

Abstract

The Autobiography of the Archpriest Avvakum - Structure and Function

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This article demonstrates how the poetic structure of Avvakum's autobiographical saint's Life reflects his theological worldview and is diametrically opposed to the neo-scholastic poetics of his ideological adversaries. The Life embodies the energy of the divine Word as interpreted through writings about the circle by Abba Dorotheus and associated with Dionysius the Areopagite. The circle's energy models the transcendence of opposition, between Adam and Christ, earth and heaven. It signifies the realization of a wholeness that is analogous to the deified human body and the Church as a place of divine indwelling. The Life's narrative structure models this wholeness as a hierarchy of mediations, a rising spiral. Its first level is the dialogic relationship between Avvakum, the protagonist and Avvakum, the narrator; its second and third levels are realized by the dialog between Avvakum, the narrator and Avvakum's father confessor, Epifanii and between Avvakum, the narrator and his far-flung readers respectively. The Life's active dialogic creation of transcendental wholeness makes it Avvakum's solution to the cultural crisis of Church schism.

Key words: Archpriest Avvakum, Epifanii, scholastic humanism, Nikonians, Abba Dorotheus, Dionysius the Areopagite, theology of the Word, hagiography, baroque , poetic structure and function

