The Grand Inquisitor Study Guide

The Grand Inquisitor by Fyodor Dostoevsky

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Introduction

"The Grand Inquisitor" was originally published as the fifth chapter of the fifth book of Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, his last and perhaps his greatest work. Dostoevsky died just months after the novel was published, and he did not live to see the peculiar situation of his novel's most famous chapter being excerpted as a short story—something he did not intend. A further peculiarity arises from the fact that the story is not excerpted the same way every time, so that whole paragraphs of the novel may be included or excluded from the short story, according to each editor's sense of how best to make the part seem like a whole.

The legend of the Grand Inquisitor is a story within a story. Jesus returns to Earth during the Spanish Inquisition and is arrested. The Grand Inquisitor visits him in his cell to tell him that he is no longer needed on Earth. The Church, which is now allied with the Devil, is better able than Jesus to give people what they need. The story has often been considered a statement of Dostoevsky's own doubts, which he wrestled with throughout his life.

Throughout the novel the themes of the legend are repeated and echoed by other characters and in other situations. Ivan explains some of what is to come before he tells the story, and he and Alyosha discuss the story when he is finished telling it. In the excerpted form, it is more difficult for readers to determine who is speaking, whose story it is, and how it is to be taken.

Author Biography

Fyodor Dostoevsky was born in Moscow, the capital of Russia, on October 20, 1821. The son of a Russian family of moderate privilege and wealth, he was highly educated and raised in the Russian Orthodox religion. His father was a doctor and a member of the aristocracy, and his mother's family belonged to the merchant class. They had a house in town and a country estate with more than one hundred servants. Dostoevsky wrote in Russian, which has a different alphabet than English. Hence, his name may be spelled in English as Dostoevsky, Dostoevski, Dostoyevsky, among others, due to inconsistent transliteration and translation. His works also appear in English translation with slightly varying titles. As a child, Dostoevsky was an avid reader who hoped to become a professional writer one day. His first novel, *Poor Folk* (1846), was well received by the critics. It tells a story about poverty and compassion through a series of letters, which makes it an example of an epistolary novel. His second novel, *The Double*, concerns the mental breakdown of a poor clerk. Although this novel received almost unanimously bad reviews, Dostoevsky had established a modest reputation in Russia's literary world and easily found publishers for his work. At the same time, he began to show symptoms of epilepsy and developed a gambling habit that plagued him for the rest of his life. Dostoevsky belonged to a literary group that secretly met to read and discuss social and political issues of certain writings that were forbidden by Russia's tsarist regime. In 1849 Dostoevsky and others were arrested. He spent four years at hard labor in a Siberian prison camp under terrible conditions. The next twenty years were turbulent ones, but he wrote some of his greatest works during this period, including the novels *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Idiot* (1868), and *The Possessed* (1872). Dostoevsky achieved some recognition in Russia for his talent, but he was forced to leave. He wandered around Europe for five years to escape his debts. Many of his works from this period explore ideas about religion, faith, and sin, which increasingly concerned him as he aged. In the last two years of his life he wrote *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80), from which "The Grand Inquisitor" is taken. Dostoevsky died of a lung hemorrhage on January 28, 1881. Over the next ten years, his reputation dwindled, but he eventually became famous at home and abroad. Throughout the Western world he is considered one of Russia's greatest writers and renowned for his psychological and philosophical insights.

Plot Summary

"The Grand Inquisitor" begins with a set of opening quotation marks. An unidentified speaker says, "Fifteen centuries have passed since He promised to come in His glory, fifteen centuries since His prophet wrote, 'Behold, I come quickly.'" The uppercase "H" in the word "He" is used conventionally to indicate that "He" is the Christian God; in this case it is Jesus Christ, as is made clear later in the sentence when the speaker refers to the "Son" and the "Father." The story, then, takes place fifteen centuries after Jesus walked on Earth. In the intervening time, according to the speaker, there was a period of great faith and miracles, and then a period in which people began to doubt the miracles and doubt their faith.

Some time in the sixteenth century, in Seville, Spain, Jesus returns to Earth. He arrives during the Spanish Inquisition, a time from 1478 until 1834 when, under the orders of the Roman Catholic Spanish monarchs, Jews and Muslims who had forcibly been converted to Christianity were questioned and, in many cases, sentenced to death for insincerity. The day before Jesus's appearance, almost one hundred had been rounded up, and "in the splendid *auto-da-fe* the wicked heretics were burnt." *Autos-da-fe* (literally, "acts of the faith") were carried out by the non-religious authorities of Spain after a religious authority had pronounced a sentence. In this case, the victims had been sentenced by "the cardinal, the Grand Inquisitor," and killed "in the presence of the king, the court, the knights, the cardinals, the most charming ladies of the court, and the whole population of Seville."

When Jesus appears, he is recognized immediately by the people, although he makes no demonstration other than "a gentle smile of infinite compassion." He passes through the crowd blessing and healing people, and raises a child from the dead. When the Grand Inquisitor sees how the people love and follow him, he has Jesus arrested and led away. The crowd makes no protest, but "bows down to the earth, like one man, before the old inquisitor." Jesus is thrown into a dark prison. That night, the Grand Inquisitor comes to ask him why he has come back, announcing that he will have Jesus burned at the stake "as the worst of heretics."

Up to this point in the story, the speaker has not been identified. Suddenly the narrative is interrupted. "'I don't quite understand, Ivan. What does it mean?' Alyosha, who had been listening in silence, said with a smile." Ivan and Alyosha are not introduced; readers of the novel would already know who they are, but readers of the short story are never told. Ivan, apparently the speaker, explains that it is irrelevant whether it is actually Jesus or not. What concerns him is the cardinal's speech, and his insistence that Jesus has no right to "add to what has been said of old" with any new works or words. Ivan's point is that the Roman Catholic Church has its power consolidated as things are. With the Pope in place as Jesus's representative on Earth, Jesus himself is irrelevant.

Nearly all the rest of the story is a long monologue by the Grand Inquisitor, while Jesus makes no reply. He explains that the Pope and the Church have assumed responsibility

for the freedom of the people; the people believe they are free, but they are actually slaves to the Church. This is to the people's benefit, because they could never be happy if they truly had free will. Jesus should have known this. He should have learned it when he was tempted by Satan.

The Gospels of Luke and Matthew tell the story of Jesus's temptation in the desert. As he wandered in the wilderness, Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, to perform a miracle to prove his divinity, and to look to earthly authority. Jesus refused each request. Referring to this incident, the Grand Inquisitor argues that in the temptation the entire nature and history of mankind was foretold. Jesus's mistake was in choosing badly. Satan urged Jesus to use his power to turn stones into bread to feed his people. Jesus made the famous reply, "Man does not live by bread alone." He chose to turn people's attention to God instead of to material things, to heavenly bread instead of to earthly bread. The Grand Inquisitor says that this was a mistake, because hungry people have no free will. The Church has been able to control people by feeding them. If Jesus had worked this great miracle, the people's faith would not have wavered.

The Church offers people security and mystery, which is what all people crave. Most people are too weak to find salvation through faith alone, so they have turned away from Jesus and given their loyalty to the Church. The Church, in alliance with the devil, has power and strength so long as it can keep the people in slavery. Jesus's coming again threatens to interrupt their power-building, and so Jesus must be burned at the stake. Actually, says the Grand Inquisitor, their way makes more people happy, since only the strong could be saved Jesus's way.

When the cardinal stops speaking, he waits for Jesus to reply, eager to answer Jesus's angry objections. Jesus says nothing, but approaches him and softly kisses him on the lips. The Grand Inquisitor shudders, then opens the cell door and says, "Go, and come no more ... come not at all, never, never!" He leads Jesus out into the alley, and Jesus walks away.

Ivan's "Literary" Preface

Ivan's "Literary" Preface Summary

Ivan Karamazov prepares his brother, Alyosha, to read a poem he's written. The poem takes place in 16th Century Spain, during the height of the Spanish Inquisition. Ivan tells Alyosha of the long tradition of stories and plays featuring Christ, Mary, the canon of Saints, Archangels and even God himself as characters, speaking words invented by various authors, and performing acts not mentioned in any holy texts. These extra-Biblical fictions were not generally counted heresy, Ivan points out. On the contrary, they were well received, by both religious and secular authorities. Most notably, Ivan cites the enthusiastic response to Victor Hugo's Biblically inspired piece celebrating the birth of the Dauphin during the reign of Louis XI.

Ivan spends a relatively large amount of time telling Alyosha about the Biblically-inspired tale of Mary's visit to Hell, where she witnesses such torment that she pleads with God to show mercy. God replies that He will not let those in torment off easily, pointing to his crucified Son. Mary proceeds to gather a throng of angels, saints and martyrs who kneel in prayer together, begging for universal forgiveness. God relents, allowing the inhabitants of Hell an annual respite.

Concluding his preface, Ivan tells of the skepticism, and the ultimate rebellion, loosed by Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation that came to pervade Europe. For 1500 years, the time between Christ's crucifixion and The Spanish Inquisition, people had seen few, if any, miracles and tales of miraculous healings and visions were usually met with disbelief. Categorical doubt arose in all but the most faithful.

Ivan's "Literary" Preface Analysis

The structure of "The Grand Inquisitor" is, from its outset, sophisticated. It's the story of a person (Ivan) telling a story about another person (The Grand Inquisitor) who is lecturing about a person (Christ) to another person (Alyosha). Complicating things further, "The Grand Inquisitor" is a chapter from a much larger work, called *The Brothers Karamazov*. The text leading up to this encounter between Ivan and Alyosha has fleshed out both characters. Ivan has been cast, or at least is understood by many critics, as a hardened atheist, and is set in a kind of opposition to Alyosha, who entertains the notion of committing his life to Christ completely by becoming a Russian Orthodox priest but will ultimately decide that his profoundly Christian love cannot be contained by the walls of a monastery.

Rather than just reciting his work, Ivan gives it a preface. The reader may wonder, "Why not just get on with it?" That remains the subject of debate; a multitude of answers has been furnished to that question. It's enough, here, to note there is an adumbrative preface, and this preface introduces the idea that Biblical notions, such as universal

love and kindness, can be improved upon and thrust home in new stories; stories that, by necessity, have to veer a bit from scripture.

The story of Mary in Hell serves as a bold case in point. How could anyone possibly know whether or not Mary visited Hell? It's certainly not in the scriptures, and anyone who claimed to have witnessed it would, at best, be laughed out of town, and at worst, disemboweled. The story is clearly the product of an earthly human imagination, and is one of love, compassion and mercy. It may be worth noting here, too, that the last time a group of heavenly characters resisted God's pronouncements, they were banished to Hell for eternity, their General, Satan, becoming the very embodiment of evil.

Ivan also hints at a relationship between Church and State by invoking Victor Hugo's universally pleasing work, and, more importantly, "the sixteenth century," the time of the Spanish Inquisition. Later in *The Grand Inquisitor*, we'll encounter a handful of peculiar thoughts on the issue of Church and State, and whether or not it's possible to keep them separate. For the moment, however, we have only a hint of the questions to come.

There was indeed an historical Grand Inquisitor, Tomas de Torquemada, a Dominican monk who was directly involved with King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of the freshly created Spanish monarchy. Ferdinand was quick to consolidate his power, and bolster it with alliances with other powerful institutions, such as the Roman Catholic Church. Debate still rages as to the reasons for the Inquisition but most agree that it was, at center, a bloody, savage display of power on the part of both the Catholic Church in Spain and Ferdinand's rule, intended to subdue the population by terror.

During the Inquisition, Moors (Spanish Muslims), Jews, and everyone else designated "heretic" were publicly burned at the stake, strangled, tortured, maimed, or all of the above. The burnings carried the appellation "*auto da fe"* which translates into "act of faith." These "acts of faith" were held often, with the same ceremony one might see at Mass. As the Church was officially forbidden to kill anyone, Torquemada simply named names, leaving it to Ferdinand and his court to carry out the executions. Ferdinand and Torquemada did, however, sit directly beside one another at the proceedings.

It is worth noting a couple things here. First, "Christ," the name, makes its one and only appearance here in Ivan's preface, and neither Torquemada nor Ferdinand are ever called by name. Second, Ivan's "poem" does not appear in verse. Rather, he relates a prose summary of the contents of his poem.

"His" Coming

"His" Coming Summary

Ivan's poem begins with the arrival of Christ in Seville, Spain which is the historical seat of King Ferdinand's power, and the epicenter of the Inquisition's atrocities. Ivan is careful to note this isn't *the* coming of Christ predicted in the New Testament, just *a* coming of Christ, documented nowhere. This day follows a particularly cruel day in Seville. Close to 100 heretics had been burned "*ad majorem gloriam Dei*" (for the greater glory of God) at the behest of a cardinal who carries the title "The Grand Inquisitor."

The inhabitants of Seville immediately recognize Christ, surrounding him, genuflecting, and kissing the ground He walks on. Ivan says the best part of his poem is this immediate recognition of Christ by the people of Seville, but gives no reason for it here. Ivan continues that, in his poem, Christ blesses the crowd, and then performs two miracles, both echoing miracles He performed in the New Testament. One man, blind since birth, is made to see, and a young girl is raised from the dead.

"His" Coming Analysis

The Spanish Inquisition has long captivated the Western imagination, primarily because it exemplifies the historically recurring hypocrisy and barbarism of institutionalized religion. No religious texts - not even the "Satanic" texts penned by LaVey and Crowley - encourage murder; on the contrary, all major religious texts condemn murder absolutely. Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of the Bible can say with certainty that Christ would recoil in horror at any violence committed in His name. Yet war, torture, murder and rape have all been carried out in the name of Christ through the centuries. We're pointedly reminded of this bitter irony in the words "*ad majorem gloriam Dei*"; people are routinely slow-roasted for the greater glory of God.

Typically, too, it's the *leaders* within institutionalized religions, the high holy men and women, who give the order to carry out violence in the name of Christ, Allah, Yahweh, Mohammed, Siva, and so on. Even the gentle religion of Buddhism furnished us with martial arts once it became organized. This is the aspect of the Spanish Inquisition Ivan seizes on; it symbolizes both the cruel and bloodthirsty underbelly of organized Christianity - particularly that of the Roman Catholic Church - and the utter callousness and cynicism of its more notorious leaders.

(On a curious historical side note, Jewish people found themselves quite welcome in pre-Inquisition Muslim Spain. The two cultures didn't simply co-exist; they flourished in collaboration. It's only when the Catholic Ferdinand shows up that the problems began.)

Although the name "Christ" is used in this analysis, it does not necessarily refer to Jesus Christ. This person performs Christ-like miracles, and He does come at a time of

profound tribulation, but this person is never, at any time in "The Grand Inquisitor," called "Christ." Instead, a capitalized pronoun is used: "Thee," "Thou," "He," "Him," and so on. Of course, literary convention and textual evidence offer pretty solid proof that this is Christ, but, because this person is not named anywhere, one cannot say this is definitely Christ.

Remember, too, that these are words spoken between Ivan and Alyosha, and that, obviously, in speech nothing is capitalized. Speech, by nature, precludes punctuation and capitalization. A speaker can inflect, add emphasis, gesture, and so on, but can't punctuate without becoming comical, and, eventually, irritating.

Alyosha hears "he," not "He." Only the reader is privy to the capital letters. This is not to say, however, Alyosha won't recognize Christ, or a Christ-like being, in Ivan's tale.

It's important to remember, too, that this isn't a story of The Second Coming. This is just a visit, Ivan tells us, leaving plenty of room for the kind and merciful Christ of the New Testament in his poem, as opposed to the not-so-nice Apocalyptic Christ.

Enter the Grand Inquisitor

Enter the Grand Inquisitor Summary

The ancient Grand Inquisitor and his retinue appear on the scene, observing the crowd around Christ from a distance. Upon witnessing the young girl's resurrection, the Grand Inquisitor orders his "holy guard" to arrest Christ. The Inquisitor wields so much power and has instilled so much fear, that the crowd quickly parts, kneels and grows silent as the guards pass to apprehend Christ. The Inquisitor blesses the crowd and moves on. Christ is taken to a cell and locked away.

