

MAN'S LITURGICAL DIMENSION IN THE NOVEL DOCTOR ZHIVAGO BY  
BORIS PASTERNAK

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*Abstract: For the Russian novelist Boris Pasternak, the tragic events of the Russian Revolution, the social and individual reality can acquire meaning and coherence only through the spiritual illumination of the evangelical text. The Christian Gospel is Life itself, the Great Text which each individual "writes" or "miswrites", depending on his/her own destiny. In Pasternak's vision, it is only the children, the saints and the poets who can glimpse in their fellows the Holy Ghost, a reflex of the eternal Mother.*

*Keywords: The Great Code, the Russian Revolution, light as logos, the feminine principle, the divine child*

In the case of the Russian writer Boris Pasternak, reading and writing equate to putting light into words, to attempting to know the Divinity. The word is the being of God himself. It is not by chance that Lara, the heroine of the famous novel Doctor Zhivago (finalized in 1958, but published in the USSR only three decades later, in 1988), needs the "accompaniment of a certain interior music" in order to survive: "This music was the Word of God about life, and Lara would go to church to mourn at the head of this word"<sup>1</sup>.

The writer does not fail to make it clear that his heroes are not religious people<sup>2</sup>. But is that true? The story contains many dramatic moments in which the heroes pray, and prayer brings them comfort and it even protects them from death. "Prayer or nothing" - as Vasili Rozanov states. "If there is «a man who prays», then anything is possible"<sup>3</sup>. The conviction of the philosopher is shared by the common Russian who, a typical aspect for Russia, is "one" with the Church<sup>4</sup>, even when he points his weapon at his fellow on the side of the Red Army. Doctor Zhivago is amazed to find, sewn to the inside of the coats worn by Admiral Kolchak's "Whites", fallen in battles against those of the same blood, but "Reds", amulets with fragments from Psalm 90. In the Civil War, it seems, it is "absolutely impossible to live without prayer, everything is madness and horror"<sup>5</sup>. Pasternak's characters live the Bible. Their thoughts, words, actions are annotations, paraphrases, "illustrations", we can say, of the Great Text. The moments in their lives naturally entangle with episodes from the New Testament. They are so impregnated with the spirit of the Book that their being "detaches"

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<sup>1</sup> Boris Pasternak, *Doctorul Jivago*, translation and preface by Emil Iordache, Editura Moldova, Iași, 1994, vol. I, p.60.

<sup>2</sup> idem

<sup>3</sup> „The religious man is beyond the wise man, beyond the priest, beyond the winner and the orator. «He who prays» will overcome them all. // I am going to church! I am going! I am going!”, in Vasili Rozanov, *Apocalipsa timpului nostru*, translation by Radu Părpăuță, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 1994, pp. 112-113.

<sup>4</sup> „He who loves the Russian people cannot not love the Church. Because the people and the Church are one. And only the Russians have this «one».”, idem, p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> Vasili Rozanov, op. cit., p. 69.

from the holy text like pages. Present in the church<sup>6</sup> - "*the only poetical and profound thing on earth*"<sup>7</sup> - for the liturgy, both Lara and Zhivago, in different moments and circumstances, know that it is *about them*, the mass is a story only *about them*. The content of the gospels becomes even more symbolic as their message is perceived by the two heroes as something very personal. Kierkegaard relates to the "truth" of the messages of the sacred texts in a similar manner, believing that the Bible should be read in the same way as a young man reads the letters from his beloved, rejoicing in the thought that they are written especially for him<sup>8</sup>. V. Rozanov shares the same perception of the sacred as well<sup>9</sup>.

Being a teenager, a paternal orphan without the power to defend herself, Lara is aware that the lawyer Komarovskiy, advisor, "protector" and "friend" of her naive mother, represents the dark side, the mistake in her life: he too early desecrated both her body and her soul and has a diabolical influence over her, from which the girl will hardly be able to free herself. She looks for comfort and interior peace by going to pray while listening to the orthodox mass - "*Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who mourn... Blessed are those who love and desire the truth...*" Lara, shaken, understands that Jesus talks especially *to her*. The Gospel relates not to *Him*, but "*to her. (...) happy will be the fate of those who are trampled. They have what to relate about themselves. That is what He believed. This is the opinion of Christ*"<sup>10</sup>. Recounting about herself, just like the text of the liturgy recounts about her or about Yuri Zhivago, Lara gives testimony about Christ.

