Siblings in *The Brothers Karamazov*

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The Brothers Karamazov has often been looked at as a study of the breakdown of father-son relations, an interpretation justified by Dostoevsky's own words. In an often-quoted entry in his *Writer's Diary* from January 1876, Dostoevsky explained: "For a long time now I have had the goal of writing a novel about children in Russia today, and about their fathers too, of course, in their mutual relationship of today. ... I will take fathers and children from every level of Russian society I can find and follow the children from their earliest childhood."[1] Dostoevsky saw the breakdown of the family as connected to overall societal degeneration. Susanne Fusso posits that "Dostoevskii's last three novels are devoted to exploring the ways in which the fathers of Russia have failed in their obligations to the sons, and therefore to the nation's future."[2] William Leatherbarrow, too, writes that "the Karamazov family relationships are invested with a symbolism designed to imply a breakdown in the transmission of values and mutual responsibility between the generations."[3]

While I believe these views to be correct, they overlook another system of connections that are also central to Dostoevsky's conception of the novel—sibling bonds. As the vertical relations between fathers and sons fail, lateral, nonhierarchical sibling bonds offer an alternative model of love, support, and understanding.[4] With their focus on the hierarchical relations, critics have tended to overlook this second, horizontal layer in Dostoevsky's scheme, but in fact from the title to the last lines of the book, siblings are present in *The Brothers Karamazov*, offering a positive alternative to the failure of fathers.

In choosing to depict sibling bonds in this way, Dostoevsky goes against the traditional Freudian model. For Freud, siblinghood was based on rivalry and competition: "The elder child ill-treats the younger, maligns him and robs him of his toys; while the younger is consumed with impotent rage against the elder, envies and fears him."[5] In Freud's writing

[1]F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh* (*PSS*) (Leningrad, 1972–90), 22:7. Future references to *PSS* also will contain references to the English translation, the page given after the back slash. This translation from *A Writer's Diary* is by Kenneth Lantz (Evanston, 1994), 302.

[2]Susanne Fusso, "Dostoevskii and the Family," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii*, ed. W. J. Leatherbarrow (Cambridge, England, 2002), 176–77.

[3]W. J. Leatherbarrow, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Cambridge, England, 1992), 25.

[4]I am using the word "father" in this text only in the sense of earthly father, not God the Father.

[5]Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London, 1953–74), 4:250.

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on the primal horde, brothers come together not in love, but to overthrow the father.[6] Dostoevsky's positive portrayal of siblinghood also rejects the type of love modeled in the biblical story of Job. There, love is based on testing. Parallel to the test of Job's loyalty—how much the son can be pushed before he will rebel against God the father—is the test of his siblings' loyalty. Job is forsaken by his brothers when his misfortunes begin (Job 19:13, 19:17). They do not withstand this test of their love and return to Job only once his wealth returns (Job 42:11). Bearing in mind the models provided in the Book of Job and in Freud, it is striking that in his novel Dostoevsky chooses precisely the sibling relationship to be his exemplar of active love.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, lateral sibling bonds not only provide an answer to failed father-son relations, they are also intimately connected to at the ideological heart of the novel—Ivan's rebellion and "The Grand Inquisitor." I will argue that the central conflict in The Grand Inquisitor is between the hierarchical, paternal love of the Inquisitor and the lateral, brotherly love of Christ. Close examination of the novel reveals that the type of active love preached by Zosima, which can restore faith, is exemplified by sibling bonds. Throughout the text, siblings stand by to support and understand each other, offering a model of how people can love one another selflessly, in the manner of Christ's love.

Yet the picture of siblinghood is not exclusively positive. Embedded at the core of the novel is a crucial instance where this love fails. The rejected fourth brother, Smerdyakov, provides an important reminder that while sibling relations *should* hold the key to overcoming a loss of faith and *should* provide a model for a different kind of society based on lateral, rather than vertical bonds, the ethical and spiritual potential of this relationship is not always realized. Like God in the story of Job, Dostoevsky is constantly testing his characters. Although in most cases siblings in the novel reach out to each other in times of trouble (unlike Job's), to love Smerdyakov becomes the ultimate challenge which everyone fails. As such, it foregrounds the consequences of choosing Christ's freedom over the Inquisitor's paternal despotism: Christ's model must give us the chance to fail. This is not to say that the idea of brotherhood itself is rejected by Dostoevsky as a failure. On the contrary, he returns to it powerfully at the end of the novel in Alyosha's speech at the stone, proving that although universal brotherhood has not yet been attained in this world, it is still Dostoevsky's ideal.

THE CENTRAL IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE

As traditionally defined, the central conflict in *The Brothers Karamazov* is between faith and the rejection of God's world. This struggle reaches its peak in Ivan's revolt in Part II, Books Five and Six—"Rebellion" and "The Grand Inquisitor." Ivan's rebellion has received immense critical attention, but focusing on the role of siblings brings to light a new understanding of what is at issue in this passage.

Ivan begins his rebellion by telling Alyosha: "I never could understand how it's possible to love one's neighbors. In my opinion, it's precisely one's neighbors that one cannot

[6]Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *The Standard Edition* 13:144.

possibly love. Perhaps if they weren't so nigh."[7] Stewart Sutherland calls this a "perhaps deliberately inconsequential way of introducing one of the central problems of the novel."[8] I would argue that there is nothing inconsequential about this beginning, because the inability to love is at the heart of what is troubling Ivan. Since moving back to Skotoprigonevsk, Ivan has deliberately been keeping his distance from Alyosha. Alyosha quickly becomes close with Dmitri, but he is confused that "his brother Ivan, though Alyosha noticed how he looked long and curiously at him at first, soon seemed even to have stopped thinking about him."[9] This remains the case for over two months, and then suddenly and significantly, Ivan reaches out to Alyosha, asking him for a meeting. "Alyosha felt that his brother had stepped a step towards him, and that he must have done so for some reason, with some purpose in mind."[10]

After Ivan initiates this first step, the brothers meet at a tavern and Ivan begins the conversation with his words about the impossibility of loving "one's neighbors" or "one's close ones" (see footnote 7). While scholars have treated this idea as the abstract idea of loving one's neighbors, it has a more immediate meaning as well. Ivan is not just thinking about the abstract neighbor, but also about the very real little brother sitting before him. By setting up the scene in this way, Dostoevsky shows the connection between what could be seen as abstract philosophical ideas and the closely personal.[11] When love of a brother is at stake in a discussion of religious values, those values become immediately concrete and relevant. I believe Ivan's deliberate step toward his brother is his test of all the ideas that follow.

The main issue Ivan is wrestling with is not faith vs. reason, but rather how man can love his fellow men. Ivan's rejection of God's world is not based on atheism in the traditional sense (Ivan says that he accepts God) but, rather, "the keenness of Ivan's reasoning lies in that he renounces God *out of love for mankind*."[12] Ivan's questions "do not relate to either the omnipotence of God, or the omniscience of God, they relate to the love of God for his creation."[13] Sutherland points to the central question the importance of divine love raises for Ivan, suggesting that the conflict in "Rebellion" could be paraphrased as: "If this world is the expression of the love of God for man, what hopes can one hold out for the love of man for man?"[14] Ivan claims to be so horrified at man's inhumanity to man (epitomized by the torturing of children) that he questions the love of a God who could set up a world

[7]*PSS* 14:215/236. Translations of *The Brothers Karamazov* are from Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London, 2004), with some slight modifications by the author. Pevear and Volokhonsky have used the word "neighbor" in this passage to show the biblical reference Ivan is making. However, the term used in the Russian Bible, "*svoikh blizhnykh*," which Dostoevsky uses, would be better translated as "close ones."