Night falls, and the Grand Inquisitor enters Christ's cell. The Inquisitor asks Christ if he is, in fact, Christ. Receiving no answer, the Inquisitor says it doesn't matter. He says that even if he is Christ, He has no right to add anything to what He has already said, and He will still be burned at the stake the following day. Furthermore, adds the Inquisitor, the people of Seville will gladly help in the immolation if he asks it.

Alyosha interrupts Ivan, asking whether the Inquisitor is indulging himself in a crazy hypothetical situation or if the Inquisitor is mistaking Christ for someone else. A brief literary debate ensues.

Ivan teases Alyosha about being too captivated by Realism, which was the dominant literary mode in the late 1800s, when *The Grand Inquisitor* was written. Ivan says that Alyosha can attribute the Inquisitor's bizarre actions and interrogations to a "real," or worldly cause, and that this scene is "really" happening.

What matters, finally, says Ivan, is that the Inquisitor has stated his long-held position: whether or not the person before him is Christ, He's hampering day-to-day church business, and the Inquisitor won't have it. It does not ultimately matter, then, Ivan says, whether or not the Inquisitor is making a mistake or is caught up in a flight of fancy.

Alyosha then asks if Christ has anything at all to say about this. Ivan uses this question as a launching pad for a jab at Roman Catholicism (as opposed to the Russian Orthodox Church), or at least the Jesuits (a powerful intellectual order of Catholic priests). Ivan contends the Inquisitor's position mirrors Rome's position: Christ obviated himself by establishing His Church.

The Inquisitor argues that Christ bestowed freedom of faith on humanity; that is, people can choose to follow Him and His teachings (or, conversely, choose not to). That freedom, the Inquisitor reminds Christ, was the single most important thing to Him when He walked the earth. So, to the Inquisitor, it follows that if Christ adds anything now to what He said during His time here, He'll rob people of that freedom. Any additions will be seen as a miracle, thereby corroborating the truth of His teachings, rendering faith - and the freedom to choose faith - moot. And anyway, continues the Inquisitor, look what the faithful did with the freedom You gave them: they happily gave it to us, your Church.

Alyosha again interrupts, asking, essentially, if the Inquisitor is kidding. Ivan responds with an emphatic "no," even going so far as to say the Inquisitor believes the Church has done Christ one better. Only by taking humanity's freedom, argues the Inquisitor, can the thought of human happiness become possible; humanity was created rebellious, and rebels can't be happy. The Inquisitor tells Christ He was warned of that, many times, but He did not heed it. Fortunately, the Inquisitor says, "You died, having invested the Church with Your authority, and the Church has nearly fixed all the problems You and the freedom You bestowed caused humanity."

Enter the Grand Inquisitor Analysis

From a literary standpoint, this is deft work. The ideas presented here are controversial even today. By burying the ideas beneath narrators (Ivan and his Inquisitor) and having Alyosha voice confusion, Dostoyevsky has removed himself by several degrees from what he's written. Neither Dostoyevsky, nor Ivan, nor Alyosha have put anything controversial forward. The Grand Inquisitor is to blame for any offense to the reader.

In addition, Ivan isn't reciting his poem. Rather, he's spinning a prose version of the poem he's written.

Then, Ivan and Alyosha discuss the subject of Realism. Ivan tells Alyosha that if he can't handle "fantasy," then let the narrative be an actual depiction of events. Ivan thereby escapes blame for rendering a literal "truth" - one that might be counted heresy.

As of now, the Grand Inquisitor hasn't given his argument much substance, only thin propositions and promises of action. Alyosha's questions reflect what most thoughtful people would ask, faced with the assertions of the Grand Inquisitor. For now, though, since we're dealing with Ivan's unfolding narrative - and his Inquisitor's argument - we have to wait for logical or substantive proof of what the Inquisitor has had to say. It's a captivating technique, one used to excellent rhetorical effect by contemporary American attorneys: grab the jury with a series of controversial assertions, then move on to proof, or lack thereof.

In a nutshell, the Inquisitor argues this: curiosity and wondering what to do makes people unhappy. Therefore, if you, from a position of authority, tell them exactly what to do and end curiosity (on pain of being burned at the stake), happiness becomes a possibility. The Inquisitor blames Christ for the misery of humanity, as it was He who gave people a choice to ponder: believe or don't believe, at your option. Here is the central irony of *The Grand Inquisitor*: only when people are enslaved can they be happy, according to the Inquisitor.

The Inquisitor argues from the Bible on its own terms: humanity, says the Bible, is born of curiosity and rebellion. Much of the Bible (the Old Testament, in any event) consists of people disobeying God for various reasons, from Adam and Eve sharing the forbidden fruit to Onan letting his seed spill to the ground and God punished them. Christ, on the other hand, offered redemption and forgiveness, asking in return only that

you believe He is the savior. Believing, however, requires a leap of faith, and one must choose to take it. Christ won't make you take the leap of faith - in fact, if you don't take the leap of faith of your own volition, it is meaningless according to the words of Christ in the Bible. According to the Inquisitor, it is here all the problems of humanity begin.

In order to buy the Inquisitor's argument, one must take the Biblical conception of human consciousness to be true: people are born rebellious, that is to say, operate strictly of their own free will, and rebels can't be happy. That is the Inquisitor's fundamental assertion. Some philosophers, especially those of the Enlightenment, and, more recently, the Existentialists, take free will very seriously.

Today, we don't take it all that seriously; in general, we attribute unhappiness to the Freudian "unconscious," or to a deep socioeconomic undercurrent, as described by Marx. While unhappiness does remain the primary human condition, according to most contemporary thinkers, and supported by evidence, it's not because of free will, but rather a result of subjection to all kinds of other forces, such as biology, psychological disposition, or location in class strata.

This does not render "The Grand Inquisitor" dated. Taken allegorically, it provides an endless supply of relevant and important questions. For example, an argument parallel to the one put forth in "The Grand Inquisitor" can be found in the realm of politics: which is better, an authoritarian governing body (as represented by the Grand Inquisitor) or a governing body of the people by the people, making up their own minds (as represented by Christ's vision of humanity)? The massive tracts on that argument exist, on shelves everywhere. As Dostoyevsky writes "The Grand Inquisitor," the French *Philosophes*, Locke and company, and even Karl Marx are merely a pleasant walk to the bookstore away.

We might go so far as to say the central question of "The Grand Inquisitor" is not a wholly religious question, but rather a general question about all of our institutions, religious, governmental, educational, medical or otherwise: do people know what the best choice is for themselves, or do they need someone or something to tell them what the best choice is? We tend to think the "democratic" way of Ivan's Christ mirrors current thought; but consider: in America, you can't buy codeine over the counter as you can in every other country in the world.

The Three Temptations of Christ

The Three Temptations of Christ Summary

The Grand Inquisitor summarizes what he'll be putting forward in terms of substantiation for his arguments and what is influencing his decision to burn Christ at the stake. It takes the form of a synopsis of the three temptations of Christ, found in the New Testament. The three questions asked of Christ and His answers to them, contends the Inquisitor, could be the single most "miraculous" occurrence ever - possibly the only miracle ever - and therefore touch something beyond human imagination. These three questions come from something divine, far removed from human imagination.

The Inquisitor adds that this scene in the New Testament predicted exactly what has come to pass in the last 1500 years, because they explain all the contradictions to be found in humanity throughout history. To add anything to that Biblical passage, then, would be an affront to the divine, and cannot be tolerated.

The Three Temptations of Christ Analysis

According the Bible, Christ was baptized by John the Baptist, and then taken by the Holy Spirit into the "wilderness" or "desert," depending on the translation. Here Christ fasted for 40 days. On the 41st day, Satan appears with three dares, or temptations: turn stones into bread, leap from a temple, and renounce God to inherit dominion over all the inhabitants of Earth. Christ refuses to indulge any of the three dares, electing instead to allow people to decide for themselves whether or not He's the Messiah.

If Christ had taken Satan up on any of his offers, there would be no freedom to choose faith. Christ would've established himself firmly as the Messiah, the Son of God, if He'd done any of what Satan asked. Because He didn't, He made human happiness a virtual impossibility - people have to wonder about Christ's nature, and then make a choice to follow Him. Proof would have fixed everything, according to the Inquisitor. Instead, people must go through life wondering, and carrying the burden of choice. The Inquisitor is arguing, in essence, that if Christ had opted to become a divine-right fascist dictator, everything would be just fine.

The First Temptation

The First Temptation Summary

The Inquisitor launches the first volley of substance for his argument, saying that, in refusing to turn stones into bread, Christ gave people freedom, and, consequently, is to blame for all human misery. The Inquisitor appears to know why Christ refused to turn stones into bread: performing a miracle and using the proceeds feed people, materially, would have established him as the Son of God, but this would come at the price of taking the freedom to choose away. Bread would be both a bribe and corroboration for divinity. People would be fed, and would happily follow Christ, but in fear rather than in freedom. After all, Christ might decide to take the bread away.

What is going to happen as a result of Christ's choice in the wilderness, the Inquisitor says, is that somewhere down the line, all of humanity will rise up against Christ and His church. People can, finally, make their own bread and can feed themselves, whether or not they've sinned and are in need of forgiveness. In this ultimate independence, they will become proud, tearing down Christ's temple, and erecting in its place a new tower of Babel, considering themselves worthy of meeting God as an equal.

The tower's fate will be the same as the fate of the old tower of Babel, says the Inquisitor. It will be unfinished. This time, however, the church will come out from hiding and finish it for them, first because the church can offer both spiritual and material bread, and second because people are miserable until they submit to some kind of authority that furnishes both spiritual and material bread.

The Inquisitor says people cannot help but submit to authority, to relieve this horrible burden of spiritual freedom coupled with basic material satisfaction. The clergy will look like gods to people because they take these awful burdens off the collective back of humanity. The clergy, however, will know that although they say they are doing things in the name of Christ, they aren't; they've simply abolished freedom, and are giving to people the things Christ didn't elect to give them out there in the wilderness.

Along the lines of freedom, the Inquisitor suggests that as long as humanity cannot come to a consensus on who to worship, if they choose to worship at all, there will be doubt as to the correct choice. That is a further example of freedom: the freedom to doubt, or consider the validity of other religious claims. What people want, the Inquisitor says, is a community of worship, with no doubt as to the correct choice regarding who to worship. Christ could have proven his divinity, simply by making bread, but chose not to, and is therefore to blame for the misery of humanity.

The First Temptation Analysis

The first of Satan's temptations is "turn these stones into bread, thereby proving you are a divine being, and erasing all doubt as to whether or not you're the Messiah." Christ

answers famously, "Man cannot live on bread alone," which is generally taken to mean people need spiritual sustenance in addition to physical sustenance. That is, people need to choose to have faith in something larger than themselves. Christ also implies here that he doesn't want, or need, to prove He is the Son of God, especially to Satan.

The Inquisitor contends that had Christ turned the stones to bread, He could have become the singular authority, a divine king over all, with no room for doubt. Instead, the church He founded, and that operates in His name, had to seize that power, turning into this awful body of despotic Inquisitors who kill in the name of Christ.

The Inquisitor's justification for the atrocities of the Inquisition is that free people cannot be happy, they must be told what to do, and do it, or be burned at the stake. Furthermore, material hunger is so powerful that people will do anything in order to eat, even revolt against Christ. Where Christ would not create material satisfaction, the Inquisitor's church will, and can therefore fulfill both the spiritual and material needs of people. Three things are at stake here, so to speak: the biological needs of people, the spiritual needs of people, and the satisfaction of those needs in the name of human happiness.

To illustrate his point, the Inquisitor invokes the Tower of Babel, discussed in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament. A group of wanderers in what is today Iraq decided to build a huge tower, the top of which would touch heaven, to "make our name famous before we be scattered abroad into all lands." Yahweh (God) took exception to that, destroying their ability to communicate with each other (the word "babble" finds its origin in this tale) and scattering them all over the place. The tower was unfinished as a result.

In both the Bible and *The Grand Inquisitor*, the story of the Tower of Babel concretizes several ideas: people are naturally rebellious and proud, God doesn't take kindly to rebellion and pride, God will punish rebellion and pride mercilessly, and punishment is unpleasant. It's only in obedience, even if that obedience derives from fear, that people can be happy.

The Inquisitor imagines a new Tower of Babel, to be built upon the ruins of Christ's church, torn down by the hordes who have rejected Christ and his church. These people, free people who have provided themselves with rudimentary material satisfaction, will do as the ancients did, deferring to no God, making their name famous. The motive behind the construction of the new tower will be different, however: their pride will derive from self-sufficiency and autonomy, not from being able to compete with God, as in the Old Testament.

The Inquisitor envisions an eventual failure, another incomplete construction, as these builders bear the burden of freedom, and the tower will be a monument to the agony of freedom. They will turn to the church that has been in hiding, and the church will once again rise, finishing the incomplete tower. The church will bear freedom for the masses, and worship shall resume.

The Second Temptation

The Second Temptation Summary

Continuing his vituperation, the Inquisitor shifts from the subject of bread, to the related subject of conscience. The Inquisitor concedes that Christ was right to refuse to change the stones into bread, the reason being that a bribe of earthly bread is indeed ultimately useless, but only in that someone might come along and seize the conscience of humanity. This would result in humanity's collective tossing of Christ's bread-bribe for the sake of a solid model upon which to base their lives. The Inquisitor argues that life itself isn't sufficient; people need something to live for.

The Inquisitor renews his attack on Christ from that angle, saying that He could have easily established himself beyond any doubt as the Messiah, but He didn't remove that doubt, opting instead to leave us with an unfettered conscience - that is, able to choose between good and evil - increasing our freedom, and therefore our sorrow.

The Inquisitor then forces a paradox on Christ: on one hand, if Christ jumped from the temple, He would show himself lacking in faith because it contravenes Biblical law to tempt God in any fashion and would die on the street below. On the other, he refused to receive a miracle, inflicting upon us this agonizing doubt that accompanies faith.

This freedom Christ insists upon, says the Inquisitor, is a cruel thing to inflict on people; they are already suffering from the rebellious spirit, and Christ adds fuel to that fire. If Christ really loved humanity, according to the Inquisitor, He would have done something, preferably something miraculous, to establish Himself as the ultimate authority. As it stands, His church has to seize the peoples' conscience; the freedom Christ left people ends up causing misery, so someone has to intervene, and dictate to them. It is here that the Inquisitor makes his famous proclamation: "We have corrected Thy work and have founded it upon *miracle, mystery,* and *authority*."

The Second Temptation Analysis

For the second temptation, Satan whisks Christ away to the top of a temple (possibly "the" temple that Solomon built) and asks Christ to jump off. If He truly is the Messiah, Satan says, God will step in to save Him from being snuffed out on the street below. Christ again refuses, knowing that this is, in essence, tempting God himself. Tempting God is a serious sin in Biblical law, of course, and this is Satan He's reckoning with.

The Inquisitor hints the church is taking Satan up on his temptations. Christ either would not, or could not, be tempted, but His church can and does accept Satan's terms. A distinction is thereby drawn: people don't worship Christ, but rather His church, falsely believing it to be an intermediary between heaven and earth.

The Inquisitor's church gives people a model for correct living, sometimes at the point of a spear, as during the Spanish Inquisition. Christ also offered a model for correct living, but He refused to force it on anyone, instead rebuking Satan, and giving posterity choice in the matter of worship and the way in which to conduct their lives.

An idea on how to behave, says the Inquisitor, is more important than material satisfaction. Conscience is key. Christ left us with our original conscience - the one that got Adam and Eve kicked out of Eden - instead of claiming his position of absolute authority, and telling us from that position precisely how to behave. His church, though, tells people exactly what to do, and if it is not done, the result is death at the hands of the church. Taking freedom of conscience away from people eases the agony of rebellious Biblical conscience.

