"Active Love" in the *Brothers Karamazov*: A Response to Ivan Karamazov's Problem of Suffering

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ivan Karamazov's "Problem of Suffering": A Brief Introduction

In Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, one of the major themes throughout is a particular articulation of the problem of suffering. In the novel, it is articulated most acutely by Ivan Karamazov. In the chapters "Rebellion" and "The Grand Inquisitor," Ivan tells of the suffering of innocent children at the hands of Turkish soldiers and the death of a young boy at the hands of a vengeful general. Ivan sees the suffering of these innocent children as a fundamental injustice that can never be accounted for and this leads him to rebel against God. At the same time, however, Ivan has a "childlike conviction that the sufferings will be healed and smoothed over, that the whole offensive comedy of human contradictions will disappear like a pitiful mirage, a vile concoction of man's Euclidean mind ... [eternal justice] will suffice not only to make forgiveness possible, but also to justify everything that has happened with men."[1]

Yet, even with this conviction, he simply does not accept God's world. Ivan's rebellion is the result of his belief that men were inevitability bound to bring injustice into the world because "Christ's love for people is in its kind a miracle impossible on earth."[2] This is the source of cynicism behind Ivan's rebellion. Like the Grand Inquisitor, he cannot understand why God gave men freedom when men were bound to bring such suffering into the world: "'Man was made a rebel; can rebels be happy?"'[3]

[1]Dostoevsky, Fyodor. Translated by Richard Pevear, and Larissa Volokhonsky. *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002, 235.
[2]ibid, 237.
[3]ibid, 251.

These two beliefs lie under an overarching belief that created beings are fallen beyond repair. Furthermore, he cannot understand why suffering of innocents seems to be a *means to an end* — that suffering is necessary in order to enable holiness. This concern is expressed most clearly in the Devil's description of Job: "how many souls had to be destroyed ... in order to get just one righteous Job ... "[4] Ultimately, Ivan asks, why not renounce a God who necessitates such suffering and depend on man with "his will and his science no longer limited"[5] to replace his heavenly hope with an earthly paradise?

1.2 Statement of Thesis and Layout of Work

Thus, in Ivan's words there is an articulation of the problem of suffering based in the belief that men cannot love as Christ loved and that suffering, particularly of the innocents, can never be accounted for. These beliefs are diametrically opposed to the beliefs of Father Zosima who preaches a Christian way of life based in "active love." The teaching of "active love" has three particular characteristics: (1) a gratitude that is indicative of a proper relationship with God; (2) a proper perspective that is characterized by (2a) looking at the local, interpersonal level instead of the global, generalized level and (2b) realizing that the ultimate end is in heaven and not earth; and (3) the ability to accept reality as it is, particularly man's fallen nature and the inherent suffering in life, but also the reality that Christ died in order that men could be redeemed from their fallen nature. *Through the combination of these three characteristics, "active love" enables a redemptive and transformative way of life that overcomes Ivan Karamazov's "problem of suffering*

Ivan's rejection of God is not a purely rational problem, in fact, it is most accurately understood as an interpersonal problem. Even with an intellectual framework

[4]ibid, 648
[5]ibid, 649.

that would allow for suffering, Ivan rebels against God. His problem, then, is with God himself. This being the case, (1) gratitude and appreciation for God's creation is essential because it enables one to restore a proper relationship with God and created beings. Zosima uses Job as the exemplar of this gratitude, in the belief that Job was actually blessed with the opportunity to glorify God through overcoming the temptation to rebel, brought on by his suffering. Furthermore, there is a pertinent undercurrent in Job of disbelief in God's goodness and the goodness of God's creation. This disbelief in God's goodness is a cause of an improper relationship with God and with other men. This doubt in the goodness of creation is also present in Ivan's disbelief in man's ability to love as Christ loved. In Job, Zosima sees a way in which the goodness of creation is re-affirmed and man's relationship with God is restored. Gratitude is the key to this restoration.

Another component of Ivan's rebellion is that it is based at an abstracted level from reality. It is not based so much in his own suffering as it is in the suffering of the children that he has read about in newspapers. Furthermore, it is appropriate to ask: in what way has Ivan *personally* worked for the betterment of these problems? Has he, himself, tried to love as Christ loved? In order for suffering to enable a transformation, "active love" teaches (2) proper perspective by looking at the (2a) local level and by realizing that (2b) heaven is the ultimate end. When one looks at the local level, Zosima teaches, there is a way in which one learns to love as Christ loved. Instead of loving humanity, "active love" teaches one to love the people who comprise "humanity" as individuals. In line with Ivan's intuition, loving as Christ loved is a difficult task — it is "labor and perseverance."[6] This does not mean, however, that it is an impossible miracle for men. (2a) Localizing one's perspective is a key component of loving as Christ loved because it both makes the task more

[6]ibid, 58.

manageable and it enables the restoration of the personal relationship in a fallen world. (2b) Remembering that heaven is the ultimate end is a further key because it fosters hope and enables perseverance.

Finally, Ivan's rebellion reflects an immature faith in that it cannot come to grips with the fact that there is suffering in the world and that man's nature is fallen. Zosima's "active love" wholeheartedly (3) accepts that these are realities and it does not try to avoid them or work around them. Instead, it embraces these realities and acts as a catalyst for a redemptive transformation — the transformation enabled by Christ's death on the cross. By wholeheartedly embracing these harsh realities, "active love" enables one to be transformed by the harsh realities in such a way that life becomes joyful.

These are lessons that are learned in the lives of the main characters of the novel: Zosima, Ivan, Alyosha and Dmitry. Each, in their own way, has a great encounter with suffering. Zosima suffers the loss of his beloved brother. Ivan struggles with the suffering of innocents and is driven to hallucination by the guilt of his father's murder. Alyosha rebels against his God for a brief moment at the 'embarrassment' of Zosima's bodily corruption and Mitya is agonized by his actions and his false sentence. Each character has a particular response to suffering and these responses are characterized by a development from an immature faith to a mature faith. The principles of "active love" can be seen in the transformation of each of the characters, whether it be Alyosha's movement away from a faith that seeks swift earthly justice, Ivan's struggle with his own fallenness and guilt or Zosima taking responsibility for his actions. The end product of "active love" is a mature faith, one that accepts the harsh realities of this world but also moves past them. Furthermore, this mature faith is a source of joy — despite the great depths of man's depravity, life is joyful and must be joyful. In the words of Dmitry, describing life in the mines of Siberia: "we'll

be in chains, and there will be no freedom, but then, in our great grief, we will arise once more into joy, without which it's not possible for man to live, or for God to be, for God gives joy, it's his prerogative, a great one."[7]

From where do these principles of "active love" arise? Alyosha's biographical account begins with an account of Zosima's older brother, Markel, who at a young age was turned to atheism and then reverted back to belief on his deathbed. Markel's death and his final words laid the seed in the teaching of "active love" that Zosima makes explicit in his life as a monk. After an analysis of the Markel episode, the paper will work through each characteristic of "active love," highlighting the way in which it is a response to Ivan Karamazov's doubts. In order to assess "active love's" effectiveness, however, the proper place to begin is a close analysis of Ivan's arguments in the sections "Rebellion" and "The Grand Inquisitor

[7] ibid, 592.

CHAPTER 2

IVAN KARAMAZOV'S "PROBLEM OF SUFFERING"

2.1 "Can it be resolved?"

Ivan Karamazov's "problem of suffering" is particularly striking because it is ambiguous as to whether or not Ivan completely believes his own argument. Furthermore, it is striking because of Ivan's wide ranging character. On the one hand, he is presented as the logician: cool, composed, calculating, rational, apathetic towards the needs of others. There is a sense in which Ivan is playing intellectual parts as opposed to fully believing them. On the other hand, Ivan is shown to be a sensualist who loves life and who is particularly sensitive towards the suffering of others. Ivan is a conflicted character and at the center of this conflict is his inability to reconcile a loving God with the suffering of innocent children. Yet, at the same time, he recognizes that God is the key to morality: "if there is no God, everything is permitted."[1] In typical Karamazov fashion, Ivan operates at opposite ends of the spectrum: he cannot completely let go of God, but he cannot accept Him either. He is tormented by this dilemma and this is why he is so struck when Zosima addresses this internal torment directly.

