The flood in the heart of Dostoyevsky

Dostoevsky is a Russian writer deeply influenced by Christianity. Figuring out Dostoevsky's religious views is necessary to interpret his works. This paper tries to analyze the relationship between *Crime and Punishment* and *The Bible* with respect to the water image, in order to find out Dostoevsky's deep understanding of Christian theology.

The prototype criticism theory was popular in the twentieth century. Northrop Frye believed that *The Bible* is the theoretical starting point of the mythological prototype. He applied the archetypal criticism theory to literary studies. He argued that the source of literary evolution is myths, including the mythology in the Bible.

*The Bible* begins at the beginning of time and ends at the end of time, as described in Revelation. Between the beginning and the end, with the two names of Adam and Eve as a symbol, summarized the history of mankind, with specific images appearing repeatedly met with a kind of integration principle. Christian tradition regarded *The Old Testament* as a series of predictions and *The New Testament* as prototypes for these predictions. Predictions are symbols while Prototypes are realities. The *New Testament* and *The Old Testament* are both of mythological nature and represent their own understanding of faith. Dostoevsky reconstructed these prototypical themes and images, reflecting Dostoevsky's deep thinking about religion.

“He fancied that he was in Africa, in Egypt, in some sort of oasis. The caravan was resting, the camels were peacefully lying down; the palms stood all around in a complete circle; all the party were at dinner. But he was drinking water from a spring which flowed gurgling close by. And it was so cool, it was wonderful, wonderful, blue, cold water running among the parti-coloured stones and over the clean sand which glistened here and there like gold….

Water represents different things in di. “After departing from Rephidim, they entered into the desert of Sinai and set up camp out in the desert. The entire community of Israel camped right in front of the mountain of God.” (Exodus 19)

In *Crime and Punishment*, lots of water imagery appear when Svidrigailov was dying. The description of the water in the text is as follows: "The water fell not in drops, but beat on the earth in streams . . . Svidrigailov was wet through . . . The rain had ceased and there was a roaring wind . . . He began shivering, and for one moment he gazed at the black waters." In the second dream of Svidrigailov, he dreamed of the little girl he had tarnished. "Her loose golden yellow hair was wet . . . the girl was committed by the river." Then he dreamed that the river was overflowing. "By morning it will be swirling down the street in the lower parts, flooding the basements and cellars. The cellar rats will swim out, and men will curse in the rain and wind as they drag their rubbish to their upper storeys . . . I’ll go out

at once straight to the park. I’ll choose a great bush there drenched with rain, so that as soon as one’s shoulder touches it, millions of drops drip on one’s head . . . He was picturing the waters of the Little Neva with a look of special interest, even inquiry. But he soon felt it very cold, standing by the water. Neva swollen in the night, Petrovsky Island, the wet paths, the wet grass, the wet trees and bushes and at last the bush" At last, Svidrigailov pulled the trigger.

We should first explore the reasons for the suicide of Svidrigailov. In *Crime and Punishment*, Svidrigailov was easy controlled by his lust and disloyal to his wife, and he tortured her to death. Killing the servant and tarnishing the young girl tortured his conscience. But after he met Dunia, the situation changed when Dunya tried to save him. Perhaps her constant discouragement and tears touched Svidrigailov so that he began to do good deeds. Before he decided to commit suicide, Svidrigailov used his knowledge of Raskolnikov's crime to force Dunya to be with him. I think that Svidrigailov's admiration for Dunya was not only the impulse of lust but also the desire to get redemption from Dunya. At the time of his fall, Dunya's pure soul shook him, pushing him to examine his soul. But at the same time, he could not escape the lust of enticement. Svidrigailov was complicated. On the one hand, he was eager to be saved and he treated Dunya as the life-saving straw. On the other hand, his lust was so shameless and despicable. Finally, when his reason and conscience let her go, he realized that he had completely lost Dunya, which was his chance of salvation. His inner struggle and split personality brought him to the pain of the abyss so that his heart was full of helplessness. As a result, Svidrigailov decided to commit suicide. But before his suicide, Svidrigailov helped Sonya settle the orphan of Marmeladov, giving his young fiancée’s parents a large sum of money. These reflected the human side of Svidrigailov. Christ's body contains the infinite nature of the human soul, but its budding exists in the soul of all, even if it is degenerate! The soul of the guilty person contains the bud but also has good qualities, which makes redemption possible. Although the road to redemption closed, he, for short while, experienced the desire to do good, which paved way for his struggled decision to death.

