they need some explanation.

Sex, he said, existed before the word and is holy, the soul and sex being one. "The tie of sex with God is stronger than the tie of intellect, or even conscience, with God." During intercourse, according to Rozanov's theory, man actually comes into direct contact with God, and from this act he causes souls to be brought from the higher world into this one. The child that results completes the family, the most aristocratic, the most sacred unit of society. Given the holiness of the relations between the husband and wife, it was wrong, he insisted, for the State to force them to remain together once their love had died and no further relations between them were possible. Therefore, he called for—and, according to some scholars, helped to achieve—less rigidity in the matter of Russian divorce.

"How," Rozanov asked, "can marriage, a physical phenomenon, be religious, i.e., of the other world, when our 'bones' and all our 'physical decay' are so obviously of this world? Precisely because sex is by no means the body, because the body, such a temporal phantom, comes from sex and wraps itself around it, with sex remaining hidden as the immortal noumenon of that body, as the face of the order of the 'I am' in us."

Since sex is closely linked with God, Rozanov found atheists to be completely sexless creatures who are unable to understand it and who pay no attention whatever to it in their thinking and writing. He regarded the genitals,

both male and female, also as holy and eventually developed what amounted to a fixation about them. "If I can't smell and kiss the sex of a woman," he says in one of his letters, "then let me suck the udder of a cow." And elsewhere he frankly admits that during his researches for his book on Egyptian religion, the sight of the phallus drove him to ecstasy.

Poor Varvara, his simple bourgeois wife—his "friend," as he always referred to her—and his modest daughters were shocked by all this talk of sex, and quarrels over it sometimes disturbed the peace of the household. The Decadents and Symbolists, however, whose work dominated the Russian cultural scene at the time, were highly enthusiastic about it and his ideas in general; but, although Rozanov met with them often and published in their journals, he did not really agree with or like them, a fact he pointed out in the *New Times* and in the preface which one Vilinskaya-Minskaya had asked him to write for her book: "This poetess," he wrote, "belongs to the Symbolists. I am not in sympathy with that school. . . . I cannot tolerate disorder and cannot recommend this book."¹

Basically, Rozanov's asystematic philosophy is a worship of life, and this is precisely what led him to reject Christianity. Christ, he said, never laughed, never sang, never danced, never married; He preached the renunciation of the world and its joys for those of heaven; His teachings cultivate pessimism, despair, death, and destruction. "A merry Christian," Rozanov said, "is the same *contradictio in adjecto* as a circular square." And elsewhere: "The pain of the world conquered the joy of the world—

¹ This remark is rather amusing when one thinks of the disorder in some of Rozanov's own books.

this is Christianity." But, he wondered, if the world is of God's making, then wasn't Christ really in opposition to Him?

The true religion, in Rozanov's eyes, is the one that glorifies life, a religion he found in the teachings of the ancient Hebrews and the primitive religion of early Egypt. What attracted him to them most was the fact that they were primarily religions of the flesh, that they supposedly placed great stress on the moral and sexual behavior of man, that they urged man to be fruitful and multiply, and that they were mainly concerned with the here and now. But then, he said, Christ appeared, "Our Sweetest Lord Jesus," and the fruits of the world turned bitter. A severe monasticism sprang up in imitation of Jesus's life, and this became the Christian ideal. The flesh became the Christian's cross. Sex and the family were accepted, but only grudgingly.

Also unacceptable to Rozanov was the Christian concept of resurrection and life everlasting: "There is absolutely no need for the dead to leave their graves, because the earth is not a wasteland; on the graves, new flowers have sprung up, with a memory of the original ones, with a reverence for the original ones, even virtually repeating in themselves those original ones. Death is not a death that is final, but merely a means of renewal: after all, in my children, I live completely, in them lives my body and blood, and therefore, literally I do not die at all, only my present name dies. My body and blood continue to live, and in their children again, and then again in their children—eternally! . . . I work in mankind with a thousand hands, I smell all the fragrances of the world, I practice all professions, I am slave and tsar, genius and madman.

What riches in comparison with any kind of personal existence! And, in general, is it really possible that the vine is poorer than a single grape?"

