



Christian Fiction and Religious Realism in the Novels of Dostoevsky

Wil van den Bercken

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Description

Offers a literary analysis and theological evaluation of the Christian themes in the five great novels of Dostoevsky.

'Wil van den Bercken has produced a focused and sober re-consideration of the vexed question of the religious identity of Dostoevsky's fiction... In a series of patient and perceptive analyses of Dostoevsky's major novels, van den Bercken extracts their religious content and assesses it without preconceptions. *Christian Fiction and Religious Realism in the Novels of Dostoevsky* should appeal not only to specialists in Dostoevsky and modern fiction, but also to students and general readers.' —Robert Bird, *The University of Chicago*

'Van den Bercken's monograph impresses with the breadth of fictional and critical material analysed, and the huge amount of analytic work which such a mammoth task entails.' —Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover, *The Dostoevsky Journal: An Independent Review*

'A gift to Dostoevskii scholars [that enriches] our understanding of the essential religious dimension of Dostoevskii's work' — Paul J. Contino, *Slavic Review*

This study offers a literary analysis and theological evaluation of the Christian themes in the five great novels of Dostoevsky – *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *The Adolescent*, *The Devils* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Based on a balanced method of literary analysis and theological evaluation of the texts, this study starts by discussing recent studies of Dostoevsky's religion. It then describes Dostoevsky's original literary method in dealing with religious issues – his use of paradoxes, contradictions and irony. ***Christian Fiction and Religious Realism in the Novels of Dostoevsky*** ultimately deconstructs Dostoevsky as an Orthodox writer, and reveals that the Christian themes in his novels are not ecclesiastical or confessionally theological ones, but instead are expressions of a fundamentally Christian anthropology and biblical ethics.

Readership: Students and scholars of literature, particularly slavists; students and scholars of theology and religious studies.

Contents

Introduction; Religious Interpretations of Dostoevsky; The Realism of Dostoevsky's Fictional Christianity; Christian Themes in *Crime and Punishment*; Religious Discussions in *The Idiot* and *The Adolescent*; Christian Voices in *The Devils*; The Spirituality of the Monk Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*; The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor: Literary Irony and Theological Seriousness; Dostoevsky's 'Grand Inquisitor' and Vladimir Solovyov's 'Antichrist'; Physical and Divine Beauty: The Aesthetical-Ethical Dilemma in Dostoevsky's Novels; Conclusion; Notes; References; Index of Names

About the Author

Wil van den Bercken is a Slavist and professor of the history of the Russian Orthodox Church at the Radboud University in Nijmegen (The Netherlands). His publications include *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union* (1988), *Holy Russia and Christian Europe: East and West in the Religious Ideology of Russia* (1999) and *Aesthetics as a Religious Factor in Eastern and Western Christianity* (ed., 2005). He is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*.

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