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Research article

Biblical topics and key motifs in N.V. Gogol's “Selected passages from correspondence with friends”: intertextual analysis

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Abstract. The interest in the Bible as an intertext and fragmentary studies on the reception of biblical topoi determine the relevance of this study. The aim of the study is to consider biblical topoi as semantic dominants of N.V. Gogol's “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends”. The material of the study is the autobiographical text of N.V. Gogol “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends”, the Bible, and the works of Ignatius Brianchaninov. The methods of the study are motivated by its objectives: the technique of continuous sampling, the descriptive and analytical method, textual analysis, cognitive analysis, philological analysis of the literary text. The authors prove that biblical topoi in the autobiographical narrative of N.V. Gogol acts as a semantic dominant of the text, ascending to universal human values and becoming precedent. From the standpoint of semiotics and linguistic-cultural analysis combining literary, linguistic, comparative-typological and cultural-historical research methods, the author's strategies of metaphorical comprehension of biblical topoi are considered: “God”, “Will of God”, “Providence”, “Humility”, “Suffering”, “Gratitude”, “Love”; connotative meanings of dominant deep images of biblical phraseological units (submission to God's will, sorrow for one's sins, God's will on all human affairs) in the context of structuring the spiritual, religious and ethical experience of moral instructions of the writer. The prospects of the study are in identifying the specifics of the religious universals in the writer's autobiographical discourse.

Keywords: Bible, biblical phraseological units, concept, precedent text, conceptual metaphor, Russian language, Russian literature

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Introduction

The Bible heritage in the modern paradigm of humanitarian and linguistic knowledge is studied from various positions: as a source of the language of faith and a sacred component of the spiritual code of culture (Maslova, 2016; 2023; Maslova, Danich, 2021); as the basis of the religion discourse (Postovalova, 2021); as a factor in the development of literary language (Ivanov, Maslova, Mokienko, 2022; Mokienko, 2023); as a source of themes, motifs and images (Krasilnikova, 2014; Kuznetsova, 2017; Nikitina, 2023); as a prototype of the phraseological units of the language (Lomakina, 2011; Baláková, Kováčová, Tyrol, 2024); as a source of paremiological and aphoristic units of language (Baláková et al., 2013; Lomakina, 2021); as a factor of national-cultural specificity of language (Lu, Shaklein, Miko-va, 2019; Walter, Ivanov, Mokienko, 2020); as a basis for comparison of genetically close languages (Ivanov, Mokienko, 2019; East Slavic Biblical Units..., 2024); as a source of precedent texts (Lomakina, 2012; Mokienko, 2024). A brief overview of the study of the Bible heritage in Russian is presented by E. Maksimowicz (Maksimowicz, 2021). Based on N.A. Kuzmina's theory of nuclear texts of Russian culture, which includes the Bible, G.V. Denisova proposes a classification of precedent texts; she attributes the Bible to the stable core of "strong texts" due to its active existence in society (Denisova, 2003: 129–153).

The intertextual character of the Bible emphasizes its status as a pre-text, a code of culture, along with the Torah and the Koran. In the modern sociocultural context, in media space and spoken speech, biblical intertexts are polyfunctional: they perform "the function of persuasion as culturally marked units" and are "a serious tool for manipulation" (Mokienko, Nikitina, 2023: 196). V.M. Mokienko and T.G. Nikitina, analyzing the works devoted to the functional potential of biblical units in the modern Russian language, note the need for their lexicographic fixing, the creation of a dictionary "Biblical proverbs and sayings in their past and present" (Mokienko, Nikitina, 2023: 195).

Biblical topoi have been traditionally considered as a special artistic intertextual technique with a great impact on the figurative world of the work; the role of biblical formulas in the works of Russian writers has been revealed, the concepts for understanding biblical and evangelical texts as metatexts of Russian culture have been put forward and substantiated (Esaulov, 2009: 164–173; Zakharov, 1997: 237–255).

Productive for studying biblical topoi is the model of textual phraseological dominants, recurrent, "thesaurus-forming" (Y.N. Karaulov, O.V. Lomakina) language units that make up the author's picture of the world, that are called phraseological / proverbial dominants (Karaulov, 2010: 60; Lomakina, 2018: 107).

