

The grand inquisitor
poem theology
religion essay



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The Grand Inquisitor is part of the stories found in the book by Fyodor Dostoevsky entitled *Brothers Karamozov*. Dostoevsky concerns himself in analyzing the psychological consequences of engaging in crime, and the moral consequences of engaging in such kind of vices. In the grand Inquisitor, the characters question the validity of religion, free will and morality. The main dilemma that these characters ask, is it prudent for man, to observe the laws of religion? The other questions that linger on the minds of these people is whether they should take the role of God, and ignore the various religious believes or traditions. The poet identifies the various degrees of freedom, and this includes positive and negative freedom, rational egoism, Christian idealism, and nihilism. He does this through the various characters in his poem the Grand Inquisitor (Dostoyevsky,, Richard and Larrisa, 27).

The Grand Inquisitor is based on the idea of freedom and human nature. In the poem, Alysha is a monk, and Ivan questions the benevolence of God. According to the Grand Inquisitor, the notion of freedom does not exist. The Grand Inquisitor observes that people need to be selfish, and by doing that the whole society will benefit. This is because the needs of individuals are the same and complement each other. On this basis, the freedom the Jesus Christ brings to the world is not freedom but slavery. This aspect is denoted in the poem when the Grand Inquisitor tells Jesus that by coming again, he is destroying the church. He further tells Jesus that the devil tempted him with three items, food, power, and divine authority (Dostoyevsky and Constance, 33).

For instance, the devil told Jesus to turn stone into bread. According to the Grand Inquisitor, Jesus should have done that. According to him, men will only follow people who feed their bellies. By turning stone into bread, Jesus will demonstrate his ability to feed the multitudes. The Grand Inquisitor further tells Jesus that he should have cast himself down from the temple and caught by angels. This would have demonstrated his godhead abilities, therefore acquiring worship and trust from the people. Finally, the Grand Inquisitor believes that had Jesus accepted to rule over the world, then the world would have seen salvation (Leatherbarrow, 24). On this basis, the Grand Inquisitor accuses Jesus of giving humanity freedom to choose.

According to him, the masses do not have the capability of choosing what is right or wrong. This freedom has led to the destruction of mankind. The Grand Inquisitor therefore believes that the freedom that Jesus gave to mankind, by refusing to oblige to the temptations of the devil, was too much for the people. On this basis therefore, the Grand Inquisitor advocates for selfishness of an individual. However, this freedom that comes with selfishness is an illusion, and does not exist in Christianity. The Christian teachings advocate for love, and humanity. For instance, the Inquisitor believes in giving people bread, in exchange of their souls. According to this teaching, the freedom of people will only come through coercion. On this basis, the Grand Inquisitor takes the role of God, instead of man. In my own opinion, the kind of freedom that the Grand Inquisitor advocates for is the negative freedom.

The Inquisitor tries to justify his believes by identifying the roles of Satan in providing real freedom. He does this by denoting that the catholic church

long left the teachings of Jesus, and followed the teachings of Satan. In his own opinion, freedom that comes from the devil is sufficient in taking care of the needs of humanity. This is because the devil gives authority to the few, who have the capability of handling their freedom. By doing, the devil manages to end the suffering of humanity, and uniting the world, through the church, i. e. the Catholic Church (Crane and Faynia, 19).

No matter what justification the Grand Inquisitor gives, this is negative freedom. This is because it is against humanity to act in a selfish manner. For people to stay together, they must satisfy the various needs of others. There is no way leadership by a few people and through coercion can result to the promotion of humanity, and hence positive freedom. This is because people will always be dissatisfied by the selfishness of individuals, resulting to rebellions. Dostoevsky presents the freedom denoted as Christian idealism through the actions of Jesus Christ. For instance, the Grand Inquisitor accuses Jesus of allowing people to choose on what they want and what they don't want (Davis, Gary, David, John, 28).

For instance, the Grand Inquisitor argues that by refusing to accept the temptations that the devil offered to Jesus Christ, he gave mankind the freedom to choose. This is what Christian idealism is all about. To Christians, they have a role to play in their lives, in regard to worshiping God. They can choose either choose to worship God, and achieve eternal life, or to go against God, and be lead to eternal death (Dostoyevsky, 33). The Grand Inquisitor acknowledges these teachings, and he tell Jesus that even though the devil is leading them to death and destruction, the freedom that he gives is for the benefit of humanity. This kind of freedom is the elimination of the <https://assignbuster.com/the-grand-inquisitor-poem-theology-religion-essay/>

free will of individuals, in exchange of providing for their needs, and happiness.

In conclusion, Dostoevsky manages to highlight religious bondage in the manner in which the Grand Inquisitor argues about the freedom. The Grand Inquisitor is under religious bondage because of his assumptions that freedom to choose is limited to a few individual. In reality, this is not freedom but bondage. This is because an individual will not have the capability of acting by himself. The person will always live in fear of need, because the authority will fail to provide for her due to disobedience. On this basis, the notion of harmony does not exist; instead individuals are under spiritual bondage, in the name of self-gratification, and self-love.