CHAPTER 8

Reading and incarnation in Dostoevsky
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‘Only what on earth do I want here? Yes, to read!’
(Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment)

Why do Dostoevsky’s characters read? Over two decades ago, Ralph Matlaw called attention to Dmitry Tschizewskij’s ‘seminal’ 1929 essay on the influence of Schiller in The Brothers Karamazov: in his words, it emphasised ‘Dostoevsky’s extraordinary concern with the use of literature, the possibilities of characterization and deepening of portraits by citation of other literary works, a technical innovation of Dostoevsky’s which has not yet been sufficiently investigated.’

Within the past twenty years, valuable investigations have been made of this area, not the least of which are Victor Terras’s commentary on The Brothers Karamazov, which documents scores of literary allusions, quotations, and paraphrases; Nina Perlina’s analysis of the aesthetic function of quotation in that same novel; and a convenient compilation of Gospel-related excerpts from Dostoevsky’s fiction, issued by the Hutterian Brethren. Nonetheless, a heightened awareness of the myriad citations in Dostoevsky’s fiction will not alone lead to a full comprehension of his narrative employment of literature, hagiography and the Bible, or the role such citations play in his portrayal of characters. There is, of course, the formal question of how such citations fit into his broader poetics of polyphony, dialogism and carnival, as these hallmarks of his art were so notably fleshed out by Mikhail Bakhtin. An answer could probably be drawn from Bakhtin’s discussion of Dostoevsky’s creative renewal of the ancient menippean genre. With its characteristically wide use of various inserted genres (novellas, letters, speeches, newspaper articles and so forth), and its tendency to mix prose and verse, the menippea would seem naturally conducive to incorporating literary, biblical and other citations. By the same
token, Perlina has already performed a great service for students of The Brothers Karamazov by demonstrating from a Bakhtinian perspective that ‘quotation organizes the whole architectonics of [that] novel’.5

However, even the critical contributions of Bakhtin and the further application of his theories by Perlina cannot exhaust the matter of literary and biblical citations in Dostoevsky. After identifying such citations, interpreting their bearing upon characterisation, and settling the question of their pertinence to narrative form, we would be left with a still more fundamental question. Citations of written texts presuppose reading. Why do Dostoevsky’s characters read in the first place? Or, what is the significance of reading as an act in Dostoevsky’s fiction?

In this chapter I suggest that the act of reading by Dostoevsky’s protagonists, especially when they read or recite aloud, bears directly upon a constant compulsion of his narratives towards intimating and depicting the phenomenon of incarnation – a term I shall use primarily in a distinct literary sense adopted from Bakhtin’s Brazilian-born Spanish contemporary, the Hispanist Américo Castro (1885–1972), but also, ultimately, in the theological sense bequeathed by the Gospel of John.6 While Russian piety may be primarily rooted in the ocular reverence of the icon, the spirits and whole inner beings of Dostoevsky’s protagonists often prove to be decisively affected or even shaped through some form of the act of reading, or through hearing some form of recitation or reading aloud.

For a reason that will soon become clear, I wish to begin by directing our attention back to a familiar figure from late antiquity.

AUGUSTINE, ZOSIMA AND THE QUESTION OF READING

In his Confessions (written 397–401 AD), St Augustine famously recalls having pondered as a young man why St Ambrose, the great Catholic bishop of Milan whom he sometimes observed reading, never read aloud. Perhaps, Augustine conjectures, Ambrose worried that if he read aloud, some difficult passage he recited might stir a listener’s curiosity, and Ambrose might be asked to pause to expound it and thus be prevented from reading as much as he desired. Or perhaps he read to himself simply to preserve his voice (6,3). Whatever the case was, there can be no denying the extraordinariness of Ambrose’s behaviour, given that it was evidently customary
for educated adults to read aloud to themselves. Augustine’s initial conjecture may do less to illuminate Ambrose’s habit of silent reading than to manifest Augustine’s own concern with the herme­neutics of textual depths and obscurities, especially those of the holy scriptures. When he had first read the scriptures, before he met Ambrose, they had put him off: ‘For my bulging pride’, he tell us, ‘shunned their style, and my sharpness of mind did not penetrate their inner meaning’. Only later – having come to appreciate them as ‘humble in pace, lofty in manner, and veiled in mysteries’ (3,5) – did he formulate his theory of figurative expression, espousing in De doctrina christiana (written 396–426) that the divinely inspired mean­ings of scripture frequently lie concealed beneath textual obscurities and ambiguities but are perceptible through allegorical reading (2,6,7–8).