And yet Rozanov was not sure about all this. His struggle against Christ was difficult, and it caused him frequently to waver. When faced with inconsolable sorrow, he was particularly drawn to Christ; when filled with joy, he rejected Him. "Christ," he wrote, "manifests Himself only in tears. He who never cries will never discover Christ; but he who cries will definitely discover Him. . . . And how understandable is its [Christianity's] silence about marriage, the flesh, and useless circumcision. When there is a sick person in the room in danger of dying, would we say to him: 'Disrobe, and cut off your foreskin'? It wouldn't even occur to us."

It must be noted that Rozanov's critics, and they were many, had no trouble finding flaws in his religious thinking; some, for instance, pointed out that monasticism and asceticism are not typical of Christianity as a whole; others, that one cannot overlook the unity of the Father and the Son; and Nikolai Berdyaev added that if Rozanov had taken the Christian idea of resurrection seriously, he could not have characterized Christianity as a religion of death. Authorities of the Russian Orthodox Church also raised objections, but they never went so far as to excommunicate Rozanov, as they did, for example, Tolstoy. Perhaps they sensed that Rozanov was not really being his true self in all this, that despite all his words of rejection, despite all his ridicule, despite all his praise of the Old Testament and disparagement of the New, he was actually more attracted to than repelled by Jesus and His teachings, and that he probably took his position at times simply to shock, to

have something different to write about, to see a subject through the eyes of another. In this connection, it is interesting to note that in one place he plainly tells us that when he dies, it will, of course, be in the Church. And in another, he asks:

“What monument would you like raised to yourself?”

“One simply showing me sticking my tongue out at the reader.”

Still another of the strange paradoxes of Rozanov reveals itself in his attitude toward the Jews. Although time and again he held up the life and philosophy of the ancient Hebrews as the model to be followed, he felt no sympathy for the Jews of the present; indeed, he vilified them mercilessly and even urged pogroms against them. For this and for his anti-Semitic articles in general he was finally expelled from the highly respected Religious and Philosophical Society, an organization of clergy and intelligentsia. His expulsion did not, however, seem to bother him very much for he continued his attacks, and in 1914, in connection with the Beilis case (1911-1913), he published his most viciously anti-Semitic work, *The Attitude of the Jews toward the Smell and Touch of Blood*. The book was destroyed by the Soviets soon after they came to power, but for some strange reason[?] was republished in Stockholm in 1934.

But, after *The Inquisitor*, the works for which Rozanov is mainly remembered today, and rightly so, are his *Solitaria* (1912; English translation, 1927), *Fallen Leaves* (1913; English translation, 1929), and *Fallen Leaves, Another Basketful* (1915). Written in a disconnected aphoristic style, they contain recollections, meditations, dreams, random thoughts, intimate revelations of his past, and the like,

all supposedly jotted down on the spur of the moment in such prosaic places as "the railway station," "the bath," "the toilet," wherever he might have been when they struck him. They seem to be dictated entirely by mood, with no workings of the will involved, and despite their chaotic and disjointed nature they have a decided charm about them and have led one critic aptly to describe them as little poems in prose.

After the Revolution, the Government closed the *New Times*, and Rozanov found himself without means of livelihood. He moved his family to Sergiev-Posad, the village outside the Trinity Monastery, near Moscow, where his main efforts were directed at collecting cigarette butts from the street to satisfy his smoking habit and at finding enough food to keep his family alive—circumstances not very conducive to writing; nevertheless, he managed to produce some articles and to complete a rather large part of a book, *The Apocalypse of Our Time*, which he brought out in short installments. Here he continued to brood over Christianity and also to seek the causes of the Revolution, which he had at first half-heartedly welcomed, but now rejected. At fault, he said, were both the State and the Church, for they had not served the people, and therefore the people had abandoned them. But the Russian people, he felt, were also to blame, for they had been guilty of vice and folly and were now being punished.

Rozanov's style here differs completely from that of *The Inquisitor*. Fragmented, jerky, and colloquial, it is intended to give the effect of actual living conversation, to establish a close rapport with the reader. The following excerpt well illustrates not only this later style but also Rozanov's reaction to the Revolution:

Well, what of it: death came, and consequently the time for death had come as well. . . . It means that God didn't want Rus' to exist any longer. He is driving it away from under the sun. "Away with you, you useless people."