Textual phraseological dominants are very clearly manifested at the level of such super-word units, which have recurrence, i.e. “the actual occurrence of a given unit more than once, its numerous realizations in speech, in the strict sense of the word repetition (and, accordingly, occurrence) in some stereotypical contexts” (Ivanov, 2019: 159–160). They always occupy a substantively and formally dominant position in the text due to the constitutive features of “generalization of meaning” and “discursive autonomy” (Ivanov, 2020: 672–689).

Despite the rich tradition of Russian lexicography in fixing units of biblical origin in different types of dictionaries¹, intertexts of biblical origin not related to phraseology and paremiology are commented on more often in the context of literary tradition. There is a need in complex analysis of artistic texts, the accurate portraying of biblical units, determination of their functional potential in the artistic work and the writer’s system and their inclusion in dictionaries of integrative type with subsequent philological commentary.

N.V. Gogol’s “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” has been analyzed to a lesser extent than other works of the writer in terms of biblical topics. Considering “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” as an intertext and the search for pre-texts seems difficult since it is a priori asserted that its source is Isaac Sirin’s “The Ladder”, a favorite book in Nikolai Gogol’s reading circle. At the same time, one cannot ignore the context of the author’s epoch. Here we can find a stable tradition of church prose refracting the genre of “spiritual literatures-teachings”, that regularly reproduce the spiritual meanings of traditional Old Russian books. In addition, the most important context of N.V. Gogol’s work is the spiritual heritage of St. Ignatius (Bryanchaninov). It was he who made an impartial assessment of the writer’s autobiographical work. Gogol in his turn listened to the opinion of the church author because it was the voice of the era transferring the axiological norms in the society of the first half of the XIX century.

The aim of the study is to examine the biblical topoi and key motifs of the biblical text in N.V. Gogol’s work “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends”.

The objectives of the study are identification and description of biblical phraseological units in the context of N.V. Gogol’s spiritual biography; comparative analysis of the semantic content of Gogol’s images and basic concepts of St. Ignatius’ (Bryanchaninov) works, accumulated in the semantics of biblical phraseological units.

Materials and Methods

This study is based on the methodology of considering the artistic text in a socio-historical-cultural context. The artistic text is investigated in the context of the artistic picture of the world as “the projection of the general linguistic picture

¹ More than 50 special dictionaries give the lexicographic description of biblical phraseological units in the Russian language, see Kunyagina, O. V. (2024). *Study of biblical phraseological units: experience of bibliographic systematization* (pp. 3–10). Chelyabinsk: ABRIS.

of the world into artistic creation” and “the reflection of the individual worldview of the writer, poet, or artist” (Mokienko, 2019: 15–16). The hermeneutic factor is considered because “an adequate understanding of a given text requires referring to the source text and a kind of ‘intellectual anamnesis’” (Fateeva, 2007: 17).

From these theoretical positions, the study analyzes biblical topoi in the autobiographical text of N.V. Gogol “Selected Places from Correspondence with Friends”². The author’s individual meanings reflecting axiological norms of Christian culture were revealed.

The methods of the research are motivated by its objectives. By means of continuous sampling we extracted examples from the artistic text; textual analysis, cognitive analysis, philological analysis of the text were used for text interpretation; the conclusions are made with the descriptive-analytical method.

The authors consider the text “Selected Places from Correspondence with Friends” as an artistic text because of the modality consisting in the creation of “inner aspiration to holiness”, personalistic pathos of spiritual-aesthetic and romantic development of the life space of the individual through the form of messages to the reader (letters).

Results

The study proved that following the traditions of the church fathers, resembling spiritual writers, N.V. Gogol in his autobiographical “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” reproduces complete, semantically and stylistically marked biblical formulas, typologically close to the works of church authors. The boundaries of N.V. Gogol’s interpretation of biblical topoi (“God”, “God’s Will”, “Providence”, “Humility”, “Suffering”, ‘Gratitude’, “Love”) in comparison with the work of the spiritual writer Ignatius Bryanchaninov lie within the traditional medieval bookishness and coincide with the genre forms of spiritual testament, epistle, and teaching eloquence. They express the salvific meaning of N.V. Gogol’s spiritual self-reflection.