What caused Augustine such great concern in the late fourth century hardly troubled Dostoevsky’s fictional Elder Zosima a millennium and a half later, as the Orthodox tradition to which Zosima adhered was less concerned with hermeneutic explication than was the Catholic tradition which Augustine had helped en­gender. Alyosha’s ‘Biographical Notes’ on Zosima in Book 6 of The Brothers Karamazov record the Elder’s instruction that village priests should make a habit of reading the Bible aloud to the peasants once a week – hardly a surprising piece of advice, given that most of the peasants were illiterate and had no choice. Absent from his speech on this matter is even the slightest intimation of an Augustinian (or Ambrosian) concern about scriptural obscurities, or about the difficulties listeners might have in fathoming them. All a priest has to do, says Zosima, is ‘open that book and begin reading it without grand words or superciliousness, without condescension to them, but gently and kindly, . . . only stopping from time to time to explain words that are not understood by the peasants. Don’t be anxious, they will understand everything, the orthodox heart will understand all!’ (272).

Zosima’s suggestion corresponds with Dostoevsky’s own expressed convictions. Dostoevsky wrote that even if the Russian people of his time knew the Gospel poorly and were ignorant of basic principles of faith, they did ‘know Christ’ and had ‘been carrying Him in their hearts from time immemorial’. This notion seems far removed from Augustine’s premise in De doctrina christiana that learning certain interpretive ‘precepts’ is a prerequisite for correctly understanding
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the scriptures and eschewing ‘the absurdity of improper meaning’ (prol. q: *absurditas pravae sententiae*). In Augustine’s view, the untrained mind could be afforded no instant recognition of Christ simply by reading or hearing the Gospel. According to the *Confessions*, his own serendipitous reading of a passage from St Paul was what finally triggered his conversion (8,12). Yet such a scripturally-induced experience would have been all but inconceivable had he not first learned from Ambrose how to interpret the scriptures ‘spiritually’ (6,4) and therefore to take them seriously. It is doubtful he would have agreed with Dostoevsky’s proposal in a letter of 1878 that the best way to convert an unbeliever is by jettisoning discussion and arguments, and simply reading with the ‘best possible attention’ all of Paul’s letters.12

This disagreement harks back to the momentous doctrinal divergence between the Western, Latin, Roman Catholic tradition which Augustine helped engender, and the Eastern, originally Cappadocian and Greek, Orthodox tradition whose Slavonic outgrowth furnished the religious context that formed Dostoevsky’s beliefs and informed his art. For modern scholars, the writings of Augustine, who remained little known and exerted practically no influence in the East, help mark the initial bifurcation of Christian thinking into Eastern and Western doctrines on such basic matters as trinitarianism and the interpretation of Adam, the fall and original sin.13

Dostoevsky, as an adherent to Orthodoxy, was certainly no heir of the Augustinian tradition. The difference between Zosima and Augustine in their hermeneutic assumptions about scriptures may therefore be illuminated by an observation by Georgy Fedotov regarding the distinct stances of Augustine and the early Russian Christians towards the cultures that inspired them: ‘The wholehearted acceptance of culture, the freedom from obscurantism, is very often a sign of the barbarian youthfulness of a nation attracted mightily by a higher and “sacred” culture and unable to perceive the spiritual dangers inherent in every product of the human mind’ – the ‘product’ referred to here being books. Augustine, Fedotov continues, ‘is obscurantist in his relation to Plato or the ancient culture in general, but Bede and Columban are not. The first Christian generations in Russia worship the sacred Greek culture in the same way in which the Celtic or Saxon monks worshipped the Latin one.’14