Much later, when the years of adolescence lagged behind, reading and commenting some fragments of texts of the liturgy together with a friend, Sima, Lara has an epiphany, like a revelation, about the meaning of her life and of Yuri Zhivago's, "*written on the same line in the book of fate*". From Sima's comments we can deduce that they reiterate, they "re-write" with their story the relationship between Jesus and his spiritual sister, Mary Magdalene.

Boris Pasternak's conviction, expressed through his hero, Yuri Zhivago, and also through other characters in the novel, is that the Christic model accompanies man from the cradle. Using the Socratic dialogue technique, through Nikolai Nicolaevich's enunciations, Yuri's uncle and somewhat mentor, an orphan of both parents, the writer offers us a key to understand the novel and makes us part of his credo. According to Boris Pasternak, man ceased to belong to nature a long time ago, because the path of his life proceeds through history, a history that was created by Christ on the foundation of the *Gospel*. The meaning of falling in time, as Emil Cioran would say, lies in "*establishing the secular works in the succession of unravelling the mystery of death and its future overcoming*"<sup>11</sup>. The spirit of the *Gospel* is wrapped in "*extraordinarily new*" ideas<sup>12</sup>. One of them is represented by the love of neighbour, "*this superior form of living energy*", "*the idea of personal freedom and the idea*

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<sup>6</sup> The protecting atmosphere of warm communion in the Russian church is suggestively described by philosopher Rozanov: „*What is more valuable in Russia than the old churches? Maybe the offices? Or the editorial offices? And the church is old, old, the dean «so so», all rather sinful and weak. But the warmth is only here. Why is it warm here, when everywhere else is cold? Here they buried my mother, my brothers and they will bury me, too. (...) Everything here. Everything that matters... Here is why people reath warmth here.*”, în Vasili Rozanov, *Apocalipsa...*, p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem

<sup>8</sup> Apud Paul Evdokimov, *Iubirea nebună a lui Dumnezeu* translation, preface and notes by Teodor Baconski, Editura Fundației Anastasia, București, 2009, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Vasili Rozanov, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> Idem, p. 61. In the sense of Pasternak's text, V. Rozanov notes: „*Help for the crushed... Help for the tired... The faith of the sick... here are your roots, religion... Eternal, wonderful*”, in Vasili Rozanov, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> According to Paul Evdokimov, "*Christianity – a religion of absolute novelty – is explosive In Caesars's kingdom we are asked to find God's kingdom (...)*", in Paul Evdokimov, op. cit., loc. cit.

*of life as self-sacrifice*"<sup>13</sup>, which must accompany and guide modern man in all the moments of his life. It is precisely the love of neighbour that cuts a path for the modern man through the ballast of matter, through the "*bragging pseudo-eternity of bronze monuments and marble columns*" of the ancient, in order to lift him above the prejudice and vanity accumulated in a decrepit world looking more like a "*flea market of borrowed gods and conquered peoples*"<sup>14</sup>. The dusty art museum, the Colosseum packed with suffering people, the circus tamer with a whip in his hand, the bludgeon, in a word the *old world*, decomposed and violent, is replaced by Life, together with the "*preacher who sacrifices himself for the people*", as the writer asserts. The old Greek dialectic of *master/slave*, oppressor/oppressed suffering becomes, settled down through the text of the Gospel, a relation of love between *father and son*<sup>15</sup>. The conception of the Russian poet about the necessity to renew the world concords with the state of spirit of Nikolai Berdyaev, confessed in the essay *A New Middle Ages*: "*It is given to us to historically live in a time of transition. The old world – if it can thus be said of the modern times, which through a not less old habit are still called <modern times>, when they are perfectly caducous - arrives at its end and decomposes. And thus a new, unknown world is born. It is curious to observe that the end of this old world and this birth of a new one simultaneously appear to some as a <revolution> and to others as a <reaction>*".<sup>16</sup>

According to Boris Pasternak, the Gospel is a fountain of living water, towards which any child of God aspires in order to find again his beginnings, his youth, his simplicity: "*And here he comes, in that hideous heap of marble and gold, smoothly and wrapped in light, both as man and as intentionally provincial, Galilean and, from that moment on people and gods ceased to exist and began the era of the man, of the carpenter, of the ploughman, of the shepherd in the middle of his flock (...), of the man who does not sound proud at all, of the man carried with gratitude through all the cradle songs of all mothers, through all the paintings in all the museums of the world*"<sup>17</sup>.