After Ivan has explained his belief, that morality depends on God and immorality, Zosima asks Ivan:"Can it be that you really hold this conviction about the consequences of the exhaustion of men's faith in the immortality of their souls?"[2] It seems that Zosima is peering into Ivan's soul and sensing the depths of Ivan's troubled heart. Ivan's response is coolly logical: "Yes, it was my contention. There is no

[1] ibid, 82.
[2] ibid, 70.

virtue if there is no immortality."[3] This is the extension of Ivan's idea that "if there is no God, everything is permitted."[4] It is important to note the nature of Zosima's response. Zosima responds to Ivan not with logic, but instead with his sense of Ivan's unhappiness — his troubled heart. His response is one of genuine compassion and sincerity: "You are blessed if you believe so, or else most unhappy!"[5] Blessedness and unhappiness — Zosima does not even try to refute Ivan's logic. He takes Ivan's argument in stride and, instead, he turns to Ivan himself and attempts to speak to Ivan's real problem: his tormented heart. Zosima continues to address the real issue at hand: "This idea [that there is no virtue if there is no immortality] is not yet resolved in your heart and torments it. ... For the time being you, too, are toying, out of despair, with your magazine articles and drawing-room discussions, without believing in your own dialectics and smirking at them with your heart aching inside you. . . The question is not resolved in you, and there lies your great grief, for it urgently demands resolution. . ."[6]

How accurately has Zosima diagnosed Ivan's problem? An answer to this question comes from Ivan himself: "'But can it be resolved in myself? Resolved in a positive way?' Ivan Fyodorovich continued asking strangely, still looking at the elder with a certain inexplicable smile."[7] This strange smile comes after a quick admission of sincerity on Ivan's part — "'But still, I wasn't quite joking either. . . ' Ivan Fyodorovich suddenly and strangely confessed—by the way, with a quick blush."[8] In both of these statements and gestures (the strange confession and blush; the strange smile), it appears that Ivan has emerged from his wall of logic and insincerity and that

[3]ibid, 70.
[4]ibid, 82.
[5]ibid, 82.
[6]ibid, 70.
[7]ibid, 70.
[8]ibid, 70.

Zosima has connected deeply with Ivan's great despair. "Even if it cannot be resolved in a positive way, it will never be resolved in the negative way either—you yourself know this property of your heart, and therein lies the whole of its torment. But thank the Creator that he has given you a lofty heart, capable of being tormented by such a torment..."[9] This is an answer that communicates directly with Ivan and causes him to break his detached and unemotional behavior. Immediately after these words, Ivan suddenly rises from his chair, receives his blessing and kisses the elder's hand. He then returns to his chair, firm and serious, and a solemn moment of silence overtakes the room. This answer apparently speaks to Ivan in a profound way. Zosima's answer is particularly revealing in that it causes Ivan to acknowledge a certain mystery in life: that God's existence and one's relationship with God will always include an element of blind faith. As Ivan's torment and response suggest, Ivan cannot shake his own blind faith in God — but neither can he understand that suffering is part of God's world.[10] This is his "Rebellion," that he cannot accept God's world.

2.2 Ivan Karamazov's Rebellion

"Rebellion" begins with Ivan and Alyosha talking over tea. During this conversation Ivan reveals his Karamazov sensuality. Importantly, this conversation is

[9] ibid, 70.

[10] Ivan's dilemma, and Zosima's response, call to mind a similar exchange between a rabbi and a learned atheist. The exchange reveals a similar dependence on faith and a similar tension in the learned atheist. Furthermore, it reveals a sense in which the question can only be answered by lived experience. Pope Benedict XVI quotes this story from M. Buber's *Werke*, vol 3 (Munich and Heidelberg, 1963), p. 348: "An adherent of the Enlightenment [writes Buber], a very learned man, who had heard of the Rabbi of Berditchev, paid a visit to him in order to argue, as was his custom, with him, too, and to shatter his old-fashioned proofs of the truth of his faith. When he entered the Rabbi's room, he found him walking up and down with a book in his hand, rapt in thought. The Rabbi paid no attention to the new arrival. Suddenly he stopped, looked at him fleetingly, and said, "But perhaps it is true after all." The scholar tried in vain to collect himself—his knees trembled, so terrible was the Rabbi to behold and so terrible his simple utterance to hear. But Rabbi Levi Yitschak now turned to face him and spoke quite calmly: "My son, the great scholars of the Torah with whom you have argued wasted their words on you; as you departed you laughed at them. They were unable to lay God and his Kingdom on the table before you, and neither can I. But think, my son, perhaps it is true." The exponent of the Enlightenment opposed him with all his strength; but this terrible "perhaps" that echoed back at him time after time broke his resistance."

the context in which Ivan's rejection of God takes place — a rejection that happens despite an intellectual, though naive, framework in which suffering could be understood. In this conversation, Ivan explains his great desire to live and his love for life to Alyosha: "If I did not believe in life, if I were to lose faith in the woman I love, if I were to lose faith in the order of things, even if I were to become convinced on the contrary, that everything is a disorderly, damned, and perhaps devilish chaos, if I were struck even by all the horrors of human disillusionment—still I would want to live..."[11]

This love for life is deeply rooted in Ivan and it is clearly associated in the text to the sensual nature of the Karamazov men — the 'sensualists'. This visceral desire for life is dramatically opposed to Ivan's 'Euclidean mind.'[12] Ivan is even willing to admit this: "I want to live, and I do live, even if it be against logic."[13] Thus, in this introduction we already see an acknowledgement on Ivan's part that he is not merely a logical being. He is, instead, a human being, with the desire to live. In this particular case, Ivan has admitted that his reason cannot explain to him why he desires to live, nor can it explain his love for "the sticky little leaves that come out in the spring"[14], nor his loved ones, nor his sensitivity towards the suffering innocent. This sensitivity towards the suffering innocent might, in fact, point back to God himself. The next important point to notice is that Ivan admits a number of important beliefs: a strong belief in God, a belief in our limited view of God and His intentions, and that it is "this world of God's, created by God," that he does not accept and cannot agree with.[15]

[11]ibid, 230.
[12]ibid, 235.
[13]ibid, 230.
[14]ibid, 230.
[15]ibid, 235.

> And so, I accept God, not only willingly, but moreover I also accept his wisdom and his purpose, which are *completely unknown to us* [emphasis mine]; I believe in order, in the meaning of life, I believe in eternal harmony, in which we are all supposed to merge, I believe in the Word for whom the universe is yearning, and who himself was 'with God,' who himself is God, and so on....[16]

So Ivan accepts God willingly... and yet he still refuses God's world. This refusal even comes in spite of his "childlike conviction that the sufferings will be healed and smoothed over, that the whole offensive comedy of human contradictions will disappear like a pitiful mirage, a vile concoction of man's Euclidean mind ... it will suffice not only to make forgiveness possible, but also to justify everything that has happened with men."[17] In other words, Ivan has articulated a fairly complex framework for suffering. This is a framework in which suffering can be justified and one that even articulates and accepts the mystery of how suffering will be justified. It appears, then, that Ivan's rejection is even against his own logic and his own words — he refuses God simply because he chooses to not accept the world as it is. This indicates a fracture in his relationship with God.

Another possible reason that Ivan cannot accept this "childlike conviction" is that his conception of faith is immature. It lacks substance in the form of personal experience but also in its naivety. His is a faith that seeks swift justice on earth and cannot accept man's responsibility for his own fallenness and depravity: "What do I care that *none are to blame and that I know it* [emphasis mine]—I need retribution ... retribution not somewhere and sometime in infinity, but here and now, on earth, so that I see it myself."[18] Furthermore, Ivan's faith is immature in the sense that he

[16]ibid, 235.
[17]ibid, 235.
[18]ibid, 244.

cannot understand the great and overwhelming power of forgiveness. His faith has not matured beyond vindication and retribution. This is seen in his statement that the mother of the murdered child "has no right to forgive the suffering of her child who was torn to pieces, she dare not forgive the tormentor, even if the child himself were to forgive him!"[19]

In response to Ivan's great desire for retribution, Alyosha is quick to remind Ivan that there "is in the whole work a being who could and would have the right to forgive," Christ Jesus who "can forgive everything, forgive all *and for all*, because he himself gave his innocent blood for all and for everything."[20] Alyosha is referring to Christ's transformational sacrifice that redeemed humanity and allowed for original sin to be overcome. Interestingly, however, Ivan brings out a vindicative, retribution-seeking faith even in his pious brother Alyosha. Ivan asks Alyosha what he would do to punish the military commander who hunted down a young boy: "'Shoot him!' Alyosha said softly, looking up at his brother with a sort of pale, twisted smile."[21] It is not difficult to see that Alyosha, in his own way, suffers from an immature faith as well. This is a point that Rowan Williams emphasizes in his interpretation of the *Brothers Karamazov*.