The unquestioning attitude of the early Russian Christians
towards books and reading did not soon dissipate. Fedotov amply documents the veneration of books that found expression in the anonymous fourteenth-century ‘collection’ (izbornik) of devotional readings, *Izmaragd* (‘Emerald’), which would remain the favourite compilation of its kind among the Russian laity for the next four centuries. Making no attempt to distinguish the divine revelation of the Bible from the theological writings of the Church fathers, Russians regarded all religious literature as ‘sacred’ and ‘divine’. The *Izmaragd*, like most other izborniki, opens with a set of writings on ‘books’ and ‘book reading’, expounding that books are creations of the Holy Spirit; that God, in exhorting human beings to study His law, was referring to the study of books; that the person who holds books in hand will be unable to forget those ‘terrible books’ of Judgment which will be opened in the age to come; and that the person who blasphemes or fails to heed sacred books shall be judged and punished. Books and reading are thus endowed with eschatological significance.

Dostoevsky’s inheritance of such venerational attitudes towards books and reading is documented in his *Diary of a Writer*. If, for example, a Christian text of medieval Kiev can eulogise ‘book learning’ by praising books as ‘the fountainhead of wisdom’, ‘the bridle of temperance’, and by quoting from the Wisdom of Solomon to legitimate the authority of the wisdom books, this eulogy anticipates a remark made by Dostoevsky in an entry of 1876. After expressing doubt that many Russians know about the saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, he asks: ‘Why should one be so blankly ignorant; why should one promise oneself not to read? Is it for lack of time? Believe me, . . . you would be learning beautiful things.’ And if early Russian Christians deemed books to be eschatologically pertinent, this judgment renders all the more comprehensible Dostoevsky’s rumination that if human beings were to be asked at the end of time whether they understood their life on earth, and what they concluded from it, their most adequate response could already be found in a book – not just any book, but a work of fiction that is widely regarded as the first modern novel: ‘Man could silently hand over *Don Quixote*: “Such is my inference from life. – Can you condemn me for it?”’

This apocalyptic valuation of Cervantes’s classic, a valuation reiterated elsewhere in *Diary of a Writer*, accords with Dostoevsky’s pre-eminently Romantic view of the novel’s hero. In an oft-quoted
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letter, he compares Don Quixote to Christ, calling Christ the ‘only one positively beautiful person [on earth]’ and Don Quixote ‘the most finished’ of all ‘beautiful characters in Christian literature’. He surely perceived in the Knight of La Mancha six traits corresponding to his own notion of true religion: faith, compassion, suffering, a tendency towards humiliation, foolishness (à la ‘holy fools’), and being childlike. Moreover, he was evidently intrigued by the fact that the entire plot and narrative of the Quixote essentially revolve around the matter of books, reading and their effects. The protagonist, after all, is a man gone mad from obsessive reading of chivalry books, and his delusional career as knight stems from his ongoing effort to make reality conform to his book-derived fantasies.

It is unclear whether Dostoevsky was aware of his own indebtedness to the Quixote for its having introduced into literature a special narrative phenomenon involving the act of reading by protagonists. Nonetheless, as we shall see, this phenomenon achieves full, transmogrified fruition in Dostoevsky, tending towards conjuring the Johannine vision of the Word-become-Flesh.

INCARNATIONAL READING IN DOSTOEVSKY

In an essay of 1947 – an essay easily as respected among cervantistas as Tschizewskij’s is among Dostoevsky scholars – Américo Castro proposed that the Quixote’s ‘supreme novelty’ lay in its initiating a new form of literary creation, one that shows us that the reality of existence consists in receiving the impact of all that can affect man from without, and in transforming these influences into outwardly manifest life processes. The illusion of a dream, devotion to a belief – in short, the ardently yearned for in any form becomes infused in the existence of him who dreams, believes, or longs; and thus, what was before transcendency without bearing on the process of living becomes embodied into life.

The overriding theme of the Quixote is thus ‘the interdependence, the “interrealisation” of what lies beyond man’s experience and the process of incorporating that into his existence’ (26–27).