In Pasternak's vision, the one who is meant to sow the word of the Gospel in man's soul – seen as son, as a child of God -, is the woman, be her mother, wet nurse or beloved. Berdyaev attributes the same role to the eternal feminine as well (not to the emancipated woman, the equal of man), in a predominantly masculine and too rationalist culture, already marked by the First World War and too much alienated from the immediate mysteries of the cosmic life. The Russian philosopher believes that "*the woman is more connected than man to the soul of the world, to the first elementary forces and, through the woman, man communicates with them. (...) The woman plays a surprisingly important role in the religious awakening of our times, she is predestined to be – just like in the Gospel – the flavour bearer*"<sup>18</sup>.

In front of the woman B. Pasternak bowed with respect and emotion, as he confessed in a letter to N. A. Tabidze in April 1953: "*From my early childhood I felt an admiration full of timidity towards the woman. I was left impressed and amazed for the rest of my life by her beauty, by her place in life and by compassion toward her. I am a realist, I know the Earth down to the smallest details, not because I entertained myself with her like a Don Juan on*

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<sup>13</sup>Idem.

<sup>14</sup>Ibidem, p. 55

<sup>15</sup>Paul Evdokimov, *Iubirea nebună a lui Dumnezeu*, ed. cit., p. 18.

<sup>16</sup>Nikolai Berdiaev, *Un nou Ev Mediu*, translation by Maria Vartic, Editura Paideia, București, 2001, p. 51 .

<sup>17</sup> Boris Pasternak, op. cit., II, p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, op. cit., p.87.

this Earth, but because from an early childhood I collected the gravel on her path from under her feet"<sup>19</sup>. The poet's footsteps are only her footsteps on her path:

”И так как с малых детских лет  
Я ранен женской долей,  
И след поэта - только след  
Её путей, не боле”<sup>20</sup>.

The feminine principle is for the poet the initial matrix from which he detached himself and in which he always re-finds himself, his life and work following the archetype of the feminine aesthetic. In the autobiographic sketch *People and Propositions*, he even writes that in his childhood it happened to him to go sometimes through a strange confusion, to believe he is a little girl: ... "the thought would come to me that, I do not know when, sometime long ago, I was a little girl and that existence, more charming and more beautiful, requires to be claimed by tightening the belt to the point of fainting. Or I would imagine that I was not the son of my parents, but a found child, adopted by them"<sup>21</sup>.

In verse or in prose, the writer would simply pray to the Mother, "the Warm Protector of the frozen world"<sup>22</sup>, as only old women and children can pray. He caught a glimpse of the reflex of his own soul in the eternal feminine at the same time with the footprint of the Holy Spirit. "My mother is the Holy Spirit" the religious philosopher D. Merejkovski reminds us citing Origen, pointing out that only in Jesus's mother tongue, Aramaic, the word Rucha, "Spirit", is not of masculine gender, like in Latin, or neutral, like in Greek, but of feminine<sup>23</sup>. Philosopher Paul Evdokimov is convinced in his turn that "the woman is the image of any soul"<sup>24</sup>, "any man carries his Eve in him, he lives waiting for her possible presence"<sup>25</sup>. One "explanation", if it can be said this way, for the presence of the feminine archetype in any soul, can be found in the essay *The Uncreated World. The Birth of the Logos* by Lucian Blaga: "Man carries deep inside his soul a spark of divine nature; this spark is nothing but the logos which the father gives birth to in the soul of every man. The human soul is in fact a Virgin Mary in whom God the Father gives birth to his son, the Logos. And God the Father gives birth to the filial Logos in every one of us"<sup>26</sup>.