The Third Temptation

The Third Temptation Summary

The Inquisitor announces that it has been 800 years since the church ceased following the teachings of Christ, and has instead followed "Caesar," a symbolic word encompassing both the Caesar of Christ's day and any emperor or powerful nation to come. The Inquisitor goes on to predict that one day, the church will have complete dominion over everyone, including the state.

In lambasting Christ for his failure to seize global power when given the opportunity, the Inquisitor justifies his and his church's act of abandonment. Christ, once again in the name of freedom, rejected the offer of global dominion, thus leaving the world divided between those who follow, those who doubt, those who vacillate in faith, and those who reject faith. The Inquisitor and his church, on the other hand, became an accomplice of the state and forced its will on both leaders and citizens, initiating the creation of a unified body of worship and obedience. In doing so, questions of faith and conscience begin to vanish - there is a unified body making the decisions for people, thereby banishing the agony of freedom.

The Inquisitor asks who can blame his forebears for turning their backs on Christ and joining the state. Human misery increased, there were no signs of Christ's return - why not become earthly, renouncing the spiritual, if it will lead to human happiness? It was Christ, after all, who gave them the option to accept or reject.

The Inquisitor goes on to predict a world in which his church finally achieves domination over humanity, finally extinguishing any sort of freedom - and therefore misery - altogether. Before this comes to pass, people must be free for a time, and suffer that burden. Then, when it has become too much, people will gladly hand the burden of freedom off to the church, as it alone can offer both spiritual and material satisfaction, and answer all questions of conscience.

The only people who will suffer in the future, says the Inquisitor, are those who know the agony of freedom, namely, the clergy, who realize what has come to pass, and remain silent on the issue, out of love for humanity. The Inquisitor confesses he once cherished the freedom Christ bestowed, but has found service and obedience to Christ ludicrous.

So, concludes the Inquisitor, Christ must never return, even as prophesied. The Inquisitor will burn Christ at the stake the following day, and the people of Seville will happily help burn him, because where Christ gave freedom to humanity, causing endless misery and the church has taken the freedom away, ameliorating the misery. The Inquisitor says plainly that if anyone ever deserved to be burned at the stake, it is Christ.

The Third Temptation Analysis

Christ's third temptation is Satan's bargain. Satan tells Christ that all the world can fall under His loving domain, and that He can spare himself the hideous death He's bound for, if only He renounces God and, some suggest, worship Satan instead. Christ refuses the deal.

The Inquisitor proclaims that his church now follows the state, not Christ. The "800 years" that have passed since the Inquisitor's church chose to follow the state probably refers to the coronation of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III. Curiously, that coronation occurred on Christmas Day in 800 A.D., some say spontaneously.

The Inquisitor again states his church did what Christ could not or would not do. The world will ultimately belong to all the Inquisitors, he predicts, because only they can control the rebellious conscience of humanity (including its secular leaders), offer it both spiritual and material sustenance, and make authoritative decisions for everyone. This banishes freedom once and for all, and humanity can, at long last, be happy.

This is the most peculiar assertion of all: the Inquisitor states plainly that not even the State can resist the alluring slavery the Church offers. Indeed, the Church will become the State, if it has not already, simply because the freedom accompanying secularism or advanced citizenship is unbearable. According to the Inquisitor, it is only in a despotic theocracy can the thought of human happiness becomes material. It sounds insane, and it is, but this is precisely what happened in Nazi Germany: dissent and rebellion led straight to the firing squad, and obedience and apoliticism led straight to comfort. And this is not to mention the most hideous program in all of history, the Holocaust.

According to the Inquisitor, the only people who will suffer in the future are the people who know freedom exists, and must carry that burden for the sake of human happiness. Out of love and a wish for human happiness, the clergy will carry the wretched burden of freedom, the sacrifice placing them somewhere near Christ in divine terms.

Ivan and Alyosha Converse

Ivan and Alyosha Converse Summary

As one might expect, Alyosha takes exception to Ivan's "poem," particularly the Inquisitor's vision of freedom. Only some elements within the Roman Catholic Church seek dominion, says Alyosha, and not because they wish to spare humanity the burden of freedom, but rather for simple material gain.

Ivan teases his brother once again, telling him to calm down, as his poem is just a fantasy. Ivan adds a "but," however: he asks Alyosha if he really thinks the Roman Catholic Church is solely about material gain, and not about operating according to an authoritarian program. Alyosha concedes that Ivan is probably right on that count, and has even heard something similar from one of his teachers. Alyosha quickly amends the latter statement, claiming some variation between Ivan and his teacher.

Ivan defends his Inquisitor by suggesting there must be someone like him in the church. The Inquisitor wasn't born The Inquisitor; he became, after a life of devotion to Christ and humanity, this authoritarian nightmare. Ironically, it is because he loves Christ and humanity so much that he has become the Inquisitor. Neither humanity should have to suffer freedom, nor should Christ have to suffer disappointment. According to Ivan, this makes the Inquisitor a tragic character, someone with whom we might sympathize.

Alyosha declares the Inquisitor is an atheist. Ivan doesn't disagree. Ivan speculates that there may even be a group of people like his Inquisitor within the church, deceiving the flock for the sake of the flock's happiness. He then speculates that the Masons may also be operating according to this idea, which would go to explain the Roman Catholics' dislike of that particular order.

Alyosha asks for the end of the poem. Ivan tells that his Inquisitor waits anxiously for Christ to speak. Christ says nothing at all, but does rise to kiss the Inquisitor on the lips. The Inquisitor releases Christ, admonishing him never to return.

Ivan and Alyosha Converse Analysis

Much has been made of the kiss Christ gives to the Inquisitor. There is a lot of anomalous kissing in the Bible. Christ kisses Mary Magdalene; Judas kisses Christ, and so on. Then there is the traditional Russian greeting of a friend with kiss on the lips, a tradition still in place today.

Also of perennial interest is the fact the Inquisitor lets Christ go, instead of burning him at the stake. Is it because the Inquisitor loves Christ? Is it because the Inquisitor loves everyone? Does the Inquisitor's cynicism derive from the profound love of humanity, love on a par with Christ's love?

In the wake of *The Da Vinci Code*'s publication and popularity, and Alan Moore's graphic novel *From Hell* along with its screen adaptation, there is a renewed interest in the Masons as they appear in *The Grand Inquisitor*. Because Masons are part of a semi-secret society spanning the globe, some people have suggested sinister dealings within their ranks, most operating from the premise that Masons are secretive, and if something's a secret, it must be terrible. Alyosha and Ivan here present the Masons as atheists, presumably plotting worldwide atheistic domination, just as the Inquisitor plots.

There was another Inquisition in France, in 1310 A.D., aimed at a specific group, the Knights Templar. Many people believe that the Knights Templar who eluded that Inquisition escaped to Scotland, where they founded a new order, called the Masons of the Scottish Rite.

Characters

Alyosha

Alyosha listens to Ivan reciting the legend of the Grand Inquisitor, and twice interrupts the narrative to ask questions. He speaks only eight sentences in the story—all questions—but gives Ivan and Dostoevsky opportunities to explain and interpret for the reader.

The Cardinal

See The Grand Inquisitor

The Grand Inquisitor

The Grand Inquisitor, a ninety-year-old cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church during the sixteenth- century Spanish Inquisition in Seville, Spain, speaks most of the lines in the story. He is among the crowd of people to whom Jesus appears, and he sees Jesus raise a child from the dead. But the Grand Inquisitor's own influence is so great that when he makes his presence known to the crowd, they bow before him rather than to Jesus. The Inquisitor has Jesus arrested, and comes to visit him in his cell, where he delivers the long monologue of condemnation that makes up most of the story. His speech is dense, with long complex sentences and ideas, and he uses language that is formal and old-fashioned. When he finishes his diatribe, and receives only a kiss from Jesus in return, he is flustered. He does nothing in reply except release his prisoner.

Ivan

Ivan is the supposed author of the legend of the Grand Inquisitor, a story in poem form that he is reciting to Alyosha. When Alyosha occasionally breaks into the narration to ask questions, Ivan gives vague answers. He tells his brother that the meaning of the Grand Inquisitor's words is less important than the fact of them, and invites Alyosha to interpret them any way he can. He does comment that "the most fundamental feature of Roman Catholicism" is its static quality, its refusal to adapt and grow. In the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* and in some versions of the short story, Ivan introduces his legend at some length, and comments on it afterward.

Jesus

Jesus does not speak at all throughout the story. He appears on Earth for reasons that are never explained. He moves through an adoring crowd, raises a dead child, and then is arrested by the Grand Inquisitor. He sits silently through the Grand Inquisitor's long

speech, making eye contact and listening intently but not replying. When the speech is over, Jesus goes to his accuser and kisses him on the lips. The Grand Inquisitor opens the cell door and lets him out. Jesus goes away.

The Old Man

See The Grand Inquisitor

The Prisoner

See Jesus

Themes

God and Religion

The fundamental tension in "The Grand Inquisitor" is between God, in the form of Jesus, and religion, in the form of the Roman Catholic Church. According to the Grand Inquisitor, the two cannot coexist in the modern world; one must give way because they require different things from their followers. Jesus refused to make things easy for his followers. He could have given them bread when they were hungry in the desert and satisfied in one gesture their need for material comfort and their need to see miracles. But he refused, demanding instead that his followers believe on the strength of their faith alone, without any proof. God will not force people to believe in him, or to follow him. Each person must be free to choose her own path. This road to salvation, says the Grand Inquisitor, is appropriate only for the very strong. Ordinary people are too weak to find this satisfying, as he explains: "Thou didst promise them the bread of Heaven, but ... can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, ever-sinful and ignoble race of men?"

People seek "to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it." This is the reason for religious wars: people demand that everyone believe as they do, and "for the sake of common worship they've slain each other with the sword." In placing the freedom to choose above all else, God has permitted this misery. And yet, "man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over the gift of freedom." In short, says the Inquisitor, God does not understand the true nature of human beings.

To fill that need, the Church has stepped in. The Church offers the mystery and the community that people need, and so it has joined forces with the devil to deceive people and take away their freedom. The Grand Inquisitor knows that he is in league with Satan, and he accepts the damnation that will be his in the end, because he is making people happy—something Jesus refused to do. The Inquisitor once followed Jesus, but "I awakened and would not serve madness."

Critics have debated about Jesus's silence in the face of these accusations, and wondered whether the Grand Inquisitor speaks for Ivan, and whether Ivan speaks for Dostoevsky. Does Jesus stand silent because he has no answer, or because he is God and need not answer? Is the kiss he gives to the cardinal a kiss of loving forgiveness, or one of thanks? Dostoevsky was an adherent of the Russian Orthodox faith, and believed that the Russian Orthodox Church allowed people to come closer to God because it does not have a Pope whose powers are handed down. Ivan tells Alyosha that it does not matter whether the man in the cell was really Jesus or not; what matters is that the cardinal thinks he is and that the cardinal says what he says. In other words, Jesus's response is not really the issue. What is important is what the Inquisitor's words reveal about the position of the Roman Catholic Church.

Within the novel as a whole, the theme of God and religion is addressed in different ways by different characters, and Ivan's position as a doubter is clear. As a short story, "The Grand Inquisitor" presents only one character, the cardinal, who believes that God and the Roman Catholic Church are at odds, and that people can follow only one of them.

Free Will

Throughout his life Dostoevsky used his writing to explore the issue of free will. He believed that human beings are given free will, and that they must constantly choose between good and evil. It is not an easy choice, and God and the devil battle each other for the possession of every soul. Dostoevsky was conscious of this struggle all his life. He wished to believe, yet his intellect kept raising doubts. For him, the question of free will was central to his understanding of humans and society.

As the Grand Inquisitor states it, Jesus was tempted to offer his followers aids to faith, and Jesus chose instead to insist on free will. Had he followed the devil's suggestions and given the people food, or miracles, or an earthly structure such as an organized religion, the people would not be choosing freely. The Inquisitor claims that people are too weak to make a free choice. As Edward Wasiolek in *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction* states, for the Inquisitor "it is not a question of *what man would like to be but what he is and can be*. He argues logically about the human condition as he sees it, as history has proven it, and he can see no place for free will if people are to be happy."

The Grand Inquisitor takes the position that faith and religion are intellectual issues, that the truth can be reasoned with the brain. His strategy is to try to reason with God, to persuade him by rational argument. Jesus's response is to sit in silence, listening intently but not engaging in argument. For Jesus, the issues are not intellectual or provable, and happiness on earth is not the goal. As Wasiolek explains, "What he offers them is the same as what he demands of them. He asks them to rise above their natures, to make over their natures in his image, and they can do that only as he had done it: in loneliness, terror, and anxiety."

Free choice and free will are only free if there are no conditions on them. To demand proof, or miracles, or a secure structure—or even happiness— are to put conditions on the choice. Do not think, says Jesus. Choose to believe. This freedom is what Jesus offered, and it is what the Grand Inquisitor rejects.

Style

Narrator

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind when reading "The Grand Inquisitor" is that the long speech is spoken by a character in a novel. It should be obvious, but it is easy to forget, that this is not an argumentative essay by Dostoevsky, in which the ideas expressed can be traced directly back to the mind of the author. Rather, a fictional character named Ivan tells a story, and within that story another fictional character called the Grand Inquisitor says what *he* thinks about God and man. The fact that there are multiple levels of narration does not mean that the ideas expressed by the Grand Inquisitor are not Dostoevsky's; it simply means that they need not be.

For the first several pages, the reader of the short story does not know who is speaking. The narrator states that God has come to Earth to visit "holy men, martyrs and hermits," and quotes the Russian poet Fyodor Ivanovich Tyutchev (1803- 1873) as an authority who will verify that God has wandered through Russia. The narrator himself steps forward to add his own weight to the claim: "And that veritably was so, I assure you." Still, the reader does not know who is speaking, or why a poet and an unnamed speaker should be accepted as authorities on the conduct of God.

A few times in the opening pages the narrator steps forward to address his audience and reveal his role as storyteller. "My story is laid in Spain," he says as he begins the action. Several lines later he again refers to his own discourse. "Everyone recognised him. That might be one of the best passages in the poem. I mean, why they recognised him." As it becomes increasingly clear, the speaker is not actually telling a story, but talking about a story that he has created, moving the narrator still another step further away from the reader and from Dostoevsky.

When Alyosha interrupts for the first time ("I don't understand, Ivan. What does it mean?"), he clouds the issue of narration further. Who is quoting Alyosha's questions and Ivan's answers? There is another level of narration between Dostoevsky and Ivan, a narrator telling the story of Ivan telling the story of the Grand Inquisitor.

Ivan makes it clear that certain plot elements of his story are still negotiable. He does not care, for example whether Alyosha believes that the man in the cell is really Jesus. He says, "If you like it to be a case of mistaken identity, let it be so.... Does it matter to us, after all, whether it was a mistake of identity or a wild fantasy?" For Ivan, the plot is just a structure, a reason for the Inquisitor to make his long speech: "All that matters is that the old man should speak out, should speak openly of what he has thought in silence for ninety years."

Through the device of multiple levels of narration, Dostoevsky accomplishes two things: he puts extra emphasis on the Grand Inquisitor's speech by demonstrating that the plot surrounding it is relatively unimportant, and he makes it clear that the speech is a piece

of fiction created by a character. The reader's charge, then, is not only to evaluate the wisdom of foolishness of the Inquisitor's speech and Jesus's response, but also to examine the mind of Ivan, who created them.

Didacticism

Connected with the issue of narration in "The Grand Inquisitor" is the issue of didacticism. A piece of writing is said to be didactic when its primary purpose is to instruct, especially about religious, moral, or ethical matters. Although writing that is openly instructional has always been able to find readers, modern critics have tended to look down upon this kind of writing when they have found that the message or lesson being delivered is stronger than the artistic quality of the work.