2.3 Alyosha's Lapse of Faith

In fact, Rowan Williams ties Alyosha together with Ivan in that they both say: "God exists but I am not sure whether I believe in him..."[22] As seen in the novel, Alyosha's faith is transformed from its naive state to a more mature faith throughout the course of the novel. As Williams puts it: "Alyosha has sensed a divine abundance and liberty that exceeds human standards of success and failure; his belief has been

[19]ibid, 245.
[20]ibid, 246.
[21]ibid, 243.
[22]Williams, Rowan. *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction*, viii.

transformed—but not in the sense that he has become convinced of God's existence. It is rather that he now sees clearly what might be involved in a life that would merit being called a life of faith."[23] The particular incident that Williams is referring to is the embarrassment of Alyosha's beloved elder, Zosima, in its odor of corruption. In that case, Alyosha was seeking a a swift justice based in the *human standards* of holiness and sainthood. This is seen particularly in "An Opportune Moment," when Alyosha has just fled the monastery and is in his greatest moment of despair. The narrator explains that "it was not miracles [Alyosha] needed, but only a "higher justice," which, as he believed, had been violated—it was this that wounded his heart so cruelly and suddenly."[24] Eventually this wound causes Alyosha to mimic Ivan in saying: "I do not rebel against my God, I simply 'do not accept his world.'"[25]

Alyosha's dejection was a result of a naive faith that sought a higher justice for personal edification. Williams, with a view towards the whole novel, explains that the novel itself puts forth a form of mature faith: "What [Dostoevsky] does in Karamazov is not to demonstrate that it is possible to imagine a life so integrated and transparent that the credibility of faith becomes unassailable;" — note that this is precisely what is envisioned in Ivan's child-like faith, a vision of a life that integrates the paradox of suffering in God's world in such a way that it can transparently be understood and framed neatly — "it is simply to show that faith moves and adapts, matures and reshapes itself, not by adjusting its doctrinal content ... but by relentless stripping away from faith of egotistical or triumphalistic expectations. The credibility of faith is in its freedom to let itself be judged and to grow."[26]

[23]ibid, viii.
[24]ibid, 339.
[25]ibid, 341.
[26]ibid, x.

In other words, in Williams' reading of the novel, Zosima's words ring true — there will never be a resolution to Ivan's dilemma — but, instead, there will be a continual growth of faith. This form of faith is Zosima's "active love." Ivan must learn that a true, mature faith will endure a great amount of suffering and it will not seek earthly justice, such as retribution or vindication. Notice the self-centeredness in Ivan's desire for retribution: "*I* need retribution." Furthermore, notice that because of a proper prioritization of heaven, such as the (2) proper perspective, a mature faith will be secure in its freedom to be mocked by earthly standards.

The act that restores Alyosha's faith is clearly categorized as a moment that 'strips away Alyosha's egotistical expectations' and as one that is an act of genuine, personal kindness from the least expected woman in the novel, Grushenka for whom Alyosha has developed a particular repugnance. Grushenka restores Alyosha's faith! Grushenka, the woman who is able to elicit the closest thing to a moral judgment on the part of Alyosha! This moment illustrates the great power of "active love" — in Alyosha's darkest moment, such a sinful woman has pity on him and restores his faith. It is a small, personal act of kindness that reveals a great capacity for love even in the soul of a woman who has been the center of a love triangle between a father and his son. These are the sorts of moments that serve to counter-act Ivan's belief that men cannot love as Christ loved, which is Ivan's greatest doubt. With this restored faith, Alyosha is able to endure the terrible murder, the trial and the death of Ilyushechka. He is also able to patiently labor and restore the relationships of the young boys and Ilyushechka, whose father was greatly embarrassed by Dmitry.

2.4 Ivan's Grand Inquisitor: Crucified Christ and Ivan's Immature Faith

In their conversation at the tavern, Ivan continues to explain to Alyosha why he does not accept God's world. This explanation takes the form of a poem called "The Grand Inquisitor." The core belief operating throughout this poem is that men

are incapable of being redeemed and that they must be controlled through hunger and fear. This viewpoint is explained through the Grand Inquisitor himself.

"My poem is called 'The Grand Inquisitor'; it's a ridiculous thing, but I want to tell it to you."[27] And so begins Ivan's Grand Inquisitor. This prose poem of Ivan's reveals a couple of things about Ivan's argument. Firstly, it reveals that Ivan's primary problem with the world that God has created is the freedom that has been given to man. This freedom is what allows for turkish soldiers to cut babies from their mothers' wombs. This freedom is the necessary condition for evil. Couple this freedom with the impossibility, in Ivan's eyes at least, of humans to love as Christ and it is possible to see the dystopia that has evolved in Ivan's mind. How can anyone possibly continue living in such a world where true love for fellow men is an impossible 'miracle'? This is a world of suffering. Hans Kung is particularly helpful in understanding Ivan's rebellion and, he explains, that in suffering of the innocent, "lies the secret of Ivan's atheism, the basis for his 'rebellion'."[28]

Kung explains: "In suffering, especially in that of the innocent, man comes up against his extreme limit, comes to the decisive question of his identity, of the sense and nonsense of his living and dying, indeed, of reality pure and simple. Given the overwhelming reality of suffering the life and history of humanity does the suffering, doubting, despairing person really have any other choice? What alternative is there to the rebellion of an Ivan Karamazov against this world of God that he finds so unacceptable..."[29] Ivan, in his great torment and his unresolved dilemma, cannot make resolve the 'sense and nonsense of living and dying.' On the one hand, Ivan has a great desire to live and a childlike hope in God. On the other hand, as a cool

[27]ibid, 246.

[28]Jens, Walter, and Hans Kung. "Religion in the Controversy Over the End of Religion." In *Literature and Religion: Pascal, Gryphius, Lessing, Hölderlin, Novalis, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Kafka*. New York: Paragon House, 1991. 227-242, 242.

[29]ibid, 234.

headed logician, Ivan can see no world in which God and evil can co-exist, and he is left to conclude that God does not exist. Yet, if God does not exist, what is the sense in living? Where does his sensitivity to suffering come from? And why does he feel so guilty for his father's murder? Ivan, himself, is able to recognize an alternative — although he cannot fully convince himself to believe it. This is a second aspect that becomes apparent in his poem. Ivan has an intuition about an alternative to a world of suffering: a world in which men love as Christ do. This is a world of Zosima's 'active love.'

Here, again, Kung is particularly helpful: "But this world of Ivan, so subtly portrayed, is now contrasted, in serenity and great inner freedom, with an alternative world that has its own plausibility. While Ivan primarily talks, Alyosha acts. Dostoevsky was convinced that on the ultimate theological issues rational argumentation was impotent."[30] Thus, the very fact that Ivan has Christ kissing the Grand Inquisitor is a certain admission of Ivan's that this argument does not exist purely within the realm of reason. This is corroborated by both Ivan's illogical desire to live as well he his irrational rebellion. Furthermore, it is seen in his sincere reaction to Zosima's compassion: Ivan kisses his hand and accepts his blessing. Clearly, something in Ivan wants to believe the world of 'active love', but he cannot convince himself just yet because of his immature faith.

Ivan's story begins with Christ coming to earth once more as a man in the town of Seville, where he alludes to a burning during the Inquisition in which "had burned almost a hundred heretics at once ad majorem gloriam Dei."[31] He describes how Christ was both unobserved and yet "every one recognized Him." Here it is worth noting that Ivan thinks these are some of the best lines in the poem: "This

[30]ibid, 236.
[31]Dostoevsky, 243.

could be one of the best passages in the poem, I mean, why it is exactly that they recognize him. People are drawn to him by an invincible force, they flock to him, surround him, follow him. He passes silently among them with a quiet smile of infinite compassion."[32] Ivan continues to describe how Christ performs a couple of miracles — healing a blind man and raising a child from the dead. While this Christ is certainly similar to the one that is seen in the Gospels, it is important to note three things: Ivan's Christ is incarnated as an adult man; he is described as if everyone suddenly recognizes that he is Christ; and people flock to him as if they cannot help but believe in him — as if by some 'invincible force'. This is a naive, childish understanding of Christ — one that is triumphalistic and based in earthy standards.

