



Previously in the Dostoevsky for Parents and Children series:

[Varenka's Memoirs](#) (from the novel Poor Folk, 1846 [1883, 1887, 1897, DPC I])

[An Honest Thief](#) (from Stories of a Man of Experience, 1848 [suggested by the Introduction to the 1897 anthology, DPC V])

[Nellie's Story](#) (from The Insulted and Injured, 1861 [1883, 1887, DPC VI])

[At The Select Boarding School](#) (from the novel The Adolescent, 1875 [1883, 1897, DPC II])

[The Merchant's Story](#) (from the novel The Adolescent, 1875 [1897, DPC IV])

[A Little Boy at Christ's Christmas Tree](#) (from The Diary Of A Writer, January 1876 [1883, 1897, DPC VII])

[The Peasant Marey](#) (from The Diary Of A Writer, February 1876 [1883, 1897, DPC III])

[A Centenarian](#) (from The Diary Of A Writer, March 1876 [1883, 1897, DPC VIII])

{In square brackets we indicate the original Anna Grigorievna Dostoevskaya anthologies in which each story appeared, followed by its order of posting in the present Dostoevsky for Parents and Children (DPC) collection. Thus [1883, 1897, DPC II] means the story appeared in the first (1883) and third (1897), but not in the second (1887) Anna Dostoevskaya anthology, and was the second in this series of postings. Please find [here](#) our brief introduction to the original Dostoevsky for Children anthologies, and to this English online version.}

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Today's reading is neither a story, nor an introduction to the Martyrology of the Church or the Lives of the Saints. It is an introduction to Dostoevsky's political journalism and ideals. Dostoevsky's fiction, as we have seen, even when inter-spread amidst journalistic pieces, like in A Writer's Diary, has an unmistakable "Dostoevsky quality". It is a "turning within". It reveals Dostoevsky's unmatched intuition for the "unseen warfare", and all his psychological, indeed often spiritual, inner depth.

We could even say that the more introspective a Dostoevsky story is, the better. Thus, Crime and Punishment is, perhaps, even more valuable than the "outwardly" more spectacular and politically hard hitting Demons (also see [here](#), in Romanian.) Met. Anthony Khrapovitsky also sees the "laws of the heart", the most inner circles in Dostoevsky's creation, as the most precious: "Should the reader leave him [Dostoevsky] for some reason at one of the great circles of observations [national, historical, universal], both of them would profit from keeping the riches of the previous, inner circles." Indeed he goes as far as to suggest that, as long as the inner spirit of Marmeladov lives on in the people (sinful? yes! apostate? no! vicious? yes! self-righteous? no! – and Dostoevsky's tentative portrait of Foma Danilov, below, hints at this aspect), the fragrance of Holy Russia lives on. Even without a state. Even should the state be turned into a colony. (Is there universal use-value in Met. Anthony's "Russian Idea"?)

Conversely, Dostoevsky's politics and "geopolitics", his "Russian Idea" (as far as non-Russians such as we can understand it) is a movement 'outwards'. A Don Quixotesque dream of the ever Romantic side of our author's soul (as he himself once seemed to admit, at the whimpering ending of the Russo-Turkish war, cf. J. Frank). A dream of national and universal reconciliation, of love, harmony, and brotherhood. "Alle Menschen werden Brüder ..." - with the religious ethos of the Russian People (of Foma Danilov, as Dostoevsky understands him) as catalyst. But notice (below, and even more in other pieces of journalism): there appears a crusading, secularizing, almost Westernizing stress, that seems unequal to both the "inner Dostoevsky" we know, and to [the Orthodox understanding of such saints](#) .