In N.V. Gogol’s artistic consciousness, the writer’s mission is to show his compatriots the way to the spiritual transformation of personality through reminding them of God’s commandments: do good, lead a highly spiritual life, follow the examples of spiritual asceticism. This testifies to the organic connection of Gogol’s text with the living “memory text” of Old Russian literature. This semantic context determines the functional potential of biblical topoi in “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends”. In N.V. Gogol’s autobiographical narrative, the phraseological actualizer *делать для памяти потомков* ‘to do for the memory of descendants’ creates a conceptually important context formed by the mentioned biblical topoi with new semantic: for the writer, creativity is a work of faith to save himself and others.

² Gogol, N. V. (1952). *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*. In N. V. Gogol. *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, pp. 213–418). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

N.V. Gogol's work is a literary interpenetration of two genre traditions and their worldviews, the medieval penitential confession and the New Age lyrical author's self-expression with the forms of publicistic epistles. We consider the syncretism of author's points of view an indicator of N.V. Gogol's deep perception of the holy-theological tradition and Orthodox culture as a whole with human repentance as a cross-cutting topic.

The analyzed work of N.V. Gogol compared with such genres of Old Russian literature as the spiritual letter and confession is based on the idea of the writer's mission, which shows "compatriots the way to the spiritual transformation of their personality reminding them the commandments of God". Thus, the work is a spiritual testament.

Specific meanings of biblical *topoi* coincide in several aspects. One of the motifs *Действовал твердо во имя Бога* "Acted firmly in the name of God" is realized in the autobiographical discourse of N.V. Gogol through the meanings of the concept "The Providence of God" and coincides with St. Ignatius's (Bryanchaninov) representations of spiritual and mental fortitude in the face of trials.

The *topos* «*Любовь от Бога*» "*Love from God*" associates love with creativity, the desire for self-expression of the soul and is inconsistent with the semantic content in St. Ignatius's semantic construct, the motif of spiritual purity in love.

The valuable constants *God, Church, and Word* are the basis of the *topos* «*Созидание Храма своей души*» "Building the Temple of one's soul" and make the analyzed work a single cycle. The first notion unites the two others: *the church* is the "House of God"³, and *the word*⁴ proclaims the God's name. The *topos* «*Любовь как божественный свет*» "Love as Divine Light" also has traditional biblical meanings and a common semantics with the concept "*Love*" "in the Holy Scriptures and patristic literature ("God as Love, Light, and Word")".

It is also important that the macro-concept «*Небесное Царство / Царство Божие*» "Heavenly Kingdom / Kingdom of God" determines the valuable meanings in the cultural space and is semantically related to the concepts "Peace", "Joy", "Love", "Tranquillity", and "Cheerfulness".

Discussion

According to N.V. Gogol, "Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends" is a testament to future generation. In 1847, the writer publishes his collection of letters-articles of religious and moral content. I. A. Aizikova (2005) correlates the research interest to "Selected Passages..." with their connection to the works of the holy fathers and teachers of the Church.

³ Church in one of its meanings is 'a building wherer Christian worship takes place', see: Evgenieva, A. P. (Ed.) (1984). *Dictionary of the Russian language in 4 volumes* (vol. 4, p. 644). Moscow: Russky Yazyk Publ.

⁴ Word in one of its meanings is 'a statement, a verbal expression of thought, feeling, etc.', see: Evgenieva, A. P. (Ed.) (1984). *Dictionary of the Russian language in 4 volumes* (vol. 4, pp. 139–140). Moscow: Russky Yazyk Publ.

In his letters to P. A. Pletnev, N.V. Gogol emphasizes: “This is so far my only useful book... I acted firmly in the name of God when I was compiling my book, in glory of His holy name I took up my pen”⁵. The author’s speech creates the evaluative sense through the adjectives *единственная* ‘the only one’ and *дельная* ‘useful’ and specifiers — phraseological units *до сих пор* ‘so far’, *во имя* ‘in the name of’, *во славу* ‘in glory of’, *взял перо* ‘took the pen’⁶. Here N. V. Gogol likens himself to the spiritual authors of ancient Russia and seeks to show his contemporaries the way to spiritual purification through the fulfillment of God’s commandments indicated in bookish phraseological units in the given context.