This creative life ‘process’ Castro calls incarnation (encarnación), which is closely akin to what Bakhtin has in mind when he speaks of the sway that quotations as ‘authoritative’ and ‘internally persuasive’ utterances have upon the ‘ideological becoming of a human being’.
And, he observes, the spoken, written and printed word stands pre-eminently among all the external ‘incitements’ that become ‘incarnated’ in the lives of Cervantes’s characters. The first of the Quixote’s two parts essentially grows out of books read by Don Quixote. Part 2 grows out of part 1, as the life of the protagonist incorporates his awareness of having already been the subject of a book. And the Don Quixote of part 2 perpetuates himself and the literary interpretation of the fictive author (Cide Hamete Benengeli), appearing to those who encounter him as both a living person and a ‘human-literary figure’ (42). ‘The traditional themes of literature’, Castro points out, ‘are now fused with the living experience of those themes; the book then becomes not only a book, but it also becomes the reader who has incorporated its poetic material into his very life’ (43).26

Although considerable scholarly attention has been paid to Dostoevsky’s literary relationship to Cervantes,27 and although Castro mentions Dostoevsky as one of the most important later novelists whose stylistic innovations were affected by the ‘various stimuli’ radiating from the Quixote,28 the extraordinarily fruitful evolvement of the incarnational phenomenon in Dostoevsky’s fiction has yet to be acknowledged. To be sure, Bakhtin does seem to touch upon this phenomenon when he contends that ‘at the center of Dostoevsky’s artistic world must lie dialogue’, in which ‘a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is.’29 The dialogic process whereby a person ‘becomes that which he is’ might seem closely related to what Castro meant by ‘incarnation’ through reading. Elsewhere, Bakhtin pertinently comments upon that type of novel that concentrates its critique of literary discourse around the hero as:

a ‘literary man’, who looks at life through the eyes of literature and who tries to live ‘according to literature’. Don Quixote and Madame Bovary are the best-known exemplars of this type, but the ‘literary man’ and the testing of that literary discourse connected with him can be found in almost every major novel (to a greater or lesser extent these are the characters in Balzac, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, etc.); they differ from each other only in the relative weight accorded this feature in the novel as a whole.30

Nonetheless, in concentrating upon dialogism in Dostoevsky’s novels ostensibly as an ideological and epistemological mode in the lives of those novels’ characters, Bakhtin and consequently Perlina as well stop short of fully acknowledging the existential, incarnational
import of the reading-act itself for those characters. Of course this is not to overlook that Bakhtin maintained his ostensible focus largely for political reasons, and that readers might in some instances read between his lines to glean possible religious implications. For during the years leading up to the initial publication of his Dostoevsky book (1929), he had, in response to the Soviet crack-down on religious institutions, practices and expression, ‘reoriented his approach in his writings and largely abandoned his Neo-Kantian vocabulary for one that was more secular and sociological.’\textsuperscript{31} Yet, as Ruth Coates has shown, Bakhtin remained, behind any appearance to the contrary, ‘a philosopher whose work is fed by certain aspects of the Christian vision of and for the world.’\textsuperscript{32}

Dostoevsky’s fictive world is saturated with the ubiquitous trappings of the modern typographic culture – the Gutenberg galaxy, as Marshall McLuhan so memorably dubbed it – which helped make widespread literary incarnation possible in the first place.\textsuperscript{33} Not surprisingly, the financial attraction of the publishing business itself is manifest: Dmitry Karamazov, in prison, states his ambition to start a newspaper (\textit{BK}, 558), and peripheral characters such as Razumikhin and Rakitin also entertain plans of going into publishing (\textit{CP}, 263; \textit{BK}, 73). To be sure, the culture of print had developed very late in Russia, where more manuscripts were still in circulation than printed books until the mid-eighteenth century. In fact, the print business of Nikolai Novikov produced more books between 1775 and 1789 than had been published in Russia since the introduction of printing.\textsuperscript{34} Nonetheless, the nineteenth-century Russian society depicted in Dostoevsky’s novels is one whose intelligentsia and educated elite reveres the published word, as betokened by Raskolnikov’s initial reaction when he sees his own article in the newspaper: he experiences ‘the strange and painfully sweet sensations of the author who sees himself in print for the first time’ (\textit{CP}, 434). Given all the attention he receives for this article, he anticipates Ivan Karamazov, who achieves early recognition for his own published journalism, especially his article on ecclesiastical courts (\textit{BK}, 11).