[8]Stewart R. Sutherland, *Atheism and the Rejection of God: Contemporary Philosophy and The Brothers Karamazov* (Oxford, 1977), 73.

[9]*PSS* 14:30/31.

[10]Ibid., 132/143.

[11]This theme appears as well in the story Zosima tells Madame Khokhlakova about the doctor who claimed that "the more I love mankind in general, the less I love people in particular, that is, individually, as separate persons" (ibid., 53/57).

[12]Konstantin Molchulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Works*, trans. Michael A Minihan (Princeton, 1967), 616.

[13]Sutherland, *Atheism*, 74.

[14]Ibid.

where such atrocities take place. Framing the problem in terms of love opens the way for Zosima's answer—that faith is restored through active love. In Sutherland's paraphrase of Ivan's question, we see clearly the parallel Ivan draws between his doubts about God's love and his fear of men's inability to reach out to each other in love. Zosima will pick up on this idea later, when he claims that hell is "the suffering of being no longer able to love."[15]

This preliminary discussion sets the stage for "The Grand Inquisitor," which I read as a continuation of Ivan's questioning how people can fulfill Christ's teachings of love. Ivan is struggling with two different conceptions of what it means to love. The Inquisitor's model is one of nurturing and benevolent despotism. Ivan presents this model as a totalitarian father's love for a weak, helpless, childish humanity (though any reader may see that it does not reflect the ideal of true fatherly love, which involves respect and grants freedom based on that respect). The Inquisitor tells Christ: "Have we not, indeed, loved mankind, in so humbly recognizing his impotence, in so lovingly alleviating his burden and allowing his feeble nature even to sin, with our permission?"[16] Christ's love, by contrast, is based on a challenge to grown-ups—offering a model of goodness that people must freely choose, and for which they must be prepared to suffer.[17] The Inquisitor argues that Christ in fact asked too much of people and showed them too little compassion and that he, the Inquisitor, has a truer love for humanity. He tells Christ: "I left the proud and returned to the humble, for the happiness of the humble."[18]

The Inquisitor creates a hierarchical model in which the people below him are children—"we will arrange their lives like a children's game"—and describes his (and his colleagues) relationship with the people: "They will become timid and look to us and cling to us in fear, like chicks to a hen."[19] In Ivan's conception, the Inquisitor becomes their parent. Ivan makes it clear that all the Inquisitor's actions are justified by love, noting rather tragically at the end that he "has wasted his whole life on a great deed in the wilderness and still has not been cured of his love for mankind."[20] The Inquisitor presents himself as a peacemaker: "They will finally understand that freedom and earthly bread in plenty for everyone are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share among themselves."[21]

This quotation aptly describes the main vertical, father-sons relationships in the novel, bringing to mind Dmitri's struggle with Fyodor Pavlovich over his inheritance and the way the latter abandoned his children without giving them a penny as they were growing up. It also appears in crude architectural form in the merchant Samsonov's selfishness in relation to his children: "Both his children and his clerks were cramped in their quarters, but the old man occupied the upper floor by himself and would not share it even with his daughter, who looked after him and at regular hours or at his irregular summons had each time to run

[15]*PSS* 14:292/322.

[16]Ibid., 234/257.

[17]As Nicholas Berdyaev notes, "in Christ there is no forcing of conscience. ... He used no coercion to make us believe in him as in God. ... Therein lies the radical secret of Jesus Christ, the secret of freedom." See Berdyaev, *Dostoevsky*, trans. Donald Attwater (New York, 1957), 78–79.

[18]*PSS* 14:237/260.

[19]Ibid., 236/259.

[20]Ibid., 238/261.

[21]Ibid., 231/253.

up to him from downstairs, despite her chronic shortness of breath."[22] Authoritarian fathers in the novel are shown to be miserly and unable to share with their children.

Not all fathers must be authoritarian tyrants, however. The sentimentalized, carnivalized Snegiryov family does not fit this pattern because Captain Snegiryov does not place himself above his children as an authority figure. At the heart of the novel is the struggle to find a love that does not stifle as it supports, but is instead compatible with freedom.[23] None of the fathers in the novel fully succeed in this love. Perhaps Snegiryov comes closest—managing to love his children while leaving them free—but he does so at the expense of fulfilling many of his fatherly duties. Placing himself beside his children as an equal, and allowing them to tell him when he is playing too much of the buffoon, he eliminates hierarchy but at the same time, he fails to provide the material support and moral authority that his children need from a father.[24]

In essence, Captain Snegiryov blends the roles of father and brother to his children, a type of mixing that will become an important theme throughout the novel. V. E. Vetlovskaia discusses this blending, pointing out that Snegiryov refers to Ilyusha as "Father, dear father" (*Batiushka, milyi batiushka*).[25] A similar kind of name-mixing goes on in the Karamazov family as well. Fyodor Pavlovich calls both Smerdyakov and Alyosha "brother" at various points. Ivan, on the other hand is in many ways the authority figure of the family. "Fyodor Pavlovich suddenly and almost accidentally calls his son Ivan 'my own father.'"[26] Unlike in the Karamazov family, however, Captain Snegiryov creates a model of equality based on disability, humility, and on mutual, unconditional love: "If I die, who will so love them, sir, and while I live, who will so love me, a little wretch, if not them?[27]

The contrast of Snegiryov-style parenting vs. the Inquisitor's authoritarian model is what Michael Holquist sees at the heart of the "Grand Inquisitor." "The Legend pits two theories of parenthood against each other," he writes, with Christ's resurrection of the little girl as "a metaphor for the view that fathers must deliver children from the killing effects of parental oppression."[28] I would go further and suggest that it is not two parental models of love being contrasted, but rather a hierarchical father/child relationship vs. a nonhierarchical brother's. In his *poema*, Ivan presents Christ's love as a lateral model of brotherly love, which mirrors the sibling love present in the rest of the text.

From examining the marks Dostoevsky made in his copy of the New Testament, we know that he was particularly struck by passages that talk of brotherly love. In his study of Dostoevsky's markings, Geir Kjetsaa finds that Dostoevsky (like all Russian Orthodox) prefers the writing of St. John and hypothesizes that this is due to "the fact that it knows only one commandment, namely the commandment to love thy neighbor."[29] A sample of

[22]Ibid., 333/368.

[23]For a discussion of the antimony of love and freedom see Berdyaev, *Dostoevsky*, 67–88.

[24]Hierarchy is also subverted as Mama acts like a child and Ilyusha gives her his toy cannon as if he were her father.

[25]V. E. Vetlovskaia, *Poetika romana "Brat'ia Karamazovy"* (Leningrad, 1977), 121.

[26]Ibid.

[27]*PSS* 14:183/201.

[28]Michael Holquist, *Dostoevsky and the Novel* (Princeton, 1977), 183.