Ivan's naive view is in contrast to Christ almost being killed by the people of his home town, the people who had grown up with Christ, in Luke 4:14-30. In other words, the people who had watched Christ grow up right in front of their eyes did not recognize him as the Son of God. They, in fact, attempted to kill him. Even the apostles, who left their entire lives behind to follow Christ were unable to recognize him without divine grace: "'Who do men say that the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Eli'jah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'... 'For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."'[33] Only Simon Peter knew the answer to this question — and this knowledge was not revealed to him by any flesh and blood, but by God himself. This is quite the contrast to Ivan's account of Christ.

Of course, Ivan's description of Christ is fictional and it occurs 15 centuries after Christ first lived. This might account for the fact that people recognize him. But,

[32]ibid, 249.

[33]Edited by May, Herbert G., and Bruce Manning Metzger. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Matthew 16:13-18.

on the other hand, Scripture affirms that Christ was not universally recognized nor universally accepted. If Christ were to come down to earth, is this what Ivan would expect to happen? This image is in line with Ivan's immature faith. It is immature in this sense: Christ became fully man. Christ is not super-human, he is human. This means that Christ suffered, that he cried and that he confronted the suffering of those around him continually throughout his life. He brought people back from the dead, but he also cried at their deaths. Furthermore, in redeeming man through his death on the cross, Christ did not negate the fact that human beings suffer. In fact, he reaffirmed the harsh reality of the world in his death. Ivan, on the other hand, seems to believe (as his Grand Inquisitor does) that Christ could have controlled the world by performing miracles — to keep people in line and essentially force them to believe him.

The Grand Inquisitor takes Christ captive and questions him — although he does not permit Christ to speak. In his questioning, he explains that through the Inquisition he (and the Roman Catholic church) have "finally overcome freedom" and they "have done so in order to make people happy."[34] The Grand Inquisitor continues to explain that God created man a rebel, that he knew man was a rebel from the very beginning, and that God knew that there would be only way way of arranging human happiness: through the fear and piety that is fostered by the Grand Inquisitor's church. "'Man was made a rebel; can rebels be happy? ... you rejected the only way of arranging for human happiness [by forcing belief through miracles and making the state the church], but fortunately, on your departure, you handed the work over to us."[35] Here again are two important ideas related to Ivan's conception of freedom and human nature: freedom is at odds with men's happiness and that man

[34]Dostoevsky, 251.
[35]ibid, 251.

'was created a rebel'. If man was created a rebel, it follows logically that he is going to abuse his freedom and from this view a natural skepticism towards man's ability to love in a Christlike way emerges.

This cynicism manifests itself particularly in the Grand Inquisitor's statement: "But you did not know that as soon as man rejects miracles, he will at once reject God as well, for man seeks not so much God as miracles."[36] It is this very miraculousness that Ivan paints Christ in, Christ with light and power radiating from his eyes, and perhaps this fixation on the miraculous is another key to Ivan's problem. If he is correct in his view, that "man seeks not so much God as miracles" there is a certain sense in which God can be proven to men and Christian morality can be instilled in them. In fact, this is exactly the sort of society that the Grand Inquisitor is seeking to uphold — one in which the Church upholds society and its laws by upholding this miraculousness in a totalitarian sort of way. And yet this belief completely contradicts certain instances in scripture where Christ's miracles were rejected. Furthermore, it is opposed to a certain realism that is part of "active love's" (3) acceptance of reality: namely, that miracles will not convince someone; even if a miracle stands before the unbeliever, the unbeliever will not believe it and will doubt his senses.[37]

In this reflection of Ivan's "Rebellion" and "Grand Inquisitor," a few aspects of Ivan's immature faith emerge. Ivan has a disconnect with God and with His creation in that doubts its goodness and he distrusts God. In this doubt, Ivan is similar to Job. It is no coincidence then that this disconnect is addressed in the first principle of Zosima's "active love," (1) gratitude as the key to restoring a proper

[36]ibid, 255.

[37]"... but it seems to me that Alyosha was even more of a realist than the rest of us... he believed absolutely in miracles, but in my opinion miracles will never confound a realist. It is not miracles that bring a realist to faith. A true realist, if he is not a believer, will always find in himself the strength and ability not to believe in miracles as well, and if a miracle stands before him as an irrefutable fact, he will sooner doubt his own senses than admit the fact." ibid, 25.

relationship with God. Furthermore, Ivan has an earthly and selfish perspective that seeks retribution, as well as a global focus on humanity and 'society' as a whole. The second principle of "active love," (2) proper perspective, addresses these issues and it encourages a perspective that will allow Ivan's faith to mature past its triumphalistic expectations. Finally, Ivan's emphasis on the miraculous, his emphasis on suffering and his unwaivering belief that man cannot overcome his fallen nature is indicative of Ivan's inability to accept the nature of the fallen world. The third principle of "active love," (3) an acceptance of reality, enables a mature faith in that it embraces the harsh realities of life but it also sees the ability for transformation. Repeated here for clarity: *through the combination of these three characteristics, "active love" enables a redemptive and transformative way of life that overcomes Ivan Karamazov's "problem of suffering*

CHAPTER 3

THE BEGINNING OF "ACTIVE LOVE"

3.1 Zosima's Brother: The Inspiration

In his biographical account of Father Zosima's life, Alyosha begins with the story of Zosima's brother, Markel. Markel befriends a young philosophy student who has been banished from Moscow for "freethinking."[1] After this encounter with the young "freethinker," there is a noted change in Markel in that he does not fast and he says that "there isn't any God."[2] Not long after this, however, in the sixth week of Lent, Markel became terminally sick and realized the nature of his sickness. Soon, a spiritual change took place in Markel. His faith was restored and even strengthened. He began speaking strangely, saying things such as: "life is paradise, and we are all in paradise, but *we do not want to know it* [emphasis mine]" and "that verily each of us is guilty before everyone, for everyone and everything."[3] These sayings culminate in Markel's grandest admission of sin and gratitude: "there was so much of God's glory around me: birds, trees, meadows, sky, and I alone lived in shame, I alone dishonored everything, and did not notice the beauty and glory of it all."[4] Markel's last words in this section show a theological definition of heaven that is rooted in forgiveness and love that overcomes Merkel's deep sense of guilt: "Let me be sinful before everyone, but so that everyone will forgive me, and that is paradise."[5].

[1] ibid, 287.
[2] ibid, 287.
[3] ibid, 288-289.
[4] ibid, 289.
[5] ibid, 290.

Markel has been transformed by his terminal illness in such a way that he is able to see that "life is paradise." This transformation is evident when he says that "we do not want to know it" — if not for his own illness, he would not be able know, nor would he want to know, this paradise. Without his own illness and imminent death, he would not be able to notice the "glory of God" all around him. This, then, reveals that suffering can be transformative in such a way that it enables one to see God's glory and joy. Furthermore, his admission that he has dishonored God reveals that his illness, and consequent ability to see that "life is paradise," reveals a change in Markel's relationship with God. He seems to be repentant for his former way of relating to God and his relationship has now been transformed into a proper relationship with God. His abundant (1) gratitude for God's glory is a result of this proper relationship.

Markel's suffering is transformative in another sense, too. It leads him to a great sense of awareness of his guilt and responsibility towards others: "each of us is guilty before everyone." This responsibility is seen in the very personal and local interaction that he has with his nurse who is lighting a candle in front of an icon in his room. Previously, Markel had treated her harshly in refusing to let her pray and light the candle. His illness, however, causes him to change his ways: "Light it, my dear, light it, what a monster I was to forbid you before!"[6] Markel has a similar transformation in his treatment of his mother. His statements of being responsible "for all" should be understood as having a local and particular application. Markel is not talking of a broad notion or a "love of humanity." Instead, he is talking of a love for individual persons that is expressed through encounters with the people right in front of him. Furthermore, notice that Markel's perspective is focused on heaven, the ultimate end, through the lens of this local application of love. He recognizes that

[6]ibid, 288.

he has sinned against those around him, particularly his mother and his nurse, and they have forgiven him. This leads him to ask: "Am I not in heaven now?" This is (2) proper perspective that is focused (2a) locally and (2b) on heaven, the second element of "active love."