The sky with all its splendours will descend upon little Yura, left orphan, through the biblical stories told by his wet nurse: "This high and inaccessible sky – writes B. Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago* – bows more and more toward him, toward his child's head and the lap of his wet nurse when she would begin recounting something from the divine stories and would become close and domestic like the tips of hazel brunches when children bend them to pick up the fruits"<sup>27</sup>.

The world of the sacred is as handy as possible for the impressed soul of the boy, for whom the transcendent is descending<sup>28</sup> and familiar, if we are to paraphrase Lucian Blaga.

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<sup>19</sup> În Aneta Dobre, *Teme și variațiuni*, Editura, Universității București, 1984, p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> Борис Пастернак, *Стихотворения и поэмы*, Moscova, 1989, p. 242

<sup>21</sup> *Oameni și împrejurări (schiță autobiografică)*, in Boris Pasternak, Under high protection, translation and notes by Maria Dinescu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2002, p. 463.

<sup>22</sup> See *Capitolul IV-lea, Decealaltă partea Evangheliei*, in Dimitri Merjkovski, *Evangheliene necunoscute*, translation by Emil Iordache, Editura Contemporanul, București, 2012, pp. 150-151.

<sup>23</sup> Idem.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Taina iubirii*, Editura Christiana, București, 1995, p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, p. 144.

<sup>26</sup> In Lucian Blaga, *Religie și spirit*, Editura Dacia Traiană, 1942, Sibiu, p. 133.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, I, p. 94.

<sup>28</sup> "The liturgy is focused on the descendance of the Holy Spirit, on the epiklesis that ensures the presence of the remembered event, transforming the anamnesis into epiphany", in Paul Evdokimov, op. cit., p. 26.

The Romanian philosopher observes that a tendency is present in the Eastern Orthodoxy to "interpret the relationship between transcendence and man as descending of the transcendent from above downwards. (...) The world is like a receptacle in which the transcendence descends or in which the sky pours its grace"<sup>29</sup>. In the *Chronicle and Song of Ages* the Romanian poet evokes one of his similar experiences: "Walking in the street once, with my eyes looking high, I noticed that the sky was accompanying me. The horizon was moving, staying above me all the time!". Blaga's autobiographical hero expects to hear a bang of beams in the sky up high, the sky to crack and to see the angels<sup>30</sup>.

The sacred in the divine stories told by the wet nurse erases for little Yura the boundaries between the worlds and the universe known to the child becomes a church, a lap of God's liturgy in which he feels protected: "The sky seemed to immerse in his gilded bowl and, after bathing in fire and gold, he would come out of his child's room and would turn into evening mass in their little church, where the wet nurse would take him to pray. There the stars in the sky would turn to candles, God would turn to priest and all things would occupy their well-deserved places"<sup>31</sup>.

Like a mirror reflecting the garden, a recurrent image in Pasternak's writings, the prosaic bowl focalises the sky, the light, the Word as light. It is not difficult for the child to perceive himself in the centre of divine history, as he is a moment in its unfolding, only God is his "father", and the divine message during the liturgy or during the moments of solitary contemplation of nature is directly addressed to him. Not about *Him*, but about *himself* in the becoming of the world, little Yura naturally learns. "Jesus's life, this is what we look for and cannot find in the Gospel, because our purpose is another: not His life, but our life, our salvation. (...) Only by finding our life in the Gospel will we also find Jesus's life", believes Dmitri Merejkovski. In this sense, the Russian philosopher observes that "the child and the saint read the Gospel better than all the theologians and erudite critics"<sup>32</sup>. And the poet, we would add. These three can glimpse His face in themselves, but also in their fellows, a face that remains unknown to people's hardened souls over two thousand years: "In 1932 He is as Unknown, an enigma, the <<sign that will stir hostility>> (Luke, 2.35), as in the year 32"<sup>33</sup>.

The world is a continuum, it is the Building, God's Church, that especially comprises itself to make room for the dome of the shining bowl in our childhood. Just as nature is nothing but the preamble, the preface of poet's life, the holy histories, the pages of the Gospels give Yuri Zhivago, from the dawn of his life, the feeling of "continuity toward the supreme forces of the Earth and Sky to which he shows humbleness only as his precursors"<sup>34</sup>.