[29]Geir Kjetsaa, *Dostoevsky and His New Testament* (Oslo, 1984), 9.

some of the passages Dostoevsky marked may make his intentions in *The Brothers Karamazov* clearer:

> A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (John 13:34)
>
> He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling him. (1 John 2:10)
>
> We love, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also. (1 John 4:19–21)

In this last passage, Dostoevsky added the word "*by*" after the word "*liubil*" at the end of verse 21 "to denote '*should* love,' thereby making the verse a commandment."[30]

As illustrated in the first biblical quotation above, in asking others to love each other *as he loves them*, Christ makes himself another brother in the universal brotherhood for which he calls. His is a reciprocal bond of mutual attachment that can be expanded indefinitely to include the whole of mankind. Christ not only acknowledges, but creates equality.[31] The Inquisitor points explicitly to the lateral nature of Christ's love when he asks Christ: "whom have you raised up to yourself?"[32]

A parallel exists between Christ's love of mankind and Alyosha's treatment of the boys he befriends. Alyosha wins the love of Kolya Krasotkin by treating him as an equal. At the beginning of their first conversation Kolya is struck that Alyosha spoke "as if he were talking to someone of the same age or even older than himself."[33] This treatment inspires Kolya to speak openly with Alyosha and to confess his shortcomings. Given Kolya's nature, we can see how Alyosha would have brought out his proud, cynical side had he attempted to speak down to Kolya and form a vertical bond. Kolya proves this later when he exclaims: "You know, what delights me most of all is that you treat me absolutely as an equal. And we're not equal, no, not equal, you are higher!"[34]

Here again, we see the blending of roles. The difference between sibling relationships and father-son relationships in *The Brothers Karamazov* is not always clearly defined. Alyosha acts as both a brother and a father/teacher in his relations with Kolya and the group of boys around Ilyusha. At the end of their first conversation Kolya announces: "I've come to learn from you," to which Alyosha replies: "And I from you."[35] While Alyosha's reply restores the lateral nature of the connection, at the same time Kolya's remark shows how the boys view Alyosha as their teacher. Kolya has no father, so Alyosha fills that role for him, as well as being like an older brother. This blending suggests the position of an

[30]Irina Kirillova, "Dostoevsky's Markings in the Gospel According to St John," in *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, ed. George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson (Cambridge, England, 2001), 50.

[31]The Inquisitor tells Christ: "You thirsted for love that is free, and not for the servile raptures of a slave before a power that has left him permanently terrified" (*PSS* 14:233/256).

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., 500/554.

[34]Ibid., 504/558.

[35]Ibid., 484/538.

uncle, who is both a brother and yet at the same time belongs to the generation of the father. In his final "speech at the stone" after Ilyusha's funeral, Alyosha refers to the twelve boys in front of him as "my little doves" and "my dear children" as a father would, yet he walks off hand in hand as a brother.

This lateral bond between Alyosha and Kolya is linked with brotherly love through the repetition of a key phrase used in conversation earlier between Ivan and Alyosha. At the end of "The Grand Inquisitor," when the two are preparing to part, Ivan tells Alyosha that the memory of Alyosha will be enough to make him go on living until his thirtieth year. He then adds: "If you wish, you can take it as a declaration of love."[36] Kolya repeats this phrase at the end of his conversation with Alyosha, saying: "You know, Karamazov, our talk is something like a declaration of love."[37]

Christ's answer to the Inquisitor could be seen as just such a declaration: "Suddenly he approaches the old man in silence and gently kisses him on his bloodless, ninety-year-old lips. That is the whole answer."[38] The detail of his bloodless ninety-year-old lips suddenly reminds us of how human and fragile the Inquisitor is. Thus the kiss not only affirms Christ's love but also heightens our awareness of humanity's shared mortality. Ivan's addition of "that is the whole answer" emphasizes that the whole answer is love. We see that this love overcomes the resolve of the Inquisitor because after the kiss, instead of having Christ executed the next day as planned, he sets Christ free.

The question, then, is what kind of love this kiss offers, and I would argue that it is the love of a brother for a brother.[39] When Ivan finishes his *poema* and sees Alyosha's suffering over his beliefs, he says with great feeling: "I thought, brother, that when I left here I'd have you, at least, in all the world ... but now I see that in your heart too there is no room for me, my dear hermit. The formula, 'everything is permitted,' I will not renounce, and what then? Will you renounce me for that? Will you?"[40] Alyosha's response is a silent kiss on Ivan's lips, exactly modeling the kiss Christ gave to the Inquisitor. Ivan immediately calls Alyosha's kiss "literary theft," cementing the parallel between the two. If Alyosha's kiss for his brother was literary theft, then it follows that the model of Christ's kiss for the Inquisitor must also be a brother's kiss.

At the beginning of his "rebellion" Ivan tells Alyosha: "In my opinion, Christ's love for people is in its kind a miracle impossible on earth."[41] But when Alyosha—after having heard his brother's rebellion and his rejection of God's world, listened to the list of atrocities against innocent victims Ivan has enumerated, and heard Ivan declare that he will not give up his formula of "everything is permitted"—when Alyosha is still able to kiss Ivan in love,

[36]Ibid., 240/264.

[37]Ibid., 504/558.

[38]Ibid., 239/262.

[39]The kiss has often been likened to that of Judas, which can be seen as a brother's betrayal. But as Elaine Pagels has convincingly argued, Judas can also be seen as the most faithful of the disciples. By giving his kiss, he knowingly allowed his name to be cursed for all of history in order to fulfill God's plan. See Elane Pagels and Karen L. King, *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity* (New York, 2007), esp. 8, 16, and 17.

[40]*PSS* 14:240/263.

[41]Ibid., 216/237.

Ivan has his most powerful proof that brotherly love modeled on Christ's is possible, even in this imperfect world and even up close.

Right after Alyosha's kiss, Ivan makes his "declaration of love," showing that he, too, can feel brotherly love. As it is Christ's brotherly love (in the form of the kiss) that overcomes the Inquisitor, Ivan declaration of love right after telling his *poema* implies that Alyosha's kiss—his brotherly love—has already overcome the Inquisitor in Ivan's heart. Ivan goes into the meeting with Alyosha, telling his brother: "perhaps I want to be healed by you," and this is exactly what happens.[42]

Of course, with a character as deliberately contradictory as Ivan (and with an author as complex as Dostoevsky), this healing cannot be instantaneous, but we do see symbolic indications of its beginnings. At the start of their meeting in the tavern Ivan tells Alyosha horrible stories until Alyosha agrees that a man who has loosed a pack of dogs on an innocent child deserves to be shot. Ivan is terribly pleased to hear this un-Christian answer from Alyosha and tells him: "You are dear to me, I don't want to let you slip, and I won't give you up to your Zosima."[43] Here, Ivan seems like the Devil tempting Alyosha and trying to seduce him. However, after the kiss Ivan releases Alyosha with the words, "Well go to your Pater Seraphicus," a direct parallel to how the Inquisitor releases Christ after his kiss.[44] It seems that love can help to restore faith. More specifically, the love of a brother wins out over the tyrannical, fatherly love offered by the Inquisitor.

