

Artículo de investigación

**Religious and moral discourse of F.M. Dostoevsky and the tale of our time by
M.M. Prishvin**РЕЛИГИОЗНО-ПРАВСТВЕННЫЙ ДИСКУРС Ф.М. ДОСТОЕВСКОГО И
“ПОВЕСТЬ НАШЕГО ВРЕМЕНИ” М.М. ПРИШВИНАDiscurso religioso y moral de F.M. Dostoevsky y el cuento de nuestro tiempo por M.M.
Prishvin

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Abstract

This study is aimed at analyzing the historical and cultural contexts of the Russian and Soviet writer Mikhail Mikhailovich Prishvin's (1873-1954) views on the possibility of realizing the ideal of charity as a theological virtue in Soviet society even in the conditions of militant atheism and the cruelties of the ongoing Great Patriotic War. The study is relevant for modern-day Russia due to the historical circumstances, that from 1917 to the early 1990s, almost the entire cultural life of the country came under the pressure of communist ideology. Historical and philosophical reconstruction serves as the main study approaches to this problem. Comparing Dostoevsky's and Prishvin's ideological and aesthetic assessments of the revolutionary movement, we establish the metatext, whose analysis allows us to better understand how Prishvin comprehended the basic laws and trends of the development of social existence and consciousness in his time. The paper shows that the main reason for Prishvin's attraction to Dostoevsky is the closeness of their views on life and recognition of the supremacy of the moral laws in the structure of human existence. The

Аннотация

Актуальность исследования обусловлена тем, что в силу исторических обстоятельств почти вся культурная жизнь России с 1917 до начала 1990 годов была под давлением коммунистической идеологии. Цель статьи – анализ исторического и культурного контекстов взглядов Пришвина на возможность осуществления в советском обществе идеалов христианской любви даже в условиях воинствующего атеизма и жестокостей идущей Великой Отечественной войны. Основным подходом к исследованию проблемы является метод историко-философской реконструкции. Сопоставляя идейные и эстетические оценки Достоевским и Пришвиным революционного движения, мы устанавливаем тот метатекст, анализ которого позволяет лучше понять, как Пришвин постигал основные закономерности и тенденции развития общественного бытия и сознания своего времени. В статье показывается, что одной из главных причин тяготения Пришвина к Достоевскому выступает мировоззренческая близость их взглядов на жизнь, признание главенства

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novelty of this study lies in the analysis of the philosophical and ideological context of Prishvin's thoughts on ways to overcome the spiritual discord in Russian society as the Orthodox Christian worldview held by a significant segment of the population came into conflict with the ideology of Bolshevism. Through his fictional heroes, the writer shows that in the year of the fascist invasion, life itself demonstrated the triumph of the Orthodox faith, to which the Russian people remained faithful despite the pressure of the menacing atheistic state. The story seems to sum up Prishvin's life journey as the writer's religious views became increasingly important to his worldview.

Keywords: Prishvin, Dostoevsky, ideology, religion, revolution, Bolshevism, Great Patriotic War.

законов морали в устройстве человеческого бытия. Новизна исследования заключается в анализе философско-мировоззренческого контекста размышлений Пришвина о путях преодоления духовного разлада русского общества, где православное мировоззрение значительной части населения вступает в конфликт с идеологией большевизма. Через художественное бытие своих героев писатель показывает, как в годину фашистского нашествия сама жизнь демонстрирует торжество православной веры, которой русский народ остается верен вопреки давлению грозного атеистического государства. Повесть как бы подводит итог жизненного пути Пришвина, на котором религиозные взгляды писателя становятся все более важной частью его мировоззрения.

Ключевые слова: Пришвин, Достоевский, идеология, религия, революция, большевизм, Великая Отечественная война.