Indeed, there was a Pan-Slavic precondition for Utopia, as our author saw it. It required more Messianic Imperialism of the post-Petrine (thus, essentially Western) kind. The idea was taken from Danilevsky, the leading proponent of Pan-Slavism. Danilevsky was a former companion of Dostoevsky's at the radical and utopian Petrashevsky circle of their youth, later to turn nationalist, with a considerable influence on the shape of our author's political views. Danilevsky was also an inspiration for Shatov, in the Demons. A strange kind of "Slavophile", in real life and in fiction. Slavophile not in Christ, but "Slavophile" in lieu of Christ and of His Church. "The very fact is that you reduce God to a simple attribute of nationality ..." (Stavrogin to Shatov, in The Demons)

In short, Dostoevsky's national and universal Utopia is as moving as Romanticism can be. But it is all too earthly. It seems to us a movement outwards and downwards from his fiction. Worldly, all too worldly. It may, however, have kept the author's contemporaries more spellbound than anything else – after all, it was largely built on their worldly ideas (Belinsky, Danilevsky, later Soloviev...). Almost a continuation of the Petrashevsky circle. Some see it even in fiction:

"The fact that the paradise of the Ridiculous Man - even if only an unrealizable ideal – is an earthly, not heavenly one suggests, as Konstantin Leontiev pointed out, that the moral ideals of the Utopian socialism of Dostoevsky's youth still held a deep attraction for him" (K. Lantz)

For our part, we feel that "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" can evoke more uplifting contemplations (and the beautifully "anagogical" role of a suffering child, there, would recommend the story for the readers of this collection). Indeed, so can Dostoevsky's wonderful fiction in general. The above quote, then, is perhaps easier understood as the over-spilling of a reaction to our author's journalistic involvement, to his far more earthly and doctrinaire "geopolitical" messianism, that seemed to him in 1877 even realizable, manu militari. In other

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words, politicized readings of Dostoevsky's fiction can be understandable. But they can also be impoverishing (comp. Met. Anthony, quoted below.)

Now, in the Church it is Christian otherworldliness that begets holy martyrs, holy military saints and missionaries, holy confessors, and catacomb saints. The Kingdom not of this world [resists](#) the dream of worldly Utopia (comp. Fr. Seraphim Rose, Orthodox Survival Course, samizdat.) It is otherworldliness that begat Foma Danilov. Worldliness is what begat Smerdyakov, the explicit and deliberate opposite of Foma, in the Brothers Karamazov. Smerdyakov - the sadly foreboding incarnation of corrupt simplicity, without even the conservative veneer of his educated nihilist mentor, Ivan Karamazov, and thus, without any lingering restraints. "Fodder for the debacle that is to come", chillingly says Ivan, expressing a characteristically lucid presaging of his ineffable author.

At this juncture, we feel that this is not the place to discuss Dostoevsky's critics, how Leontiev, among them, predicted the failure of Messianic Pan-Slavism from the standpoint of the cultural and spiritual concerns of Holy Russia (but see the work of historian [Victor Taki](#) on [this](#)), or why the state could be but a necessary evil in the eyes of the classic, Orthodox Church and small community - oriented Slavophiles (yet note that for Met. Anthony, in view of the lessons of history, a profitable reading of Dostoevsky should take stock of this aspect, cf. below.)

Rather, we feel that the most urgent question for our homeschooling readers could be: what, then, is the "inner-rooted" account that best makes sense of Holy Russia? What is the account that makes intelligible its past, present, and future, war and peace, its outer life in light of the inner? The account against which to understand both Dostoevsky and Leontiev, say, the holy missionaries and the Tsars, and the Westernizers of various shades, in order - so to speak - to separate the wheat from the chaff? The grand otherworldly account that lovingly but discerningly makes intelligible the Russian (and perhaps universal) "all".

If war and peace are downstream from inner life, if the worldly is downstream from the otherworldly, then such an account must come from the Church. This was recently [illustrated on karamazov.ro](#)

. For purposes of intuitive induction, we repeat below one of the beautiful excerpts given previously, adding two more. Their common horizon, we feel, could be where the needed account begins. A starting point for the discerning of the spirits, in Dostoevsky's world and beyond.

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(If not for space and translation constraints, we would also have included here St. Ignatius Brianchaninov's "Archpastoral appeal concerning the issue of the liberation of the peasants from serfdom" of May 1859, for a basic understanding the larger spiritual-political context of Dostoevsky's age, and of Russia in general. It is a pastoral tour de force, a true Orthodox Survival Course in One Lesson for all times and places, by the hand of a holy man in every way commensurable to the greatest luminaries of the Russian Century. Our diligent readers will definitely want to study it. We are considering a short separate selection, [if only in machine-translation](#) until a better one becomes available.)