Throughout the novel, Ivan struggles with the idea of being his brother's keeper, attempting to reject this role, yet at the same time never fully letting go of his sense of responsibility. At the beginning of their conversation, when Alyosha asks what will happen between their father and Dmitri if Ivan leaves, Ivan angrily replies: "Am I my brother Dmitri's keeper or something? ... Cain's answer to God about his murdered brother, eh? Maybe that's what you're thinking at the moment? But, devil take it, I can't really stay on here as their keeper!"[45] In a later conversation he makes a similar comment about Lise—"If she's a child, I'm not her nanny"—and also about Katerina Ivanovna.[46] Yet despite his words, Ivan has not reached an ultimate rejection of this role and his actions show that he still has an element of faith in him. Zosima tells Ivan that the question of his faith is not yet decided and that "even if it cannot be resolved in a positive way, it will never be resolved in the negative way either."[47]

The struggle itself is a sign of the good that is in Ivan. Alyosha addresses this good part of his brother when he kisses him, and in the end Ivan does make an attempt to be his brother's keeper. Dostoevsky shows that at every moment one has a choice about how to act, as when Dmitri leaves Fyodor Pavlovich's window without killing him. Ivan, too, at his crucial moment *chooses* for the good, turning around when leaving the courtroom and handing over Smerdyakov's money in an attempt to prove Dmitri's innocence.

[42]Ibid. 14:215/236.
[43]Ibid., 222/243.
[44]Ibid., 241/264.
[45]Ibid., 211/231–32.
[46]Ibid. 15:38, 39/600.
[47]Ibid. 14:65/70.

This is the end of the novel's central struggle. The bonds of brotherhood between Ivan and Dmitri prevail during Dmitri's hour of need, even as they are placed in stark contrast with the failed brotherhood of Smerdyakov.[48] This moment also counters the failures of the father that have been expounded throughout the court case. This is Christ's lateral model of love taking the place of the Inquisitor's hierarchical model. As Anne Hruska argues:

> The novel proposes a solution to the vicious cycle of abuse: people need to be willing not to strive for the top of the hierarchy, but rather to put themselves in the position of historical victims. If everyone becomes like a child or like a serf, then power structures become meaningless and the whole violent system dissolves.[49]

While I believe she is correct in her analysis of the problem—people striving to be at the top of a hierarchy—I do not think *The Brothers Karamazov* offers a model of the world in which everyone should be serfs and children. Instead, what Christ's kiss shows, and what the actions in the book illustrate, is that brotherhood will overcome hierarchy. It is through actively loving others as siblings that the violent abuses described in Ivan's rebellion will come to an end.

It must be remembered, however, that the mature Dostoevsky was not a socialist and did not advocate the leveling of society. He believed in people's interdependence that comes through material inequality. As Linda Ivanits shows, this mutual dependence is linked with brotherhood in *Crime and Punishment* by the Lazarus song (a subtext throughout the novel), in which the rich Lazarus and the poor Lazarus are brothers and the rich Lazarus is damned for failing to give his brother alms.[50] This story reminds us that the model of brotherly love and support does not require that all brothers be equally endowed, but instead that they treat each other as equals in the eyes of God. Brothers should be prepared to both give and receive aid, a theme that recurs throughout *The Brothers Karamazov*.[51] The Inquisitor's model, in which both material and spiritual sustenance (forgiveness) come from above, fails at this type of reciprocity.

ACTIVE LOVE: THE RESTORATION OF FAITH

The active love that can restore faith is embodied in the life and words of the Elder Zosima. Early in the novel Zosima lays out his basic philosophy when talking to Madame Khokhlakova, who confesses to having doubts about the existence of God. Zosima assures her that although one cannot prove God's existence, one can be convinced "by the experience of active love."

[48]Gary Saul Morson shows how Smerdyakov's suicide note is an intentional attempt to ruin his brothers by lying (through its silence) about his murderous guilt. See Morson, "Verbal Pollution in *The Brothers Karamazov*," in *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, ed. Robin Feuer Miller (Boston, 1986), 240.

[49]Anne Hruska, "The Sins of Children in *The Brothers Karamazov*: Serfdom, Hierarchy, and Transcendence," *Christianity and Literature* 54:4 (2005): 472.

[50]Linda Ivanits, "The Other Lazarus in *Crime and Punishment*," *Russian Review* 61 (July 2002): 341–57.

[51]Olga Meerson notes that Mitya quotes from the Lazarus song in jail when he refers to Smerdyakov. See Meerson, *Dostoevsky's Taboos* (Dresden, 1998), 190.

> 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.[52]

Alyosha focuses on this theme in his *zhitie* of Zosima. While writing *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky told K. P. Pobedonostsev that Zosima's words in Book Six were designed as an answer to Ivan's rebellion.[53] These words are permeated with the importance of siblings. Zosima begins by telling of his older brother, Markel, who died when Zosima was still a child, and whom Zosima credits with putting him on the spiritual path that led him to his theology of love. Thus, before the narrator even presents Alyosha's *zhitie* of Zosima, Zosima has already established the primary importance of a sibling in his life.

It is significant that Zosima's teachings of love were not passed down to him from a father, but instead came laterally from his brother. With Markel, Dostoevsky offers an alternative to the breakdown of the transmission of values between generations—lateral transmission from brother to brother. Zosima bequeaths his last words to Alyosha, and this again can be seen as a brother passing on his teachings to a brother. While Zosima in many ways plays the role of a spiritual father for Alyosha, calling him "little son" (*synok*) at the same time Zosima claims that his love of Alyosha stems from the fact that Alyosha reminds him of his brother: "many times I have actually taken him, as it were, for that youth, my brother, come to me mysteriously at the end of my way."[54]

Zosima fills the blended role of father/brother not only for Alyosha, but for all the listeners in his cell during his final speech. His role for them is similar to the one Markel held for him—both as their brother and the teacher of their theology. Zosima alternates between calling his listeners (other monks) "brothers" and "fathers and teachers," suggesting that their roles are both to be brothers to the rest of mankind, and at the same time to teach in the manner of fathers.

One great lesson Zosima shares that he learned from Markel is love for all of God's creation. Markel envisions a world in which all people are equals and should love each other as brothers. He tells his mother that while there are servants and masters, "let me also be the servant of my servants."[55] While accepting the practical need for these roles, he overcomes hierarchy by suggesting that all people should be treated as equals. This sets up a lateral model, which Zosima will turn to later in his life. Zosima's spiritual awakening comes after he strikes his servant and then remembers the words of his brother, asking the servants what he has done to deserve their services. Zosima's awakening is an awareness of people's shared humanity, as he thinks: "how did I deserve that another man, just like me, the image and likeness of God, should serve me?"[56] Although he does not use the word

[52]*PSS* 14:52/56.

[53]Ibid. 30:1:66.

[54]Ibid. 14:259/286.

[55]Ibid., 262/289. This contrasts with Fyodor Pavlovich's statement that "there have always been and always will be boors and gentlemen in the world, and so there will always be such a little floor scrubber, and there will always be a master over her, and that is all one needs for happiness in life!" (ibid., 126/136).

[56]Ibid., 270/298.

brother at this point, Zosima is articulating his first awareness of the brotherhood of all mankind. He is not just calling for love, but more specifically for lateral love among equals. "Its duties ... are entirely horizontal: to love and beg forgiveness of nature and of fellow human beings."[57] Later in life, when he has become a monk, Zosima reencounters this same servant he hit, and now receives fifty kopeks from him in alms (a counter to the Lazarus song). This gesture raises them to the same level, just as the Inquisitor says Christ wanted to raise people to his level.