The intertextual unit *Действовал твердо во имя Бога* “Acted firmly in the name of God” performs here the function of textual dominance and represents a general formula with semantic completeness, reproducibility, semantic, and stylistic marking (Berdnikova, Uarova, 2015: 109–119). The meaning of this topos is revealed in the key concept “the Providence of God”, which in the spiritual writings of St. Ignatius (Bryanchaninov) has the meaning of spiritual and mental fortitude in the face of trials:

“The vision of God’s Providence inspires unbounded submission to God. Will the servant of God be surrounded everywhere by various and multifarious sorrows? Thus, he comforts his wounded heart: “Precious to me is this will, more precious than life. I would rather die to a creature than reject the will of the Creator. This will is true life. Whoever dies to fulfill the will of God, enters a greater development of life. For all things, glory to God””⁷.

This paragraph actualizes the words and phraseological units *покорность* ‘submission’, *скорбь* ‘sorrow’, *воля Божия* ‘God’s will’.

Let us consider the representations of this concept in the works of St. Ignatius. In the Holy Scriptures, God’s PROVIDENCE is a guiding and blessing force which saves people from troubles. We know that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice, the blessing God’s PROVIDENCE was over him. The following passage contains the author’s meta-linguistic commentary, which explains the graphic form of the concept:

“A person, about to sail and cross the fierce waves, calls to his aid a tree weaker than the ship that carries him because the desire for gain has invented it and the artist has skillfully arranged it. But Your промысл ‘Providence’ (провоия / про-нойа / is always spelled without /e/ in Slavonic and Russian texts in contrast to промысел “craft”), Father, pilots the ship, for Thou hast given both a way in the sea and a safe path in the waves; Thou show that Thou can save from all things even if someone travels by sea without art. Thou wilt that the works of Thy wisdom

⁵ Gogol, N. V. (1952). *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 13, p. 110). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

⁶ Fedorov, A. I. (Comp.). (1997). *Phraseological dictionary of the Russian literary language in 2 volumes* (vol. 1, pp. 78, 281; vol. 2, pp. 128, 245). Moscow: Citadel.

⁷ Tereshchenko, T. N. (Comp.). (2008). *Symphony based on the works of St. Ignatius (Bryanchaninov)*. (p. 335). Moscow: Dar.

should not be in vain; therefore men entrust their lives to the smallest tree, and are saved by passing through the waves in a rook”⁸.

N.V. Gogol reproduces this meaning in his “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends”. It is clear in his Letter about the benefits of diseases addressed to Count Alexander P. Tolstoy (1801–1873):

*“If there were no severe painful sufferings, where would I go now? What a great man I would imagine myself to be! Hearing all this, I am humbled every minute and find no words to thank the Heavenly Provider for my illness. I recommend you to humbly accept every illness believing beforehand that it is necessary. Pray only that its marvelous meaning and the depth of its high meaning may be revealed to you”*⁹.

In this context, Gogol uses the periphrasis of the *Heavenly Provider* derived from the noun *Providence*. The topos “Gratitude to the Heavenly Provider for illness and sorrows” is actualized here with the words *польза* ‘benefit’ and *душа* ‘soul’. However, there is one more archetypal semantic paradigm in N.V. Gogol’s autobiographical discourse, the Gospel topos “*The Last Judgment*”. The Church doctrine says that everyone will answer for their actions during the Last Judgment; those who have multiplied their talents will be praised, and the “wicked and lazy servant” will be punished and excluded from the kingdom of the Messiah¹⁰.

The topos “Love from God” is also an important actualizer of meanings in the conceptual space of the work:

*“Compatriots, I loved you; I loved you with that love which is not expressed, which was given to me by God, for which I thank Him as for the best favor because this love was a joy and comfort to me in the midst of my worst sufferings. In the name of this love, I ask you to listen to my “Farewell Tale” with your heart. I swear I did not compose it and did not invent it; it was sung by itself from the soul, which God Himself brought up through trials and grief; the sounds were taken from the innermost forces of our common Russian breed, by which I am a close relative to you all”*¹¹.

However, the semantic connotation of the topos “Love from God” in N.V. Gogol does not coincide with the complex and multilayered system of existential coordinates of St. Ignatius (Bryanchaninov). The writer associates the image of Love with creativity, the desire for self-expression of the soul. St. Ignatius puts a completely different meaning into this semantic construct and orients the reader to spiritual purity in love, whereas for N.V. Gogol self-expression is important, a mystical ecstasy during confession to his contemporaries:

⁸ Tereshchenko, T. N. (Comp.). (2008). *Symphony based on the works of St. Ignatius (Bryanchaninov)*. (p. 120). Moscow: Dar.