The long speech delivered by the Grand Inquisitor is openly and solidly didactic. To put it another way, when the Inquisitor gives Jesus the catalog of his complaints, he is concerned with what he is saying, not with how he is saying it. He speaks formally, and eloquently, as is appropriate to his station as a cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church, but his concern is with message, not with form. His speech is not intended to raise questions, but to cut them off, and give answers.

As creator of the Inquisitor's speech, Ivan is somewhat didactic, but he is also concerned with form. He has created the story to help himself think through the issues of God and religion and free will, and although his character the Inquisitor speaks didactically, the fact of Jesus's silent response raises the question: Is the Grand Inquisitor right? The story is able to raise the question only because Ivan has worked hard on form; although the story is a fantasy, he has created believable characters. The Grand Inquisitor's focus is on his message, while Ivan's focus is on his character who is delivering a message.

Dostoevsky is one step further back. His hope is that the reader will look at Ivan and wonder, not "Is the Grand Inquisitor right?" but "What kind of a man would make up a story like this?" "The Grand Inquisitor" is a useful story for coming to understand didacticism, because it presents shades or degrees of it. The Grand Inquisitor represents didacticism in the purest form, the form that critics have rejected most strenuously. Dostoevsky represents an ideal writer who writes artistic fiction that raises open-ended questions about important issues. Ivan represents the writer in the middle, who is perhaps so concerned with his message that it threatens to overpower his artistry.

Historical Context

Russia in the 1860s and 1870s was in a great upheaval. Its ruler, Tsar Alexander II, had negotiated the end of the Crimean War in 1856, ending four years of conflict between Russia and an alliance comprising England, France, Sardinia and Turkey. Russia, at the time one of the greatest powers in Europe, had wanted to seize control of the Balkans and other territory that had been controlled by Turkey, but had been stopped temporarily by Turkey and her allies. Although the war was over, the "Eastern Question" still loomed over the region, and Russia still wanted to acquire access to the Mediterranean Sea, and to expand the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. As part of the settlement that ended the Crimean War, Turkey agreed to enhanced tolerance for Christians within its borders.

In 1861, Alexander began a series of dramatic social reforms. Until that year, about one third of the population of Russia were serfs, or indentured servants who worked for a landowner. They were not slaves, but not entirely free either. Dostoevsky's father had almost one hundred serfs attached to his country estate; they received accommodations and a share of the land's yield in exchange for manual labor. Alexander issued the Emancipation Edict of 1861, abolishing the system of serfdom, freeing all the serfs, and requiring landowners to make land available for the serfs to purchase. Alexander also weakened his own power, introducing *zemstvo*, a modest form of self-government similar to a local assembly. The *zemstvo* organized and controlled local institutions including health care and education, and elected representatives to a regional body.

These reforms led to chaos and confusion, as well as to real improvements in the lives of many people. As the former serfs struggled to succeed in the new political and economic climate, the wealthy and the educated minority protested the destabilization and the erosion of their own influence. Fearful of losing his own power, Alexander II grew more conservative, causing further confusion.

Dostoevsky and others believed that autocratic rule, or government by one tsar (also spelled czar), was necessary and right. They called for a return to the old system of an established peasant class, a single authority, and a central role for the Orthodox Church. By the end of the 1870s, repression had grown and had been countered with the formation of terrorist groups whose goal was the assassination of Alexander. In 1880, dynamite was exploded in the Winter Palace where Alexander was expected to be. Alexander was not harmed, but dozens of others were hurt, and ten guards were killed. Other attempts followed.

It was in this climate that *The Brothers Karamazov* was written and published. In *The Russian Dagger: Cold War in the Days of the Czars*, Virginia Cowles quotes Dostoevsky telling the edi tor of the Russian *Times* "that tragedy was in the air. 'You said that there had been some clairvoyance in my *Brothers Karamazov* ... Wait till you have the sequel ... I shall make my pure Aliosha join the terrorists and kill the Czar.'" Two months later Alexander was assassinated in another explosion at the Palace. Two more

repressive tsars followed before the Russian Revolution overthrew tsarist government in 1917.

Critical Overview

When *The Brothers Karamazov* was serialized in the *Russian Herald* in 1879 and 1880, it won high praise, and finally earned Dostoevsky enough to pay off his debts for the first time. He considered the novel his greatest work, and critics have generally echoed this sentiment over the past century and more. Although Dostoevsky died just a few months after the completion of the novel, at the height of his acclaim, his reputation in Russia declined in the generation after his death, and his international reputation had to wait decades to become established. *The Brothers Karamazov* was first translated into English by Constance Garnett in 1912; other translations have since been published. The first English publication of "The Grand Inquisitor" as a separate short story did not appear until the 1930s.

The story has tended to divide critics sharply. The first important English-language piece of criticism of "The Grand Inquisitor" was by the British writer D. H. Lawrence, who had read the novel twice previously. His "Preface to Dostoevsky's *The Grand Inquisitor*" (1930) in *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays*, finds in the story a "final and unanswerable criticism of Christ." The antithesis is the view expressed by Jacques Catteau in *Dostoevsky: New Perspectives*. Catteau claims that "Dostoevsky's indictment of his Grand Inquisitor would indeed seem grave and without appeal."

Lawrence argues that in the confrontation between Jesus and the Inquisitor, the Inquisitor is wise and intelligent. At the end of the story, Lawrence says, "Jesus kisses the Inquisitor: Thank you, you are right, wise old man!" Robert Belknap disagrees in *Modern Critical Views: Fyodor Dostoevsky*, calling the kiss "obviously a blessing; it burns in the Inquisitor's heart as holy things do in this novel.... Here, in a single kiss, the most absolute and most appealing part of the Grand Inquisitor's exploit becomes an empty, unnecessary gesture." William Leatherbarrow describes the kiss in *Fedor Dostoevsky* as a "kiss of forgiveness."

Lawrence's view that Dostoevsky uses the story to explain Jesus's failings is widely echoed by Russian critics, including Leo Shestov and V. Rozanov. Edward Wasiolek asserts that "we know that Lawrence's interpretation is not what Dostoevsky intended," but he finds some delight in the fact that "the revolt of so many distinguished readers against Dostoevsky's conscious intention is, whatever else, a testimony to the force and persuasiveness with which Dostoevsky was able to state the other case."

An interesting third possibility is offered by Robert Lord in *Dostoevsky: Essays and Perspective*. He writes that "Dostoevsky never intended the reader to select one or the other alternative," and continues, "Dostoevsky is continually hinting that solutions are to be resisted at all costs. There are mere temptations; like Christ's temptations in the wilderness, so aptly described by Ivan Karamazov's Grand Inquisitor."

In addition to highlighting the central critical question of the story, Lawrence's preface also introduces the central difficulty with criticism of the short story. Even critics who attempt to discuss only the legend of the Grand Inquisitor tend to do so in the context of

the novel as a whole, or to bring in material from Dostoevsky's other works. Lawrence, for example, answers the question "Who is the grand Inquisitor?" with "it is Ivan himself." He continues, "Ivan is the greatest of the three brothers, pivotal. The passionate Dmitri and the inspired Alyosha are, at last, only offsets to Ivan." Comments like these are meaningless to readers who encounter "The Grand Inquisitor" as a separate story.

Ralph Matlaw, in an introduction in *Notes from Underground and The Grand Inquisitor*, an edition of the extracted story, saw his own project as in some ways doomed. "To lift it from its context is to distort its meaning, for it too is a highly revealing confession by a character and is elsewhere in the novel balanced by other confessions, statements, attitudes and actions.... 'The Grand Inquisitor' is a much richer and fuller episode when read in the novel than it can be here." But whether or not they believe the story can be removed from the novel successfully, critics have agreed that, as Bruce Ward stated in *Dostoevsky's Critique of the West* (1986), the legend "can be regarded as the culmination ... of his religious and political thought—his 'final statement' concerning the question of human order." Perhaps the sign of Dostoevsky's genius is that there is still room for intelligent readers to disagree about the meaning of that "final statement."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5
- Critical Essay #6

Critical Essay #1

Bily teaches English at Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan. In this essay, she discusses the meanings of speech and silence in "The Grand Inquisitor."

The central conflict in "The Grand Inquisitor" is between the Inquisitor himself and his prisoner, Jesus. On the surface, it is a one-sided battle. The Inquisitor does literally all the talking, making accusation after accusation while Jesus refuses to defend himself. Perhaps "refuses" is the wrong word, for it implies a level of engagement that does not seem to be there. Jesus does not refuse to speak in his own defense; he simply does not do so. He sits in silence, he listens intently; no one says the Grand Inquisitor refuses to be silent. The two "speak" different languages, one of talk and one of action, one of thinking and one of knowing.

As Jesus walks on earth he encounters many who speak the Inquisitor's language, but he will not speak it. The contrast from the moment he appears is sharp. Jesus comes softly: "He moves silently in their midst with a gentle smile of infinite compassion. The sun of love burns in his heart, light and power shine from his eyes, and their radiance, shed on the people, stirs their hearts with responsive love. He holds out His hands to them, blesses them, and a healing virtue comes from contact with him, even with His garments." The people around him do not move softly, but remarkably loudly. They "sing and cry hosannah," "the crowd shouts," "the mother of the dead child throws herself at His feet with a wail" before she "cries" out. Jesus responds by uttering the only words he speaks in the entire story: "He looks with compassion, and His lips once more softly pronounce, 'Maiden, arise!'"

How seemingly alike and yet how different when the Grand Inquisitor arrives on the scene. He too is silent, and he too gets a strong reaction from the crowd. He merely "holds out his finger and bids the guard take him. And such is his power, so completely are the people cowed into submission and trembling obedience to him, that ... in the midst of deathlike silence they lay hands on Him and lead Him away. The crowd instantly bows down to the earth ... before the old inquisitor. He blesses the people in silence and passes on." Both Jesus and the Inquisitor move among the people and bless them in silence. But only Jesus's presence "stirs their hearts with responsive love"; only his blessing yields "a healing virtue."

Of course, there is no great insight in concluding that Jesus is divine and the Inquisitor is not. The tension that I find interesting is in the uses both make of silence and speech. Jesus is a man of action. He does not ask the people for anything, he does not tell them anything, he simply walks among them smiling and touching. Is this all he has come for? Yes. He has come to demonstrate Christianity as a robust, active faith, not as an issue for logical debate. His only words, "Maiden, arise," are the words that are the action, that work the miracle.

Although like the crowd he cannot help talking to Jesus himself, the Inquisitor at first welcomes Jesus's silence: "Don't answer, be silent. What canst Thou say, indeed? I

know too well what Thou wouldst say. And Thou has no right to add anything to what Thou hast said of old." The Inquisitor comes back to this point again, insisting that Jesus has no right to speak. It is an odd thing to insist, as Ivan points out, especially since Jesus shows no sign of wishing to say anything. It is the technique of a debater, and perhaps one who is not sure he is right.

After a while, Jesus begins to make the Inquisitor nervous. He interrupts his long monologue three times to draw attention to Jesus's silence. "Were we right teaching them this? Speak!" But Jesus does not reply. "And why dost Thou look silently and searchingly at me with Thy mild eyes? Be angry." Again, no response. "Who is most to blame for their not knowing [the value of complete submission]? Speak!" Nothing. Within his speech the Inquisitor has already anticipated Jesus's reply which is no reply. He reminded Jesus that he did not "come down from the Cross when they shouted to Thee, mocking and reviling thee." As the Inquisitor knows, Jesus does not respond to verbal bullying. The Inquisitor also knows that he is not persuading his audience, he knows he is only trying to convince himself, but he cannot stop talking. With the crowd, with his inferiors, he can use silence as a tool of power, but with Jesus he is as weak and babbling as those he despises. There is no sense throughout the monologue that Jesus is cowering. Clearly his silence is a sign of power.

The word "babbling" is appropriate here, because it echoes a favorite image of the Inquisitor's: the tower of Babel. The Old Testament book of Genesis tells the story of Noah's descendants, who wandered until they came to Babylonia. Skilled at brickwork, they set to building a great tower, the highest structure ever made. God saw this structure as a sign of arrogance, and to punish the people he created the different languages so that the people could no longer speak to each other, thus preventing the completion of the tower. The Grand Inquisitor states that men need structures, and that they cannot help but create chaos and confusion. He does not understand why Jesus did not step in when he might "have prevented that new tower and have cut short the sufferings of men for a thousand years."

"By their fruits ye shall know them," says Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, and the fruit of the Grand Inquisitor is speech. Even the name by which he is known, "Inquisitor," means one who inquires, one who asks questions and gets answers and hopes to find the truth in the words. Dostoevsky chose the Spanish Inquisition for his setting because the Inquisition demonstrates most clearly how language and speech can be used wrongly to serve the Faith. It is not simply that the Grand Inquisitor is saying the wrong things; the fact that he relies on argument at all in the presence of his Lord is a sign that he does not understand what faith is.

This is what Ivan means when he says that it does not matter whether the Inquisitor was truly speaking to Jesus or not. The Inquisitor reveals himself by the *fact* of speaking, of thinking that rationality and argumentative speech are the ways to reach God. Ivan says, "All that matters is that the old man should speak out, should speak openly of what he has thought in silence for ninety years." The content of his speech is not important. "All that matters is that the old man should speak out."

Nicholas Berdyaev, who claims that Dostoevsky "has played a decisive part" in his spiritual life, points to the importance of Jesus's silence in his 1957 book : "Christ is a shadowy figure who says nothing all the time; efficacious religion does not explain itself, the principles of freedom cannot be expressed in words; but the principle of compulsion puts its case very freely indeed. In the end, truth springs from the contradictions in the ideas of the Grand Inquisitor, it stands out clearly among all the considerations that he marshals against it. He argues and persuades; he is a master of logic and he is single-mindedly set on the carrying-out of a definite plan; but our Lord's silence is stronger and more convincing."

The Grand Inquisitor demands silence from his subjects, and they comply. But God does not want his people to be "cowed into submission and trembling obedience." Jesus asks his people to give up speech and logic because they do not need it, because he wants them to have real faith, not because they should not dare to speak. Jesus is silent before the Grand Inquisitor, but it is not a silence born of fear like the crowd's silence, and the Inquisitor knows it. The message of Jesus is beyond and above language: believe. Don't talk about it, don't reason it out logically. Words can fail you; they can deceive you. Have faith.

When the Grand Inquisitor runs out of words, he is desperate for Jesus to reply, but "his silence weighed down upon him. He saw that the Prisoner had listened intently all the time, looking gently in his face, evidently not wishing to reply. The old man longed for Him to say something, however bitter and terrible." He still wants Jesus to argue, to be angry. It is the only language he knows. But Jesus stays silent, the man of action not of speech. He stands and delivers that soft kiss, and earns an emotional, human response from the Inquisitor: the old man shudders. His long monologue has not affected Jesus at all, but he has been touched by the simple gesture.

The Grand Inquisitor condemns Jesus because he has not provided "miracle, mystery and authority," the three things people need in order to believe. But in fact Jesus has shown all three to the Inquisitor himself: miracle in raising the child from the dead, mystery in his silence which the Inquisitor cannot understand, and authority in kissing his accuser and walking away. By his speech and his inability to control it, the Inquisitor demonstrates that he is less than God, and that he does not have faith in God. By his control of speech, by his using it only to save the girl and not to condescend to argue with the Inquisitor, Jesus demonstrates his divine power and authority.

Source: Cynthia Bily, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Ward discusses "The Grand Inquisitor" as Dostoevsky's exposition of the his final Western formula—"The Pope—the leader of communism"—through the three temptations of Jesus in the Wilderness.

