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Incarnation of Man: Development as Incarnation

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Abstract

Psychoanalytic writers, spanning from Freud to Winnicott, consistently remark on a developmental trajectory that involves a movement from perceived omnipotence to vulnerability, narcissism to relationality, or self to other. Derailments in this basic developmental trajectory can be understood to create a variety of pathologies. Through a different perspective, the empirical infant research supports these notions, adding that we are able to see others more clearly as we develop into an understanding and embodiment of ourselves as limited beings. These insights suggest that development is organized by an incarnational, or kenotic, task. That human development holds an incarnational character is made most clear in Christ's life. Throughout Christ's ministry, the devil sought to obstruct his movement towards the cross and frustrate the fulfillment of his incarnational task. The temptations Christ faced during his ministry capture, in paradigmatic form, the temptations that, if not endured, can disrupt individual human development. In imitation of Christ's struggles to be human, development necessitates a self-emptying of the seductive delusions of divinity that betray our humanity. I aim to clarify and expand upon these points by delving into the psychoanalytic developmental and infant research literature, drawing connections to compelling interpretations of the Temptation on the Mount which offer an incisive view of the incarnational task of development.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Developmental Psychology, Narcissism, Theology, Incarnation, Kenosis

I want to begin by drawing on a presentation by a colleague, who referenced the play *Amadeus* when presenting his work with a narcissistic patient who was coming to terms with the gulf between the brilliance of her mind and the paucity of her life. The portion of the play that he referenced offered such an incisive and succinct formulation of what I intend to convey, that I will quote it here. In the play, the main protagonist, Antoni Salieri, is complaining to God about a perceived injustice over how God has chosen to distribute His gifts. Upset that such brilliant musical work could be produced from the young and vulgar Mozart, Salieri stands before the crucifix and complains:

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"From now on, we are enemies - You and I. Because You chose for Your instrument a boastful, lustful, smutty, infantile boy and give me for reward only the ability to recognize the incarnation. Because You are unjust, unfair, unkind, I will block You, I swear it. I will hinder and harm Your creature as far as I am able. I will ruin *Your* incarnation." [1]

In offering feedback to my colleague, I indicated that one way of understanding his patient's struggles was to convert the ending quote into "I will ruin *my own* incarnation." It was an attempt to recognize how her narcissism interfered with her ability to dwell within and accept the limitations of her finitude, dependency and mortality, a struggle that animated her course of treatment. Her refusal to experience herself as a human being involved frequent errant attempts at transcending herself, efforts that inevitably ended in failure and invited feelings that contributed to a significant depression that impaired her capacity to sustain her work, her relational roles, and, at times, even her ability to care for herself. This could be observed specifically in her immense struggles with shame in the face of any cognitive failing, in her attempts to resist bodily cues such as hunger, and in the way she foreclosed any opportunity for awareness or acknowledgment of her need and desire for others, all of which captured her striving to assert herself over and against the gravitational pull of her nature. Her resistance can be understood as a particular expression of a more general opposition to what I would like to describe as the incarnational task of development. This is a task that involves a general movement, over the course of one's psychological development, from power to weakness, strength to vulnerability, a movement that involves descending from the illusion that we are God into the reality of our humanity. The term "incarnational" functions here in a multivalent sense, intending to invoke several associated meanings. First, despite its ultimate theological connotations, it is used literally or concretely in the sense of embodiment. Coming into one's literal flesh is one purported task of development, as I intend to illustrate by citing the empirical infant developmental research. In light of those ideas I otherwise use it analogically, to call forward the theology associated with the Incarnation of the Word of God, hoping to evoke parallels between what is meant by the doctrine of the incarnation and human psychological development. Through a modern psychological and developmental key, I will reflect on what it means for Christ to become and be human with an intention to clarify what it means for us to become and be human.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria intimately links his theology of the incarnation with the concept of kenosis. Throughout his work, he identifies the incarnation of the Son of God as occurring through his self-emptying, as best described in Philippians 2: 6-11. When asked to explain what is meant by the often

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1 *Amadeus*, directed by Miloš Forman (Los Angeles: Orion Pictures, 1984).