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar los contextos históricos y culturales de las opiniones del escritor ruso y soviético Mikhail Mikhailovich Prishvin (1873-1954) sobre la posibilidad de realizar el ideal de la caridad como una virtud teológica en la sociedad soviética, incluso en las condiciones de ateísmo militante y Las crueldades de la Gran Guerra Patria en curso. El estudio es relevante para la Rusia moderna debido a las circunstancias históricas, que desde 1917 hasta principios de la década de 1990, casi toda la vida cultural del país estuvo bajo la presión de la ideología comunista. La reconstrucción histórica y filosófica sirve como los principales enfoques de estudio para este problema. Al comparar las evaluaciones ideológicas y estéticas del movimiento revolucionario de Dostoevski y Prishvin, establecemos el metatexto, cuyo análisis nos permite comprender mejor cómo Prishvin comprendió las leyes y tendencias básicas del desarrollo de la existencia y la conciencia social en su tiempo. El documento muestra que la razón principal de la atracción de Prishvin por Dostoevski es la cercanía de sus puntos de vista sobre la vida y el reconocimiento de la supremacía de las leyes morales en la estructura de la existencia humana. La novedad de este estudio radica en el análisis del contexto filosófico e ideológico de los pensamientos de Prishvin sobre las formas de superar la discordia espiritual en la sociedad rusa cuando la cosmovisión cristiana ortodoxa sostenida por un segmento significativo de la población entró en conflicto con la ideología del bolchevismo. A través de sus héroes ficticios, el escritor muestra que en el año de la invasión fascista, la vida misma demostró el triunfo de la fe ortodoxa, a la que el pueblo ruso permaneció fiel a pesar de la presión del amenazante estado ateo. La historia parece resumir el viaje de vida de Prishvin a medida que las opiniones religiosas del escritor se hicieron cada vez más importantes para su cosmovisión.

Palabras clave: Prishvin, Dostoevski, ideología, religión, revolución, bolchevismo, gran guerra patriótica.

Introduction

The question of the influence of F.M. Dostoevsky's ideas on *The Tale of Our Time* (1944), written by M.M. Prishvin, has already attracted scholarly attention. However, in Soviet times, discussion on the topic was limited because almost two-thirds of the Prishvin's creative legacy was censored: the 18-volume

Diary, some political essays on the pre-revolutionary years and the early post-October years, *World Cup*, *Color and a Cross*, *We Are With You: Diary of Love*. Today, publication of these materials has enabled the discovery of Prishvin as not only an outstanding artist of the word, but also as an heir of the traditions of

patriotism and humanism in Russian literature. The writer's creative legacy has been analyzed in a number of foreign publications on the issues of Christianity in Dostoevsky's works (Barsht, 2019; Borisova, 2019; Kelly, 2017; Kibalnik, 2018; Logvinenko, 2015; Saisu, 2019), the revolution (Bogdanova, 2016; Lotarev and Kuznetsov, 2015; Podoksenov, 2015), and interpretation of the works of certain authors in the context of his ideological heritage (Babuk, 2015; Givens, 2015; Podoksenov, 2016; Razumov, 2015). Researchers traditionally have been attracted by the themes of such novels as *Crime and Punishment* (Barsht, 2019; Dyogteva, 2018; Saraskina, 2017), *The Brothers Karamazov* (Batalova, 2017), *The Idiot* (Kladova, 2017), and *The Possessed* (Chernyshov, 2017; Chernyshov, 2018).

In an effort to artistically express the key ideas of his time, Prishvin confronted readers with these burning issues in national life that after Dostoevsky, perhaps no one else put before the Russian society. The leitmotif of *The Tale of Our Time* is the search for a resolution of the conflict between the religious and moral foundations of the common people and the Russia revolutionaries' ideology of atheism. As Dostoevsky noted earlier, "the socialists want to regenerate humans, to liberate them, to present them without God and the family. They conclude that having forcibly changed the economic way humans live, they will achieve their goals. But humans are transformed not from external reasons, but only from moral changes" (Dostoevsky, 1980).

In *The Tale of Our Time*, Prishvin essentially states that in the fight against fascism, faithfulness to the Christ's commands has become a fundamental issue, and the defeat of the fascist invaders is possible only because of the moral superiority of the Russian people. He thus once again emphasizes the validity of Dostoevsky's belief that Christianity is an ontological condition of being Russian: "An atheist cannot be Russian; an atheist immediately ceases to be Russian" (Dostoevsky, 1974). Indeed, all the people's morality "comes from religion for religion is the only formula of morality" (Dostoevsky, 1982).

Prishvin saw the obvious relevance of this thought from Dostoevsky. Even while sleeping, Prishvin sought means of liberation from that spiritual oppression, under which he and many of the intelligentsia and common people found themselves after the revolution: "I dreamed that from the enemies, I climbed into some kind of

white, slippery narrow intestine ... began to suffocate and woke up. And I began to think that Christ, whatever he may be, church or spiritual, as an idea, he is the best that humanity has wrought out of itself in its disastrous path. And in the end, if I take it, then with Christ, they will not drive me into that intestine" (Prishvin, 2010b).