The moment of revelation when the sky descends in the child's room finds its echo, we believe, in Zhivago's verses, verses without which the novel would not be complete. We know that Pasternak wrote these verses simultaneously with other chapters in the novel, like a "testimony", like a confession. The *Christmas Star* (*Рождественская звезда*) is a poetic discourse built on the analogy between the exterior light – in the sky –

*"And alongside, unknown through times,  
Shy and soft,*

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<sup>29</sup> See *Lumina necreată. Nașterea logosului*, in Lucian Blaga, *Religie și spirit*, Editura Dacia Traiană, Sibiu, 1942, p.123.

<sup>30</sup> Lucian Blaga, *Hronicul și cântecul vârstelor*, Editura Sport-Turism, București, 1998, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Boris Pasternak, *Doctorul Jivago*, I, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> Dmitri Merejkovski, *Evanghelia necunoscută*, translation by Emil Iordache, Editura Contemporanul, București, 2012, p.77.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, p. 13

<sup>34</sup> Idem, p. 95.

*Like a candle,  
A star was flickering lighting toward Bethlehem"*<sup>35</sup>–

and the light inside, in the soul. The infant sleeping in the manger, of whose birth the three wise men were informed by the new star in the sky, is the Light of the world itself:

*"In the manger the child was sleeping like a rare  
glitter of sun in a corner"*<sup>36</sup>.

Between the two glowing poles – the star guiding the steps of the wise men and the child glistening in a humble manger – a whole world was floating in the distance like an omen, a "freezing story" - "*Морозная ночь походила на сказку*". The masterpieces and splendours of the world, representing painting, literature, music, emerged in the power of Jesus's birth. The gates of the sky are torn and the horizon turns into an altarpiece, in flying pieces of iconostasis. The Russian poet's vision (or phantasm) on the birth of civilization, of the Christian world is a dynamic one, in the purest Expressionist manner, reminding of a cosmogony. The embodiment of the Logos, the history of God's birth, reverberated in and filtered through man's soul and imagination is and will remain art's eternal theme:

*"And strange spectres from other centuries  
Were floating in the distance, foretelling their arrival.  
They were future blue-icons,  
Paintings from the museum of the world,  
Incantations, magic spells, all the good fairies,  
All the fir trees and sweet children's dreams.*

*There were candles flickering and tinsels  
And all the splendour of living colours...*

*... The coarse wind from the steppes was blowing...  
... There were golden nuts, there were toys..."*<sup>37</sup>

The picturality, the syncretism of Pasternak's word is of maximum pithiness. We can even call it image word. It is the Word itself, as the Son is called by John the Evangelist, who enters history and about whom the theologian Pavel Evdokimov asserts that "*he not only speaks, but also makes History and calls people to actions that express them in a visibly spiritual manner*"<sup>38</sup>. Born from cult, true culture has the origins of the liturgy. Like man who, "*created in God's image, is a living icon, the earthly culture is the icon of the Kingdom in the Sky. // In the perennial liturgy of the century to come, man will give glory to God through all the elements of a culture that will be forged in the heat of fire*"<sup>39</sup>. Pasternak metaphorically makes us part of his credo: having the image of the Creator in his soul, man cannot live but fulfilled through creation. He creates the world again through the power of words, he gives meaning to it, and this second creation is a fulfilment of holiness.

Embodiment of the Word, the birth of the Divine Child means the regeneration of Time, of the World. The light in the sky – the star – grows, *crescit lux*, the moment of the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, II, p. 274.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, p. 275.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Arta icoanei. O teologie a frumuseții*, translation by Grigore Moga and Petru Moga, Editura Meridiane, București, 1992, p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Iubirea nebună a lui Dumnezeu*, ed.cit., pp.119-120.

Christmas underlying the solar nature of the Infant – the "Moon of peoples" and the "Sun rising"<sup>40</sup>.