referenced text on the incarnation, "and the Word became flesh" (John 1:14), reconciling its meaning with what it means to be God, he responds by calling upon the hymn from Philippians 2:6-11 saying "And indeed, the Only Begotten Word, even though he was God and born from God by nature, the "radiance of the glory, and the exact image of the being" of the one who begot him, he it was who became man. He did not change himself into flesh...but he submitted himself to being emptied...and did not disdain the poverty of human nature."[2] He later adds "...when one speaks of the incarnation one also implies all those other things that are economically brought to bear on the one who willingly suffered this "emptying out," as for example hunger and tiredness. How could he who has all power ever have been tired, or how could one ever say that he who is the food and life of all beings was ever hungry, if he had not appropriated to himself a body which by its very nature was subject to hunger and tiredness?"[3] The link between the two concepts in the work is repeated throughout: "For Cyril the notion of the Eternal One's self-emptying (Kenosis) as outlined in Phil 2:6f. rises to the status of a master theme throughout his thought—to such an extent that the earthly economy of the Word made flesh is often simply referred to as the Kenosis."[4] Saint Cyril is not the only one to account for this connection. Origen accounts for kenosis and the passage in Philippians as fundamental in understanding the rest of scripture and some have written that the passage functions for Saint Paul "as a sort of "master story" that structures Paul's vision of his own mission and in turn the mission of every Christian."[5,6]

In one critical sense, kenosis is described as a transition from one form to another, without leaving behind what is proper to the previous form, as several fathers go to great lengths to describe. As in the passage from Saint Cyril, it can specifically be described as a transition from being "he who has all power" to this human experience of being "tired" or "hungry." More broadly, it could be described as a movement from being divine (i.e. omnipotent, omniscient, immeasurable, uncreated) to becoming human (i.e. created, measurable, impoverished, and limited). When describing development as incarnational, this descent is what I have in mind. Emptying ourselves and coming into our own flesh is, as noted earlier, our mission. The

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2 Saint Cyril Of Alexandria, On The Unity of Christ (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 54-55.

3 Saint Cyril Of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ,* 56.

4 John McGuckin. *Saint Cyril of Alexandra and the Christological Controversy: The Church and the Divinity of Christ* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 189.

5 Michael C. Magree, *The Interpretation of Kenosis from Origen to Cyril of Alexandria: Dimensions of Self-Emptying in the Reception of Philippians 2:7* (Oxford Early Christian Studies, 2024), 109.

6 Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Eerdmans, 209), 10.

distinction being that for us, unlike God's descent into the form of man, that process involves a movement from the illusion of being all-powerful, all knowing, above all need and limitation into the reality of our need, vulnerabilities, weaknesses, and limitations.[7] We develop by emptying ourselves of the illusion of being God to embrace the reality of our humanity. I hope to argue that this happens necessarily in both a basic physical sense and in a psychological sense. Development calls for an emptying out of the fantasies that betray our humanity. And through this emptying of ourselves, through the acceptance of our limitations and our entering into our own flesh, we allow for Christ to take form in us as his body, for "the incarnation, in brief, is not 'an episode in a biography', an event now in the past, but the ongoing embodiment of God in those who follow Christ."[8] We empty ourselves to be filled with him. In this way the incarnation is not something to be left behind in history, but in fact as an ever relevant, present, and permeating reality, the means by which we are to "put on" (Romans 13:14) or embody Christ.

Christ's self-emptying is not only the means by which he incarnates, but also how he loves us. Self-emptying love is what occurs in and through the incarnation. "The emptying out of self is so much the sign of love that without it love cannot be manifested. For in love the person forgets himself and gives himself to another in a total self-surrender; yet it is precisely through this love that he reveals himself in his own fullness...And as man does not exist except to the extent to which he abandons himself, the incarnation of God thus appears as the supreme and unique example of the essential fulfillment."[9] His self-emptying love calls for us to work out the same, for "the kenosis of the Son demands the kenosis of the adopted sons."[10] Through self-emptying, we both recognize and enter into our limitations while simultaneously providing a space for another person to enter and exist. To support and discuss these points, I will draw on the psychoanalytic developmental literature and the empirical infant developmental literature, as already mentioned, while also turning to compelling interpretations of the Temptation on the Mount.

