

Title: Dostoevsky and Filaret: The Anxiety of Dispute
Author: Nicholas Rzhevsky, Stony Brook University

Metropolitan Filaret's *Nachatki khristianskogo ucheniia* (1828) is an unusual item in the bibliography of Slavic literary studies. Published in one hundred and five editions between 1828 and 1865 in some one million, two hundred thousand copies it was a basic source of religious education for Russian youth in the 19th century. One of those youths was Fedor Dostoevsky, in whose family, according to his brother Andrei, the catechism was memorized "word by word." Filaret's influence on Dostoevsky has been noted by scholars such as Konrad Onasch and Joseph Frank, but not explored to the extent the text demands. As a crucial source of the theological issues that prodded Russian culture during the height of its creative accomplishments the catechism stimulated Dostoevsky's thinking in fundamental ways not only during his youth but throughout his lifetime. Dostoevsky responded to the basic orientations of Russian Orthodox belief that structured the moral and psychological issues of his fiction, but also exposed them to a profound questioning based on the predictable reaction of a profoundly imaginative writer to accepted authorities. The offered paper looks at the major principles of faith based on the Russian Orthodox kenotic tradition the catechism highlights and the ways in which Dostoevsky's texts with particular reference to "The Village of Stephanchikovo," both incorporate and subvert them.