In narrating his life, Zosima tells not only his own story but also several from the Bible and from the lives of others he has met. These stories often center on the theme of siblings. Zosima calls for village priests to read the scriptures to the peasants, focusing on the story of Joseph and his brothers. In his interpretation of the story, Zosima focuses almost exclusively on the relationships between Joseph, his brothers, and their father, showing how Joseph is spiritually regenerated by a love for his brothers that overcomes his anger against them. Zosima is showing the clergy how to deliver "one essential message, that through active love man at the same time serves his fellow man and fulfils the divine purpose ... such is the power of active love, and such, if we follow Zosima's interpretation, is the lesson to be learned from the story of Joseph."[58] This lesson does seem to take root in Alyosha, who is responsible for which stories to include in Zosima's *zhitie* and how to present them.[59]

One of Zosima's most important stories concerns his mysterious visitor, Mikhail. Like Zosima, Mikhail also talks of the importance of seeing all men as brothers. He tells Zosima that "until one has indeed become the brother of all, there will be no brotherhood."[60] Mikhail believes the time of universal brotherhood has not come about yet because "first the period of human *isolation* must conclude." Mikhail lays out the problems with society, in what could be seen as a description of the relations between fathers and sons in the novel.

> For everyone now strives most of all to separate his person, wishing to experience the fullness of life within himself, and yet what comes of all his efforts is not the fullness of life but full suicide, for instead of the fullness of self-definition, they fall into complete isolation. For all men in our age are separated into units, each seeks seclusion in his own hole, each withdraws from the others, hides himself, and hides what he has, and ends by pushing himself away from people and pushing people away from himself. He accumulates wealth in solitude, thinking: how strong, how secure I am now; and does not see, madman that he is, that the more he accumulates, the more he sinks into suicidal impotence.[61]

This image resonates with the Grand Inquisitor's depiction of people who are unable to share bread among themselves and, according to him, needed the Inquisitor to rule over them.

[57]Caryl Emerson, "Zosima's 'Mysterious Visitor': Again Bakhtin on Dostoevsky, and Dostoevsky on Heaven and Hell," in *A New Word on* The Brothers Karamazov, ed. Robert Louis Jackson (Evanston, 2004), 158.

[58]Richard C. Miller, "The Biblical Story of Joseph in Dostoevskii's *The Brothers Karamazov*," *Slavic Review* 41:4 (1982): 658.

[59]This idea is discussed by Miller (ibid., 663–64); and by Diane Oenning Thompson, The Brothers Karamazov *and the Poetics of Memory* (Cambridge, England, 1991), 96.

[60]*PSS* 14:275/303.

[61]Ibid.

Mikhail, however, draws a different conclusion, and says that the time of isolation will end when people come to understand that "a man's true security lies not in his own solitary effort, but in the general wholeness of humanity." His answer, which the rest of the text seems to enforce, is that brotherhood can overcome this isolation (and he places his duties towards an abstract brotherhood higher even than his responsibilities as a father). Zosima explicitly states that brotherhood will allow people to live in harmony: "Where there are brothers, there will be brotherhood; but before brotherhood they will never share among themselves."[62] Here sharing, which is inherent in the sibling relationship, is extended to the entire human family.

Although Dostoevsky claimed while working on the novel that Zosima's words were meant as a reply to the Grand Inquisitor, after finishing he wrote in his notebook that the whole book was meant as a reply.[63] Throughout, Zosima's teachings of active love often take the form of sibling love or connection. Sharing neither mothers (in the case of Dmitri) nor childhood homes (except for a few years Ivan had with Alyosha), the three legitimate Karamazov brothers have almost no relationship when they meet as young adults; thus the bonds they form are not based on their pasts, but on present, active love.

For both Dmitri and Ivan, Alyosha serves as their primary object of love, and he in turn loves both brothers intensely. At their meeting in the neighbor's yard, Dmitri tells Alyosha: "I could take you, Alyoshka, and press you to my heart until I crushed you, for in all the world. ... I really ... re-al-ly ... (understand?) ... love only you!"[64] Later Dmitri contemplates suicide, then sees Alyosha and thinks, "so there is a man that I love, here he is, here is that man, my dear little brother, whom I love more than anyone in the world, and who is the only one I love!"[65] Before his trial, Dmitri tells Alyosha: "I love you more than anyone. My heart trembles at you, that's what."[66]

Although Alyosha tries hard to provide what his brother needs and never intentionally wrongs him, there are instances when he fails. Shaken after hearing Ivan's rebellion, Alyosha forgets to go find Dmitri as he planned. Also, in his moment of despair after the death of Zosima he allows himself to be taken to Dmitri's lover, Grushenka. In both of these instances, Alyosha is in an extreme condition of vulnerability and he has no ill intentions, so I believe that these lapses in his role as his brother's keeper cannot be seen as deliberate betrayals and do not touch the underlying sense of connection between the pair.

Dmitri shares his most precious ideas with his brothers. On the night before his trial, he tells Alyosha: "I've been waiting till this last time to pour out my soul to you."[67] Dmitri explains his ideas about the resurrection of his soul, and how, deep in the mines in Siberia, "we, the men underground, will start singing a tragic hymn to God, in whom there is joy! Hail to God and his joy! I love him!"[68] It might seem that Dmitri's outpouring only demonstrates Alyosha's ability to elicit this kind of openness, but Dmitri mentions in passing,

[62]Ibid., 286–87/316.
[63]Ibid. 27:48.
[64]Ibid. 14:96/104.
[65]Ibid., 142/154.
[66]Ibid. 15:28/588.
[67]Ibid., 30/591.
[68]Ibid., 31/592.

almost as if he takes it for granted, that Ivan too understands him. "I'm talking to you, Alexei, because you alone can understand this, and no one else, for the others it's foolishness, raving—all that I was telling you about the hymn. ... Ivan too, understands about the hymn, oof, he understands."[69]

Dmitri's openness with Ivan is not just a momentary whim, but a pattern throughout the novel (and of a deeper nature than his spontaneous sharing with others). When first describing their relationship, the narrator writes: "His [Alyosha's] brother Dmitri Fyodorovich spoke of their brother Ivan with the deepest respect; he talked about him with a special sort of feeling. It was from him that Alyosha learned all the details of the important affair that had recently joined the two older brothers with such a wonderful and close bond."[70] This is a particularly telling passage in light of the fact that the narrator later tells us Ivan dislikes Dmitri. Here, we see that this bond can exist in spite of Ivan's personal feelings. Later, when confessing to Alyosha the story of his engagement to Katerina Ivanovna, Dmitri says: "I've never told anyone, you'll be the first, except for Ivan, of course, Ivan knows everything. He's known it for a long time before you."[71] Dmitri can confess the feelings and ideas most precious to his soul to his brothers alone.