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7 My focus on the matter of kenotic movement within the doctrine of the Incarnation is not meant to diminish or overshadow that in becoming fully human, Christ did not cease to be fully divine. The movement into human finitude is not a movement away from divinity, as the fullness of divinity continued to dwell with the fullness of humanity.

8 [8] John Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 5.

9 [9] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church,* trans. George M. Filiti (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 192.

10 Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (Routledge, 1996), 34.

Freud's developmental thinking could be thought of as a non-theological account of original sin, a modern myth about human origins.[11] According to him, the first developmental step for the ego, or the self, involves entrance into a state of primary narcissism.[12] This state is characterized by "an overestimation of the power of their wishes and mental acts, the 'omnipotence of thoughts,' a belief in the thaumaturgic force of words..."[13] For the infant, no distinction is held between self and other, as the infant does not know where they leave off and the other begins. Freud otherwise describes it as an experience of limitless "oceanic" oneness.[14] One emerges from this as reality impinges upon the infant and they begin to appreciate the boundary between "me" and "not me." As was characteristic of him, Freud used this early developmental hypothesis as a platform to hypothesize about adult psychopathology, as he viewed consequent attempts in development to regain the original state of narcissistic fulfillment to bring about a variety of associated psychopathology.

Mahler's stage of primary symbiosis functioned as a normative step after the phase of primary autism, her equivalent to Freud's stage of primary narcissism. The essential feature of the primary symbiotic phase is a fantastical, somatopsychic omnipotent fusion of the infant with the mother, a "dual-unity," as a means of managing the creeping suggestion of a separation.[15] In normal development, the illusion of unity eventually gives way to a separation-individuation phase capped off by the rapprochement subphase where the conflict between fusion and differentiation is reconciled. Successful completion of this subphase completes the psychological birth of the infant and initiates the infant into personhood, as a person in their own right, at the cost of the emotionally painful loss of prior security and power.

Winnicott's own conceptions of the infant's starting point is not so solipsistic. Without a significant emphasis on a primary union, he nevertheless maintains "that there is no such thing as a baby," maintaining a conception of early unity while also suggesting self-other distinction through the infant-mother dyad.[16] He lays great emphasis on coordination and synchronization of the pair, as the mother's "good enough" adaptation to the infant's needs translates into a necessary infantile illusion of omnipotence. Transitional

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11 Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (Routledge, 2001).

12 Joseph Sandler, Ethel Spector Person, and Peter Fonagy eds., *Freud's "On Narcissism–an Introduction"* (Yale University Press, 1991).

13 Sandler, Person and Fonagy, *Freuds "On Narcissism—an Introduction,"* 5.

14 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (Norton, 2005).

15 Margaret Mahler, *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation: Infantile Psychosis* (International Universities Press, 1968).

16 D.W. Winnicott, "The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship," *The International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 41, no. 4 (1960): 586.

objects, as objects of control and power, replace the mother, ushering the infant out of a state of omnipotence into sociality and reality. Transitional objects help place infants into an intermediate area that helps them manage the loss associated with the transition.[17] Part of this transition from one to two involves forays by the infant to control and subjugate the other. The necessity of the other to "survive" the infant's aggressive attempts to subjugate them allows the infant to move from what he calls object-relating to object-usage, the phase where two people are recognized as separate and different, though related.

These early psychoanalytic writers all suggest, with differentiating stress on the infant's unity with the environment, a necessary movement from the illusion of divinity to humanity, where the infant comes to realize that they are not, to recruit biblical language, "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28) nor are "all things under [their] feet" (Psalm 8:6). While offering a differing sense of emphasis and process, the infant developmental literature elaborates further upon the creative insights of the psychoanalytic writers.

In relation to the emergence from a state of infantile omnipotence, developmental research on possession, ownership, and fairness in infants captures a related trajectory. Possessions, insofar as they are considered part of ourselves, offer a provisional means of expanding and supporting one's sense of self.[18] As such, they offer a bridge for managing early narcissistic desires. A child's relationship with property first becomes explicit around the age of two when they are able to first say the words "mine."[19],[20],[21] Children are claimed to be born with a "property instinct."[22] They progress from an implicit sense of property as inalienable, as in the case of Winnicott's transitional object, to an eventual explicit sense of property as something that can be negotiated in reciprocal exchange.[23] By age five, children begin to be capable of taking a mature and equitable moral stance on possession, betraying their former

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17 D.W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 34, no. 1 (1953): 89-97.