Met. Anthony Khrapovitsky:

[W]e value Dostoevsky so highly not only as an expert diagnostician of our country's life but also as a teacher, a therapist who is capable of helping us even if our patient, Russia, had both its hands amputated; that is, was deprived of its statehood. And what is the state? Actually, it is the "people's police" with threefold spying and tenfold executions, as the history of the French and Russian communes have demonstrated. Pressing all the policies of public life into a state uniform, even the most Republican "uniform," is above all highly unliberal. Dostoevsky was quite right when, in the "Epilogue" to the "Pushkin Address", he tried to convince Professor Gradovsky (an advocate of law and order), that the patriarchal principles of the life of our people are not only much more moral, but even more liberal than the constitutional and Republican orders, which give incomparably less room for private initiative and moral truth... Do not, therefore, consider Dostoevsky a representative of a party or a political trend: he stood far above those secondary areas of life and thought, although as a thinking man he could not avoid having definite opinions on these matters. Following our writer, we call upon our readers to keep separate the concepts of public life and the concept of statehood [mutatis mutandis, see also the example of Holy Tsar Nicholas II and St. Nicholas the Enlightener of Japan, below, and the Orthodox ideal of State-Church Symphony] and not to raise the idea of statehood to an absolute, not to consider the state to be of the highest importance, so that all other values, all other ideas would be evaluated from that point of view. One must recall that this is precisely the

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substance of the falsehood of ancient pagan Rome, and this was the cause of its three century long vicious hostility toward Christianity, a hostility which was inspired by the first commandment of the Old Testament. The Roman Empire aspired to be the highest deity for all peoples, and therefore executed Christians with a cruelty unprecedented among barbarian people – not because of their dogmas, but because they considered moral truths and virtue, rather than the state, to be the highest value, the highest duty of humanity. Dostoevsky affirms such an understanding of ancient Rome. There is no culture or idea more hostile to Christianity than the idea of ancient Rome, he writes (Diary of a Writer [where he also sees Roman Catholicism as the inheritor of the “Roman Idea”; is Met. Anthony cautiously hinting, here, that a party-line reading of Dostoevsky could lead us straight into the arms of the Great Inquisitor?]).

(Concordance to Dostoevsky, L. Koehler transl.)

Holy Tsar Nicholas II and St. Nicholas, the Enlightener of Japan:

Conflict was brewing between Russia and Japan. On the night of January 26 to 27, 1904, hostilities broke out between the two countries, breaking the peaceful state of Vladykas missionary labors. As a true shepherd of his flock, Bishop Nicholas did not leave Japan in the terrible years of war, and remained together with his flock.

The Japanese Church must not be left without a bishop, and therefore I am staying here, read his report to the Holy Governing Synod. Since the beginning of the war, the mission, its head, and all Japanese Orthodox suffered violent attacks of malice, hatred, and slander. Persistent calls for the destruction of the Orthodox cathedral were heard. As acknowledged by the Japanese themselves, the mission and its cathedral survived only because the Russian side was losing. From the first days of the war, Vladyka Nicholas blessed his flock to pray so that victory would be granted to the Japanese people, and he, as a true patriot of his homeland, Russia, deprived himself of participation in the common worship. Now all of his attention turned to the aid of the Russian prisoners of war: he supplied them with books, and he sent priests to visit them. When the war was over, he was engaged in building graves for the Russian soldiers who died in captivity.

Tsar Nicholas II understood and appreciated the labors of the Japanese hierarch. After the war was over, the Tsar wrote to him on October 9, 1905:

“You have shown to all of us how the Orthodox Church of Christ is alien to all worldly dominion and every tribal animosity, that She equally embraces with love all tribes and peoples. During the difficult time of war, when the weapons of combat broke the peaceful relations between peoples and rulers, you, fulfilling Christ’s covenant, did not leave the flock entrusted to you, and the grace of love and faith gave you strength to withstand the test of fire, and in the midst of war and strife, to keep the world of faith and love in the Church erected through your labors.”

It was also thanks to the moral influence of the saint that friendly relations between the two countries were soon reestablished and continued until the year 1917. As a reward for his services to the Orthodox Church, the Holy Ruling Synod elevated bishop Nicholas to the rank of archbishop.