Dostoyevsky presents his definitive elucidation of the final Western social formula in "The Grand Inquisitor." This short writing, considered by him to be the "culminating point" of *The Brothers Karamazov*, can be regarded as the culmination also of his religious and political thought—his "final statement" concerning the question of human order. The importance which he attached to his critique of the West is perhaps most conclusively established by the fact that his final statement about human order is also his final statement about the West. The thought about human order contained in "The Grand Inquisitor" is of universal import. But clearly, for Dostoyevsky, this thought is at least initially inseparable from the consideration of the meaning of Western civilization. It can hardly be an accident that the universal themes of this writing, which represent the distillation of years of Dostoyevsky's thought about the "mystery of man," are expressed by a Western character. The Grand Inquisitor is, with minor exceptions, the only attempt at a portrayal of a non-Russian figure in Dostoyevsky's art. Dostoyevsky's willingness thus to risk the aesthetic effect of his "final statement" bears eloquent testimony to the significance which the question of the West held for him. Our concern with finding in "The Grand Inquisitor" an elucidation of the social formula—"The Pope—leader of communism"—will bring us inevitably into the presence of Dostoyevsky's timeless thought. The same concern, however, will determine the limits of our consideration of this thought, for this chapter does not pretend to plumb all the "fathomless depth" of "The Grand Inquisitor" which, as Nicholas Berdyaev maintains, has "never yet been properly explored."

The exposition of the final Western social formula is the primary concern of the Grand Inquisitor's monologue. Apart from this monologue, the only constituents of the writing itself are Ivan Karamazov's brief "literary introduction," and the silent figure of Christ. Ivan's authorship of "The Grand Inquisitor," and the presence within it of Christ, both serve to integrate it within *The Brothers Karamazov* as a whole. Yet although it thus points, on the one hand, to Ivan's "rebellion" against God and, on the other, to the Christian teachings of Father Zosima, "The Grand Inquisitor" can be approached, at least initially, as an independent writing. Ivan himself maintains that, with regard to the Inquisitor's monologue, "the only thing that matters is that the old man should speak out, that at last he does speak out and says aloud what he has been thinking in silence for ninety years." This assertion is made in response to Alyosha's question concerning the meaning of that silent presence to which the "old man" addresses himself, and it could serve equally as a response to the question of Ivan's own relation to "The Grand Inquisitor." It is my intention to heed Ivan's assertion by examining the Inquisitor's monologue first in isolation from the thought either of Ivan or of Father Zosima.

Before consideration of what is said in the monologue, note should be made of who, precisely, is speaking. The Grand Inquisitor, as Ivan points out in his "literary

introduction," is a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church in sixteenth-century Spain "during the most terrible time of the Inquisition, when fires were lighted every day throughout the land to the glory of God.... " He therefore embodies Roman Catholicism, not at the time of its apogee in the twelfth century, but at the time of its desperately militant attempt during the Counter-Reforma- tion to preserve itself by means of the Spanish sword. The Inquisitor, close to death at ninety years of age, stands near the end of Roman Catholic civilization in the West, and at the beginning of the modern quest for a new order. Though rooted in a particular time and place, the old man's vision extends in both directions to encompass the entire history of Western civilization, from the ancient Roman Empire to the new Rome which he anticipates after the fall of modern liberalism and socialism. "The Grand Inquisitor" is meant to be a teaching about Western civilization as a whole. And beyond this, it is meant to be a teaching about humanity as a whole, for the Inquisitor's fundamental concern is to articulate the social order which most closely corresponds to human nature. In this endeavour he looks to the history of the West for evidence of the truth of his teaching, and for an answer to the question of its realizability.

The Inquisitor sets his account of the best social order within the framework provided by the biblical account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-10). He claims that the "prodigious miracle" of the story of the three temptations lies in the fact that the questions posed in them should have appeared among men at all, particularly at such an early date in human history, for the posing of these questions evinces an insight into everything which is most fundamentally at issue in the problem of human order, an insight arrived at prior to the centuries of historical experience which have since borne it out:

If it were possible to imagine, 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 we had to rediscover, restore, and invent them afresh and that to do so we had to gather together all the wise men of the earth—rulers, high priests, scholars, philosophers, poets—and set them the task of devising and inventing three questions which would not only correspond to the magnitude of the occasion, but, in addition, express in three words, in three short human sentences, the whole future history of the world and of mankind, do you think that the entire wisdom of the earth, gathered together, could have invented anything equal in depth and force to the three questions which were actually put to you at the time by the wise and mighty spirit in the wilderness? From these questions alone, from the miracle of their appearance, one can see that what one is dealing with here is not the human, transient mind, but an absolute and everlasting one. For in those three questions the whole future history of mankind is, as it were, anticipated and combined in one whole and three images are presented in which all the insoluble historical ... contradictions of human nature all over the world will meet.

The Inquisitor's social formula is founded on his own interpretation of, and response to, the three "everlasting" questions posed to Christ in the wilderness. To him, each question reveals a fundamental truth about human nature—or, more precisely— a fundamental human need which is actually present in people and verifiable in their

historical experience. The only order which can be considered final is that order which satisfies the three basic human needs articulated in the temptations.

The Inquisitor's elaboration of his social formula proceeds in terms of the three human needs revealed in the temptations. This elaboration, however, assumes his recognition of one primal human need, which determines his interpretation of the others. Note must be taken of this chief need, or "torment," of humanity which constitutes the unifying theme of the Inquisitor's discourse. This need, of "every man individually and of mankind as a whole from the beginning of time," is the need for order itself. We have seen that in Dostoyevsky's thought the need for order is tantamount to the need for a religion, in the broadest and yet most literal meaning of a "binding together." This teaching is reflected in the Inquisitor's assertion that "man's universal and everlasting craving ... can be summed up in the words 'whom shall I worship?'" The need for religion inevitably becomes, according to the Inquisitor, the yearning for a common religion, for the existence of differing reverences casts doubt upon all of them:

It is this need for *universal* worship that is the chief torment of every man individually and of mankind as a whole from the beginning of time. For the sake of that universal worship they have put each other to the sword. They have set up gods and called upon each other, 'Give up your gods and come and worship ours, or else death to you and to your gods!' And so it will be to the end of the world, even when the gods have vanished from the earth: they will prostrate themselves before idols just the same.

According to the Inquisitor, the primal human yearning for order has never enjoyed complete and permanent satisfaction because the great movers of humankind have not been unanimous in according it the recognition it deserves. Throughout history the Caesars have been opposed by the Christs, who have placed freedom higher than the need for order. In their sanctioning of the free individual in separation from the mass, the preachers of freedom (encompassed symbolically for the Inquisitor in the figure of Christ) have repeatedly encouraged disorder. The Inquisitor accuses these preachers of behaving as though they hated human beings and wished to mock them, or, at best, as though they were blithely indifferent to the most elementary facts of human life. Surely those who truly love human beings would recognize and make provision for the fact that they suffer from disorder as from a disease—a disease which they are too weak to endure for the sake of freedom.

The Inquisitor interprets the entire history of the West in terms of the struggle between the advocates of order and the advocates of freedom, between those who take human beings as they actually are and those who estimate them too highly. According to his interpretation, the ancient world was just within sight of success in its Herculean attempt at a permanent solution to the problem of order when it was undermined by Christ's affirmation of personal freedom. It had been the enormous accomplishment of Roman Catholicism to salvage what remained of the ancient order, and on this basis to re-integrate the isolated individual within a "Christian civilization":

"Was it not you who said so often in those days, 'I shall make you free?' But now you have seen those 'free' men," the old man adds suddenly with a pensive smile. "Yes, this

business has cost us a great deal," he goes on, looking sternly at him, "but we've completed it at last in your name. For fifteen centuries we've been troubled by this freedom, but now it's over and done with for good."

For fifteen centuries the West had been in fragments, but it had finally become whole again thanks to the Roman Catholic reconciliation of Rome with Christ. This wholeness, however, was to be of short duration. Turning towards the future, the Inquisitor anticipates with foreboding the dissolution of Roman Catholic order in the series of events being initiated in his own time by the "dreadful new heresy" which had arisen in the "north of Germany." He does envisage, beyond this period of chaos, a renewed attempt at order; but he prophesies that this attempt will be futile unless and until the variants of liberal-socialist thought which will inform it give way before his social formula. Although he considers his formula to be the best for all human beings at all times, he clearly thinks that its actualization is most likely in the modern West, in the aftermath of the internecine struggle between bourgeois liberalism and political socialism. Addressing in the figure of Christ all the teachers of freedom, he nevertheless proposes his formula particularly in opposition to the Christ who is the "great idealist" of Geneva thought.

It is evident that the Inquisitor's social formula is founded, not only on the conviction of the primacy of the human need for order, but also on the conviction that the satisfaction of this need is incompatible with the affirmation of freedom. The dissonance of freedom and order is sounded throughout his discourse. However, it is important to recognize (as Alyosha does) that the Inquisitor's opposition of freedom to order stems from a particular understanding of freedom. For the Inquisitor, as for Geneva thought, the affirmation of freedom is synonymous with the affirmation of the individual as a separate "conscious will," as an isolated being endowed with reason and will. Yet the Inquisitor does not share the Geneva hope that the separate individual can be re-integrated within the social union through the mediatory power of love. Because freedom and social cohesion are ultimately antithetical, freedom is an intolerable burden for humanity: "nothing has ever been more unendurable to man and to human society than freedom! ... I tell you man has no more agonizing anxiety than to find someone to whom he can hand over with all speed the gift of freedom with which the unhappy creature is born." The Inquisitor maintains that freedom, though intolerable, is a fact of life which cannot simply be abolished. It can, however, be transferred into the hands of a few rulers who will exact from the majority of humanity absolute obedience in all things large and small, thereby granting them the order for which they yearn. A final solution to the problem of order is possible for the Inquisitor only on the basis of the positing of a radical inequality among human beings. Dostoyevsky has him state this inequality most explicitly in the rough notes for the novel: "But the strengths of mankind are various. There are the strong and there are the weak."

The Inquisitor's attribution to human beings of a fundamental need for order is therefore subject to a decisive qualification: there are those, inevitably a minority, who are strong enough to renounce the satisfaction of this need. The existence of two sorts of human beings can militate against order when the strong demand comparable strength from the weak, as did the "great idealist," Jesus. But when the strong are also

compassionate, then the most complete order becomes possible. The "millions and scores of thousands of millions" of the weak, anxious to surrender the conscious will which alienates them from the spontaneous life of complete social integration, will be able to place their freedom in the hands of the "great and strong" who consent to "endure freedom and rule over them.... " The appeal to an evident inequality along human beings by way of justifying the absolute rule of a minority of free individuals over the mass of humanity, who are equal only in their slavery and free only because they gratefully accept the assurance of their rulers that they are free, recalls Shigalyov's scientific reinterpretation of the Geneva idea. Unlike the taciturn Russian, however, the Spanish cardinal is more than willing to elaborate his formula for the only earthly paradise possible for human beings.

Critical Essay #3

The first temptation to which Christ was subjected is interpreted by the Inquisitor as follows:

And do you see the stones in this parched and barren desert? Turn them into loaves, and mankind will run after you like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though forever trembling with fear that you might withdraw your hand and they would no longer have your loaves. But you did not want to deprive man of freedom and rejected to offer, for, you thought, what sort of freedom is it if obedience is bought with loaves of bread?

The rejection of the loaves constitutes a rejection of the first, and most self-evident, of the three principal means whereby individuals can be re lieved of their burdensome freedom—for in this first temptation is revealed the truth that the weak will give up the prerogative of individual freedom to those who assure them that this prerogative is merely a chimera, that the real concern of human life is the multiplication and satisfaction of natural needs. According to the Inquisitor, "heavenly bread"—synonymous with such notions as the right to "freedom," or "moral responsibility," or the "spiritual dimension" of human life—cannot compare in the eyes of the weak with "earthly bread." This preference has its source in the fundamental need of human beings for at least the minimum satisfaction of their natural inclinations, for the minimum protection from hunger, cold, and the numbing hopelessness of material poverty. Despite the obviousness of this need, its strength has repeatedly been underestimated by the preachers of heavenly bread. Yet can the offer of heavenly bread have any impact upon people who are subject to the tyranny of unsatisfied natural desires? This is the question posed in the first temptation.

Those strong enough for the most inflexible disciplining of their inclinations by the conscious will may perhaps be able to contemplate virtue while suffering the pangs of hunger; but there still remain the weak, "numerous as the sand of the sea," who cannot ignore their pain. According to the Inquisitor, it is terribly unjust to add to the suffering of the majority of humanity the additional burden of moral guilt because of their preference for earthly bread. The "great idealists" are all too quick to condemn precisely where they should show compassion. Those who love human beings with a genuine love will not condemn them for a yearning too strong to struggle against, but will attempt to alleviate their suffering by satisfying this yearning. The Inquisitor thus stands with those who declare: "Feed them first and then demand virtue of them!" The meaning of this declaration is elaborated by Dostoyevsky himself in a letter in which he discusses explicitly the first temptation:

Rather than go to the ruined poor, who from hunger and oppression look more like beasts than like men, rather than go and start preaching to the hungry abstention from sins, humility, sexual chastity, wouldn't it be better to *feed* them first? ... give them *food* to save them; give them a social structure so that they always have bread and order—and then speak to them of sin—Command then that henceforth the earth should bring forth without toil, instruct people in such science or instruct them in such an order, that

their lives should henceforth be provided for. Is it possible not to believe that the greatest vices and misfortunes of man have resulted from hunger, cold, poverty, and the impossible struggle for existence?

Those self-styled teachers of humanity who have evinced an apparent indifference to the enormous suffering which material poverty has inflicted and continues to inflict upon the vast majority of their fellow beings are accused by the Inquisitor of exhibiting a dire lack of commonsense, or worse, a reprehensible severity.

Although the first temptation discloses a truth which is "absolute and everlasting," it anticipates also the "future history of mankind," for the issue which it raises was to be especially predominant in a certain epoch of history. The Inquisitor, present at the barely discernible incipience of this epoch, foresees the full course of its development:

You replied that man does 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 join battle with you and conquer you, and all will follow him, crying 'Who is like this beast? He have given us fire from heaven!' Do you know that ages will pass and mankind will proclaim in its wisdom and science that there is no crime and, therefore, no sin, but that there are only hungry people. 'Feed them first and then demand virtue of them!'—that is what they will inscribe on their banner which they will raise against you and which will destroy your temple.

The historical epoch anticipated here is that of the modern West. The allusion to Prometheus (whom Marx regarded as "the foremost saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar") indicates perfectly the Inquisitor's understanding of the spirit of Western modernity as a rebellion against the insubstantial, otherworldly notion of heavenly bread on behalf of the tangible, earthly need of those who suffer here and now. The traditional Christianity which the Inquisitor himself represents must face the consequences of its failure to accord sufficient recognition to actual human suffering: "we shall again be persecuted and tortured.... "After tearing down the Roman Catholic "temple," the modern rebels will embark upon the construction of an alternative order: "A new building will rise where your temple stood, the dreadful Tower of Babel will rise up again.... "

The builders of the new Tower of Babel are not named, but in the letter previously quoted Dostoyevsky specifies the historical movement alluded to by the Inquisitor:

Here is the first idea which was posed by the evil spirit to Christ. Contemporary socialism in Europe ... sets Christ aside and is first of all concerned with bread. It appeals to science and maintains that the cause of all human misfortune is poverty, the struggle for existence and an oppressive environment.

Socialism is thus specified as the most effective historical embodiment of the Promethean attempt to alleviate the suffering of the "millions, numerous as the sand of the sea" who hunger for the earthly bread which has been denied them. According to Dostoyevsky, the compassion of socialism for human suffering is combined with an

understanding of suffering as ultimately material in origin, as the consequence of "poverty, the struggle for existence and an oppressive environment." Despite the apparent nobility of its intentions, then, socialism inevitably develops into a form of political materialism. The modern Western rebellion against Roman Catholic order in the name of earthly suffering culminates in the materialism of communism and its rival, bourgeois liberalism. The Inquisitor thus anticipates, not only the destruction of Roman Catholic order, but also the overcoming of the Geneva idea by the appeal to earthly bread.