The experience of life under socialism led the writer to conclude that faith in the teachings of Christ is the last hope of persons in a violent society based on a class ideology. This conclusion once again indicates the spiritual closeness of Prishvin and Dostoevsky, who noted that for him, Christ became the only deliverance from the physical, spiritual, and moral trials of hard labor. Dostoevsky had written that one must "believe that nothing is more beautiful, profound, sympathetic, reasonable, manly, and more perfect, than Christ. ... Even more, if someone proved to me that Christ is outside the truth, and that *in reality* the truth were outside of Christ, then I should prefer to remain with Christ rather than with the truth" (Dostoevsky, 1985).

In *The Tale of Our Time* Prishvin not only speaks of Dostoevsky's work as the highest wisdom of the national genius, but also considers his ideas, trying to discover in them those innermost meanings that will respond to queries of the time for new great trials of the Russian people. Talking about the evolution of the worldview of Alyosha Korshunov – the main character of the story – the writer seems to sum up his own life's journey. "I looked at Alyosha, what a good face he had at that moment, it glowed from within, and I realized to myself: not because of his freedom, not because of mischief he argued with God, but because so, apparently, he really needed to" (Prishvin, 1983a), – so he writes about the spiritual turmoil of a boy living in a society of militant atheism. Actually, this was the idea of the novel: to tell how a boy comes to Christ, how life itself demonstrates the triumph of the Orthodox faith, to which the Russian people remain faithful despite the pressure of the menacing atheistic state.

The fictional life of a teenager, who stumbles over every new thought in search of spiritual support, reminds us that long before the revolution Prishvin wrote about himself as a typical Russian boy, who, entangled in the spiritual temptations of the era, took turns trying to replace the beloved God with all the dominant teachings of the century. What is most remarkable about these boy's ideological wanderings is that the result of this struggle,

hidden in the distant future, was known to Prishvin at the very beginning of the twentieth century: "The fate of our boy was already foretold by Dostoevsky, he said that wherever such a boy ran, in the end he will run to Christ" (Prishvin, 2007). One of the decisive factors here will be the humanistic legacy of the Russian literature, which invisibly ties together eras and generations.

Methodology

Using the method of historical and philosophical reconstruction and comparing Dostoevsky's and Prishvin's ideological and aesthetic assessments of the revolutionary movement, we establish the metatext, the analysis of which allows us to better understand the manner in which Prishvin comprehended the basic laws as well as trends of the development of social existence/consciousness of his time. This method is particularly important for analyzing the impact that Dostoevsky's creative heritage had on the writer, given that it not only allows for comprehensive consideration of the characteristic features of Prishvin's work, but also to establish its connection with the concepts envisioned by the author of *The Possessed* and *Brothers Karamazov*.

Results

One of the main topics of the *Tale of Our Time* is the predicament of overcoming the spiritual discord of Soviet society, where the Orthodox worldview of a significant part of the population directly conflicts the ideology of atheism, which began to gain strength even under the monarchy. Reflecting on the spiritual and moral crisis facing the Russian society in the middle of the 19th century, Dostoevsky wrote: "I hold all evil to be grounded upon disbelief ... with us national consciousness is based on Christianity. "A Christian peasant-people," "believing Russia" – these are our fundamental conceptions. A Russian who abjures nationalism (and there are many such) is either an atheist or indifferent to religious questions" (Dostoevsky, 1988). Through the fictionalization of his characters, Prishvin seeks to not only express his personal attitude towards people's faith in Christ, but also to show, following Dostoevsky, that Orthodox Christianity in Russia remains an unshakable constant in the moral state of the nation's soul in all historical times.

As a result, *The Tale of Our Time* turned out to be openly religious. Prishvin writes: "Its civic plan was to oppose a worthy citizen of Orthodox

culture to a worthy citizen of revolutionary culture, a militant atheist" (Prishvin, 2013). These rivals are two young characters – Ivan and Alexei, the vivid descriptions of the vicissitudes of growing process of which allow the writer not only to unravel the painful nodes of the visceral ideological and moral contradictions of Soviet society, but also to illuminate the ways of resolving them.