On the surface, it appears that Ivan detests Dmitri. In reference to the quarrel between Dmitri and their father, Ivan tells Alyosha that "viper will eat viper, and it would serve them both right!" and he not infrequently refers to Dmitri as a "monster" (*izverg*).[72] Despite the potential disaster brewing in his family, Ivan leaves for Moscow, failing to provide support in a critical moment of need. When Ivan returns from Moscow after the murder, the narrator states explicitly that he "decidedly disliked him [Dmitri], and the most he occasionally felt for him was compassion, but even then mixed with great contempt, reaching the point of squeamishness."[73]

If we take the narrator's word as the ultimate truth, then there would be little to discuss, but a close reading hints at another level to this relationship that goes unseen. Although Dmitri and Ivan both refer to conversations they have had, the narrator shows us none of these conversations. However, while we do not get to see Ivan's reactions when Dmitri confides his deepest feelings and secrets, we do know that he is affected by Dmitri's words. Ivan tells Katerina Ivanovna a great deal of what Dmitri has said about the underground hymn they will sing in Siberia. This hymn is the most important idea to Dmitri after his arrest, and closely linked with his salvation. We have proof that Ivan is deeply moved by it because Katerina Ivanovna tells Alyosha: "if you knew how he spoke [about the hymn]!" adding, "If you knew how he loved the wretched man at that moment, as he was telling about him, and how he hated him, perhaps, at the same moment!"[74] Ivan is able to overcome his feelings of dislike and relate to his brother on a deeper level, despite their outward differences. This is active love.

[69]Ibid., 34–35/596.
[70]Ibid. 14:30/31.
[71]Ibid., 101/110.
[72]Ibid., 129/141.
[73]Ibid. 15:42/604.
[74]Ibid., 182/760.

The positive importance of brotherhood is most explicitly stated by Alyosha when he tries to give Captain Snegiryov two hundred rubles from Katerina Ivanovna. She lets Alyosha decide how to deliver the money so that Snegiryov will not feel ashamed to take it, and Alyosha chooses to give it from a "sister." He tells Snegiryov how he and Katerina Ivanovna have both been offended by the same man and concludes: "It means that a sister is coming to the aid of a brother. ... She precisely charged me to persuade you to accept these two hundred rubles from her as from a sister."[75] Alyosha views a sibling as closer to the self—someone with whom one need not feel pride, and from whom one can therefore accept help without shame. He tells Snegiryov: "You must accept them, otherwise ... otherwise it follows that everyone in the world must be enemies of each other! But there are brothers in the world too. ... You have a noble soul ... you must understand, you must!"

Here, Alyosha sets up an opposition between siblings and enemies, suggesting that if we cannot allow brothers to help us, then we are truly isolated as individuals, and everyone will become enemies (an idea parallel to Mikhail's). Alyosha uses the word "must" (*dolzhny*) four times in this short speech, suggesting that accepting brotherhood is a duty necessary for the improvement of mankind. Snegiryov takes heed of Alyosha's rhetoric of siblinghood, and in fact seems to share Alyosha's views on the privileged status siblings have. He asks twice: "And she says that a sister ... and it's true ... really true?" and: "Here you are persuading me to accept it, telling me that a 'sister' has sent it?"[76]

Thus, the sibling bond can extend beyond literal, blood relatives. Throughout the novel, characters call others "brother" or "sister" in order to change the way they can interact with them. Katerina Ivanovna calls Alyosha "brother" when seeking intimacy with him. Grushenka, too, forms a sibling-like bond with Alyosha. After Zosima's death, when Alyosha is in grief, he lets Rakitin bring him to Grushenka, expecting her to corrupt him. When, instead, she reacts with compassion on learning of Zosima's death, Alyosha tells her: "I came here looking for a wicked soul—I was drawn to that, because I was low and wicked myself, but I found a true sister, I found a treasure—a loving soul."[77] At this pivotal moment in his life, Alyosha thinks of the one who understands him and treats him with compassion as a sister. And again, in her response, the word sister does not go unrecognized or unacknowledged: "He called me his sister, I'll never forget it!" From this moment on, Grushenka confides in Alyosha like a true brother. The narrator tells us that after Dmitri's arrest, "Grushenka opened her heart to him [Alyosha] alone and constantly asked his advice."[78]

In providing the examples of active love, the sibling bond also challenges the idea that love must be earned or deserved, an idea significantly associated with fathers. This idea is put forward rather convincingly in the trial, when the defense attorney speaks of parricide and suggests that to be a real father one must not only beget a child but also love and make sacrifices for that child and share his joys and pains. He argues that Fyodor Pavlovich has done nothing to deserve this title and concludes that "love for a father that is not justified

[75]Ibid. 14:190/208–9.
[76]Ibid., 190, 191/209.
[77]Ibid., 318/351.
[78]Ibid. 15:6/564.

by the father is an absurdity, an impossibility. Love cannot be created out of nothing: only God creates out of nothing."[79]

The defense attorney's claim is reminiscent of Ivan's claim, quoted above, that "Christ's love for people is in its kind a miracle impossible on earth." We have seen that sibling love, embodied in Alyosha's kiss, disproved this claim. Therefore, by the same logic, the defense attorney must also be mistaken about the possibilities of active love. And to remove all doubt, Dostoevsky titles the chapter "An Adulterer of Thought." In falsifying the idea that love must be earned, Dostoevsky thus draws a parallel to Grace (Rom. 9–11). Like Grace, sibling love does not have to be earned, but is bestowed unconditionally upon a brother. Another discredited character, Rakitin, also fails to understand this. When accused of not loving Grushenka or Alyosha, Rakitin asks angrily: "What's there to love you for? ... One loves for some reason, and what has either of you done for me?"[80] Grushenka's reply, "You should love for no reason, like Alyosha," comes just after Alyosha has called her a sister, again linking selfless love to the sibling bond.

SMERDYAKOV

By far the most troubling aspect of the status of brotherhood in *The Brothers Karamazov* is the role of Smerdyakov. Although the topic has already received a thoughtful and persuasive treatment by Olga Meerson, which I will rely on here as a jumping-off point, I conceive the problem of Smerdyakov's brotherhood in fundamentally different terms than Meerson, and therefore, while I agree with the specifics of her argument, we arrive at different conclusions.

For Meerson, the central issue is taboo: "The chief taboo in *The Brothers Karamazov* is the idea that Smerdiakov is the fourth son of Fedor Pavlovich—or more precisely, an equal to the other brothers in his blood-sonship."[81] While Smerdyakov is acknowledged by many to be an illegitimate child of Fyodor Pavlovich (this is even stated quite publicly in Dmitri's trial), "a related idea ... is not mentionable, and this is the possibility of Smerdiakov's being the fourth *brother* to the three brothers Karamazov."[82] If Smerdyakov's brotherhood were tabooed, as Meerson argues, then the big question that would need to be answered is why. Meerson does not answer this question and I believe that it cannot be answered because *brotherhood cannot be tabooed*. And certainly in *The Brothers Karamazov*, it does not make sense for it to be so, because that would go against Dostoevsky's main principle of the novel.

This problem disappears, however, if we view Smerdyakov's brotherhood not as taboo, but as a test. There is no ultimate law saying others cannot see Smerdyakov as a brother. If he is not loved as one, it is because of human failure alone. As Zosima tells Madama Khokhlakova, "active love is a harsh and fearful thing compared with love in dreams. ... Active love is labor and perseverance."[83] Through his vileness, Smerdyakov makes this labor all the more difficult.

[79]Ibid., 169/744.
[80]Ibid. 14:319–20/353.
[81]Meerson, *Dostoevsky's Taboos*, 183.
[82]Ibid., 186.
[83]*PSS* 14:54/58.