Finally, Markel is struck with an overwhelming sense of guilt, a feeling that he has sinned against everyone, including God and His creation. Furthermore, there is a deeper, more personal way in which this guilt shows itself, a very sickly way in which guilt causes men to bring suffering upon themselves. They feel so guilty that they *"do not want to know" the paradise before their very eyes.* This sickly guilt is best characterized by Ivan Karamazov's great and overwhelming guilt — and Ivan's greatest sign of progress in the maturation of his faith is his admission of his guilt. Markel's acceptance of this guilt and his 'sinfulness' is, perhaps, a recognition of the fallenness of man's nature. Man is guilty before God and he dishonors God's creation because he is fallen. Similarly, man is guilty before all because he is fallen and focused solely on himself — as opposed to focusing on his neighbors, as the Bible instructs and "active love" teaches. Markel's sickness leads him to focus on his mother and his nurse, to be sensitive to their suffering and his poor treatment of them. In other words, Markel embraces his own sinfulness while simultaneously working to overcome his sinfulness. This the third and final element of "active love," (3) embracing the reality that man is depraved, but also the reality that because of Christ's sacrifice, man can overcome his fallen nature and "love as Christ loved."

Once Markel accepts this guilt and *accepts* forgiveness, he becomes joyful — and this is the great mystery behind "active love," the joy that follows and comes often at the darkest moments in one's existence. The first key to such an overwhelming joy is gratitude, which stems from a proper relationship with God. It is not surprising, then, that the very next section in the novel is Zosima's interpretation of the "Book

of Job The "Book of Job" is Zosima's paradigm for (1) gratitude that is the key to a proper relationship with God.

CHAPTER 4

GRATITUDE: RESTORING A PROPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Alyosha's biographical sketch continues with Zosima's teachings on the "Book of Job," a Biblical text that is central to his teaching of "active love." We learn that Job was the first Biblical text that Zosima felt that he clearly understood from a young age. In Alyosha's words, a brief paraphrase of Job is given in which it becomes clear that Zosima sees Job as God's beloved servant: "And have you seen my servant Job?" God asks [Satan].[1] Further in the account, Zosima speaks of "scoffers and blasphemers" who asked why the Lord would allow His saint to suffer so greatly.[2] In a tone that foreshadows Ivan's devil, these "scoffers" go so far as to mock God as saying: "See what my saint can suffer for my sake!"[3] As if to ask, as Ivan does, is this suffering really necessary to prove Job's righteousness?

Zosima answers this question by saying that what *is actually* happening in the story of Job is that the trials of Job are not so much to prove Job's righteousness as they are an opportunity for Job to affirm the goodness of God's creation. God looks at his creation and praises it saying: "That which I have created is good."[4] And, Zosima says that Job is praising God and that he serves not only God, but also serves all of creation and all generations.[5] It is almost as if Zosima envisions Job saying, "Yes, Lord. Your creation is indeed good." Furthermore, for Zosima and his teaching of "active love," Job illustrates the mystery at the heart of "active love." This mystery

[1]ibid, 291.
[2]ibid, 292.
[3]ibid,292.
[4]ibid, 292.
[5]ibid, 292.

is the way in which suffering and grief gradually pass into quiet, tender joy.[6] But Job's trial is severe and it is not quite as clear-cut as Zosima envisions. There are moments in which Job seems to call into question God's goodness and, consequently, the goodness of His creation. It is for this very reason, perhaps, that God points Job back to creation in his speech "out of the whirlwind." In pointing back to creation, God is also pointing back to Genesis and, this being the case, a brief interpretation of Genesis will be included in this section as well.

Markel's gratitude was a product of being able to see the goodness of God's creation, the "glory all around him." As Zosima tells it, one of the fundamental lessons of Job is that Job is given the opportunity to re-affirm the goodness of God's creation by enduring his trials. Markel was unable to see the goodness of creation until he underwent his own trial. Job, too, seems to suffer from an inability to fully comprehend the goodness of creation and, furthermore, his own faith undergoes a period of growth through his suffering and his encounter with God. Job was able to hear God, but he could not see God until he underwent his trial.

4.1 The Book of Job: A Trial That Enabled Job to See God

> Then Job answered the Lord: "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.[7]

This passage comes at the very end of the "Book of Job" and, for that reason, it summarizes the transformation of Job's relationship with God. He has gone from a relationship in which he only heard God with his ears to a relationship in which he

[6] ibid, 292.
[7] Job 42:1-6

sees God with his eyes. Without such a trial, it is not clear that Job would have had this transformation. He clearly knew God well before his trial, as he sacrificed on a regular basis and was "was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil."[8]. Similarly, he must have been familiar with the religious laws of the time in order to successfully maintain his innocence and righteousness in the face of criticism from his friends. The success of his defense is even verified by God, Himself, when He says that Jobs friends have not spoken correctly, as Job has.[9]

Yet the question emerges: if Job was correct in all that he had said of God, how could his suffering enable him to "see" God as opposed to "hearing" him? Perhaps the answer lies in an analysis of Job's potential error — an underlying doubt in the goodness of God's creation — an error that is related to Markel's inability to see God and Ivan's great doubt in the goodness of men.

> "Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man-child is conceived.' Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, or light shine on it. Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds settle upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it."[10]

In the passage quoted above, Job has called into question the goodness of God's creation and he has moved into ingratitude at God's creation. This "lament is radically nihilistic, calling on forces of darkness, chaos, and death to negate light, life, conception, birth, and ultimately creation itself... In the *egocentrism of despair* [emphasis mine], Job closes in upon himself and wills creation, too, to collapse into darkness and chaos."[11] This self-centeredness seems to be *the result of doubt in God's goodness*. Without faith in God's goodness, man is left on his own terms in a world that he must master with his 'will and his science', as Ivan's Devil says, and man

[8]Job 1:1.
[9]Job 42:7-9.
[10]ibid, Job 3:3-5
[11]Schifferdecker, Kathryn. *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Theological Studies, Harvard Divinity School :, 2008, 9.

cannot help but be self-centered. This, however, clashes with Mitya's great, ecstatic proclamation that "man cannot live without joy And, if Mitya's statement is true, gratitude for God's creation is necessary for joy. Thus, another question emerges: how is Job's faith in God's goodness secured?

> Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements — surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?[12]

Given the overpowering nature of God's response, some interpreters have claimed that the "divine speeches reveal God as a capricious, jealous tyrant who abuses his power."[13] Others suggest that the "questions of the speeches are not designed to humiliate Job but to remind him of what he already knows. They enable him to realize anew that God establishes order in the cosmos... This order visible in the universe leads Job to trust God even when he does not understand why he suffers."[14] And it is this second line of interpretation that is more consistent with Zosima's principles in that God's reference to creation is a way in which God can remind Job of his proper place in creation. Man's place in creation is one of the primary themes in the "Book of Genesis." And it is for this reason that God's speech, in which the majority of his words have to do with creation, can be seen as a pointer back to "Genesis."

[12]Job 42:1-6
[13]Schifferdecker, 9.
[14]ibid, 9.

4.2 Genesis: The Lesson of Man's Place in Creation and His Relationship With God

In Genesis it is written that man is made in the "image and likeness" of God and this is the interpretative key to understanding man's proper place in creation. In order to better grasp this concept, a collection of homilies by Pope Benedict XVI will be used. In his homilies, Pope Benedict highlights a few key themes which reveal that: man is given special affection as God's creation; that as a created being, man is entirely dependent on God's goodness for his existence and, therefore, it is man's proper place to praise God; and, finally, Pope Benedict reflects on 'the fall' and gives an interpretation of 'original sin' and 'fallenness' that is especially helpful in understanding how 'the fall' changed man's relationship to God and to other human beings. Since man is made in God's image, every single human life "life stands under God's special protection, because each human being, however wretched or exalted he or she may be, however sick or suffering, however good-for-nothing or important, whether born or unborn, whether incurably ill or radiant with health - [because] each one bears God's breath in himself or herself, each one is God's image" [emphasis mine].[15] Pope Benedict sees in the image of God breathing life into man, as described in Genesis 2:7, a loving and creative God who pours Himself into His own creation.

This image of God calls to mind Psalm 139, particularly lines 13-14: "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."[16] God, in this view, loves His creation and cares for each particular individual, so much so that He knits them each in their mother's wombs. The Psalmist continues to say that *because "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," I praise you.* The Psalmist is articulating a relationship with

[15]Ramsey, O.P., Boniface, and Pope Benedict XVI. *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, 45.