For many years, Prishvin could not reconcile with the idea that the Soviet government will exist forever and earnestly hoped that the country's disasters would indeed end someday. This is the way the theme of the search for the essential meanings of the Soviet era, in which the heroes of the story live and act, was defined: "I don't remember on what occasion Gavriila had said: there's no eternity for our Pereslavl authorities" (Prishvin, 1983b). Evidently, the writer understood the potential pitfalls of such statements and remembered how one of the characters in his novel *Homeland of the Crane* (1929) while complaining about small-town bureaucrats and comparing them with tsarist officials, consoled his companion: "Do not look at the old: there is no eternity in the Soviet power" (Prishvin, 1983a). However, ten years later, such a phrase could catch back with Prishvin in the form of repressions, as evidenced by his conversation with one of the functionaries of the USSR Writers Union in 1937: "Do you read," Stavskiy asked, "what you wrote earlier? ... You wrote: "There is no eternity in the Soviet power"" (Prishvin, 2010a). The gravity of the situation was that apart from Stavsky, punitive authorities could pay attention to the writer's unapologetic anti-Soviet position and subject him to repression.

Therefore, smoothing out the words about the disconsolateness of the Soviet regime in the novel, the writer introduces a conciliatory comment, which brings forth clarity on the fact that these words refer only to the minor absurdities of provincial life: "Ah, I remembered: Miron Ivanovich started the conversation about "eternity" – he asked where he would have to buy raw beeswax for his hive now. And then it turned out that there was a bank in the house where they used to sell the beeswax and that this bank had already moved six times this year. Hearing that the bank had moved six times and again drove out the beekeeping society, Gavriila Alekseevich immediately expressed his firm belief that there's no eternity for the Pereslavl authorities" (Prishvin, 1983b).

However, the seeds of doubt have already been sown and the logic of the narration inexorably necessitates a convincing answer to a palpably dangerous question: “Is Soviet regime perennial?” At this stage, a young character steps in, who, by virtue of his age, has a proclivity towards flippancy: “At that moment the mischievous boy Alyoshka blurted out: “There’s no eternity for anything!” “How so?” angrily exclaimed Gavrila, “And what about God?”” (Prishvin, 1983b). The development of the plot, which leads to the completely inadmissible for Marxist ideology thoughts about the existence of the Creator, makes the characters balance on the verge of censorial permissibility. Therefore, the author interrupts the typically contentious debate about the eternity of God and the temporality of Soviet power through the appearance of girls with population census forms, in which one of the questions actually pertained to faith.

Prishvin sets the task to tell not about the abstract-logical searches for God, but about the Russian people’s historical fidelity to the teachings of Christ and about those “Russian boys” (Dostoevsky) who choose their own way of discovering the truth and righteousness. In this regard, the episode of the population census scene, where Alyosha writes in the column “Confession” that he is “*Faithless*” in order to annoy his friend’s father, is one of the most quintessential and psychologically penetrating examples in the entire history of Russian prose. It is only after many years that the narrator of the story learns from Alexei how Gavrila Alekseevich made him change his mind about the idea of renouncing God: “Alyoshen’ka, have mercy on your soul! My dear boy, you cannot write about yourself that you’re faithless! You will not be able to take it back, and it will forever be true, for eternity. I’m begging you on my knees, cross it out! Alyosha was terrified by eternity, but what terrified him more was that gray-haired man on his knees in front of him. And he crossed it out” (Prishvin, 1983b).

Thus, the boy, who so arrogantly was “at war with eternity,” learns the important lesson of demonstrating a humane attitude towards the feelings of another person. The evocative memory of this lesson, through several years of life’s trials, will lead Alexei to the comprehension of that divine truth and those genuine humane relations between people that the Russian Church has carefully preserved for many centuries. It is this spiritual self-determination of personality that Dostoevsky had encouraged in his time: “Study Orthodox Christianity, it is not only churchism and

ritualism; it is a living feeling, it is living forces, without which nations cannot live. There is not even mysticism in it – there is only love for mankind, only the image of Christ” (Dostoevsky, 1982). However, the path of return to Christ will be fraught with challenges for not only the young man, but also for many of his peers of the Soviet era. The narrator points out that for the whole twelve pre-war years, “the guys and I have argued all evenings long, analyzing the questions about the way out of moral dead ends brought up by our ten Russian sages” (Prishvin, 1983b).

It is noteworthy that this debate did not come down to the question of personal paths to the good and the truth. Instead it was primarily about choosing a path for the development of the entire Soviet society. Whether to go to the bright future of socialism through violence of one part of the population against another, or, as the Church teaches, to embrace the path of reconciliation and rally the people on the basis of the moral values associated with the religion of Christianity. In the course of this polemic, Ivan Staroverov, alluding to Alexei’s tendency to gravitate towards the ideas of socialism, ironically advises his friend to join the Communists: “You’d make a good devoted Communist. And how would you benefit from your double-entry bookkeeping” (Prishvin, 1983b). Furthermore, the absence of the development of the plot with his entry into the party speaks of the author’s position of disagreement with the opinion that Marxist-Leninist ideology is the only true path to the truth of social existence.

