

BIBLICAL MOTIFS IN THE WORDS OF M. Y. LERMONTOV**Koval Katerina**

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of biblical motifs in the works of M. Y. Lermontov. The article examines the works of the poet, which reflect the biblical images, ideas, themes and plots on the example of the poems «My Demon», «Angel», «The cup of life» and the poem «Demon».

Аннотация. Статья посвящена исследованию библейских мотивов в творчестве М. Ю. Лермонтова. В статье рассматриваются произведения поэта, в которых отражаются библейские образы, идеи, темы и сюжеты на примере стихотворений «Мой демон», «Ангел», «Чаша жизни» и поэмы «Демон».

Keywords: M. Y. Lermontov; lyrics; biblical motifs; religion; worldview.

Ключевые слова: М.Ю. Лермонтов; лирика; библейские мотивы; религия; мировоззрение.

M. Y. Lermontov is one of the great writers in the history of Russian literature, who still remains an unsolved and not fully understood person. During his short life, the writer managed to write a large number of works, thereby leaving a large mark on world literature. Since the end of the XIX century, there has been a close interest of literary critics in the work of Lermontov, so you can observe an acute struggle of opinions and sometimes completely opposite ones. Researchers pay special attention to the reflection of biblical motifs in the works of the poet. I. S. Aksakov wrote that "Lermontov's poetry is the longing of the soul, which is sick from its own emptiness due to lack of faith and ideals" [Kotelnikov, 7]. Literary critic L. P. Semenov notes that the Bible helped the poet "in a difficult moment of life", and S. N. Durylin believes that "Lermontov at the end of his creative career gets tired of the demonic beginning in his soul and comes to writing "wonderful prayers" full of faith, hope and love" [Kotelnikov, 8]. Such different and contradictory opinions are not surprising, since in Lermontov's work the biblical motif is always perceived differently. In this regard, the purpose of this work is to find biblical motifs in Lermontov's works and prove that they originate from the Bible.

The whole life of the poet passed before the «creator of nature» or «creator of nature» eyes. Therefore, in lyrical works that reflect spiritual agitation or search, the evolution of the worldview of the lyric hero is given as a path to something holy or divine.

In the poem «My Demon» (1830-1831), the main motif is the motif of demonism:

Collection of evils is his element;

Between dark clouds he rushing off,

The fatal storms he loves with no end

And rivers foam and noise of oak groves;

(Translated by Anatoli Trojanowski)

The theme of demonism is rooted in the Bible, which tells of a fallen angel who went against the most high and was turned into a demon for this.

It is from this poem that Lermontov forms his own idea of demonism, which: «goes back to the Biblical mythology, the designation of the attitude to the world, the ultimate goal of which is the destruction of existing spiritual and material values, up to the conversion of the world into nothing» [Peskov, Turbin 1981: 137]. The poet later uses the theme of demonism in many works, including the poem «The Demon» (1839), where Lermontov took the biblical legend about the spirit of evil as the basis for the plot:

His way above the sinful earth

The melancholy Demon winged

And memories of happier days

About his exiled spirit thronged

(Translated by Avril Pyman)

A demon is a negative character who, although able to perceive high emotions, deliberately refuses them and suppresses them in himself. He gains power over the soul not by annihilation, but by his restlessness, by striving for «images of perfection». He rushes between light and darkness, good and evil, just as the poet says, where light and darkness meet, there will be eternal enmity and war. We can say that the toss between good and evil in this work reflects the inner struggle of the poet himself.

Under the influence of the Bible, Lermontov also has the image of an angel. In the poem «An Angel» (1831), images are associated with religious symbols:

At midnight an angel flew high in the sky,
He sang his song, lovely and quiet,
The Moon, and the stars, and the clouds as well –
All heeded that song's holy bell.

(Translated by Eugene Kiselev)

It also describes and contrasts the two worlds – the earthly and the heavenly. In one there are «sorrows and tears», in the other – songs «about the bliss of sinless spirits». The soul of a person, which is carried by an angel (while singing paradise and God with unfeigned praise), to the earth is a sacrifice of the supreme will. Suffering awaits her on earth, and the angel will grieve in advance about what trials she will have to go through.

It can be said that the Angel and the Demon appear on a very large scale in the work of M. Yu. Lermontov. They are used not only as symbols, but also as «iconographic» characters.

The motif of anxiety and mental anguish, which are revealed through biblical symbols, is also present in the work of M. Y. Lermontov. In the poem «The cup of life» (1831):

We drink from the existence cup

With eyes that are closed tightly,

Its golden edges wet become

By tears ours undesignedly. <...>

Then we may see that empty is

The golden cup and too fast,

That drink in it is only dreams

And that dreams are not ours!

(Translated by Igor Skryagin)

The theme of the «cup of woe» also originates from the Bible. In various places, you can find such sayings: «The cup is in the hand of the Lord, the wine is boiling in it, full of confusion, and he pours out of it. Even its yeast will squeeze out and drink all the wicked lands» (Psalm 74.9.) «If it is possible, let this cup pass from me» (Gospel of Mark, 14:36). Through the image of the chalice, the poet shows how a person blindly lives all his life with illusions and dreams, but on his deathbed, when a person looks at his life path sensibly, he sees that he lived in self-deception, in empty illusions that were inspired by someone else. Analyzing the work of M. Y. Lermontov, it can be concluded that through the biblical motifs, the poet touches on the themes of superhuman power, inexplicable spiritual torments, the transience of life, the throwing of a person between good and evil. Religious motifs are presented in different ways in the poet's lyrics. It can be an image, a symbol, a name, a specific plot, an idea, or a quote taken from the Bible. Through the poet's lyrics, you can also see the contradictory attitude to religion. One work may have a God-fighting orientation, the other reflects reconciliation and unity with God and with the world.

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