[16]Psalm 139:13-14.

God that is laced with gratitude — gratitude at having been created is the *cause* of the Psalmist's praise of God. In fact, the relationship articulated here is a paradigm of what it means to be a created being, entirely dependent on God. Job, too, is aware of his dependence on the Lord: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."[17] It is with this loving, creative God in mind that Zosima is able to interpret the story of Job the way that he does.

But the question still remains: if God is such a loving God, why does Job suffer as he does and why does suffering exist in the world? Would such a loving God truly stand for this? This, of course, is the question that plagues Ivan and its answer, too, can be found in the text of Genesis that God has pointed Job to in His "whirlwind" speech. If suffering is a product of a doubt in God, a fracture in human beings' relationship with God, and if after this fracture, suffering has become an inherent part of existence in this world, then the suffering is understood in a completely different way than Ivan conceives it. Suffering does not necessarily have to be a means to an end — a purification process, as Ivan's Devil suggests — it might just be an unfixable aspect of human existence. The "fall," as Pope Benedict conceives it, describes exactly a fracturing of man's relationship with God and with other man in the creation of a 'sin-damaged world'.[18]

4.3 The Fall: Doubt Fractures Man's Relationship With God and Fellow Men

Leading up to his discussion about original sin and 'the fall', Pope Benedict highlights a very important detail about humans: they are relational and that "they live in those whom they love and in those who love them and to whom they are

[17]ibid, Job 1:21.

[18]Ramsey, O.P., Boniface, and Pope Benedict XVI. *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, 73.

'present"'[19] He puts it very succinctly when he says to "be truly a human being means to be related in love, to be of and for..."[20] Sin destroys our relationship with God and with other humans. This is because sin is "a rejection of relationality because it wants to make the human being a god... Consequently sin is always an offense that touches others, that alters the world and damages it... every human being enters into a world that is marked by relational damage..."[21] Job, too, is born into this sin-damaged world. He is not born with a fully intact relationship with God. This is, perhaps, why he has only heard of God but not seen God with his eyes. Similarly, Markel's guilt and 'sin' is tied to improper relationality with God and with his nurse and mother. Markel's suffering made him aware of the fractures in his relationships. So to did Job's admonishment from God enable him to overcome his limited, fallen relationship with God and arrive at a higher, more proper relationship.

This understanding of original sin also gives another way to comprehend suffering: suffering is the result of this sin-damaged world. Furthermore, it enables us to escape the problem of necessary suffering. Instead, we can say that suffering is unavoidable because we are all born into this "sin-damaged world This "sin-damaged world" is clearly present throughout Dostoevsky's novel in all of its characters and stories. In Zosima's relationship with Afanasy, Mitya's relationships with his father and Grushenka and Katerina Ivanovna and the relationships between the young boys. Even from a young age, grade school boys are capable of such great depravity as stabbing one another with pen-knives and pelting each other with rocks. The result of this "sin-damaged" world is one in which relationships with oneself are also damaged — damaged in such a way that there is an all-consuming guilt that makes one "not want to see paradise."

[19]ibid, 72.
[20]ibid, 72.
[21]ibid, 73.

Pope Benedict's explanation that sin is a "rejection of relationality because it wants to make the human being a god..." is particularly striking when taken together with Ivan's Devil's statement of men building a world for themselves. Words from the mouth of the devil that bring to mind the original temptation from the mouth of a snake: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?"[22] In analyzing this line, Pope Benedict is quick to point out that the serpents first words take the form of a question, in a form that is meant to bring doubt. Pope Benedict continues to explain that the first step in sin, as seen in Genesis 3:1, "is not the denial of God but rather doubt about his covenant..."[23] In this line of analysis, in which doubt is the first step of sin, Job's "nihilistic" lamentations are also on the first way to sin — which has been clarified as a fracturing of the relationship with God. Doubt, sin and Job are connected then in that doubt is the first step in sin that causes Job's relationship with God to be fractured.

In this framework, Job can be reassured of God's goodness by the fact that sin and doubt from the very first instance changed the dynamics of the world in such a way that the world was damaged by sin and suffering became unavoidable. Only by restoring a proper relationship with God and with the world is Job able to "see" God and His glory, in the same way that Markel is able to see God's glory. And while suffering remains an inherent part of the world, once this proper relationship has been restored, there is a mysterious way in which God is able to heal the wounds of the suffering. This is what Zosima concludes his analysis on Job with: the old grief and

[22]Edited by May, Herbert G., and Bruce Manning Metzger. "The Book of Job." In The *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: Revised standard version, containing the second edition of the New Testament and an expanded edition of the Apocrypha.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Genesis 3:1.

[23]Ramsey, O.P., Boniface, and Pope Benedict XVI. *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, 66.

pain "gradually passes into quiet, tender joy; instead of young, ebullient blood comes a mild, serene old age: I bless the sun's rising each day and my heart sings to it as before, but now I love its setting even more, its long slanting rays, and with them quiet, mild, tender memories, dear images form the whole of a long and blessed life — and over all is God's truth, moving, reconciling, all-forgiving!"[24] In accordance with the fact that "active love" is a way of life, and not simply a philosophical framework, Zosima does not try to understand how suffering is reconciled — instead he embraces it as a "great mystery of life[25]

In conversation with Ivan, Alyosha is quick to remind Ivan that Christ suffered for the sins of humanity in order that humanity might be redeemed. In Christ, "the passing earthly image and eternal truth here touched each other. In the face of earthly truth, the enacting of eternal truth is accomplished."[26] The truth in this phrase is that Christ became man and accepted death on a cross in order to redeem humanity. In Christ, the earthly truth of man's created nature and our dependence on God touches the eternal truth of God's love for humanity. Christ is the personification of man's relationship with God the creator. As such, Christ's sacrifice is the ultimate act that enables a redemptive transformation to take place. It is no wonder, then, that Zosima's "active love" is a direct counter to Ivan's critique that men cannot love as Christ loved. This love of neighbor is what the second principle of "active love" is primarily about — along with the long-term vision that Christ's death was for eternal salvation and not earthly salvation.

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[24]Dostoevsky, Fyodor. Translated by Richard Pevear, and Larissa Volokhonsky. *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue*. 292

[25]ibid, 292.

[26]ibid, 292.

CHAPTER 5

PROPER PERSPECTIVE: LOVING ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS CHRIST LOVED

The second principle of Zosima's "active love" is characterized, broadly, by (2) proper perspective. This broad perspective can be broken into two smaller sections: (2a) a focus on the local level towards one's neighbors; and (2b) a remembrance that the ultimate end is heaven. With regards to (2a), Zosima gives the most explicit account of "active love" to the "Lady of Little Faith," Madame Khokhlavov. A further account of this (2a) local perspective is given, in this same chapter, in the doctor who loved humanity but hated his neighbor. The second aspect of this proper perspective, (2b) the eternal salvation of one's soul, is illustrated in a great episode of Zosima's own life, in the story of the "Mysterious Visitor." In this episode, Zosima practices principle (2a) while also illustrating the importance of the fact that man's end is in heaven and not on earth.

This principle of proper perspective is the answer to Ivan's great doubt that man can love as Christ loved. Principle (2a) is particularly addressed towards that issue, while (2b) addresses a broader concern of Ivan's: whether or not God's world can be accepted. Through the practice of (2a) local perspective, Zosima is able to love the "Mysterious Visitor" — and, in fact, a number of other people such as Afansy and the Karamazov brothers — as Christ loved, with genuine sincerity, selflessness and empathy. In a focus on the (2b) eternal salvation of the soul, Zosima is able to encourage true repentance and redemption in the life of a man who lived with tremendous guilt, the guilt of a premeditated murder, for an entire lifetime. Perhaps it is not coincidence that Ivan Karamazov is overwhelmed by a similar guilt. In the

development from an immature faith to a mature faith, if (1) gratitude is the first step in repairing the relationship with God, (2) proper perspective is the second step in trusting that man can indeed love as Christ loved by enabling the reparation of local, personal relationships between people. Furthermore, a proper focus on the eternal salvation enables that mature faith that does not have selfish, earthly or triumphalstic motives. The final step in the maturation of this faith will be in the acceptance of reality: that it is fallen, that it *has been redeemed and transformed* and that, in spite of this, suffering is still an inherent part of earthly existence.[1]

5.1 Madame Khokhlavov's 'Little Faith' and the Search for Immediate Gratitude

Madame Khokhlavov comes to Zosima seeking the healing of her daughter. Her conversation soon turns towards herself, however, and she explains to Zosima that she is suffering from a lack of faith. She wants to believe in God, but she cannot bring herself to it. Throughout the conversation, a clear self-interest becomes apparent: Madame Khokhlavov seeks instant gratitude. This is surprisingly similar to Alyosha's lapse in faith where he sought a swift justice and Ivan's faith that seeks retribution. Furthermore, there is a noted similarity in her faith with Ivan's faith in that she is concerned with a broad 'humanity'. Zosima proposes an answer to Madame Khokhlavov's suffering — suffering that is brought on by her immature faith — but this answer runs counter to her self-centeredness as well as her broad perspective. In doing so, Zosima's focus on self-giving acts towards one's neighbor, irregardless of receiving gratitude, teaches one to overcome a self-centered faith and a broad, humanitarian, naive faith. Furthermore, this teaching is a direct counter to Ivan's belief that men cannot love as Christ loved.