The ultimate insufficiency of any order which fails to protect the mass of humanity from "hunger, cold, poverty, and the impossible struggle for existence" is painfully demonstrated for the Inquisitor in the imminent breakdown of Roman Catholic civilization. The future practical success of modern political materialism will constitute an indisputable lesson concerning the crucial place which material need occupies in human existence. The final triumph of socialism over its liberal rival will indicate that it has learned this lesson more thoroughly and has demonstrated a superior capacity for distributing bread equitably and efficiently. Nevertheless, in the face of the lesson concerning humanity's need for earthly bread, the Inquisitor reaffirms the primacy of the need for order and, evaluating socialism in terms of this need, he finds it deficient. He certainly does not deny that materialism is capable of functioning as a religion; indeed, he acknowledges that earthly bread may well be the most incontestable object of worship which can be offered to humanity. What could be more evident to the perception, and the inclination, of the masses than natural satisfactions? The meaning of earthly bread is obvious, and it enjoins no troublesome chastisement of natural inclination for the sake of some obscure "spiritual destiny." Rather than setting the conscious will against natural impulses, the religion of earthly bread encourages human beings to exercise the will only insofar as it serves these impulses. The conse consequent atrophying of the conscious will can only facilitate the overcoming of isolation and the individual's re-integration within the social unit.

Yet despite his acknowledgment of the primal appeal of earthly bread, the Inquisitor judges it to constitute an inferior idea of life, ultimately incapable of satisfying the human need for order. The futility of the modern attempt to found a new order on the universal satisfaction of material needs will finally become inescapably clear: "No science will give them bread so long as they remain free.... They will, at last, realize themselves that there cannot be enough freedom and bread for everybody, for they will never, never be able to let everyone have his fair share." Those who would give humanity "fire from heaven" will be compelled to recognize that the universal and fair distribution of bread will never be realized in a society which has not completely overcome individual freedom. For inevitably there will be those who, unwilling to attune their desires to the collective, will demand more than their "fair share" of life's goods. What could induce these more strongly desiring individuals to "make a sacrifice" for the whole? The inadequacy of political materialism is manifest for the Inquisitor in its inability to furnish a conclusive answer to this question. The socialist argument that competitive individualism is itself a product of the socio-economic environment is ultimately no more than wishful thinking. For the available evidence concerning the "always vicious and

always ignoble race of man" does not encourage hope for a flowering of human goodness within a more "rational" environment.

The inability of socialism to secure the compliance of every conscious will in the social union necessarily implies the failure, not only to distribute bread effectively among human beings, but also to give them the order which they desire above all. The Inquisitor thus adds a significant qualification to his initial declaration that human obedience can be bought with bread. In summoning up the spectre of the rebellious individual against the new Tower of Babel, he asserts that any renunciation of individual freedom called forth by the need for material satisfaction can only be temporary. To assume that the alienated individual will be reconciled to the collective through a certain transformation of external material structures is to fail to penetrate to the roots of humanity's attachment to the conscious will. The builders of the modern Tower of Babel do not grasp the significance of human freedom, and will thus never be able to possess it. They will break their hearts "for a thousand years" with their tower, without being able to complete it.

For the Inquisitor, the truth of modern political materialism lies in its profound appreciation of the need for earthly bread. Its fatal error lies in its disregard of the continuing need for heavenly bread. Communism is correct in inscribing on its banner- "Feed them first and then demand virtue of them!"- but its tendency to concentrate on the first part of this slogan to the exclusion of the second betrays an incomplete understanding of human nature. Thus, while castigating the "great idealists" for their failure to heed the teaching about human order expressed in the first temptation, the Inquisitor nevertheless acknowledges the ultimate validity of their refusal to uphold earthly bread as humanity's highest end:

With the bread you were given an incontestable banner: give him bread and man will worship you, for there is nothing more incontestable than bread; but if at the same time someone besides yourself should gain possession of his conscience—oh, then he will even throw away your bread and follow him who has ensnared his conscience. You were right about that. For the mystery of human life is not only in living, but in knowing why one lives. Without a clear idea of what to live for man will not consent to live and will rather destroy himself than remain on the earth, though he were surrounded by loaves of bread.

Earthly bread is necessary, but it is not suffi- cient, for the final solution to the problem of order. Human beings can be finally relieved of the burden of their freedom only if the distributors of the loaves satisfy another human need-the need for a "moral enticement." This need and the means by which it can be met are explicated in the course of the Inquisitor's interpretation of the second temptation.

Critical Essay #4

"Man is born a rebel." According to the Inquisitor, the primary source of this "rebelliousness" is the insistence of human beings on regarding themselves as something more than the product of nature. The striving to transcend the limitations of natural necessity expresses itself particularly in the tendency to measure human existence against an ultimate good. In spinning its fine web of necessity around human beings, socialism forgets their insistent need to know that what is necessary can also be called "good." And if they cannot affirm the goodness of the order which provides them with bread, then they will finally reject this order and its bread, whatever the consequences for their natural wants. Against the modern Tower of Babel, then, the Inquisitor asserts the human propensity for making moral distinctions. Whether or not human beings are in truth entirely a product of chance and necessity, they are in fact beings who insist on perceiving themselves as something more. This tendency seems so deeply rooted as to be impervious to any amount of re-education according to the laws of "utility" and "necessity." Insofar as people tend, not only to make moral distinctions, but to insist on making these distinctions for themselves, their propensity for moral judgment is intimately associated with the assertion of the individual conscious will. The "conscious will" can thus be more precisely designated the "conscience." For the Inquisitor the personal conscience is the mainspring of human freedom. Those who understand human freedom as directed primarily towards natural, rather than moral, ends will never be able to possess it.

According to the Inquisitor, the personal conscience has been no less important than the desire for earthly bread in inspiring that rebelliousness which has undermined human order throughout history. The nearly complete order of antiquity was doomed when the individual began to reject the "strict ancient law" in order to "decide for himself with a free heart what is good and what is evil" (a movement associated above all with the names of Socrates and Jesus). The ensuing moral chaos had been alleviated by Roman Catholicism's massive effort to establish a solid morality which defined good and evil clearly for all. But the Inquisitor perceives, in the "dreadful new heresy" of Luther appearing in his own time, a renewed assertion of the personal conscience which can only issue in another epoch of moral chaos. He knows that the personal conscience will resist the threat of fire with which the Roman Catholic order vainly defends itself, and he knows that it will finally resist also the offer of earthly bread with which the builders of the modern Tower of Babel will attempt to tame it. These builders ignore at their peril the depth of the human attachment to the conscience. Like the yearning for material goods, this attachment is an "eternal problem" which centuries of historical experience have made impossible to ignore, at least for those who are genuinely and intelligently concerned with human happiness.

This "eternal problem" does admit of a solution, according to the Inquisitor. Despite his appreciation of the obduracy of the personal conscience, he insists still on the primacy of the human desire for order. His conviction that human beings ultimately wish to be induced to give up their freedom remains unshaken. For him, the proper estimation of the personal conscience is merely the prerequisite for capturing it: "whoever knows this

mystery of mankind's existence knows how to go about subduing him, and who can, subdues him." The "mystery" of the conscience is that "there is nothing more alluring to man than ... freedom of conscience"; at the same time, "there is nothing more tormenting, either." In this paradox resides the possibility of relieving human beings of their freedom.

According to the Inquisitor, human beings strive for an ultimate good only in order finally to attain to a condition of happy repose. When the longed-for tranquillity eludes them and the moral quest becomes a perpetual striving, then the personal conscience becomes a torment—particularly for the "thousands of millions" of the weak who lack the spiritual capacity to sustain the arduous struggle for final peace of mind. If there is indeed an ultimate end to the moral quest, surely knowledge of it will be vouchsafed only to the few thousand of the strong, who are more like gods than human beings. For the weak, the freedom of conscience which they find so alluring issues only in "unrest, confusion, and unhappiness.... " To the Inquisitor this is demonstrable from the historical experience of the West just as surely as is the tenacity with which humanity upholds the prerogative of the personal conscience. Gazing into a distant future in which the Protestant conscience has been translated through Geneva thought into the right of each individual to decide independently "with a free heart" what is good, the Inquisitor predicts that the mass of humanity will come to rue the day that simple acquiescence in the given morality of the Roman Catholic order was rejected:

They will pay dearly for it. They will tear down the temples and drench the earth with blood. But they will realize at last, the foolish children, that although they are rebels, they are impotent rebels who are unable to keep up with their rebellion. Dissolving into foolish tears, they will admit at last that he who created them rebels must undoubtedly have meant to laugh at them.

The Inquisitor does not claim that individuals will cease to be moral beings, for the need to make moral judgments is too deeply rooted. He thinks, however, that in the aftermath of the trials in store for them, human beings could be persuaded to relinquish the right to make such judgments for themselves, "with a free heart." Yet the sacrifice of personal conscience, which the modern individual will be only too willing to make, will be merely temporary unless it is accepted by those with the knowledge to hold it "captive for ever."

According to the Inquisitor, this knowledge is disclosed in the second temptation. The temptation, properly interpreted, not only reveals that human beings will surrender their freedom only to those who can fully appease their conscience, but reveals also the most effective means of appeasement:

There are three forces, the only three forces that are able to conquer and hold captive for ever the conscience of those weak rebels for their own happiness— these forces are: miracle, mystery, and authority. You rejected all three and yourself set the example for doing so. When the wise and terrible spirit set you on a pinnacle of the temple and said to you: '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.... '

The "rebels" have to be taught that the question of good is a "mystery" which must be believed rather than known, that it is not the "free verdict of their hearts nor love that matters, but the mystery which they must obey blindly, even against their conscience." Remembering the "horrors of slavery and confusion" to which a "free mind" brought them, they will gratefully accept the assurance that the ultimate good is inaccessible to human knowledge. The "authority" of those who preach the "mystery" will be confirmed, above all, by "miracles," or the appearance of miracles, for when freedom of conscience becomes too agonizing "what man seeks is not so much God as miracles." Human beings are ultimately unable to carry on without a miracle, so much so that even in the modern age which has banished miracles they will find new miracles for themselves and will worship the pseudo- miracles of the modern "witch-doctor."

The Inquisitor maintains that in Western history the preaching of "miracle, mystery, and authority" has come within the special province of the Roman Catholic Church. And he foresees no serious rival arising to contend with the traditional supremacy of Roman Catholicism in this matter. It would thus appear that when modern people begin to yearn for "miracle, mystery, and authority," they will have no choice but to return to that morality which they have spurned with such cavalier disregard for their own happiness. The Roman Catholic Church may again be compelled to hide itself in the catacombs; but the Inquisitor thinks it possible that the day will come when it will be sought out in its hiding place and asked to renew its possession of the human conscience. This time will come when humanity's striving after knowledge of good and evil becomes completely transformed into the directionless striving after knowledge for its own sake which is characteristic of modern science:

Freedom, a free mind and science will lead them into such a jungle and bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries that some of them, the recalcitrant and the fierce, will destroy themselves, others, recalcitrant but weak, will destroy one another, and the rest, weak and unhappy, will come crawling to our feet and cry aloud: 'Yes, you were right, you alone possessed his mystery, and we come back to you—save us from ourselves!'

The Inquisitor's social formula is based on his interpretation of the first two temptations. It can therefore now be stated in the following way: those who would rule over humanity for its happiness must be both distributors of "loaves" and preachers of "miracle, mystery, and authority." Properly interpreted, and regarded in the light of historical experience, the first two temptations reveal that people will ultimately consent only to an order which provides them with both earthly and heavenly bread. Only to rulers who simultaneously satisfy their physical and moral appetites will people relinquish forever their freedom for the sake of that social re-integration which is their most fundamental desire. Because it is based on two "eternal" or "everlasting" truths about human nature, the Inquisitor's social formula applies to human beings everywhere and always.

The very timelessness of the Inquisitor's formula, however, must inevitably render it more or less "abstract," despite his citing of concrete historical evidence for its validity. Yet "abstractness" implies a certain dissociation of theory and practice which the Inquisitor, of all people, must not admit. For he is concerned with the *actual* happiness

of human beings, a concern which leads him to refuse to ask too much of them and to found his social formula on human beings as they actually *are* rather than as they *ought* to be. The Inquisitor cannot remain content with a teaching which is the best in theory, though it may never be realized in practice. For him, this would be equivalent to siding with the "great idealists," who do not love humanity suffi- ciently. His entire enterprise requires that his social formula be realizable. The confident assurance with which he does anticipate the realization of his formula has its source in his interpretation of the third temptation.

Critical Essay #5

The third and last "torment" of humanity is the need for "universal unity," for the union of all in a "common, harmonious, and incontestable ant anthill.... " The Inquisitor avers that the human yearning for order will not be satisfied by the idea alone of an ultimate good, even when this idea is provided in conjunction with earthly bread, for human beings need also to give a practical living expression to the object of their belief, and they need to do so in unity with others. The unity sought is ultimately universal, for the co-existence of differing ideas of life tends to undermine the certainty of those who live by them. For the Inquisitor the human need for a universal order is not to be satisfied by the appeal (which Christianity, for instance, has made) to a universality which is "spiritual" in nature. The universality for which humanity has always yearned is a visible universality; therefore, in the Inquisitor's thinking, "universal" is synonymous with "world-wide" (or "ecumenic," as first defined by the Roman historian, Polybius). According to the Inquisitor, then, human beings require an actual world-wide social order corresponding to the "miracle, mystery, and authority" which they obey—an order, moreover, which grants them at least the minimal satisfaction of their material wants. This is to say that human beings will ultimately settle for nothing less than the realization, not merely in a dream but in actuality, of the Inquisitor's social formula.

The Inquisitor interprets the offer of the "kingdoms of the world" in the third temptation as the offer of the most powerful instrument for satisfying the human need for universal unity—the universal state. The universal state is the prime vehicle for the actualization of the social order ruled by keepers of humanity's conscience who are also distributors of its bread. History for the Inquisitor is important chiefly as the realm of the appearance and progressive development of this vehicle. (Indeed, his ecstatic certainty concerning the future realization of his final solution to the problem of order makes his view of history reminiscent of that modern Western "philosophy of history" developed from Vico to Marx.)

According to the Inquisitor, the dawn of history coincides with the first tentative efforts towards the construction of a universal order. The persistence with which human beings have moved towards the universal state, even in its most rudimentary form, reflects at least a half-conscious awareness of its importance for their happiness:

Mankind as a whole has always striven to organize itself into a world state. There have been many great nations with great histories, but the more highly developed they were, the more unhappy they were, for they were more acutely conscious of the need for the world-wide union of men. The great conquerors, the Timurs and Genghis Khans, swept like a whirl-wind over the earth, striving to conquer the world, but, though unconsciously, they expressed the same great need of mankind for a universal and world-wide union.

The work of the Timurs and the Genghis Khans is a striking manifestation of the human impulse towards the universal state; but, in them, this impulse remained merely unconscious, and hence failed to bear fruit. The conscious aspiration towards the construction of the universal state first appeared in the ecumenic empires of Persia,

Macedon, and Rome. The Inquisitor focuses upon the last as the culmination of ancient humanity's striving for universal unity.