Notably, during the years of the Civil War, Prishvin was already persuaded to join the Bolsheviks, who sarcastically observed that “they would offer Christ to be a commissar in their state sect, too, on condition that he will join the party” (Prishvin, 1994). For the writer, the religious connotation of the communist idea, with which Bolshevism intended to replace traditional Christianity, had long been obvious: “The whole horror of Russian life was that each of us (revolutionaries, intellectuals) renounced themselves, sacrificed creativity for the sake of civic duty. It was the blind Golgotha, exactly the same as the Golgotha of unconscious soldiers in the war” (Prishvin, 2003). Therefore, the evangelic archetype of redeeming mercy is reinterpreted and Golgotha, as opposed to the allegory of Christian death for the ideal, emerges as a sign of spiritual blindness of a person, who is willing to renounce the moral foundations of human existence in the name of the project of establishing a communist heaven on earth.

In the course of work on the novel, Prishvin draws a conclusion about the moral imperative that imparts spiritual strength to an individual to withstand the pressure of the atheistic policy of the Bolshevik party: "Man should follow not the times, but God, who always goes for man through the times (Truth)" (Prishvin, 2013). Thus, in his own way, he interprets the thought of V. Solov'yov, who wrote in an article with a notable title "The Russian Idea" that the answer to all the meaningful life questions of people's historical existence can only be found in the "eternal truths of religion. For *the idea of a nation is not what it thinks of itself in time, but what God thinks of it in eternity*" (Solov'yov, 1992). However, other spiritual support systems were also required to catalyze the revolutionary transformation of the world. Bolshevism desperately needed a turn of the masses to a different faith. The government actively introduced the spirit of militant atheism in all spheres of public consciousness, which is where the younger generation became the most susceptible. Therefore, "they have long ceased to have a sense of eternity and from it there remains a ladder to some stratosphere, where there is no God, no anything" (Prishvin, 2012) – so Prishvin writes, characterizing the prevailing mood of society on the eve of the Great Patriotic War.

Owing to the many years of creativity under the Soviet censorship, Prishvin developed the ability to articulate his views in Aesopian language. Therefore, in *The Tale of Our Time*, everything outwardly looks as if the characters are merely discussing the name of a new village built near a creek with clear and cold water. While Aleksey, alongside most of the builders, favors the name "The Creek of Truth", Ivan thinks differently: "I suggested "The Right Way," he said, "because the truth is only between people. Righteousness is something more than truth, and the right way can be the way to truth and to righteousness" (Prishvin, 1983b).

From the following text, it becomes evident that the debate in question is about the difference in the moral foundations of Christianity and socialism. The meaning of this argument about righteousness and truth applies not only to the current Soviet time, but also to the entire historical existence of Russia. Moreover, the further development of this topic is, in fact, an artistic interpretation of one of the most important theses concerning the spiritual and moral foundations of people's life that was formulated by Dostoevsky: "Russian faith, Russian Orthodox Christianity is everything that the Russian people hold sacred; in it are their

ideals, the whole truth and righteousness of life" (Dostoevsky, 1981). Dostoevsky was unambiguous in his views that the truth of Christ "is higher than Nekrasov, higher than Pushkin, higher than the people, higher than Russia, higher than anything, and therefore we must desire the same truth and seek it, despite all the benefits that we can lose because of it" (Dostoevsky, 1984a). The reasonableness of Dostoevsky's words will fully manifest itself in the lives of subsequent generations of Russian people, who will also strive to perceive the truth and righteousness of their time. This denotes the sense of fidelity to the ageless commandments of Christ that never dies in the people's soul, for which Prishvin's novel speaks: "Everyone got cleansed by war, some, who had spare clothes – had worn it out, some – exchanged. But by the annual holiday on Petrov's Day even the one, who exchanged everything, got dressed up, and so the people, clean and jolly, from different villages, near and far, everyone ... gathered near the church" (Prishvin, 1983b).