18 Russell W. Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research* 15, no. 2 (1988): 139–68.

19 Dale F. Hay and Hildy S. Ross, "The Social Nature of Early Conflict," *Child Development* 53, no. 1 (1982): 105-113.

20 Hildy S. Ross, "Negotiating Principles of Entitlement in Sibling Property Disputes," *Developmental Psychology* 32, no. 1 (1996): 90-101.

21 Dale F. Hay, "Yours and Mine: Toddlers' Talk about Possessions with Familiar Peers," *British Journal of Developmental Psychology,* 24, no. 1 (2006): 39–52.

22 Jeffrey E. Stake, "The Property 'Instinct'," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B: Biological Sciences* 359, no. 1451 (2004): 1763-1774.

23 Philippe Rochat, "Possession and Morality in Early Development," *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, no. 132 (2011): 23-38.

ego-centric attitudes.[24], [25] As attitudes around possessions become less self-centered, accompanying trends around self-evaluation evolve. Babies move from unrealistically positive self-regard to more mature and less grandiose takes on their self-esteem over time.[26] Despite strong evidence for a moral sense in infants, infants early on are largely self-biased with a preference towards in-groups, only developing a sense of fairness and equity over time.[27]

As to the presence of an early phase, either autistic or symbiotic in nature, where the infant is totally unable to differentiate between the boundaries of self and other, infant developmental research has largely shown this to be false.[28],[29],[30] Intersubjective unitive experiences, as constituted by moments of affective attunement between the infant and its caregivers, are important constitutive parts of development and are useful terms to consider psychopathology, but they only occur first after there is a basic differentiation of the self upon which a later union can occur.[31] The first steps towards a basic differentiation of the self are, in fact, concretely incarnational. This is demonstrated even prior to two months of age, as young infants are actively engaging in an exploration that involves discovering themselves as embodied entities, contained within a body that specifies them as separate from their environment. Empirical evidence demonstrates that infants discriminate between perceptual events that are either self- or not self-produced. Through double touch stimulation and the experience of proprioception (i.e. perceptual mechanisms that are one's own) infants have mechanisms to implicitly mark themselves, through attention and behavior, separate from their environment.[32] They demonstrate an early sense of their own body,

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24 Peter R. Blake and Paul L. Harris, "Children's Understanding of Ownership Transfers," *Cognitive Development* 24, no. 2 (2009): 133-145.

25 Sunae Kim and Charles W. Kalish, "Children's Ascriptions of Property Rights with Changes of Ownership," Cognitive Development 24, no. 3 (2009): 322–36.

26 Susan Harter, *The Construction of the Self: A Developmental Perspective* (Guilford Press, 1999).

27 Karen Wynn, Paul Bloom, Ashley C. Jordan, Julia Marshall, and Mark Sheskin, "Not Noble Savages After All: Limits to Early Altruism, " *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 27, no. 1 (February 2018): 3-8.

28 Shaun Gallagher and Andrew N. Meltzoff. "The Earliest Sense of Self and Others: Merleau-Ponty and Recent Developmental Studies," *Philosophical Psychology* 9, no. 2 (1996): 213-236.

29 György Gergely and Julie Watson, "Early Socio-emotional Development: Contingency Perception and the Social-Biofeedback Model," in *Early Social Cognition: Understanding Others in the First Months of Life*, ed. Philip Rochat, (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999), 101-136.

30 Andrew N. Meltzoff, "'Like Me': A Foundation for Social Cognition," *Developmental Science* 10 (1): 126–34.

31 Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (Basic Books, 1985).