(From the Life of St. Nicholas Kasatkin, the Enlightener of Japan)

St. Barsanuphius the Great:

Once certain of the Fathers besought Saint Barsanuphius to pray that God stay His wrath and spare the world. Saint Barsanuphius wrote back that there were "three men perfect before God," whose prayers met at the throne of God and protected the whole world; to them it had been revealed that the wrath of God would not last long. These three, he said, were "John of Rome, Elias of Corinth, and another in the diocese of Jerusalem," concealing the name of the last, since it was himself.

(From the Letters of Sts. Barsanuphius and John, paraphrase taken from [here](#) .)

F.M. Dostoevsky

FOMA DANILOV - THE RUSSIAN HERO TORTURED TO DEATH (1877)

In the spring of last year all newspapers reprinted the news which appeared in The Russian Invalid about the martyr's death of a non-commissioned officer of the 2nd Turkestan Rifle Battalion, Foma Danilov; he was taken a prisoner by the Kipchaks and barbarously murdered by them on November 21, 1875, at Margelan, after having been subjected to many refined tortures because he had refused to enter their service and to embrace Mohammedanism. The Khan himself promised him pardon, reward and honors on condition that he renounce Christ. Danilov answered that he could not betray the Cross, and that as a subject of the Czar though in captivity, he had to abide by his duty toward the Czar and Christianity. The torturers, having tortured him to death, were astonished by the force of his spirit and gave him the name of "bogatyr," which means "valiant knight."

At the time this news item, though printed in all newspapers, caused but little comment in society, while the papers having published it in the form of a usual newspaper entre-filet, did not deem it necessary to dwell upon it particularly. In a word, in the case of Foma Danilov "it was quiet" in stock-exchange parlance. Subsequently, as is known, the Slavic movement came into being; thence came Cherniaiev, the Serbians, Kireev, donations, volunteers, and the tortured-to-death Foma was completely forgotten (i.e., by the newspapers), and recently additional details amplifying the earlier account have been received. It is reported that the

Samara governor has made inquiries about the family of Danilov, who was a peasant of the village Kirsanovka of the Buguruslan county of the Samara province, and it was found that he was survived by his wife Evfrosinia of the age of twenty-seven and a six-year-old daughter Oulita who were in a destitute condition. Relief was given to them on the noble initiative of the governor, who applied to several persons requesting them to help the widow and the daughter of the martyred Russian hero, and to the Samara, provincial zemstvo assembly-with the proposal to place Danilov's daughter as a stipendiary in one of the educational institutions. Thereupon 1320 rubles were collected; 600 rubles were set aside till the daughter's majority, the remainder of the sum was turned over to the widow, and the daughter was placed in a school. In addition the Chief of the General Staff notified the governor that the Emperor gracefully ordered that an annual life pension of 120 rubles be paid by the State Treasury to the widow. Thereupon . . . thereupon the matter probably will be again forgotten in view of the current anxieties, political fears, enormous problems awaiting their solution, bankruptcies, and so on, and so forth.

Oh, I do not mean to say that our society took an indifferent attitude toward this striking act as one not worthy of attention. It is merely a fact that little was said, or, more correctly, almost no one spoke about it particularly. However, perhaps, people somewhere did speak among themselves, among merchants, among the clergy, for instance, but not in society, not among our intelligentsia. Of course, the people will not forget this great death: this hero has suffered tortures for Christ and he is a great Russian. The people treasure this and will not forget, have never forgotten, such deeds.

And now I already hear, as it were, those voices so familiar to me: "No doubt, this is force; this we admit; nevertheless it is an obscure force which manifested itself in so-to-speak antediluvian, bureaucratized forms, and, therefore, why should we be particularly talking about the matter? It does not belong to our world; it would have been different had this force revealed itself intelligently, consciously. There are, you see, also other sufferers and other forces; there are infinitely loftier ideas, for instance, the idea of cosmopolitanism...."