Madame Khokhlavov pleads to Zosima: "And yet happiness, happiness — where is it? Who can call himself happy? ... let me tell you everything that I held back

[1] **I need to take this stuff and add it back into the statement of thesis / layout section**

last time, that I did not dare to say, everything that I suffer with, and have for so long, so long! I am suffering, forgive me, I am suffering!"[2] Madame Khokhlavov, the lady of little faith, whose daughter has been ill and unable to walk, admits to Zosima. He responds: "From what precisely... Lack of faith in God?"[3] Madame Khokhlavov responds: "Oh, no, no I dare not even think of that, but the life after death — it's such a riddle! ... I give you my greatest word that I am not speaking lightly now, that this thought about a future life after death troubles me to point of suffering, terror and fright...."[4] In many ways, Madame Khokhlavov's lack of faith is similar to Ivan's: on the one hand, she dare not even think of doubting God; on the other hand, she is not really sure she can trust Him. Furthermore, in another similarity to Ivan, she is self-aware of her primary limitation — her thirst for immediate gratitude: "if there's anything that would immediately cool my 'active' love for mankind, that one thing is ingratitude. In short, I work for pay and demand my pay at once, that is, praise and a return of love for my love. Otherwise I'm unable to love anyone!"[5] This is the earthly desire for swift justice that is present in Ivan's naive faith. Zosima's 'answer' to Madame Khokhlavov points to a mature faith, one that endures suffering without earthly reward. The key to developing this sort of faith, as becomes clear in Zosima's 'answer', is a continual focus on the needs of those who are (2a) immediately in front of her and (2b) the fact that she is on the path to heaven.

5.2 Zosima's Answer: Seeing Christ in all People

Zosima replies to her anguish with great compassion, as he replies to Ivan's great doubt: "I believe completely in the genuineness of your anguish."[6] This ability to embrace her anguish and her doubt is indicative of great sympathy. This sympathy

[2]ibid, 55.
[3]ibid, 55.
[4]ibid, 55.
[5]ibid, 57.
[6]ibid, 56.

comes, in part, from Zosima's focus: he is focused solely on Madame Khokhlavov. She has his full attention and feels that she can trust him completely. This is similar, perhaps, to the effect that Alyosha has on those who see him: "There was something in [Alyosha] that told one, that convinced one ... that [Alyosha] did not want to be a judge of men, that he would not take judgment upon himself and would not condemn anyone for anything."[7] This particular characteristic seems to be dependent on Alyosha's "love of people" and his "complete faith in people."[8] Zosima displays these same characteristics in his encounter with Madame Khokhlavov. In this way, Zosima practices the very "active love" that he preaches.

Madame Khokhlavov continues:

> "Oh, how grateful I am to you! You see, I close my eyes and think: if everyone has faith, where does it come from? And then they say that it all came orginally from fear of the awesome phenomena of nature, and that there is nothing to it at all. What? I think, all my life I've believed, then I die, and suddenly there's nothing, and only 'burdock will grown on my grave,' as I read in one writer? Though I believed only when I was a little child, mechanically, without thinking about anything... How, how can it be proved? I've come now to throw myself at your feet [Zosima's feet] and ask you about it. If I miss this chance, too, then surely no one will answer me for the rest of my life. ... It's devastating, devastating!"
>
> [Zosima] "No doubt it is devastating. One cannot prove anything here, but it is possible to be convinced."
>
> "How? By what?"

[7]ibid, 19.
[8]ibid, 19.

> [Zosima] "By the experience of active love. Try to love your neighbors actively and tirelessly. The more you succeed in loving, the more you'll be convinced of the existence of God and the immortality of your soul. And if you reach complete selflessness in the love of your neighbor, then undoubtedly you will believe, and no doubt will even be able to enter your soul. This has been tested. It is certain."[9]

Madame Khokhavov is seeking a simple answer to her doubts, almost as if she expects a single statement from Zosima to cure her. This sort of thinking operates within earthly and self-centered standards. It expects an argument, perhaps even a Euclidean argument, that God exists. As Job and Markel illustrated, however, coming to "see" God is not so easy — and it often involves a great trial. Furthermore, Job and Genesis illustrate another great principal of faith: faith is interpersonal. Job does not plead to an abstract principle for help. No, he pleads to God. Genesis confirms this personal relationship between God and His creation and it also reveals the 'fall' as the source of a 'sin-damaged' world. Restoring one's relationship with God is one key in the maturation of one's faith and this was seen in the section on gratitude. The second step in this development of faith lies in the restoration of one's relationship with the rest of humanity — a direct counter to Ivan's great doubt in man's ability to love as Christ loved.

The process by which one's *faith in God* is restored through *selfless love of neighbor* is somewhat of a mystery: "if you reach complete selflessness in the love of your neighbor, then undoubtedly you will believe..."[10] This process is demystified, however, with the insight from Genesis, that man is made in God's image. If this is so, then the idea of 'seeing Christ in all people' is no stretch of the imagination. In

[9]Dostoevsky, 56.
[10]ibid, 56.

this way, and in a form of Matthew 25:36-40, "active love" and (2) proper perspective enable one to see Christ in all people.[11]

5.3 Heaven: The Hope That Sustains Perseverance

This restorative love is not easy, however, and it is easily confused with a general love for humanity. Madame Khokhlavov explains to Zosima that she has a great love for humanity: "You see, I love mankind so much that — would you believe it? — I sometimes dream of giving up all, all I have, of leaving Lise and going to become a sister of mercy. I close my eyes, I think and dream, and in such moments I feel an invincible strength in myself."[12] Here Zosima says, not without a bit of humor, "It's already a great deal and very well for you that you dream of that in your mind and not of something else. Once in a while, by chance, you may really do some good deed."[13] Zosima continues to explain to Madame Khokhlavov that she will make no progress in convincing herself if she merely speaks sincerely in order to be praised for her sincerity. Zosima is so astute in his analysis that she cries out, "You've brought me back to myself, you've caught me out and explained me to myself!"[14]

And here Zosima spells out the difficulty of active love — it is not naive, nor does it discount human suffering. He continues: "... active love is labor and perseverance, and for some people, perhaps, a whole science."[15] Instead, it embraces this suffering and accepts reality as it is, without ever losing hope: "If you do not attain happiness,

[11]Matthew 25:36-40 reads: 'I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

[12]ibid, 56.

[13]ibid, 56.

[14]ibid, 58.

[15]ibid, 58.

always remember that you are on a good path, and try not to leave it."[16] Where does this hope come from? Zosima reminds her that she is "on a good path," that is, if she practices this love she will be on a path to heaven. Heaven is the source of this hope and it arises from aspect (2b) focusing on heaven. This is the ultimate end. As in Markel's story, an application of love (2a) at the local level is sustained by his hope (2b) of eternal salvation and a great deal of grace during one's greatest trial: "But I predict that even in that very moment when you see with horror that despite all your efforts, you not only have not come nearer your goal but seem to have gotten farther from it, at that very moment — I predict this to you — you will suddenly reach your goal and will clearly behold over you the wonder-working power of the Lord, who all the while has been loving you, and all the while has been mysteriously guiding you."[17]

These great moments of grace, while apparently far-fetched, are scattered throughout the novel itself. Zosima is overpowered by grace the night before his duel. Alyosha's faith is restored at the depths of his despair by Grushenka. And Mitya's redemptive revelation that he is guilty before all comes on the night of his interrogation. As far fetched as these moments of grace seem, they are similar to Job's encounter with God when he has suffered greatly and is at his wit's end in justifying himself. These great trials call to mind Christ's own words, quoted from Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest."[18] In the midst of this great despair, the Psalmist later proclaims: "From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued[d] me. I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise

[16]ibid, 58.
[17]ibid, 58.
[18]Psalm 22:1-3.

you..."[19] Like Markel and like Christ, the Psalmist's great joy lies not in some earthly triumph but in the eternal dominion of God.