Why are we "useless?"

For a long time now we've been writing in "our golden literature": "The Diary of a *Superfluous Man*," "Notes of an *Unnecessary Man*." Also "—of an *Idle Man*." We thought up all sorts of "*undergrounds*" . . . We had somehow hidden ourselves from the light of the sun, as if we were ashamed of ourselves.

A person ashamed of himself? Won't the sun also become ashamed of him? The sun and man are tied up with each other.

Consequently, we are "of no use" in the world, and we are withdrawing into a kind of night. Night. Non-existence. The grave. rub
No 1

We are dying like braggarts, like actors. "Without the cross, without prayer." And if there was ever a death without the cross and without prayer, it was the death of the Russians. Strange. All our lives we crossed ourselves, we prayed: then suddenly, death—and we had cast aside the cross. "It is simply that the Russian had never lived as an Orthodox believer." The transition to socialism and consequently to complete atheism was accomplished in the soldiers and peasants as easily "as if they had gone into the bath-house and drenched themselves with fresh water." That's exactly the way it was, it is reality, and not some wild nightmare.

As a matter of fact, why are we dying? . . . We are dying for a single and fundamental reason: *lack of respect for ourselves*. We are, as a matter of fact, committing suicide. It isn't so much that the "sun is persecuting us," as it is that we are persecuting ourselves. "Go away, you devil."

Nihilism . . . Yes, this is nihilism—the name the Russian long ago baptized himself by—or more accurately the name he took when he renounced Christianity.

"Who are you wandering there through the world?"

"I'm a nihilist."

"I only *pretended* that I prayed."

"I only pretended that I *lived in the Empire*."

"As a matter of fact—I'm a completely independent person."

"I'm a worker in a pipe factory, and nothing else concerns me."

"I'd like to work a little less."

"I'd like to have a good time a little more often."

"And I don't want to fight."

And the soldier throws down his gun. The workman leaves his bench.

"The land—it must bear fruit on its own."

And he leaves the land.

"Everybody knows that the land is God's. It belongs to everyone alike."

"Yes, but you're not a man of God. And the land in which you trust, will give you nothing. And because it will give you nothing, you will stain it with blood.

The land is Cain's, and the land is Abel's. And your land, Russian, is Cain's. You cursed your land, and your land has cursed you. There you have nihilism and its formula. . . .

It is remarkable that we are going to the grave enraptured. We also began the War enraptured with ourselves. . . .

But if there was one thing that we were enthusiastic about, it was revolution. "The complete fulfillment of our heart's desire." No, as a matter of fact: what aren't we satiated with? "If ever there was a time when the thirsty had their thirst quenched and the hungry their hunger satisfied, it was during the Revolution." And the revolutionary has hardly worn out his first pair of boots than he falls into the grave. Isn't he an actor? Isn't he a braggart? And where are our prayers? And where are our crosses? "Not a single priest would conduct a funeral service for such a corpse."

It is a sorcerer, a werewolf, and not a live human being. There is no living soul in it, there never was.

"Nihilist."

They don't conduct funeral services for nihilists. They limit themselves to saying: "To hell with him."

Cursed was his life, and cursed is his death.

One-sixth of the earth's surface. The Revolution was enraptured, enraptured was the War. "We'll win." Oh, definitely. Now isn't it a terrible fact that one-sixth of the earth's surface somehow always produced "thistles and thorns" until the sun said: "I don't need you any longer." "I'm bored shining down on the barren earth."

Nihilism. "What grows from you?"

"Nothing."

And about this "nothing," there is nothing more to say.

"We didn't respect ourselves. The main thing about Rus' is that it does not respect itself."

That is quite clear. One can respect work and sweat, but we didn't sweat, we didn't work. And the fact that we didn't work and didn't sweat is the reason that the land has cast us from it, that the planet has cast us from it.

Did we deserve it?

Far too much. . . .

Russia is like a fake general over whom some fake priest is conducting a funeral service. "As a matter of fact, it was a runaway actor from a provincial theater."