Notwithstanding these sensible and intelligent voices, it seems to me permissible and altogether justifiable to say something particular about Danilov. Moreover, I even venture to maintain that our intelligentsia would have by no means humiliated itself had it dealt with this fact more attentively. For instance, first of all I am surprised that no astonishment was revealed - precisely, astonishment. I am not speaking of the people: among them no astonishment is needed and there will be none: Foma's deed cannot seem to them extraordinary for the mere reason of their great faith in themselves and in their soul. They will react to this heroic exploit only by a strong sentiment and a great emotion. However, were a similar fact to occur in Europe, that is, the manifestation of such a great spiritual force among the English or the French, they would have certainly heralded it all over the world. Nay, listen, gentlemen, do you

know how I represent to myself this obscure soldier of the Turkestan battalion? - Indeed, this is, so to speak, the emblem of Russia, of all Russia, of all our popular Russia, the true image of that very Russia in which our cynics and profound sages are now denying the great spirit, every possibility of enthusiasm and of the revelation of a great thought and great feeling. Listen, none the less you are not those cynics, you are merely intelligently Europeanizing, that is, essentially, the kindest folk: in fact, you do not deny that in summer our people, here and there, did manifest extraordinary spiritual potency: men left their homes and children, and went to die for religion, for the oppressed, God knows whither and God knows with what means, exactly as the first crusaders nine centuries ago in Europe, - those very crusaders whose reappearance Granovsky, for example, would have considered almost ridiculous and offensive "in our age of positive problems, progress," etc. Let this summer movement of ours be, in your opinion, a blind and even insensible movement, a so-to-speak "crusaders' " movement. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that it was firm and magnanimous - if it be viewed from only a slightly broader standpoint. A great idea was awakening, an idea which, at once, has lifted, maybe, hundreds of thousands and millions of souls from inertia, cynicism, debauch and ugliness in which. Prior to that, these souls had been submerged. You know, of course, that our people are considered kindhearted and even intellectually most gifted, but still an ignorant elemental mass devoid of consciousness, almost solidly addicted to vices and prejudices, almost solidly indecent. But you see, I will venture to express, so to speak, an axiom: in order to judge the moral force of people and what they are capable of in the future, one has to take into account not that level of indecency to which, temporarily, even though in their majority, they have sunk, but that elevation of the spirit which they are capable of attaining when the time comes. Indecency is a temporary misfortune, always dependent upon past and transitory circumstances, upon slavery, secular oppression, inveterateness, whereas the gift of magnanimity is a perpetual, elemental gift which is born with a people, one which is all the more to be valued if, despite centuries of slavery, oppression and misery, it is still preserved intact in the hearts of the people.

Seemingly, Foma Danilov was one of the most ordinary and inconspicuous specimens of the Russian people, inconspicuous as the Russian people themselves. (Indeed, to still quite a few they are altogether inconspicuous.) Perhaps, in days past, he had been leading a loose life; he may have been fond of drinking; maybe, he even did not pray much, although, of course, he always remembered God. And all of a sudden he is being ordered to change his religion under the threat of a martyr's death. In this connection one has to recall what these tortures, these Asiatic tortures are! He faces the Khan himself, who promises him his favors, and Danilov understands perfectly that his refusal unfailingly will anger the Khan, will vex the ambition of the Kipchaks because "this Christian dog dares to despise Islam to such a degree." Yet, notwithstanding everything that awaits him, this inconspicuous Russian man endures the cruelest tortures and dies astonishing his torturers. You know, gentlemen, that none of us would have done this. To assume martyrdom in public, at times, is even slightly; but here the thing transpired in utter obscurity, in a remote locality; no one was looking at him; besides Foma himself could not have thought, and certainly did not suppose, that his heroic deed would be heralded all over Russia. I believe some of the martyrs, even during the first centuries of the Christian era, when enduring their tortures, were partly consoled and alleviated by the conviction that their death would serve as an example for the timid and oscillating ones, and

would increase the number of the followers of Christ. For Foma even this great consolation could not have existed: who would find it out? -He was alone among his torturers. He was still young. Over there, somewhere, were his young wife and daughter. Never is he going to see them again. But be it so : "Wherever I may be, I will not act against my conscience, and I will endure the tortures." - Indeed, this is truth for truth's sake, and not for the sake of ostentation! And no iniquity, no sophism with conscience: "I shall embrace Islam ostensibly; I shall not yield to temptation; no one is going to see. Later I shall pray for forgiveness; life is long. I shall perpetrate good deeds." There was nothing of the kind: astounding, primitive, elemental honesty. Nay, gentlemen, we should hardly have acted in this manner!