⁹ Gogol, N. V. (1952). *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, p. 120). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

¹⁰ Gogol, N. V. (1952). *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 13, p. 220). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

¹¹ Gogol, N. V. (1952). *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 13, p. 221). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

“God <...> demands love from man, but the true, spiritual, and holy love, not dreamy, carnal, defiled by pride and voluptuousness one. It is impossible to love God in any other way than with a heart purified and sanctified by divine grace. And love for God is a gift of God; it is poured into the souls of true servants of God with the Holy Spirit (see Romans 5, verse 5). On the contrary, the love which is our natural need is in a sinful corruption that encompasses the whole human race, the whole personality of every human being, and all the properties of every human being”¹².

The most important function of biblical topoi in the considered work of N.V. Gogol is the desire to share spiritual advice with friends. In this regard, “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” is certainly a “spiritual testament” of the writer. The work stands alongside with such church writers as Tikhon Zadonsky, John Maslov, Dmitry Rostovsky, and Filaret Drozdov.

Having compared the biblical topoi in the autobiographical work of N.V. Gogol and the work of the spiritual writer Ignatius Bryanchaninov, we can conclude that the boundaries of the key concepts of “God”, “Will” (of God), “Providence”, “Humility”, “Suffering”, ‘Gratitude’, “Love” in Gogol’s work is in line with the traditional medieval literature, its genres of spiritual testament, epistle, and teaching eloquence. This is the soteriological (salvific) meaning of N.V. Gogol’s spiritual experience, unique for Russian literature. He is among the first Russian writers on the path of spiritual self-reflection.

The genre of spiritual letters with a testament to descendants shows how the “memory of the genre” (M.M. Bakhtin) highlights the dominant topos of the religious discourse in N.V. Gogol’s final autobiographical work “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends”, “*Building the Temple of one’s Soul*”.

“The authority of the Holy Scriptures when addressing the tsar to influence his mind and behavior was necessary to get his understanding and support in the middle of the 17th century in Russia”¹³. This shows the role of the biblical text, on the one hand, and the need to transmit the necessary knowledge, pragmatics, on the other. The spiritual charter as a genre was at the heart of the autobiographical narrative of Old Russian literature and largely determined the development of New Age literature.

“Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” develops this genre and uses it for purely aesthetic purposes, including by playing with the key topos “*Building the Temple of one’s soul*”. Metropolitan Cyprian’s spiritual letter develops the topos “*Man is the Temple of God*”.

Thus, the main theme in “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” is the theme of the human path as a striving for purification through humility. It originates in the spiritual letters of the Northern Russian saints Cyril of

¹² Tereshchenko, T. N. (Comp.). (2008). *Symphony based on the works of St. Ignatius (Bryanchaninov)*. (p. 400). Moscow: Dar.

¹³ Sevastyanova, S. K. (2003). *Materials to the “Chronicle of the Life and Literary Activity of Patriarch Nikon”* (p. 339). St. Petersburg: Publishing House of Dmitry Bulanin.

Belozersk and Joseph of Volotsk, the founders of monasteries. The source of the introductory part of these letters were the letters of Metropolitan Cyprian, who translated the “Lestvitsa” by John of Sinai into Church Slavonic. This work is the most important work on human deification, which N.V. Gogol used to read (Prokhorov, 2000).

Starting from the text of the “Instruction” of the secular author Vladimir Monomakh and up to the narratives of Patriarch Filaret of Moscow and St. Ignatius Bryanchaninov, the concept of “*Humility*” is dominant: “spiritual transformation of any person is impossible without humility” (Krasilnikova, 2013a: 63). This is stated in the ecclesiastical discourse of Isaac Sirin’s Lenten prayer: “But give me, Your servant, the spirit of chastity, *humility*, patience and love...” Like the fathers of the Church, Gogol sought to show the way to purification and deification of readers through the ascetic ascent up the “ladder” of self-improvement, high moral life.