Humanity had possessed, in the Roman Empire, a splendid and apparently "eternal" instrument for its happiness. Yet just when it seemed that the human struggle towards order had achieved final success, Rome was undermined by the rebellion of the personal conscience, which found its most effective vehicle in Christianity. Despite its aura of finality, the Roman state had failed to understand properly the moral dimension of human life. This failure condemned humanity to a thousand years of the disease of disorder. The external political and legal structures of Rome proved extraordinarily durable, however, even after the life had gone out of them; the "sword of Caesar" remained at hand for the use of new architects of world-wide order. In its attempt to have Christianity serve order rather than disorder, the Western church did not spurn this sword, and the accommodation which it reached with the remnants of the Roman state gave birth to that Roman Catholic order which was to define Western civilization for centuries. Although it evinced a more profound appreciation of the need for heavenly bread, Roman Catholic order was also to be finally undermined by the assertiveness of the personal conscience, and also by the attempt to alleviate the sufferings of material deprivation. But in its rejection of Roman Catholic civilization, the modern West has not repudiated the "sword of Caesar"; indeed, it apotheosizes the state—still fundamentally the universal state of Rome—and opposes it to any other instrument of human order. Because of its wholehearted adoption of the state, the modern West tends to overcome the divergence of loyalties once rendered inevitable by the uneasy compromise achieved in the Middle Ages between the Roman church and the Roman state. The modern state, moreover, in consciously founding itself solely on reason, is bound up with a science which holds out possibilities for the control of human and non-human nature beyond anything dreamt of in the past. For these reasons, the modern Western state must be regarded as the most effective instrument of social order that the world has yet seen. The "sword of Caesar" could prove, in its modern embodiment, to be more powerful than it ever was in ancient Rome or in medieval Europe. But who will wield this formidable instrument?

As we have already noted, the Inquisitor predicts that it is socialism which will finally inherit Caesar's sword. We have also noted, however, his expectation that the triumph of socialism will be short-lived unless it can offer humanity something more than earthly bread. Among the socialists there will be those sufficiently "scientific" to realize that the full compliance of the individual in the socialist order will require a "moral enticement." In order to preserve itself, socialism will at last be compelled to seek out preachers of "miracle, mystery, and authority." The Inquisitor thus foresees that the socialist state, following those driven to despair by the "jungle" into which freedom of conscience has led them, will turn to the Roman Catholic Church as the most practised adept in the realm of "miracle, mystery, and authority." This time, however, the alliance between church and state will be more complete than the compromise of the past allowed. The two will enter into the indivisible union expressed in the formula—"The Pope—leader of communism"—which is the outward historical expression of the Inquisitor's social theory. When socialism surrenders its highly organized system for the satisfaction of material needs into the hands of Roman Catholicism, then the keepers of humanity's

conscience will also be the distributors of its bread. The problem of social order will be at last solved in actuality. Human beings will finally come into possession of that yearned-for earthly paradise which has always eluded them:

And then we shall finish building their tower ... and we alone shall feed them in your name ... the flock will be gathered together again and will submit once more, and this time it will be for good. Then we shall give them quiet, humble happiness, the happiness of weak creatures, such as they were created.... They will grow timid and begin looking up to us and cling to us in fear as chicks to the hen. They will marvel at us and be terrified of us and be proud that we are so mighty and so wise as to be able to tame such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions. They will be helpless and in constant fear of our wrath, their minds will grow timid, their eyes will always be shedding tears like women and children, but at the slightest sign from us they will be just as ready to pass to mirth and laughter, to bright-eyed gladness and happy childish song.... And they will have no secrets from us.... The most tormenting secrets of their conscience-everything, everything they will bring to us, and we shall give them our decision for it all.... And they will all be happy, all the millions of creatures, except the hundred thousand who rule over them....

Source: Bruce K. Ward, "The Final Western Social Formula," in *Dostoyevsky's Critique of the West: The Quest for the Earthly Paradise*, Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1986, pp. 101-134.

Critical Essay #6

In the following essay, Pachmuss discusses Dostoevsky's concept of the dual heavenly and earthly nature of humankind as it is reflected in the Grand Inquisitor's three reproaches against Christ.

In Seeking To Reveal the tragedy of man as a dual being, Dostoevsky portrays the abnormal states of the psyche, all phenomena of which he considers manifestations of higher metaphysical realities. And an understanding of Dostoevsky's metaphysics of evil is necessary for one to discern the primal tragedy, which comes to the fore in his more mature works, particularly *The Brothers Karamazov*, where evil is expressed both in metaphysical and psychological terms. "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," an expression of Ivan Karamazov's rebellion against God, stands in close connection with Dostoevsky's earlier writings, for it discloses more of the concept of duality which underlies the works previously examined. It reflects Dostoevsky's lifelong study of man as a "mixture of the heavenly and the earthly," the problem which tormented his mind even when he was at the Military Engineers' Academy.

After the portrayal of man with inherent egocentricity, vanity, and other facets of his creaturely being, Dostoevsky arranges a trial, as it were, at which the Grand Inquisitor points out to Christ that God created man as the least perfect of all creatures. He burdened man with an animal being and so condemned him to continual suffering. The Grand Inquisitor appears as the defense counsel for man, the victim of God, Who has endowed him with a dual nature which man is too weak to bear with dignity. He elaborates his defense by showing that in most cases man either becomes a prey to his creaturely being or revolts against God. In neither of these instances does man strive for spiritual and moral perfection as should a creature made in the divine image. In the name of mankind, the Grand Inquisitor brings against Christ three charges. First of all, he states, man has earthly needs and a natural impulse to satisfy them. Man's freedom of spirit and the exercise of his will are impeded by these natural needs. How is it possible, the Grand Inquisitor asks, to reproach man with his efforts to maintain natural existence, an existence which requires, first and foremost, that his hunger be allayed? He rebukes Christ that He did not take from men the worry over their daily bread. As freedom of spirit can scarcely be reconciled with the natural needs of human beings, they abandon this freedom and say, "Make us your slaves, but feed us." The Grand Inquisitor says to Christ, "They themselves will understand at last that freedom and bread, enough for all, are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share among themselves." There are but few people who have enough strength to neglect their animal being for the sake of living for the spirit. "And, if for the sake of the bread of Heaven, thousands will follow Thee, what is to become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who have not the strength to forgo the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly?" the Grand Inquisitor proceeds. He believes that, had Christ freed men from the anxiety associated with their earthly needs, He would have lifted the burden of suffering which arises from the duality of human nature. Their question as to whom they should worship would then have been answered. Man,

relieved of this anxiety, would no longer doubt his Creator, for "man seeks to worship what is established beyond any dispute."

Man as a spiritual being, the Grand Inquisitor continues, needs worship as an expression of belief in immortality; but even if he succeeds in worshipping something "established beyond any dispute," he cannot be happy so long as he is devoid of the feeling of unity with humanity. This feeling of isolation deprives him of contentment with life. "The craving for *community* of worship is the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time," the Grand Inquisitor insists. Man's worry about his natural existence, however, forces him to struggle against his fellow men. Man is turned against man because they stand in a relationship similar to that of one animal toward another, each trying to seize the other's food. The animal is not disturbed by the question of whether or not this lies in the nature of universal laws, but man suffers under the law of the jungle, for it conflicts with his conscience. Had Christ freed men from the worry about their daily bread, He would also have freed them from this primitive state, and consequently from a stricken conscience: "And behold, instead of providing a firm foundation for setting the conscience of man at rest forever, Thou didst choose all that is exceptional, vague and enigmatic; Thou didst choose what was utterly beyond the strength of man, acting as if Thou didst not love him at all." The Grand Inquisitor considers that Christ demanded too much of man, and that His love for humanity was too uncompromising; it was directed toward man as he should be, and not as he is.

The second reproach of the Grand Inquisitor is that Christ withheld "miracle, mystery, and authority." Christ did not cast Himself down the mountain, nor did He descend from the cross. He submitted His body to the natural laws, for He did not want "to enslave man by a miracle." Man, however, a rebel by nature, will try to conquer these natural laws and rise above them, and a significant part of the tragedy of Dostoevsky's heroes lies in this struggle, for such attempts lead only to inevitable failure and spiritual pain. Raskolnikov strove to become a superman, stronger than that nature which condemned him to cling to his "flesh and lust." The Underground Man tried to run against "the wall of the laws of nature," although he knew full well the utter futility of his endeavor. Kirillov wanted, through suicide, to initiate the transformation of man into superman; and Ivan Karamazov, too, thought that he could disregard the laws of nature. All these attempts resulted only in suffering.

The Grand Inquisitor says to Christ, "Thou didst hope that man, following Thee, could cling to God and not ask for a miracle." Had Christ left the possibility of a miracle—a gap in the wall of nature— men would have followed Him, for "men are slaves, of course, though created rebels." Since the causal laws of nature exclude the miracle, man's faith grows weaker. Raskolnikov, dissatisfied with the social structure of the community—which is for him the consequence of causal laws—rages against God's creation and feels himself justified in attempting to improve it. The Underground Man, too, driven to desperation, tries to smash "the wall of the laws of nature." He cannot, in his state, be reconciled with God's creation or believe in Christ's love for man. Kirillov, who admired Christ's martyrdom, does not recognize the causal laws as ordained by God. He intends to free himself from subservience to them, and thus to point the way for

humanity through his suicide. In a determination to destroy God, he aims at making the world happy.

Dostoevsky considers the causal laws of nature to be an apparent antithesis to the spiritual aspect of God's creation. "The highest heavenly world," as Father Zosima terms it, or "the higher noble spirituality," in Dostoevsky's words, is in utter contradiction with the earthly laws to which all men are subjected, irrespective of their denial of God's existence. Therefore, the Grand Inquisitor tells Christ that while these causal laws prevail, a weak man believes his faith in God and his striving to "the higher spiritual world" to be futile. The Grand Inquisitor's fears are justified in the case of Raskolnikov, the Underground Man, and Smerdyakov, who are unable to accept the world— in which the scoundrel prospers and the righteous man perishes—as a creation of a kind and merciful God. From this viewpoint, the Grand Inquisitor maintains that a miracle or "a gap in the wall of the laws of nature" can give man a belief in God and immortality, a belief which is essential for his peace of mind. If Christ had left for man a belief in the possibility of a miracle, he would have acquired his faith undisturbed by doubt, he would have attained peace and happiness. The immutability of the causal laws not only reduces him to "the last and the least of creatures," but is also the reason that in the whole creation of God "the law of spiritual nature is ... violated." The Grand Inquisitor raises this violation as his second charge against Christ. Duality in the structure of the world makes man a wretched slave of the relentless laws of nature, a plaything in the hands of some all-powerful force. Out of compas sion for man, the Grand Inquisitor censures Christ for His failure to abolish through a miracle this painful duality.

As in the argument presented by Glaucon and Adeimantus in Plato's *Republic*, Dostoevsky's rebellious characters such as Raskolnikov, the Underground Man, and even Ivan Karamazov, are ready to worship and believe in God if they can be sure of a reward. The valet Smerdyakov is also prepared to revere God if he is to be rewarded for his faith. He arrives at the conclusion that, since he cannot bid his faith to move a mountain, Heaven will not esteem highly his religious feeling, "for since the mountain had not moved at my word, they cannot think very much of my faith in Heaven, and there cannot be a great reward awaiting me in the world to come. So why should I let them flay me alive as well, and to no good purpose?"; For Smerdyakov, thus, there is no virtue without a reward. Even old Karamazov is aroused at such an interpretation of the Christian faith. Raskolnikov has a similar view of Christianity. He believes Sonya actually out of her mind to worship God without a reward. He witnesses the ruin of her family and cannot understand that, regardless of this, she still entrusts herself to a God Who can permit such an injustice as her terrible and shameful position in the community. Raskolnikov asks himself, when he thinks of Sonya, the tragedy of her future and that of her family, "What is she waiting for? A miracle?" He believes she endures her hard life only in the expectation of a miracle, a reward from God for her firm religious faith.

On the death of Father Zosima, his followers also expect a miracle as recompense for his life of purity. When none takes place and his body begins to decompose in accordance with the laws of nature, even Alyosha is shaken and, through his sorrow, driven almost to sin. The followers have already forgotten Father Zosima's words on the

pure act of faith: "Children, seek no miracles. Miracles will kill faith." The Underground Man, too, denounces virtue without reward, and the noble-minded Ivan Karamazov's menial ego says to him, "Only those who have no conscience gain, for how can they be tortured by conscience when they have none? But decent people who have conscience and honor suffer for it." In despair, Ivan can only reply, "How could my soul beget such a creature as you?" whereupon the devil explains to him that this creature is the author of "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," and that the latter is the advocate for all such weaklings. The Grand Inquisitor is prepared to give man a longed-for miracle, since "man seeks not so much God as the miraculous," whereas Christ, craving "faith given freely," refused "to enslave men by a miracle."

The pawnbroker in "The Gentle Maiden" desires his wife's love "given freely," not based on compulsion. In this he resembles Christ in "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." The pawnbroker's wife, however, is too weak to measure up to such demands; in order to gain her confidence and love, her husband would have had to give her proof of his love for her, just as in "The Legend" Christ would have had to come down from the cross in order to win the love and faith of man. When the pawnbroker realizes that he was wrong in his expectations, he also grasps his wife's weakness. He, too, had rated her too highly, whereas she was only "a slave, even though rebellious by nature." Similarly, she revolted against her husband because he was a coward and a weakling. He should have shown her his power, or bribed her with love and compassion. Virtue without a reward did not exist for her any more than it existed for Golyadkin, Raskolnikov, and Ivan Karamazov.

The third reproach of the Grand Inquisitor is that Christ rejected the sword of Caesar and bequeathed to man a freedom in his decisions and actions, a freedom which will lead him to ruin. The Grand Inquisitor bitterly attacks Christ for His love, which has become a burden rather than a blessing for humanity: He has given men freedom of conscience for which they are too weak. He therefore says to Christ, "Hadst Thou accepted that last counsel of the mighty spirit, Thou wouldst have accomplished all that man seeks on earth, that is, Thou wouldst have given him someone to worship, someone to entrust his conscience to, and some means of unifying all into one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap."

The thought that man tries to shun all responsibility for the sins and actions which weigh heavily on his conscience was expressed by Dostoevsky for the first time in *The Double*. Golyadkin, when he can no longer manage his double, is willing to sacrifice his personal freedom for peace of mind. When he fails to achieve power and authority over others, he attempts to avoid self-reproaches by disclaiming the responsibility for his actions: "I look upon you, my benefactor and superior, as a father, and entrust my fate to you, and I will not say anything against your decisions; I put myself in your hands, and retire from the affair." He seeks someone to whom he can transfer the heavy burden of his conscience. In his anguish, he visualizes some magician who comes to him saying, "Give a finger from your right hand, Golyadkin, and we shall call it quits; the other Golyadkin will no longer exist, and you will be happy, only you will not have your finger." "Yes, I would sacrifice my finger," Golyadkin admits, "I certainly would!"

Men long to obey the one who can shoulder this encumbrance for them. "They will submit to us gladly and cheerfully," the Grand Inquisitor observes, "and they will be glad to believe our decisions, for it will save them from the great anxiety and terrible agony they endure at present in making a free decision for themselves." He believes that since man is continually torn between his spiritual and creaturely being, a freedom to govern his own decisions can only result in suffering. As man is weak and afraid of suffering, he will always seek someone whom he can make responsible for his actions.

Man's fear of assuming responsibility for his deeds prompts the Grand Inquisitor to relieve man of his duality by denying him conscience, "the greatest anxiety and terrible agony in making a free decision for himself." Once man is unburdened of this "terrible gift that has brought him so much suffering," he will rejoice and be happy. Christ's way of life has proven to be only for "the strong and elect," those who can cope with their freedom of conscience. Troubled by the thought of the weak ones, the Grand Inquisitor asks, "Are they to blame because they could not endure what the strong have endured? ... Canst Thou have come only to the elect and for the elect?" In their freedom of conscience, given to men by Christ, they are tormented by their sins, and, like Golyadkin, they would like to appeal to "a benefactor and superior," as if to a father who would free them from conscience and, by so doing, allow them to sin again. "Oh, we shall even allow them to sin; 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 done with our permission," the Grand Inquisitor promises Christ. If there is someone to accept responsibility for man's sin, his conscience will no longer suffer. If laws allow man to succumb to sins, he must have no feeling of guilt.