It was truly amazing for the Soviet era that despite the fiercest persecution of atheist power, the Church did not cease to pray for the people as well as for the brutally oppressive state, before which it was in such a subservient and powerless position. The strength of the Church was that while the communist state held the interests of the proletariat above all, the churches served as a refuge for all and everyone could find spiritual comfort in it. So, in a predominantly anti-God age, people once again became convinced of the accuracy of Dostoevsky's words about the fateful significance of Christianity for the country: "*Formula*. The Russian people are all in Christianity and the idea of it. They have nothing more, and nothing more is needed, because Christianity is everything. Christianity is the church and the church is the crown of the creation and forever ... one, who does not understand Orthodox Christianity, will never understand anything about the people" (Dostoevsky, 1984b). In order to depict the revival of religious climate among the people, Prishvin introduces a series of gospel stories into the text, elaborating how the worship of the holy images strengthens the spirit of the afflicted in the year of the enemy invasion, and how fidelity to the patristic faith encourages Anna to wait for her missing husband Ivan, who, upon his return back home, publicly kneels before the church to passionately and fervently say a prayer to God for his salvation. Here, the writer clearly emphasizes the main premise of the story that the gospel principle of love will also help Alexei to straighten his life path, about which Anna speaks to her friend with the

sagacity that is emblematic of a deeply religious person: “Don’t be afraid, Milochka, your Alyosha is a good man, I know him: a good man will never become a failure because of love. It is he, who loves himself alone, becomes a failure, and he, who truly loves, always wins” (Prishvin, 1983b). This is one of the virtues of the nature of an Orthodox person: a true believer is always merciful, because he not only desires personal happiness, but is also considerate about the happiness and well-being of others. It is on this path of introduction to the values of the Christian worldview that the spiritual rebirth of Alexei takes place, who reveals for himself the meaning of the eternal truths of the existence of Russian people, as opposed to merely the myopic and transient truth of the Soviet era.

Discussion

The entire content of the *Tale of Our Time* is permeated with the idea of moral opposition of various social forces of the society. Using Gogol’s story *Terrible Vengeance* as an artistic context of one of the most important ideas of his novel, Prishvin turns to his thoughts of 1917 on the revolutionary disaster: “I would like to pray for the peace on earth and in my soul ... I say my own vagrant prayer to the unknown God: Lord, help me understand everything and not forget, and not forgive!” (Prishvin, 2004).

The idea of retribution manifested in the year of revolution, when Bolshevism, having seized the state power, began to destroy the Russian Christian culture. For many years, this notion had literally burned Prishvin’s soul, until the very passage of time led him to the conclusion that life requires creation, and not destruction. The transformation of Prishvin’s mind is artistically embodied in *The Tale of Our Time*. The ending of the story, polemically addressed not only to Gogol, but also to the assessment of the October Revolution, which found its expression in “vagrant prayer,” consisted of two parts, each revealing the idea of retribution in its own way. The first resolution of this plot was that the story’s main character had exacted the “terrible vengeance.” That’s why his “old ‘not forgive’ ... turned into terrible vengeance” for Alexei and from now on, his life’s mission is only to “bind the times with retribution and truth” (Prishvin, 1983b).

However, as Dostoevsky repeatedly wrote, thoughts on the religious and moral foundations of the life of the Russian people have led Prishvin to the understanding that for most people, who managed to defeat the most formidable enemy,

“the meaning of our time is in search of a moral justification for the joy of life, and not in retribution ... this force has already exhausted itself” (Prishvin, 2013). Consequently, he makes fundamental changes in the end of the novel and writes final lines on the last page of the text in order to liberate the character’s soul from an insatiable quest for revenge: “May God, Alyosha, my beloved son, find you and help you, you poor thing, remove this torment of yours: understand everything, forget nothing and forgive nothing” (Prishvin, 1983b). After Prishvin’s death, his wife discovered these words, which “*overturn* the whole meaning of the story”, during the preparation of the novel for publication (Prishvina, 1981). “This addition was, in essence, the resolution of the dispute of Mikhail Mikhailovich’s whole life, and in a sense also of the dispute of the whole human culture” (Prishvina, 1981).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be inferred that the Great Patriotic War showed the whole world the moral force that, since ancient times, has allowed Russian people to not only surmount enemy invasions, but also to remain Christian. Throughout the novel, it is evident that Prishvin’s attitude towards Bolshevism and the post-revolutionary structure of the Soviet society is rooted in the moral commandments of Christ. Not retribution, but compassion as a source of love – that is the true calling of the time and the only true way for the spiritual rebirth of man as well as Russian society after the endured horrors of war. Thus, the Christian viewpoint of the writer on wartime events with an amazing light of kindness illuminates *The Tale of Our Time*, thereby demonstrating that the tested weapon of Christ – mercy and love – is the only way of overcoming the evil prevailing in the world and of changing any violent ideology. And this remains true across all historical times.

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