Pasternak's text is naturally inscribed in the Grand Text, the story of Zhivago/Pasternak unfolding in its turn in the pages of the *Gospel*. A series of "coincidences" contours the theme of destiny in the novel *Doctor Zhivago*. Long before meeting each other, when they were only teenagers and high school students belonging to totally different worlds, Lara and Yuri feel "watched" by the same "eyes" in a cold Christmas night: a candle burning on the sill of a frozen window: "*On the window, in front of the flame, the ice began to melt and to give shape to a black eye*"<sup>41</sup>. "*Yuri's attention was drawn by a wreath of melted ice on the glass of a window. On this wreath one could see the flame of a candle throwing into the street an almost conscious look, as if the flame was peeping to the strangers and waiting for someone*"<sup>42</sup>.

The almost human "behaviour" of the flame signals that the light, in Zhivago's book of life (a revelatory pleonasm), is a mysterious character, a divine agent, of whose purpose the hero, although troubled, is not for the moment aware: "<<A candle was burning on the table. A candle was burning... >>, Yura whispered to himself the beginning of something turbid, still gnarled, hoping that the continuation will gain contour by itself, willingly"<sup>43</sup>.

The burning candle, a recurrent image in the novel, is a Christian symbol for the soul, the poetic expression of our own soul in our fellows. Yuri's intuition in the freezing Christmas evening will settle down a lot later in his poetic lines:

*"And on the ground it was snowing, snowing  
From horizon to horizon.  
On the table a candle was burning,  
A candle."*<sup>44</sup>

The moment of the Christmas, with its presupposed richness of emotions and significances is also recurrent in the novel. For example, it seems to young Yura that his favourite poet, Blok, is so fascinating that he simply embodies "*Christmas in all the life of Russia, in the urban, septentrional way of life, and also in the new literature, under the starry night of a modern street and around a tree with burning candles in a room from our century*"<sup>45</sup>.

Acting metonymically, Pasternak "condenses" in his favourite poet the spiritual image of modern Russia. Putting on paper an article about Blok seems to Yura Zhivago eventually useless: "*a Russian worship to the wise men must be painted, like the Dutch have, a painting in which the frost, the wolves and the dark fir tree forest to appear*"<sup>46</sup>. B. Pasternak's novel is a particular literary answer to the biblical Birth, which opposes to the Apocalypse of history ("*Now, dear Sir, the Last Judgment is on Earth, creatures from the Apocalypse wander around, with swords and dragons*"<sup>47</sup>, asserts Strelnikov) the moment of the Christmas as symbol of life, eternity and hope. In the tragic twilight of his life, in the path of wolves and the red flag, "*that is not a flag, but the scarf of death which lures the proletarians and the*

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<sup>40</sup>Paul Evdokimov, *Arta icoanei. O teologie a frumuseții*, ed. cit., p. 120.

<sup>41</sup>B. Pasternak, *Doctorul Jivago*, I, p. 86

<sup>42</sup>Idem, p. 89.1

<sup>43</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>44</sup>Noapte de iarnă, în B. Pasternak, *Doctorul Jivago*, II, p. 269

<sup>45</sup>B. Pasternak, *Doctorul Jivago*, I, p.88.

<sup>46</sup>Idem.

<sup>47</sup>Ibidem, p. 241.

*poor in all countries*", the poet Zhivago always illuminates from his notebook of verses, that became the 17th chapter of the novel. There are pages in the forever living Gospel, as the hero states that life cannot be material, but, under the sign of holiness, an eternal beginning. Or, as D. Merejkovski observes, "*As many centuries, as many peoples and even as many people - as many Gospels there are. Everyone reads it - writes it - correctly or incorrectly, with or without wisdom, sinfully or holily, but differently, each man in his own way. And in everything there is one single Gospel, just like the Sun is only one in all drops of dew*"<sup>48</sup>. Pages from the ever-unfolding Gospel, "written"/lived right under their eyes, are noticed, "identified" by Zhivago and Lara in the rush of the dramatic events of the Russian Revolution: "*Yesterday night I watched the rally. It was an amazing show. Mother Russia has moved, (...), it wanders and does not grow tired of wandering, it speaks and does not grow tired of speaking. And it is not only people that speak. (...) the stars and the trees speak as well (...), stone buildings take part in the rallies. Is it not something evangelical? As it was in days of the Apostles. Like in the times of Saint Paul, do you remember? (...) // - I understand the words about trees and stars that take part in rallies. I know what you mean. It happened to me, too*".<sup>49</sup>