The Grand Inquisitor warns Christ that there are few elect people who can bear responsibility alone. "And besides," he proceeds, "how many of those elect, those mighty ones who could have become elect, have grown weary waiting for Thee, and have transferred and will transfer the power of their spirit and the ardor of their heart to the other camp, and end by raising their free banner against Thee." Raskolnikov has the strength to shoulder the responsibility for his murder and its consequences. However, even though filled with genuine Christian compassion and sympathy for the suffering and oppressed, he directs his strength against Christ for the sake of his "flesh and lust." A further revolt against Christ is Raskolnikov's wish to change Sonya's Christian state of mind—all enduring and sacrificial—into hatred toward her tormentors. The Grand Inquisitor refers to this attitude of Raskolnikov's in speaking of those who could have become the elect, but turned their free banner against Christ.

Svidrigaylov, Kirillov, Stavrogin, Versilov, and Ivan Karamazov also could have become elect, but they end in laying hands either on themselves or on others, raising in this way their free banner against Christ. With the exception of Kirillov, they are all slaves to the "coarse veil" of earth and the causal laws of nature against which they clamor so loudly. Even Kirillov, in the last minutes before suicide, is transformed from a man-god into a weakling through his subjection to the "earthly veil of matter."

In his logically developed argument the Grand Inquisitor has, however, missed one important possibility. He does not take into consideration the fact that these same

mutineers, if given the opportunity, can find their way back to Christ. Raskolnikov, who is prepared to suffer in atonement for his crime, finally becomes enlightened and, having won the battle against his base instincts, is now ready to raise the banner for Christ. As will be shown later, Dostoevsky implies that such conflicts in the human mind are necessary to determine the meaning of earthly life. The conflict between Raskolnikov's denial and Sonya's acceptance of divine justice is of this nature. But the Grand Inquisitor, even though he understands the purpose of these antitheses, refuses to accept them. This appears to be the reason that he can see only the dark side of the rebel's actions: his mutiny against God and Christ.

From the Grand Inquisitor's three charges against Christ, man's spiritual suffering is shown to have its roots in his freedom of conscience, and the only way of relieving man from the mental pain caused by his duality is to deny him this freedom, the Grand Inquisitor suggests, since freedom and happiness are for him incompatible. In freedom, man is a slave and a rebel at the same time; yet if he is deprived of freedom, he will remain only a slave, and the pain arising from his duality will be eliminated. Had the Grand Inquisitor succeeded in freeing man from his burden of conscience, he would have removed the main source of man's mental anguish and enabled those "millions of men," who are his chief concern, to live a quiet and peaceful life, without suffering, without the pricks of conscience, and without a struggle for existence. This condition can be achieved only by depriving man of his divine image and of his chance to live for the spirit.

"The roots of man's thoughts and feelings are not here, but in other worlds," insists Father Zosima. In taking from man freedom of conscience, the Grand Inquisitor would have also lost for him a connection with "other worlds." As Father Zosima maintains, "the spiritual world, the higher part of man's being, would then be rejected altogether and banished." This possibility does not perturb the Grand Inquisitor because he cannot believe in man's divine origin, as he does not believe in God. Alyosha Karamazov recognizes this clearly when he replies to Ivan, "Your Inquisitor does not believe in God, that's his whole secret!" But even the Grand Inquisitor himself fears that an animal existence will never suffice for man, since he admits. "The secret of man's being is not only to live, but to have something to live for. Without a steadfast faith in the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, but would rather destroy himself than remain on earth, though he had bread in abundance."

In order to satisfy man with an animal life, the Grand Inquisitor must delude him into a conviction of happiness. To achieve this, he intends to give man a purpose in life by supporting his inherent belief in immortality and God, and, with promises of heavenly and eternal reward, so lead him to a false sense of bliss. The exclusion of suffering, however, would mean the destruction of humanity, as Ivan himself explains to Alyosha: "One should accept lying and deception and lead man consciously to death and destruction; and yet one should deceive them all the way so that they may not notice where they are being led, that the poor blind creatures may at least, on the way, think themselves happy." Ivan himself, thus, admits that the happiness promised mankind by the Grand Inquisitor is only a deception, and in so doing he, even if involuntarily, sides

with Christ. This is plain to Alyosha, who exclaims, "Your poem is to praise Jesus, not to blame Him!'

The Grand Inquisitor, in denying man a link with the spiritual world, is determined to destroy human spirit and thought. Deprived of his divine origin, man will lose—in spite of the spurious notions of happiness provided by the Grand Inquisitor— the idea of God and personal immortality. He will view his life only as "a meaningless flash." There will be no further point to a life now devoid of all meaning; therefore no satisfaction will be left save in self-destruction, as it was with Svidrigaylov and Stavrogin. Dostoevsky explains this condition more fully in *The Diary of a Writer*:

If man loses his belief in immortality, suicide becomes an absolute and inevitable necessity.... But the idea of immortality, promising eternal life, binds man closely to the earth.... Man's belief in a personal immortality is the only thing which gives point and reason to his life on earth. Without this belief, his bond with the earth loosens, becomes weak and unstable; the loss of life's higher meaning—even if it is felt only as a most subconscious form of depression and ennui—leads him inevitably to suicide.

As Dostoevsky explicitly states, without a belief in personal immortality,

People will suddenly realize that there is no more life for them; that there is no freedom of spirit, no will, no personality; that someone has stolen everything from them; that the human way of life has vanished, to be replaced by the bestial way of life, the way of cattle, with this difference, however, that the cattle do not know that they are cattle, whereas men will discover that they have become cattle.... And then, perhaps, others will cry to God, "Thou art right, oh Lord! Man lives not by bread alone!"

The Grand Inquisitor, therefore, who contemplates the elimination of what he believes to be the principle of evil in the structure of the world, admits that he sides with Satan. "Listen," he addresses Christ, "we are not with Thee, but with *him*—that is our secret!" His intention will lead man to absolute evil: to death and destruction. The Grand Inquisitor realizes this, but he believes that his substitution of an acceptable myth for painful conscience will be justified, for he will secure for man the happiness denied him by his inability to accept the idea represented by Christ.

Dostoevsky clearly distinguishes this evil from that manifested in Ivan's hallucination of the devil, who says, "I am the 'X' in an equation with one unknown." It appears from this formulation that evil ending in suffering is an integral part of life just as the "X" is of such an equation. Suffering, for Dostoevsky, is not only inherent in man, but it provides the only spur toward a greater consciousness of reality, which in turn engenders the assertion of man's personality. Complete harmony on earth, therefore, is excluded by the existence of suffering. The world, as it is, must have suffering, and man must have his duality, and yet it is possible to strive for harmony on earth.

A dual force, in Dostoevsky's view, is indispensable for the whole of earthly existence. Life on earth is an incessant striving and must be stimulated by the operation of the two opposite forces of good and evil, which manifest themselves also in man as a part of the

universe. As Lebedev in *The Idiot* explains to Evgeny Pavlovich, "The laws of selfpreservation and self-destruction are equally powerful in humanity. The devil will maintain his domination over mankind for a period of time which is still unknown to us." The hypothesis that these impulses of self-preservation and self-destruction are a part of the dual and fundamental law of the universe which divert man from his "spiritual world" induces Lebedev to ascribe this law to the realm of the devil. But the impulse of self-preservation must be given its due, since it preserves earthly existence, even though it is one of destruction when considered in relation to the "spiritual world."

According to Dostoevsky, since man's physical nature hinders his independent thoughts and distorts his "spiritual world," there can be no paradise and no harmony so long as man must live under earthly conditions. Kirillov expresses a similar viewpoint in his conversation with Shatov: "There are seconds ... when you suddenly feel the presence of the eternal harmony perfectly attained. It is something not earthly—I do not mean in the sense that it is heavenly—but in that sense that man cannot endure it in his earthly aspect. He must be physically changed or die." This thought occurs again in the following note: "We do not know which form it [eternal harmony] will take, or where it will take place, ... in which center, whether in the final center, that is, in the bosom of the universal synthesis— God.... It will be in general hardly possible to call men human beings; therefore we have not even an idea what kind of beings we shall be."

With the attainment of man's goal, Dostoevsky further claims, human existence will become static. Thus, it will no longer be necessary for man to develop himself, or to await the coming of future generations to attain his goal. The life hitherto known to man will cease to be a life based on perpetual motion. In the same way, Ivan's devil, who represents the principle of evil in human nature, assures Ivan that he, the devil, "in a simple and straightforward way demands [his] own annihilation," but is commanded to live further. "For there would be nothing without me," he says, "if everything on earth were as it should be, then nothing would happen. There would be no events without me, but there must be events." Without the negative, destructive principle of the dual force, which represents one pole of duality— "the indispensable minus"—there would be no phenomena on earth. While ultimate harmony would be attained, it would mean simultaneously the end of earthly life as man knows it.

The same result would be achieved if man could solve the mystery of life and find an ultimate answer to the eternal question "why?" so convincingly presented by Lebyadkin. The devil, referring to this mystery of life, says to Ivan, "I know, of course, there is a secret in it, but for nothing in the world will they tell me this secret; for then, perhaps, seeing the meaning of it, I might shout 'hosanna!'; the indispensable minus would disappear at once, and good sense would reign supreme throughout the world. That, of course, would mean the end of everything."

Thus, while the principle of evil which destroys the "spiritual world" of man is indispensable for the preservation of earthly existence, the complete transition to absolute evil, quite consciously aimed at by the Grand Inquisitor, would exclude the principle of good, resulting ultimately in death and destruction. Even Ivan Karamazov himself is convinced that his devil— "the 'X' in an equation with one unknown"—is not

the Satan mentioned by the Grand Inquisitor, but "only a devil." Similarly, Ivan questions Alyosha in one of the drafts, "In what way is he Satan? He is a devil, simply a devil. I cannot visualize him as Satan." In a letter to N. A. Lyubimov, Dostoevsky reasserts his viewpoint by writing, "Please forgive me my devil. He is only a devil ... not Satan with his 'singed' wings." It is strange that this important distinction escaped the attention of some scholars and critics. D. H. Lawrence, for example, in his article "Preface to Dostoevsky's *The Grand Inquisitor*," states forthrightly:

"As always in Dostoevsky, the amazing perspicacity is mixed with ugly perversity. Nothing is pure. His wild love for Jesus is mixed with perverse and poisonous hate of Jesus: his moral hostility to the devil is mixed with secret worship of the devil." It is evident that D. H. Lawrence has overlooked the dichotomy so important for Dostoevsky between Satan and the devil. As has been shown, the Russian novelist equates the devil with "the 'X' in an equation with one unknown," and with "the indispensable minus" in the structure of the world.

The principle of evil is a prerequisite of earthly existence, but Dostoevsky, through Father Zosima, states his view that only the "spiritual world," the "higher part of man's being" can be the goal of human aspiration. The contradictions discussed above, which are characteristic of Dostoevsky's philosophy and are reflected in his fiction, the writer reconciles very forcefully and lucidly.

Source: Temira Pachmuss, "The Metaphysics of Evil," in F. M*. Dostoevsky: Dualism and Synthesis of the Human Soul*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1963, pp. 97-111.

Adaptations

"The Grand Inquisitor" has not been recorded as a separate story. However, the entire novel from which it is taken, *The Brothers Karamazov* has been recorded as read by Walter Covell. The novel on tape runs 42 hours, and can be purchased from Books on Tape, Inc.

Topics for Further Study

Look at the story of Jesus's temptation in the wilderness in either the Gospel of Luke (Luke 4:1-13) or the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 4:1- 11). Do you think the Grand Inquisitor is right in the way he interprets the significance of the temptations?

Find out what you can about the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, especially their beliefs about earthly authority. Explain why Dostoevsky, an ardent Russian Orthodox follower, might think that the Roman Catholic Church had joined forces with the devil.

Investigate socialism, especially as it was understood in Europe in the late nineteenth century. Find out what kinds of specific programs and policies socialists worked for. Do you agree that socialism is concerned only with the people's material needs?

Read about the Spanish Inquisition. Why might Dostoevsky have chosen to set his confrontation between Jesus and a Church official in this time and place?

Compare and Contrast

1870s: Dostoevsky is part of a political movement in Russia calling for the establishment of a great Greek Orthodox Empire with Russia as its leader and Constantinople as its capital. Non- Orthodox Christians, particularly Roman Catholics, were considered heretics.

1990s: After a serious decline during the middle of the twentieth century, the Russian Orthodox Church has regained its position as the most important of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Since 1962, the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches have had free dialogue as equals.

1870s: Socialism in Europe and in Russia calls for the collective or government ownership and management of the means of production and distribution of goods. Dostoevsky believes that socialism is concerned with bread rather than with God.

1990s: Socialist parties are still influential in Western Europe, and still relatively unimportant in capitalist countries like the United States. In 1999, one member of the United States House of Representatives, Bernie Sanders of Vermont, is a Socialist.

1880: The Friends of Russian Literature is divided between those who praise the poet Pushkin as a great Russian and European, and those who believe being Russian and being European are mutually exclusive. Dostoevsky gives a great speech declaring that Pushkin's genius was in being able to use the best of other nations, and reunites Russia's literary community.

1990s: Debates about the meaning of national literature and ethnic literature continue. In the United States, some writers identify themselves as Anglo-American writers or African American or Native American, while others wonder whether the term "American literature" has any useful meaning.

What Do I Read Next?

Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879- 80) is the novel from which "The Grand Inquisitor" is taken. A man is murdered, probably by one of his four sons. As the crime is solved, the novel explores the political and intellectual ideas being debated in nineteenth-century Russia. Several fine English translations are available.

The Double (1846) is a short fantasy novel by Dostoevsky. When a poor civil servant is unable to win the hand of his employer's daughter, his double mysteriously appears and succeeds where he has failed.

Dostoevsky, His Life and Work (1967) is a translation by Michael Minihan of Konstantin Mochulsky's critical biography. A solid and insightful critical biography, especially valuable for its coverage of the end of Dostoevsky's life.

"Ward No. 6" (1892) is a short story by Anton Chekhov, perhaps the finest Russian short-story writer. A doctor who operates a mental hospital himself slips into alcoholism and mental illness. He holds long philosophical discussions with one of the patients, before his condition erodes to the point where the doctor becomes one of the inmates in his own hospital.

Flannery O'Connor is an American fiction writer whose work often deals with the struggle to find God. Her collection *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965) contains some of her finest short stories.

Further Study

FitzLyon, Kyril, and Tatiana Browning. *Before the Revolution: Russia and Its People under the Czar*, Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1978.

Contains over three hundred black and white photographs of cities and villages of Russia, taken between 1894 and 1917. Many of the scenes photographed would have been familiar to Dostoevsky, who died in 1881.

Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Four volumes of this masterful biography have been published so far, covering Dostoevsky's life from 1821 through 1871. Widely considered the best literary biography available.

Jackson, Robert Louis, ed. *Dostoevsky: New Perspectives*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984.

Contains fourteen relatively recent essays providing critical analysis of Dostoevsky's most important works. Included are three essays on *The Brothers Karamazov* and one, by Jacques Catteau, that concludes that "The Grand Inquisitor" is tragic but ultimately hopeful.

Kornblatt, Judith Deutsch, and Richard F. Gustafson, eds. *Russian Religious Thought*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996.

Provides an analysis of the major ideas of Russian religious philosophy, with their historical backgrounds and cultural contexts.

Peters, Edward. *Inquisition*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

A scholarly but accessible attempt to correct generally held misconceptions about the Inquisition, written by an important historian.

Waldron, Peter. *The End of Imperial Russia, 1855-1917*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

A historical look at the economic and social consequences of tsarist Russia and the opposition to it, of which Dostoevsky was a part.

Wellek, Rene, ed. *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

Contains eleven older critical essays about the major works, including D. H. Lawrence's famous Preface to "The Grand Inquisitor." Wellek's introduction traces the history of Dostoevsky criticism and influence.

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Wasiolek, Edward. *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1964, p. 169.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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