The phenomenon of literary incarnation born in the \textit{Quixote} – a novel published less than a century and a half after the death of Johannes Gutenberg (c. 1400–68) – seems pervasively inherent in the more fully developed print culture of Dostoevsky’s characters. The phenomenon seems most blatant when one character can
interpret some trait in another character’s personality by identifying that trait with an author whose qualities the latter may rightly or wrongly seem to incarnate as a result of reading. For example, Svidrigailov, who calls Raskolnikov ‘a Schiller, a Russian Schiller, an absolute Schiller’ tells him: ‘The Schiller in you is always getting into a muddle’ (CP, 408, 410). This identification of Raskolnikov with Schiller was earlier hinted at by a question put to him by Porphiry, who clearly assumed that Raskolnikov was familiar enough with Schiller to recognise when someone’s speech resembled that of the German poet: ‘What are you smiling at again – because I am talking like Schiller?’ (389). At the same time, Dmitry Karamazov, having apparently committed numerous literary sources to memory (like Schiller, whom he had read ‘till he knew him by heart’ (BK, 176)), seems to have absorbed them so deeply that they are part of his self-identity and can well up into his consciousness whenever he happens to find himself in situations that call them to mind. On repeated occasions he spontaneously identifies himself with specific voices from works of great poets (Schiller, Pushkin, Shakespeare), grafting their personalities and roles onto his own existence by quoting verses from them that seem appropriate to his own immediate mood – as when he sadly tells Perkhotin: ‘Do you remember Hamlet? “I am very sorry, good Horatio! Alas, poor Yorick!” Perhaps that’s me, Yorick? Yes, I’m Yorick now, and a skull afterwards’ (383).35

I cannot broach here the almost limitless array of more complex and subtler incarnational phenomena in Dostoevsky, or all the complexities involved in distinguishing exactly how each character views the particular texts which he or she might read, recite, or hear read aloud or recited. I conclude simply by indicating how a sequence of three familiar scenes, all of them involving characters reading aloud, reveals a progressive rejoining of the phenomenon of literary incarnation with its theological paradigm: the doctrine of the incarnate Word as set forth in Dostoevsky’s favourite Gospel, the fourth. Observing that ‘the indisputably authoritative word is the word of Holy Writ’, Perlina notes that The Brothers Karamazov involves a complex ‘hierarchy of quotations’ on whose ‘slopes’ the ‘words’ of the different characters vie with each other dialogically, some progressing upwards ‘from the internally persuasive to the authoritative’, others degenerating downwards ‘from persuasiveness to false authority.’36 If this is true, then we should not be surprised that, within the hierarchy of Dostoevsky’s works, it will be only in a single
The instant within that final novel that the phenomenon of literary incarnation and the doctrine of the incarnate Word symbolically touch.

The first scene is that in which Raskolnikov commands Sonya to read to him the account of the resurrection of Lazarus (CP, 274–75), an account which, as she has to remind him, occurs only in the fourth Gospel. The old and worn, leather-bound Russian New Testament in her possession, she informs him, was brought to her by Lizaveta, with whom she used to read. So even as she hesitatingly begins to oblige his repeated command, ‘Read it!’, by reading aloud from that copy, the irony is already clear (to us, as well as to Raskolnikov) that Sonya is unwittingly re-enacting with the killer the sacred reading-ritual which she formerly practised with his victim-to-be. This irony will be compounded at the novel’s end, where it is disclosed that the convicted and imprisoned Raskolnikov now keeps that same copy of the New Testament under his pillow (as Dostoevsky himself kept a copy of it under his pillow during four years of penal servitude). If this final disclosure will portend Raskolnikov’s putatively impending regeneration, one aside regarding the present scene already hints in that direction: the narrator’s remark that, upon reading the verse telling that Lazarus had ‘been dead four days’, Sonya ‘strongly’ emphasises the word ‘four’ (277). Four days have passed since Lizaveta and the pawnbroker were killed, and Sonya means to imply that Lizaveta, like Lazarus, will spiritually rise and – as Sonya said moments earlier – ‘see God’ (275). But we know that this occasion of Sonya’s reading also marks a crucial initial stage in the spiritual resurrection of Raskolnikov.