32 Philippe Rochat, *Body Schema and Body Image: New Directions*, (Routledge, 2002).

hence an early perceptually based implicit sense of themselves as "bounded, organized, differentiated, situated, substantial and agentive entity among other entities in the world."[33] This could be described as a "sense of the core self" or a "minimal self," the rough developmental counterparts of the "body ego" referenced in psychoanalytic literature.[34,35]

From the beginning infants are embodying themselves through a simultaneous recognition of their environment. That is, their incarnation is entwined and accompanied by an act of recognition. As the infant comes into their own body, they inhabit it within an environmental context that they are simultaneously perceiving. And as they actively explore and learn about their environment, they learn about and implicitly understand themselves.[36] I discover "me" by also discovering what is "not me," embodying myself in context. Over the course of development, what goes hand in hand with a sophisticated and elaborate sense of self is an equally sophisticated and elaborate sense of the other, as a higher resolution of both evolves on the stage of subjective experience. In normal development, this is the means by which there is a gradual abrogation of a prior state of grandiosity and self-centeredness into an understanding and embodiment of ourselves as limited beings intersubjectively contingent upon others. Through a gradual and simultaneous recognition and letting go of one's environment, one can see the progression from an implicit narcissistic, God-like sense of self, into a sense of self that is more limited, contained, and compatibly human.

When thinking about the self's relation to the other, the psychoanalytic writers we have engaged with thus far understand any regressive sliding back to a state of omnipotence and merger as contributing to psychopathology. Winnicott likewise notes that omnipotence always remains a point of conflict throughout life as individuals struggle to take in the reality of their humanity: "reality acceptance is never completed."[37] This developing capacity for reality acceptance fundamentally requires that a person move towards self-emptying, self-denying love and leave behind desires for power and control that may falsely promise a return to a sense of "oceanic oneness." One's desire for control, from this developmental perspective, goes hand in hand with a seemingly impaired and regressed state of recognition where others are considered objects of use as opposed to subjects in their own right. This is

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33 Rochat, *Body Schema,* 184-185.

34 Stern, *Interpersonal World.*

35 Philippe Rochat, "Self-Conceptualizing in Development." In *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology, Volume 2: Self,* ed. Philip David Zelazo (Oxford University Press), 373-395.

36 Ulric Neisser ed. *The Perceived Self: Ecological and Interpersonal Sources of Self-Knowledge,* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

37 Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 96.

the 'transition' Winnicott claims transitional objects assist with. A transition from a recognition of others as objects into subjects that runs parallel with a transition from a desire for power self-emptied in and for love. The link between this self-emptying love and recognition of the other is remarked on by Iris Murdoch when she says "Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real...Love is the discovery of reality."[38] Leaving behind this power for love is difficult for "love is reunion through spontaneous mutuality, power seeks to create union through unilateral imposition."[39] To the extent that the incarnation paradoxically calls for a denial of the self and a corresponding recognition of the other and their freedom in love, it presents a universal challenge for all individuals to grapple with during the course of their development.

The incarnational struggle and its link to granting another person's free existence can be recognized in the gospel accounts of the temptation of Christ. Some Christian writers have remarked that the most compelling temptation Christ faced was the temptation to draw him away from the cross.[40],[41] Both Nikolai Berdyaev and George MacDonald see in the three temptations an attempt by the devil to lure Christ into considering alternatives to the incarnation and his death on the cross (the ultimate signifier of his coming in the flesh). Traditionally, the scene in the Bible where Christ faces temptation is titled "The Temptation on the Mount." However, it could be renamed "The Temptation against the Incarnation" or "The Temptation against the Cross." These hold together one of the compelling unifying themes of the three temptations laid out clearly in the story of the Grand Inquisitor in "The Brothers Karamazov." The Grand Inquisitor claims that "There are three powers, only three powers on earth, capable of conquering and holding captive forever the conscience of these feeble rebels, for their own happiness—these powers are miracle, mystery and authority."[42] The Inquisitor suggests that Christ should take the more "noble" route, as he himself has chosen, and rule his creation from on high, as the all-powerful God he is. The freedom God has granted his creation has proven too much of a burden, and the Inquisitor recommends that he forcibly compel them into a state of happiness rather than honoring their freedom by taking on flesh and dying on the Cross. This would be a more compassionate approach, accommodating the limitations of his creation, as they in fact do not want

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38 Iris Murdoch, *The Sublime and the Good,* (Chatto & Windus, 1995), 52.

39 Hans J. Morgenthau, "Love and Power," Commentary Magazine, September 3, 2015, https://www.commentary.org/articles/hans-morgenthau/love-and-power/.