But this is - we, whereas to our people Danilov's exploit, I repeat, is, perhaps, even not surprising. Therein is the point that precisely here we have, as it were, the portrait, the full picture of the Russian people. This is precisely what makes the thing dear to me and, of course, to you. Likewise our people love truth for its own sake and not for ostentation. And let them be coarse and ugly and sinful and inconspicuous, but when their time comes, and a cause of general popular truth arises, then you will be astounded by that measure of spiritual freedom which they will reveal despite the pressure of materialism, passions, pecuniary and material greed, and even in the face of dread of the cruelest martyr's death. And they will do and manifest all this simply, firmly, without claiming any reward or commendation, without making a display of themselves: "That in which I believe, I confess." In this respect even the most obdurate wranglers about "reaction" in the people's ideals have nothing to say, since it is unimportant whether or not an ideal is reactionary; the important point is the ability to reveal the strongest will for the sake of a magnanimous exploit. (This ridiculous little idea about "reaction" I introduced here for the sake of complete impartiality.)

You know, gentlemen, the question must be put squarely: I maintain that we have nothing to teach such a people. This is a sophism but sometimes it does come to my mind. Why, of course, we are more educated than the people, but the trouble is - what are we going to teach them! Of course, I am not speaking of trades, technique, mathematics; these may be taught even by hired travelling Germans, if we should fail to teach them. But what are we going to impart? For we are Russians, brethren of this people, and this means that we must enlighten them. And yet what do we have to impart to them from among the things that are moral and lofty? What shall we explain to them? With what shall we illumine their "obscure" souls? The enlightenment of the people - this, gentlemen, is our right and our duty, - this is a right in the highest Christian sense: he who knows the good, the true word of life, must, is duty bound, to convey it to him who knows not, to his brother groping in darkness - thus it is according to the Gospel. Now, what shall we convey to the groping that he does not know better than we?

Of course, first of all, - teaching is useful, and one has to learn. Isn't this so? But the people, even before us, said: "Knowledge is light, ignorance is darkness." Eradication of prejudices, for

instance, or the casting down of idols? But within ourselves there is such a mass of prejudices, and we have placed before ourselves so many idols, that the people will unhesitatingly tell us: "Physician, heal thyself." (And they know our idols; they are quite able to discern things!) - Well, is it self-respect? Personal dignity? - But our people as a whole respect themselves far more than we; they respect and understand their dignity much more deeply than we. In fact, we are awfully ambitious, yet we do not respect ourselves at all, nor is there in us the feeling of personal dignity, - in no respect whatsoever. Well - to give an example - is it for us to teach the people respect for other men's convictions? Our people, even prior to Peter, have proved their respect for other men's convictions, whereas we, even among ourselves, do not forgive one another the slightest deviation from our convictions, and those even slightly disagreeing with us we consider scoundrels, forgetting that he who is apt to lose respect for others, to begin with, does not respect himself. Is it for us to teach the people faith in ourselves, in our strength? The people have their Foma Danilovs - thousands of them, whereas we do not believe in the least in Russian strength, and, besides, we regard this disbelief as sublime enlightenment and virtually as prowess.

What is it, finally, that we can teach? We loathe to the point of wrath everything that our people love and respect, for which their heart longs. So what sort of demophiles are we? It may be argued that we love the people all the more if we loathe their ignorance wishing them good. Nay, gentlemen, not at all: In fact, if we truly loved the people - and not merely in articles and books - we should come closer to them; we should take pains to study that which at present, altogether without thinking, abiding by European patterns, we seek to exterminate in them. If we should do this, perhaps, we ourselves might learn so many things that at present we cannot even imagine.

However, we have one consolation, one great superiority to our people, and this is why we so despise them: it is that they are nationally-minded and adhere to this with all their strength, whereas ours are cosmopolitan convictions, and, for this reason, we have lifted ourselves far above them. Now, herein is our whole dissension, our detachment from the people. And I directly proclaim: should we settle this point, should we find the point of reconciliation, at once our whole discord with the people would come to an end. Such a point exists; and it is very easy to find it. I repeat decisively that even our most radical disagreements, essentially, are nothing but a mirage.