In this scene, which would perfectly illustrate Zosima’s advice on the value of reading aloud the Bible, the themes of divine incarnation and literary incarnation remain separate. The incarnate God is present as miracle-worker in the Lazarus story which is read aloud, while the human protagonist, the listener who recalls having read this tale ‘a long time ago . . . When I was at school’ (275), seems already to have begun incarnating an incitement he may recall (consciously or unconsciously) from elsewhere in the fourth Gospel: Jesus’s distanciating remark to his mother at the wedding at Cana, ‘Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come’ (John 2:4). Immediately following Sonya’s reading, Raskolnikov announces abruptly and likewise: ‘Today I deserted my family, my mother and sister . . . I have made a complete break’ (278).
The second scene whose incarnational import I want to consider occurs in *The Idiot*, whose hero, as we know from Dostoevsky’s letters and notebooks, was consciously conceived to blend the images of Don Quixote and the Johannine Christ. Just as there are indications in the novel’s first part that Nastasia implicitly recognises Myshkin’s saintly or Christlike nature, so Aglaya Epanchina explicitly recognises his quixotic nature in part 2. After reading a letter from the prince, she places it in a volume of Cervantes’s novel and bursts out laughing. Later, in the company of her family, the prince and others, she explains the link between Pushkin’s ballad ‘A Poor Knight’ and Don Quixote (266), and then recites the ballad aloud from memory, slyly changing the letters inscribed on the hero’s shield, A. M. D. (*Ave Mater Dei*), to A. N. B. (*Ave Nastasia Barashkova*) (2:7). Although the mocking association which Aglaya means to draw between the prince and the two literary knights escapes most of the persons present, the prince discerns it, and there is something strangely fatalistic about the way the content of the Pushkin poem becomes infused, or incarnated, in his subsequent life. (Noteworthily, he will later proceed to read all of Pushkin’s works with Rogozhin (556)). His unflagging compassion for Nastasia, the ‘fallen’ woman, will recall not only Christ’s refusal to condemn the adulterous woman (another story from John’s Gospel) but also Aglaya’s interpretation of the ‘poor knight’ as one who would still ‘believe in’ his lady ‘even if she became a thief’ (266). Aglaya will even hint at these associations when she later suggests to him that he is ‘sacrificing’ himself by refusing to marry Nastasia (445). By the end, when he winds up back in the Swiss sanatorium as a relapsed idiot, we will realise the extreme extent to which he incarnates the closing stanza of ‘A Poor Knight’: ‘Returning to his distant castle, / There he lived and sighed, / Ever silent, sad, and cheerless, / Of reason bereft, he died’ (quoted at 269).

While it was out of compassion and for Raskolnikov’s spiritual benefit that Sonya read to him from the Gospel, Aglaya recites the Pushkin poem with her mocking insertions specifically in order to prick and embarrass the prince. Nonetheless, Sonya’s reading and Aglaya’s recitation end up having comparable effects, infusing the minds (and hence the actions and lives) of Raskolnikov and Myshkin with the images of the Johannine Christ and the Christlike knight. It is therefore left to Ivan Karamazov to be so bold as to as to retrieve from the Bible and, in effect, to re-incarnate the
Divine Logos in the character of Christ within the ‘The Grand Inquisitor’, the prose-poem of his own creation which he rehearses to Alyosha in the Metropolis tavern. It is significant that Ivan recites it extemporaneously with no text in hand; that, indeed, although he asserts that he ‘composed’ it a year earlier, he also claims to have ‘never written’ it down; and that therefore Alyosha is its ‘first reader – that is, listener’ (BK, 227). Suffice it for me to close by remarking the significance of what happens moments after the recitation of the poem is done. When the saintly listener kisses his rebellious brother on the lips, in precise emulation of the parting kiss Christ gave the Inquisitor in the poem, the act is more than simply ‘plagiarism’, which is what Ivan jokingly calls it, or ‘a reaccented quotation’, which is what Perlina calls it.39 The kiss confirms that the conjured exemplum of the Incarnate God, the Christ of Ivan’s tale, has hit its mark as an incitement in Alyosha’s mind, and perhaps even his soul. A tremendous irony it may seem that this incitement was emitted from the imagination of a rebel-against-God. Yet the Word is the Word, or the Logos, the Logos, no matter by whom or in what spirit it is conveyed. And evidently for Dostoevsky, the Word, when recited aloud by a human – and Russian – voice, bears for the listener a force much profounder than the silence of Ambrose’s study or of Don Quixote’s reading room.