Loving Smerdyakov is a test that Dostoevsky presents to his characters in order to link the main action of the novel back to the central ideological struggle in the Grand Inquisitor. As was discussed above, the Inquisitor's love for mankind removed the burden of free choice, while Christ's love offered a challenge—a model of goodness that people must freely take upon themselves despite the suffering it may entail. If we are to choose Christ over the Inquisitor, then we must be prepared to accept the challenge of actively *choosing* to love others as our brothers. As Nicholas Berdyaev writes, "free goodness ... entails the liberty of evil."[84] The harder Dostoevsky makes it to love Smerdyakov, the greater he makes this choice. Precisely because Smerdyakov is so contemptible, he makes the concept of universal brotherhood more powerful by showing how far it must be able to go. Loving Alyosha is easy and proves little.

The real question is: how does this ultimate test of brotherhood work, and why does everyone fail? First, Dostoevsky makes seeing Smerdyakov as a brother an extreme challenge. This begins with Smerdyakov's foster father, Grigory, who himself regards Smerdyakov as something less than human. After Smerdyakov's birth, Grigory claims he "was born of the devil's son and a righteous woman."[85] Grigory strikes Smerdyakov when he questions biblical teaching and Smerdyakov grows up hearing words of abuse. "'He doesn't like us, the monster,' Grigory used to say to Marfa Ignatievna, 'and he doesn't like anyone. You think you're a human being?' he would suddenly address Smerdyakov directly. 'You are not a human being, you were begotten of bathhouse slime, that's who you are.'"[86] Because Grigory is in many ways portrayed as a positive figure by the narrator, his voice is given a certain amount of authority, so that we as readers trust his ill opinion of his foster child and are lulled into accepting that this harsh treatment is Smerdyakov's just due.

The least reflective of the brothers, Dmitri never questions the justness of the role he puts Smerdyakov into as his obedient servant, thereby not only slighting a brother but also going against Zosima's teaching that we should be the servant to our servants. Dmitri refers to Smerdyakov as "lackey" and seems oblivious to the implications of their shared paternity. Strangely, Alyosha too falls into this pattern. He is very concerned about his other two brothers and spends most of the book running between them, but he speaks with Smerdyakov only once, and then quite briefly. Despite hearing Smerdyakov wish that he had never been born, Alyosha does not notice the "harsh reality of his life."[87] In conversation, Alyosha, too, refers to Smerdyakov as a lackey. After the trial, Alyosha tells Kolya: "the lackey killed him [Fyodor Pavlovich], my brother is innocent."[88] He creates a radical separation between the lackey and his brother, proving his inability to see that the lackey is his brother too.[89] Dostoevsky offers no explanation of this failure on Alyosha's part, and I am likewise unable to explain it.

[84]Berdyaev, *Dostoevsky*, 70.
[85]*PSS* 14:92–93/100.
[86]Ibid., 114/124.
[87]Vladimir Golstein, "Accidental Families and Surrogate Fathers: Richard, Grigory, and Smerdyakov," in *A New Word*, 103.
[88]*PSS* 15:189/768.
[89]This comment is noted by Meerson, *Dostoevsky's Taboos*, 197.

Of the Karamazov brothers, Ivan is the most aware of Smerdyakov. Though he does not acknowledge the latter as a brother, his behavior toward Smerdyakov suggests that, somewhere in his unconscious, Ivan is struggling against this relationship. With very few words, Smerdyakov can raise such a fury in his aloof and self-contained brother that Ivan even contemplates fratricide. Ivan's reaction is in keeping with that of a sibling, as it is those who are closest to us who can hurt us most. After telling Alyosha his *poema*, "The Grand Inquisitor," Ivan finds himself in inexplicable anguish until he sees Smerdyakov and realizes "that the lackey Smerdyakov was also sitting in his soul, and that it was precisely this man that his soul could not bear."[90] Ivan seems to find Smerdyakov upsetting because he represents the negative aspects Ivan wishes were not present in himself. To acknowledge Smerdyakov as a brother would thus be to acknowledge a link with these ugly parts of his nature.

Smerdyakov is also aware of his brotherly bonds. Meerson argues that he "actively *dis*sociates himself from the Karamazov brotherhood—so actively, in fact, that it becomes clear that he is sure he is one of them."[91] Smerdyakov makes a veiled biblical reference to Cain's "Am I my brother's keeper," yet alters the statement so as not to use the word brother. When Alyosha asks Smerdyakov if "brother Dmitri" will soon be returning, Smerdyakov answers: "Why should I be informed as to Dmitri Fyodorovich? It is not as if I were his keeper."[92] The significance of this reference is heightened when, a few pages later, Ivan makes a similar comment (quoted above) and then catches himself and points out the biblical parallel. It seems that Smerdyakov is deliberate in his attempt to both point out his awareness of the sibling relationship he has to Alyosha, while at the same time, through removing the word brother, to show his active rejection of this sibling bond. Smerdyakov foregrounds this story which, while about the first sibling pair, actually tells of the absence of sibling bonds. Cain and Abel are only linked by their competing relations with a higher being and do not interact until Cain invites Abel to the field to murder him.

The one brother with whom Smerdyakov seeks a connection is Ivan, though he never calls Ivan a brother. Psychologist Juliet Mitchell writes that "the sibling ... is the figure which underlies such nearly forgotten concepts as the ego-ideal—the older sibling is idealized as someone the subject would like to be, and sometimes this is a reversal of the hatred for a rival."[93] Mitchell's work provides an important reminder that fathers are not the only models to be emulated and struggled against in the search to define oneself. I believe this idea of the ego-ideal helps explain Smerdyakov's feelings about Ivan, feelings demonstrated in the first half of the novel and then discussed during the pair's three encounters after the murder. Unlike Dmitri and Alyosha, whom Smerdyakov hates, Ivan has become Smerdyakov's ideal and model because of their mutual admiration for Europe. Fyodor Pavlovich points out how Smerdyakov shows off his intelligence for Ivan, and how he has started coming to lunch every day since Ivan arrived. In the first of the post-murder meetings, Smerdyakov tells Ivan: "I thought you were like I am," and then a moment later, in reference

[90]*PSS* 14:242/266.

[91]Meerson, *Dostoevsky's Taboos*, 187.

[92]*PSS* 14:206/226. This passage is discussed by both Meerson, *Dostoevsky's Taboos*, 187–88; and Morson, "Urban Pollution," 241.

[93]Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (Cambridge, England, 2003), 4.

to their conversation before Ivan left for Moscow: "I loved you very much then, and acted in all simplicity."[94] This is the sole time Smerdyakov claims to have loved someone, and it counters Grigory's harsh statement that he "does not love anyone." Bearing in mind Zosima's statement that hell is the inability to love, it is significant that this one ray of love from Smerdyakov is for a brother.

Before the murder, Smerdyakov fantasizes that he shares a connection with his admired brother, and though he never speaks plainly, he truly believes that Ivan understands the underlying meaning of his words. Over the course of their three meetings after the murder, however, Smerdyakov comes to understand that he has *not* understood his brother, nor Ivan him. During their second meeting, Ivan strikes Smerdyakov, at which the latter dissolves into tears. This is a harsh awakening for Smerdyakov to the fact that he and Ivan have not been working together, a message affirmed again in their final meeting, when Ivan calls Smerdyakov "viper" and then tells him: "I don't care about you."[95] In the light of this loss of the one positive connection Smerdyakov believed he had, I think his suicide can be seen as one of utter hopelessness, as the only flicker of love in his life goes out. Holquist writes that Smerdyakov commits suicide "from the despair of a twice-abandoned orphan," considering Ivan to be his second father-figure.[96] Abandonment by a brother can be even more devastating.