Let us pay attention to the composition of N.V. Gogol’s autobiographical work. “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” “begins with the ‘Testament’ and words about death and ends with the chapter ‘Bright Sunday’ about the most important feast of Easter in Russia and about the resurrection of the human soul, about immortality”. “The form chosen by the writer, letters to friends, typologically goes back to the genre of spiritual letters — testaments” (Krasilnikova, 2013a: 64):

*“My heart tells me that my book is necessary and that it can be useful. I think so not because I have a high opinion of myself and hope for my ability to be useful, but because I have never had such a **strong desire to be useful** before”* (emphasis added)¹⁴.

The constants *God*, *Church*, and *Word* in the topos “*Building the Temple of one’s soul*” create the structure of Gogol’s text and ensure its unity. The pretext has the beginning: “*Being in the full presence of memory and common sense, I here state my last will*”¹⁵. The next part is built on the lexical repetition of the noun *чернота* ‘blackness’: “*We should not be despondent at any sudden loss, but look back strictly on ourselves, think no longer of the **blackness** of others or of the **blackness** of the whole world, but of our own **blackness***”¹⁶. Words with the component ‘death’ in the contextual environment of thematically related lexemes (*чернота* ‘blackness’, *погребение* ‘burial’, *прах* ‘ashes’, *уныние* ‘despondency’, *ужас* ‘horror’) make up the integrity of the text. Man must realize that punishment, the Last Judgment, is inevitable:

¹⁴ Gogol, N. V. (1952). Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends. In N. V. Gogol. *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, p. 231). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

¹⁵ Gogol, N. V. (1952). Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends. In N. V. Gogol. *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, p. 240). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

¹⁶ Gogol, N. V. (1952). Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends. In N. V. Gogol. *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, p. 240). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

*“Compatriots, I am scared! My soul freezes with horror at the mere foretaste of the afterlife greatness and those spiritual higher creations of God, before which all the greatness of His creations seen and admired here is dust. My whole dying composition groans, smelling the gigantic growths and fruits, whose seeds we sowed in life without seeing and hearing horrors that would rise from them...”*¹⁷.

The word *любовь* ‘love’ and its derivatives (including tautological expression *любил любовью* “I loved you with love” with the expressive function) contrast contextually with the theme of death and become a means of victory over death. The topos “*Love as Divine Light*” is motivated by the author’s axiological attitudes:

*“Compatriots, I loved you, I loved you with that love which is not expressed, which God gave me, for which I thank Him as the best favor because this love was a joy and comfort to me in the midst of my worst sufferings...”*¹⁸.

The concepts “*Humility*” and “*Love*” in N.V. Gogol’s ‘Testament’ have an axiological meaning and represent the topos “*Building the Temple of one’s soul*” (Krasilnikova, 2013b).

The concept “*Temple*” has specific figurative features within the framework of N.V. Gogol’s religious picture of the world. The temple is a model of the world, a symbol of harmony between the “outer” and the ‘inner’, while the human being is the embodiment of God’s temple; “the devil’s things has been “rushing to appear in the world” over time and distort the image of God in man”¹⁹. The autobiographical narrative presents the Temple as an “ark” (III, 135; the 2nd edition of “Portrait”).

Analyzing the creative principles of Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol in his article “What is the essence of Russian poetry and what is its peculiarity” writes:

“Even in those times when he was floundering in the heat of passion, poetry was for him a shrine, a kind of temple. He did not enter there unkempt and untidy, he did not bring there anything unconsidered, reckless from his own life; the naked disheveled reality did not enter there. Meanwhile, everything there is the history of his own life. But nobody can see it. The reader only feels the fragrance, but no one feels what substances have burned up in the poet’s breast afterward to produce this fragrance, how he cherished them in himself, how he nurtured them”²⁰.

The writer mixed stylistically different words, bookish and colloquial ones, and this created an image of an abandoned, empty temple (“in the heat of passions”),

¹⁷ Gogol, N. V. (1952). Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends. In N. V. Gogol. *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, p. 240). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

¹⁸ Gogol, N. V. (1952). Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends. In N. V. Gogol. *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, p. 220). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

¹⁹ Gogol, N. V. (1952). Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends. In N. V. Gogol. *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, p. 243). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

²⁰ Gogol, N. V. (1952). Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends. In N. V. Gogol. *Complete works in 14 volumes* (vol. 8, pp. 382). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

symbolizing desolation (“disheveled reality”). The reader sees images of people full of vices, but having a hope for salvation if purified from vices.