In Frye's opinion, the flood itself can be seen as a demonic image in the sense of the wrath and revenge of God while it can also be seen as a salvation image, depending on whether we view it from the point of view of Noah, or from all others. Fry thought the water not only had the power of destruction but also had the power of salvation. When Moses led the Israelites out of the Red Sea of Egypt, he, with the help of the Lord, separated the Red Sea with the rods, forming the way for the Israelites to pass, after which the Red Sea drowned the Egyptian pursuers. The story of the Red Sea is similar to the story of the flood. Those who were chosen by God were forgiven while those who were opposed to God were punished.

For the fish in the flood, Frye gave the explanation: "In the symbolic sense, the flood never retreats, and we all live in the symbolic sense of the underwater imagination of the world's fish. The same is the later symbolism of the darkness and death of Egypt, so Noah's floods and through the Red Sea in the "New Testament" is considered a different form of sacred baptism in the baptism.” The baptized people were symbolically submerged in the old world, and woke up to reach the other side of the new world.

Based on Frye’s theory above, in *Crime and Punishment*, the rain right before the death of Svidrigailov symbolizes his Baptism. After the rain, Svidrigailov thought: "I never

have liked water . . . even in a landscape." This means that in his life, Svidrigailov never contacted God. His dislike of water meant that he refused the baptism and the salvation, which made his life full of pain. He had the desire to find God but was blocked from God helplessly. However, he was not entirely bad because he did not forget the help of Sonya and his fiancée before his death. When standing on the bridge and looking at the Little Neva, he forgot the feeling of cold and his wet body.

In the dream, Svidrigailov felt the chill, dark, and dampness outside the window, but flowers appeared. In the dream, Svidrigailov was looking forward to the swollen water in the morning, flooding the basements and cellars. In the dream, Svidrigailov could not wait to go to the Park and was desperate to let millions of drops drip on his head.

Although he was rejected by Dunya, although Dunya did not give him the opportunity to be redeemed, although he desperately end his life by suicide, Svidrigailov eventually received a baptism in a special way. This is exactly the theme of the Dostoevsky's works: salvation. Dostoevsky would give the hope of salvation to any individual, no matter what kind of crimes the person might have committed, as long as the person still has a soul. As a result, at the end of Svidrigailov's life, a grand baptism came to him. The following description in Psalms perfectly matches the state of Svidrigailov: "Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God."(Biblical Psalm 69: 1-3) Svidrigailov wanted to look for his God but failed. He hoped to get redemption but was unable to extricate himself from his lusts. He waited for God but his eyes were blinded, ending up in death.

The floods in the Bible had exterminated all creatures outside Noah's ark, but, undoubtedly, the fish in the water were exempted. Jesus and fish, dolphins and fishing have appeared many times in the Biblical New Testament. The first letter of Greek words for "Jesus", “the Son of God”, and "Savior" constitute the word "Ichthys", which means fish. In the representative works of Dostoevsky's, most of the main characters were in poverty and distress, like those big fish living in the old world underwater. They were eager to get into a new world after the baptism.

In conclusion, this article analyzes the religious theme contained in Dostoyevsky's works by analyzing the figure of Svidrigailov in the *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoyevsky would give final salvation even to a man full of evil and crimes. Perhaps the big flood in the heart of Dostoyevsky never receded.