Thus, by incorporating (2) proper perspective, Ivan's doubts about man's ability to love as Christ loved are overcome. By focusing on (2a) the local perspective, one is able to see Christ in all people and break down the monumental task of truly loving one's neighbor. In so doing, the task does not become easy — it is labor and perseverance — but it becomes manageable. Furthermore, the strength to sustain this laborious task is maintained by (2b) a focus on the eternal end.

[19]Psalm 22:21-22.

CHAPTER 6

ACCEPTING REALITY: MAN'S FALLEN NATURE AND REDEMPTION

The "sin damaged world", the framework introduced by Pope Benedict XVI in his homilies on creation, is helpful in this analysis in that it reveals the nature of fallenness — the damage is done by means of fractured relationships. The first is a fractured relationship with God — as expressed in Ivan's distrust in God, the same distrust the mirrors Job's doubt in God's goodness. The second is a fractured relationship with others — this is expressed in Ivan's doubt that man can love as Christ loved. The third is a fractured relationship with oneself — as expressed in Ivan's struggle to embrace both the guilt over his father's murder and forgiveness. In this struggle, Ivan's great desire for retribution is at odds with his own guilt. The final obstacle for Ivan's faith in its maturation is his inability to accept the forgiveness for his sinfulness that was enabled by Christ's death.

Zosima's "active love" speaks to Ivan's final obstacle in two steps: first, one must accept man's fallen nature and become guilty before all; and second, one must also accept the forgiveness of Christ. This principle of (3) acceptance of reality is embodied in Zosima's beloved John 12:24: "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."[1] As this passage, and Christ's death, suggests: the world is fallen in such a way that death is a necessary component in the development towards life. It is this principle that "active love invokes as a *redemptive and transformative* process.

[1] John 12:24.

6.1 Guilty Before All: Markel's Message Lives Through Zosima

The idea that one must be "guilty before all" is an idea that stuck with Zosima from the time of his brother's death. This idea is more fully fleshed out by Zosima in his comments during Ivan's first philosophical argument at the monastery. During this conversation, Zosima explains that true reformation and redemption lies in one's conscience becoming self-aware: "... real punishment, the only real, the only frightening and appeasing punishment ... lies in the acknowledgement of one's own conscience."[2] He continues to explain the importance of forgiveness and true acknowledgement of sin: "If anything protects society even in our time, and even reforms the criminal himself and transforms him into a different person, again it is Christ's law alone, which manifests itself in the acknowledgement of one's own conscience."[3] The process of acknowledging one's own guilt is what is meant in the phrase "I am guilty before all" — as is shown in Zosima's belief that only when one acknowledges guilt internally will one publicly confess it to society.[4]

As Zosima emphasizes in his conversation with Madame Khokhlavov, the key in this process is to be honest with oneself and to acknowledge one's guilt: "Above all, avoid lies, all lies, especially the lie to yourself. ... do not even be very frightened by your own bad acts."[5] In Zosima's own life, the realism of not lying to himself comes in his recognition of his guilt in beating Afansy: "Indeed, how did I deserve that another man, just like me, the *image and likeness of God* [emphasis mine], should serve me? This question pierced my mind for the first time in my life."[6] This acknowledgement of a personal sin leads Zosima to immediately remember Markel's proclamation of being

[2]Dostoevsky, 64.
[3]ibid, 64.
[4]ibid, 64.
[5]ibid, 58.
[6]ibid, 298.

"guilty before all". This might seem to be an unusual jump — from acknowledging a particular sin to such a general sin. In the context of a "sin-damaged world", as made clear in Zosima's connection to Genesis with the "image and likeness" imagery as well as Pope Benedict XVI's homilies on creation, this responsibility for all makes much more sense. It makes sense in this way: because of man's fallen nature, he is continually sinning against God[7], against others[8], and against himself[9].Once this guilt is accepted, the next step in the process of redemption and transformation is the ability to accept forgiveness for this sin. This ability to accept forgiveness is fundamental to Markel's conception of paradise: "Let me be sinful before everyone, but so that everyone will forgive me, an that is paradise."[10]

6.2 Accepting Forgiveness: The Final Key in the Transformation

In Zosima's words to Ivan, he tells Ivan that the problem will never be resolved: "Even if it cannot be resolved in a positive way, it will never be resolved in the negative way either—you yourself know this property of your heart..."[11] While it might sound trivial, the fact that Ivan cannot resolve this dilemma himself — in the positive, due to a lack of knowledge and in the negative, due to his great sympathy for the suffering and desire for justice — reveals, to a certain extent, Ivan's need of an external force to resolve it. This external force is Christ — "he can forgive everything, forgive all *and for all*."[12] Because of his desire for retribution and earthly justice, Ivan is unable to accept Christ and the consequent forgiveness as a resolving force for his dilemma.

[7]Markel: "... there was so much of God's glory around me ... I alone dishonored everything, and did not notice the beauty and glory of it at all.", 289

[8]Mitya's crimes and the young boys injuring Ilyushechka come to mind.

[9]The pride of Katya, Ivan and Mitya in not allowing themselves to forgive or to be forgiven come to mind as examples.

[10]ibid, 290.

[11]ibid, 68.

[12]ibid, 246.

While it might seem odd that Ivan cannot accept such a force, there is precedent in the novel in the mysterious visitor who cannot accept forgiveness, either.

The mysterious visitor is perhaps the greatest example of a prideful conscience attempting to evade its own standards of justice. After committing the murder of his beloved, he attempts to soothe over his conscience by justifying it as an act of love, through philanthropy and through a marriage. Yet his conscience continually tugs at him and his conscience draws him to Zosima after Zosima's great and transformative experience with the duel. After spending significant time with Zosima, he confesses to the murder and feels the need to publicly confess. The encounter culminates in the visitor resisting the urge to confess to Zosima (and even contemplating murdering Zosima) while Zosima reads two passages from scripture: John 12:24 and Hebrews 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."[13] The first passage, in alluding to Christ and his death, points to the need for external grace in forgiveness. The second passage alludes to the great difficulty in submitting one's will to God. Once the will submits, however, after it has been prepared and transformed through the practice of "active love", it will be ready for the great moment of grace. This moment for the mysterious visitor manifests itself in the lack of consequences for his family.

[13]It is not surprising that Zosima articulates "active love" with similar terminology: "I am sorry that I cannot say anything more comforting, for active love is a harsh and fearful thing compared with love in dreams.", 58.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

The moment for Job manifests itself in 'seeing' God. The moment for Zosima manifests itself in an overflowing joy that permeates his existence: "the old grief, by a great mystery of human life, gradually passes into quiet, tender joy; ... I bless the sun's rising each day and my heart sings to it before, but now I love its setting even more, its long slanting rays, and with them quiet, mild, tender memories, dear images from the whole of a long and blessed life—an over all is God's truth, moving, reconciling, all-forgiving!"[1] This joy is a product of a life of "active love" which has enabled Zosima to restore his relationship with God, with others and himself. Furthermore, it has enabled him to acknowledge his guilt before all, to acknowledge the depravity of man's nature and the inherent suffering in life, while also acknowledging that Christ has bought eternal salvation and redeemed men.

"Life is paradise" for Zosima precisely because he has acknowledged this guilt and forgiveness. In so doing, he has grown into a mature faith which adapts to reality, accepts reality and has his sight opened to the great goodness of God's creation (much the same way as Markel does). In this way, suffering is not a test of faith for Zosima so much as another reality of the 'sin-damaged world' that he must adapt to and embrace. This sort of mature faith is revealed in Alyosha's acceptance of Ilyushechka's death and there is a pointer back to Job in Ilyushechka's words to his father: [INSERT QUOTE HERE ABOUT LOVING ANOTHER BOY]. And thus,

[1] ibid, 292.

through "active love", there is a restoration of man to his proper place in creation and in his ability to see the goodness of God's creation and to partake in its joyfulness.

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