It is important that “extracts from the works of the Holy Fathers, the Kormchaia Book and service Menaion collected by N.V. Gogol in a separate notebook of extracts from liturgical books, works of the church fathers (about 18 printed sheets) and published for the first time in the last collection of the writer’s works” (Krasilnikova, 2013a: 67) create the archetypes of holiness as a person’s path on the ladder of purification from sins to transfiguration, deification in the cultural memory of the author and readers. We can single out the phraseological unit actualizing all the above topos in Gogol’s book, *делать для памяти потомков* ‘to do for the memory of descendants’. This creates a phraseologically rich context, where a new semantic connotation appears; the author of the New Age considers his writing as a work of faith to save himself and others (Lomakina, 2018: 141).

Metaphorical interpretation of the biblical topos “*Building the Temple of one’s soul*” in the author’s consciousness creates an internal plot of his personal history, and designate biographical contexts; the writer both in his creative work and in his life chooses the path of deification, self-perfection and climbs the ladder of purification from sins. Therefore, “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” is not epistolary notes, but a spiritual testament to posterity in the full sense. The author’s reflections are embedded in the traditional spiritual context of saint literature with its teaching pathos and allow the author to outline the soteriological vector in Russian literature development.

Conclusion

N.V. Gogol’s autobiographical work “Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends” typologically inherits one of the traditional genres. The themes, motifs, and images in the writer’s spiritual testament coincide with the stable topoi of church authors: “*Man is the Temple of God*”, “*The Providence of God*”, “*The Last Judgment*”, “*Christian salvation*”. In metaphorical terms, the writer plays with the key topos “*Building the Temple of his soul*” based on three value constants, God, Church, and Word.

The boundaries of interpretations of the biblical topoi “*God*”, “*Will*” (*of God*), “*Providence*”, “*Humility*”, “*Suffering*”, “*Gratitude*”, and “*Love*” in Gogol’s text compared with the work of the spiritual writer Ignatius Bryanchaninov are the same as in traditional medieval books and coincide with the genre forms of spiritual testament and epistle, teaching eloquence. The selected biblical topoi express the salvific meaning of N.V. Gogol’s spiritual self-reflection.

The conceptual meanings are verbalized by lexical and phraseological units that actualize the designated concepts.

The expansion of the repertoire of Russian artistic texts, not only the common genres of saint and Easter stories and biblical cycles, that can be understood only through multidimensional analysis involving the Bible as a pre-text, is the prospect of this study.

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Научная статья

Библейская топики и ключевые мотивы в сочинении Н.В. Гоголя «Выбранные места из переписки с друзьями»: интертекстуальный анализ

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Аннотация. Интерес к Библии как интертексту и фрагментарность исследований рецепций библейских топосов определяет актуальность данного исследования. Цель исследования — рассмотреть библейские топосы как смысловые доминанты сочинения Н.В. Гоголя «Выбранные места из переписки с друзьями». Материалом исследования выступают автобиографический текст Н.В. Гоголя, Библия и сочинения святителя Игнатия (Брянчанинова). Используются методы описательно-аналитический, текстологического и когнитивного анализов, филологического анализа художественного текста, а также прием сплошной выборки. Доказано, что библейская топики в автобиографическом нарративе Н.В. Гоголя выступает как смысловая доминанта текста, восходящая к универсальным общечеловеческим ценностям и обладающая прецедентностью. С позиции семиотики и системного подхода, объединяющего литературоведческий, лингвистический, сравнительно-типологический и культурно-исторический методы исследования, рассмотрены авторские стратегии метафорического осмысления библейских топосов «Бог», «Воля» (Бога), «Промысл», «Смирение», «Страдание», «Благодарность», «Любовь», выявлены и описаны коннотированные смыслы доминантных глубинных образов библейских фразеологизмов (покорности воле Божьей, скорби о своих грехах, воли Божией на

все дела человека) в контексте структурирования духовного, религиозно-этического опыта нравственных житейских наставлений писателя. Перспективы исследования заключаются в выявлении специфики конструирования религиозных универсалий в автобиографическом дискурсе писателя.

Ключевые слова: Библия, библеизм, концепт, прецедентный текст, концептуальная метафора, русский язык, русская литература

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