40 Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoevsky: An Introduction,* trans. Donald Attwater (Meridian Books, 1958).

41 George MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons* (Strahan & Co., 1885).

42 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamozov,* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Vintage Classics, 1990), 252.

to be free but yearn for contentment through an authority that will control their lives. Instead of dying on the cross, give them what they are hungry for. Captivate, delude, or distract them by your power, using miracle and mystery. Macdonald elaborates further, "Could it be other than a temptation to think that he might, if he would, lay a righteous grasp upon the reins of government, leap into the chariot of power, and the ride forth conquering and to conquer?...What glowing visions of holy vengeance, what rosy dreams of human blessedness...would crowd such a brains as his!...Could he not mold the people at his will? Could he not, transfigured in his snowy garments, call aloud in the streets of Jerusalem, "Behold your King?"[43]

In effect, when the devil argues that Christ turn stone into bread, he is making an argument that God undo his work of creation. He is tempting Christ to use his power and authority to save us by converting our useless and problematic freedom into bondage. It is a suggestion that he remove from us the gift of his image that we have so obstinately rejected. How tempting must have that been for Christ, to retain the power of the Godhead in the flesh and not to act out in all of his authority. Peter repeated the temptation later in his ministry, just as the devil suggested in the desert, forbidding Christ from suffering to which Christ promptly responded, "get behind me Satan." (Matthew 16:16). How significant was the temptation he faced at his arrest, following Peter wielding his sword to cut the temple servant's ear, as his Father could have provided Him with more than twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). And again, after being slapped and spit upon, mocked and taunted on the Cross, challenged to perform a miracle to convert their disbelief (Matthew 27:42). In these moments and more, the devil was working to have Christ undo his work of creation: the hands that slapped him and the mouths that taunted him. Could he have turned his children into obedient slaves and saved them by any other way then by becoming man? To possess power and not to wield it is to resist what may be the greatest human temptation. Despite his ultimate power to do otherwise, he chose to approach us defenseless, with arms open, resisting the temptation to fight us with the same weapons we use against Him. He chose restraint and humility, acting with such generativity and love. It is through his tremendous humility that we are recognized as friends alongside him. Emptying himself of his power, he recognizes us as other and real.

"Every man is offered the alternatives of the Grand Inquisitor or of Jesus Christ and he must accept one or the other, for there is no third choice."[44] The choices are either a self-emptying love that grants the other's liberty and existence, a self-emptying love that calls for assuming one's vulnerability, versus a stance of power and control that compels others as though they

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[43] MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 52.

[44] Berdyaev, *Dostoevsky,* 188.

were mere extensions of oneself. And so that same struggle, at work in the temptations of Christ, are recapitulated in every individual's psychological development, for our history is called to be his, as his history is ours.[45] Christ calls us to imitate him through our development. Our becoming human, and the tension and loss it entails around yearnings for unity and authority, involves struggling against "the spirit of the antichrist, the acceptance of the temptation rejected by Christ in the desert."[46] Insofar as one is tempted to confuse and convert the utter dependence of their humanity into an illusion of power, one is tasked to follow the path laid out by our Savior and strive against this temptation. We are called, by his love, to reject this power and to vulnerably love others, recognizing their freedom as subjects as opposed to objects of control. "The child in that distant Bethlehem cave...enters our hearts not by...proving His power and authority, but by love alone. He is given to us as a child, and only as children can we in turn love Him and give ourselves to Him. The world is ruled by authority and power...The child God liberates us from that. All He desires from us is our love, freely given and joyful; all He desires is that we give Him our heart. And we give it to a defenseless, endlessly trusting child."[47] In a strange way, the self-emptying, incarnational task of development does require a recovery of our original state, a recovery of our childhood and its vulnerability.

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45 Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 56.

46 Nikolai Berdyaev trans. Roberto J. De La Noval "The Spirit of the Grand Inquisitor: On the Ukaz of Metropolitan Sergius Condemning the Theological Views of Father Sergius Bulgakov," in *The Wheel* 34-35 (2023), 18.

47 Alexander Schmemann, *The Church Year. The Celebration of Faith. Sermons, Volume 2.* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 254.