The most striking thing about the whole affair, the main point of it, lies in the fact that "virtually nothing happened." "But everything went to pieces." What did they do to cause the downfall of the Empire? Literally, it fell on an ordinary day of the week. It was a Wednesday, no different from any of the rest. Not on a Sunday, nor a Saturday, nor even a Mussulman Friday. Literally, God spat and put out the candle. There had been a shortage of food, and lines had formed at the shops. And there had been opposition. And the Tsar had been capricious. But then when in Rus' had there ever been enough of anything without the work of the Jew and without the work of the German? And when wasn't there op-

position with us? And when wasn't the Tsar capricious? Oh, dreary Friday or Monday, Tuesday . . .

Can one really die so dully, so stinkingly, so horridly? "Actor, you might at least make some sort of gesture. After all, you were always ready to play Hamlet." "Remember your lines." . . .

Yes, if ever there was a "dull affair," it was "the fall of Rus'."

The candle was put out. And it wasn't even done by God . . . A drunken peasant woman was walking along, she stumbled, and fell flat on her face. Stupid. Vile. "Don't play us a tragedy, give us a vaudeville instead." . . .

The Apocalypse of Our Time was never completed, for Rozanov's health failed rapidly. Near the end, when he realized he was dying, he underwent a profound spiritual change and renounced all that he had written against both the Christians and the Jews. At his request, priests from the monastery gave him communion four times, extreme unction once, and three times read the prayers for the dying over him. Shortly before death, he said: "Everyone embrace—everyone. Let us kiss each other in the name of the resurrected Christ. Christ has risen! How joyful, how wonderful . . . Miracles are indeed happening inside me; what those miracles are I'll tell you later, sometime . . ."

He died on January 23, 1919 (Old Style), and, as he had requested, was buried in the monastery cemetery beside Konstantin Leontiev, a fellow conservative, an aesthete and writer. Shortly afterward, his wife also died, one of his daughters hanged herself, and his son froze to death while searching for food.

Shifty, insincere, servile, inconsistent, contradictory, prejudiced, blasphemous—all these pejoratives and more describe Rozanov. Certainly few Russian writers can so antagonize. Yet, even while disagreeing with him, scholars read him with delight, marveling at his inventiveness, at his brilliant verbal gift, at his clever dialectic, at his candor in revealing the sordid details of his narcissistic soul. If the Soviet Union ever decides to publish him, along with a considerable number of other writers it now regards as skeletons in its closet, the Russian people will realize that their literary past is even richer than they ever thought it was. And Rozanov will introduce them to a strange world they have never known before: a world dominated by the idolatry of the soul; a world where man comes into direct contact with God through sex; a world where the individual counts for more than anything else in history and where the most satisfying thing a person can do is just to sit at home in his round, warm little nest and watch the sun go down. But this is dangerous stuff for a collective society, and the chances of it being published in the present circumstances are slim indeed.

Therefore, one can only hope that the present volume will encourage publishers in the English-speaking world to bring out other works of Rozanov's, thus rescuing him from the obscurity of the few research libraries to which he has been relegated for the past fifty years.

*Dostoevsky and the Legend
of the Grand Inquisitor*

Designed by John H. Warner.

Composed by Vail-Ballou Press, Inc.,
in 11 point linotype Janson, 3 points leaded,
with display lines in monotype Janson.

Printed letterpress from type by Vail-Ballou Press
on Warren's No. 66 text, 60 pound basis,
with the Cornell University Press watermark.

Bound by Vail-Ballou Press
in Columbia BSL book cloth
and stamped in All Purpose foil.

Endpapers are Weyerhaeuser Torino Blue Spruce.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
(For library cataloging purposes only)

Rozanov, Vasilii Vasil'evich, 1856-1919.

Dostoevsky and the legend of the Grand Inquisitor.

Translation of *Legenda o Velikom inkvizitorie*.

"What appears here is the complete text of the third edition [1906] of the book, minus the appendix."

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Dostoevskii, Fedor Mikhaïlovich, 1821-1881.

Brat'ia Karamazovy. Book 5, chapter 5. 2. Gogol', Nikolaï Vasil'evich, 1809-1852. I. Title. II. Title: Legend of the Grand Inquisitor.

PG3325.B73R613 1972 891.7'3'3 79-37754

ISBN 0-8014-0694-3