This failure of the brothers' relations with Smerdyakov has implications far beyond his personal tragedy or the immediate family. To fully appreciate this, we must remove his brotherhood from the realm of taboo and see it as it actually is—the ultimate challenge of the novel, perhaps greater even than the Inquisitor. For the Karamazov brothers "he is the first step from the concrete and mundane blood brotherhood to the universal one," and Dostoevsky makes him the most difficult step imaginable.[97] In failing to love Smerdyakov, the Karamazov brothers are failing to enter this larger brotherhood. Even Alyosha, who is described as "simply an early lover of mankind," manages to overlook one of the "brothers" closest to him. Remembering Mikhail's teaching ("Until one has indeed become the brother of all, there will be no brotherhood."), it could be argued that by rejecting Smerdyakov, not only Dmitri, Ivan, and Alyosha, but all the characters in the novel fail at Zosima's central commandment to love all of God's creation.

Furthermore, as Meerson shows, not only the characters fail to see Smerdyakov as a brother, but also the narrator. "Dostoevsky *makes his narrator* demonize Smerdiakov because he, the real author, taboos the idea that Smerdiakov is a human being (i.e., a brother to other humans) not only for the purposes of his characters but for the purpose of his narrator as well."[98] While each of the legitimate brothers gets an entire chapter devoted to him in Book One, Smerdyakov's first mention in the novel is when Dmitri, arriving late for the meeting at father Zosima's cell, explains that "the servant Smerdyakov" gave him the wrong hour. Smerdyakov is next mentioned in Book Three, chapter 1, "In the Servants' Quarters," immediately placing him on a lower level than the "true" brothers. This chapter

[94]*PSS* 15:46, 47/608, 609.
[95]Ibid., 58/622.
[96]Holquist, *Dostoevsky and the Novel*, 182.
[97]Meerson, *Dostoevsky's Taboos*, 194.
[98]Ibid., 190.

focuses entirely on Grigory and Marfa, so Smerdyakov is again slighted by lack of notice. At the end of the following chapter, "Stinking Lizaveta," the narrator finally tells us: "I ought to say a little more about him in particular, but I am ashamed to distract my reader's attention for such a long time to such ordinary lackeys, and therefore I shall go back to my narrative, hoping that with regard to Smerdyakov things will somehow work themselves out in the further course of the story."[99]

Using the narrator in this way, Dostoevsky expands the scope of this test of brotherhood, making it a test for the reader as well. If we are lulled into believing the narrator that Smerdyakov does not deserve to be part of universal brotherhood, then Dostoevsky implicates us, his readers, as well as the Karamazov brothers in this oversight. This reinforces the idea that everyone is guilty before everyone, making the guilt for the murder of Fyodor Pavlovich a truly universal phenomenon. Smerdyakov acts as the lynchpin of the novel, the overlooked brother in a world based on forming lateral bonds. He is the reminder of the price we pay for choosing Christ over the Inquisitor.

A LIGHT IN THE DARK

Dostoevsky has been accused of creating grim worlds. Unlike Tolstoy's harmonious, domestic scenes of jam-making, Dostoevsky portrays the harsh realities of poverty, depravity, and "accidental families."

> While Turgenev, Goncharov, and Lev Tolstoy painted grand epics of the impregnable order of the Russian "cosmos," Dostoevsky cried out that this cosmos was unstable, that beneath it chaos was already beginning to stir. In the midst of general prosperity, he alone spoke of the cultural crisis and of the unimagined catastrophes that awaited the world.[100]

The main source of light, of course, is faith; the words of Zosima provide a way out of inner turmoil and an alternative to doubt and despair. However, another source of light in Dostoevsky's world is the sibling bond. Amidst all the suffering and isolation the characters experience, siblings provide connection, support, and in many cases, unconditional love. In an earlier draft of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Zosima says: "God gave us relatives so that we could learn how to love. People in general hate people in particular."[101] Although this statement did not make it into the final version, it indicates how Dostoevsky saw family love (which in the novel mostly takes the form of sibling love) as a model for loving "one's close ones." It also shows how for Dostoevsky, unlike Tolstoy, this love is not simply the product of growing up in a close family, but involves work.

Dostoevsky emphasizes the sibling relationship because he sees its expansion to all of humanity as a solution to many of the ills he depicts in society. Critics have suggested that the novel ends on a hopeful note, as "the description of a failed family that opens *The Brothers Karamazov* is juxtaposed with the image of a new kind of family in the novel's

[99]*PSS* 14:93/100.
[100]Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky*, xvii.
[101]*PSS* 15:205.

conclusion," calling this new family an ideal foster father (Alyosha) and his twelve boys; "the novel ends by emphasizing the love that exists between fathers and sons."[102] I would argue, however, that this new family is a family of siblings. Though the failure around Smerdyakov still hangs in the air, Dostoevsky returns to the ideal of universal brotherhood in perhaps his most forceful passage on the topic, as Alyosha tells the boys: "Let us never forget how good we once felt here, all together, united by such good and kind feelings as made us, too, for the time that we loved the poor boy, perhaps better than we actually are."[103] He concludes with the words: "And we go like this now, hand in hand," the quintessential pose of lateral connectedness.[104] As Hruska notes, "for a brief moment, the boys transcend hierarchy, no longer struggling to be older and to establish supremacy over each other."[105] Similar to Christ's love in Ivan's *poema*, Alyosha's brotherly love is offered in place of a hierarchical model (and to twelve young disciples).[106] Alyosha, the older brother, walks off hand in hand with the boys as Kolya shouts: "And eternally so, all our lives hand in hand! Hurrah for Karamazov!"[107] This is an unambiguous cry for brotherhood.

Dostoevsky planned a sequel to *The Brothers Karamazov* in which Alyosha would become a revolutionary and commit a political crime (perhaps an attempt on the tsar's life).[108] Viewed in that light, Kolya's cry can be seen as the force meant to bind society and prevent such violence and destruction, or more negatively, it can be taken as an echo of the *fraternité* of the French Revolution, reminding us again that brotherhood and material inequality are not incompatible for Dostoevsky. Instead he valued the sibling bond precisely for its ability to forge bonds of mutual dependence across all strata of society. *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky's most mature work, illustrates the importance of siblinghood more strongly than any of his preceding novels. Here Dostoevsky puts forward lateral bonds as a positive force to counter the failure of fathers and the process of disintegration in Russian society.

[102]Golstein, "Accidental Families," 104; and Susanne Fusso, "The Sexuality of the Male Virgin: Arkady in *A Raw Youth* and Alyosha Karamazov," in *A New Word*, 142.

[103]*PSS* 15:195/774.

[104]Ibid., 197/776.

[105]Hruska, "Sins of Children," 489.

[106]This idea is discussed in Robert Louis Jackson, "Alyosha's Speech at the Stone: 'The Whole Picture,'" in *A New Word*, 237.

[107]*PSS* 15:197/776.

[108]James L. Rice, "Dostoevsky's Endgame: The Projected Sequel to *The Brothers Karamazov*," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 33 (Spring 2006): 45–62.