The voices of the prophets are heard in full Apocalypse. But in his verses, the poet doctor will not write about it, but about *immortality*, "*the second name of life*"<sup>50</sup>, as Zhivago observes, about the birth and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, about his love for the people. The Gospel of Zhivago, like the Gospel re-written by Bulgakov's Master, protected by his Mary Magdalene, Margaret, is meant to remind people of the Word, the name given to the Son by the apostle John, to bring him into the light from the pit of clichés of ideologies. The poet, in Pasternak's vision, has to carry forward the message of love of the apostles. In one of the draft versions of the novel, trying to explain Zhivago's attitude towards Strelnikov, the writer appoints the creators of all times as direct descendants of the evangelists. It is not the heroes, the abstractions, the bombastic and empty concepts like *justice, truth, holiness* that have to make themselves heard through them, but simply the people, with their concrete lives, with everything most natural and most human that they have. "*How he always loved these people of conviction and action, these fanatics of revolution and religion! How he admired them, what a shame engulfed him, how without courage he seemed in front of them and how he never, ever set his mind to be like them and to follow them. Work would take another direction upon him. He did not love the naked justice, the naked truth, the naked holiness of the sky. And the voices of the evangelists and prophets would not have conquered him with their profoundness, if he had not recognized in them the voices of the Earth, the voices of the street, the voices of contemporaneity that the descendants of the teachers - the artists have expressed in all the centuries. Look whom he revered with all his sincerity, and not the heroes, and respected the perfection of the creation coming out of their imperfect hands beyond man's sterile self-perfection*"<sup>51</sup>.

What Zhivago-Pasternak understood very well is that the "*last word of Christianity is not the Golgotha, is not death, but resurrection through the Golgotha*"<sup>52</sup>. The political mysticism, the Golgotha of communist ideology with her recent "god" who kills, only the "*Laws of human civilization were now forgotten*"<sup>53</sup> are pushed by the writer in the

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<sup>48</sup> Dmitri Merejkovski, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>49</sup> B. Pasternak, op.cit., pp. 146-147.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, p.25.

<sup>51</sup> Vezi B. Пастернак, *Доктор Живаго*, Москва, 1989, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Un nou Ev Mediu*, Editura Paideia, București, 2000, p. 39.

<sup>53</sup> Boris Pasternak, *Doctorul Jivago*, II, p. 119.

background. In the foreground we can see the "passions of Zhivago", as recorded by Pasternak in his novel, and the Book of Revelation, of the Truth in the last "chapter" - "Poems by Yuri Zhivago". Referring to the role played by the so atypical chapter 17 in the economy of Pasternak's model, Emil Iordache asserts that: "...in the chaos and dynamism of contemporaneity, the Christian symbolism, meant to take to the reader the superior meaning of immediate events, finally puts things in order. In this regard, Pasternak's novel is set in the tradition of Russian prose of the XIX century, with its strong Christocentric orientation"<sup>54</sup>.

The profoundly Christian meaning of this cycle of poems concords with the message of one of the last letters written by the poet who, hospitalized following a heart attack, has an ever-clearer revelation about the meaning of his life and his artistic work: "In the moment that seemed the last in life, more than ever before, I wanted to speak to God, to praise the seen, to observe it and to paint it. <<Lord, I whispered, I thank you that you lay the colours so densely and that you built life and death this way, that your language is music and greatness, that you made me an artist, and that my creation is your teaching, that all my life you prepared me for this night>>"<sup>55</sup>. A being of the liturgy, the artist celebrates his own liturgy for all eternity. Like a skilled icon master, he paints with the colours of this world, "in the light of Transfiguration, a freshened-up reality, in which the enigmatic face of the Kingdom discreetly rejoices"<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup>Emil Iordache, *Prefață*, în Boris Pasternak, op. cit., I, pp. 11-12.

<sup>55</sup> *Письмо к Нине Табидзе*, 1953, in Борис Пастернак об искусстве, Moscova, 1990, p. 348.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Iubirea nebună a lui Dumnezeu*, ed. cit., p. 120.

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