NOTES


5 Perlina, _Varieties_, 39.


8 Translations of Augustine are mine.

9 Indeed, a century after Dostoevsky, an Orthodox priest like Georges Florovsky could still express wariness towards hermeneutics: ‘We are in danger of losing the uniqueness of the Word of God in the process of continuous “reinterpretation”. But how can we interpret at all if we have forgotten the original language?’ ( _Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View_ (Belmont, MA, 1972), 10). This is not to suggest that Florovsky denies that scriptural revelation requires interpretation (see _ibid._, 17–36). Yet, relative to Catholicism, the distinctly lesser concern with, or wariness towards, scriptural hermeneutics in Russian Orthodoxy may be attributable, at least in part, to the overbearing emphasis which the Orthodox always placed upon the seven Ecumenical Councils of 325–681 AD. As Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia) points out, the Councils ‘defined once and for all the Church’s teaching upon the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith’, doctrines that are hence to be accepted as ‘absolute and unchanging’ (_The Orthodox Church_, new edn (London, 1993), 20, 197).

10 References to _The Brothers Karamazov_ are from the edition cited in note 2.


14 _Russian Religious Mind_, vol. 1, 379.

15 _Ibid._, vol. 2, 41–43.

16 _Ibid._, vol. 1, 377.
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17 Ibid., vol. 1, 377; Dostoevsky, Diary, 203, my emphasis.
18 Diary, 260, quoted in Eric J. Ziolkowski, The Sanctification of Don Quixote: From Hidalgo to Priest (University Park, PA, 1991), 114–15. On the view of the Quixote as ‘the first and unsurpassed model of the modern realist novel’ (M. Menéndez y Pelayo), see Ziolkowski, Sanctification, i, including note 1.
19 See ‘A lie is saved by a lie’ (September 1877), in Diary, 836.
20 See Ziolkowski, Sanctification, 95–126.
21 Letter 1/13 January 1868 to Sofia (his niece), as quoted in Robin Feuer Miller, Dostoevsky and The Idiot: Author, Narrator, and Reader (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 74. As indicated by Ziolkowski, Sanctification, 113, note 41, Miller omits from her translation of the pertinent passage a parenthetical sentence that specifies ‘the whole Gospel of St John’ as Dostoevsky’s source for the ‘thought’ of the beautiful as an ‘ideal’: ‘John sees the wonder of the Incarnation, the visible apparition of the Beautiful’ (quoted from Dostoevsky, Letters, 142).
22 See Ziolkowski, Sanctification, 120–25.
23 Dostoevsky’s ‘A lie is saved by a lie’ (note 19 above), 835–38, conveys his fascination with the way Don Quixote overcomes a certain doubt that at one point threatens his belief in the truth of chivalry books. For discussion see Ziolkowski, Sanctification, 116–17.
24 ‘Incarnation’, 23, 26. See viii–ix for references to the original 1947 sources, as well as a 1957 source in which this essay previously appeared (in both English and Spanish).
25 See Perlina, Varieties, 14–6.
26 Compare Carlos Fuentes, Don Quixote, or the Critique of Reading (Austin, TX, 1976).
part 2 of Ziolkowski’s *Sanctification*, which cites numerous other studies that focus or comment upon this specific relationship.


35 Compare, for example, how a line about ‘the whispering silence’ from a poem by Pushkin ‘for some reason rose to his mind’ as he snuck around outside his father’s house on the night of the murder (368).

36 Perlina, *Varieties*, 20–21.

37 ‘Old People’ (1873) in *Diary*, 9.
