

The Theology in Avvakum's Life and His Polemic with the Nikonians

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The *Holy* is lost; the strong cement, which had held so firmly together the stones of the ancient building built according to plan, has gradually vanished, eaten away by the acid activities of the human mind.¹

The Archpriest Avvakum included his autobiographical *Life* (*Zhitie*) among the polemics produced by the coexiles in Pustozersk against the upholders of Patriarch Nikon's reforms (Nikonians).² An understanding of the polemical function of *Zhitie* reveals a hidden poetic-theological agenda that elucidates the broader cultural significance of the Church crisis brought on by the Nikonian correction of the Church books. Avvakum developed his polemical stance in the first year of his personal confrontation with the Nikonian clergy, after his return from his first exile in 1664. Analysis of this development brings to light the framework in which Avvakum conceived *Zhitie*.

In the spring of 1664, Avvakum produced his "First Petition to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich" (hereafter *Pervaia chelobitnaia*).³ Before November, he wrote an epistle (hereafter *Poslanie*) to the boyar Andrei Pleshcheev.⁴ During the same year he produced a writing (hereafter *Pisaneitse*) to the boyar Fedor Rtishchev, an active patron of the new learning associated with the Nikonian

¹ A letter by V. A. Zhukovskii to P. A. Viazemskii (July 1848), quoted by Michael Cherniavsky in *Tsar and People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 173.

² On the polemical activity of the Pustozersk exiles, see N. Iu. Bubnov, *Starobriadchenskaia kniga v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XVII v.* (St. Petersburg: BAN, 1995), 231–99. On Old Believer publicistics, see A. S. Eleonskaia, *Russkaia publitsistika vtoroi poloviny XVII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978); and A. N. Robinson, *Bor'ba idei v russkoi literature XVII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974). Unless otherwise noted, this article will refer to the 1672 redaction of *Zhitie* in A. N. Robinson, *Zhizneopisaniia Avvakuma i Epifaniia* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1963), 139–78.

³ See *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma i drugie ego sochineniia*, ed. N. K. Gudziia (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1960), 185–90.

⁴ See *Pamiatniki istorii starobriadchestva XVII v.*, ed. S. F. Platonov, *Russkaia istoricheskaiia biblioteka*, vol. 39 (Leningrad: Akademiia nauk, 1927), stlb. 880–86.

reforms.⁵ These latter two writings make use of the rich archive of biblical citations he was collecting as ammunition for his polemics during the period 1664–67.⁶ During oral debate at Fedor Rtishchev's house, Avvakum had the opportunity to personally confront Rtishchev's protégé, Epifanii Slavinetskii, the key actor in the introduction and defense of the reforms.⁷

Avvakum and Slavinetskii each recognized the other as a particular danger, and for analogous reasons; each believed the other employed a verbal craftiness to undermine the Church and each saw in the other a "wolf in sheep's clothing."⁸ Some time during the period between 1664–67, Slavinetskii wrote a sermon where he responded to many of the arguments and inferences which we find in Avvakum's three earlier writings of 1664, "Against those who are disobedient to the Church from the person of the Church" ("Na nepokorniki Tserkvi ot litsa toia") (hereafter, *Slovo*).⁹ Copied and edited by his disciple Efimii Chudovskii, *Slovo* was the first written attack against the resisters of the Nikonian reforms (hereafter termed traditionalists). Analysis of Slavinetskii's text reveals why Avvakum feared his deviousness (*zlokhitrstvo*) and responded with a craftiness (*prekhyschrenie*) of his own in *Zhitie*.¹⁰ Elucidation of points of interchange between Avvakum's writings of 1664 and Slavinetskii's *Slovo* gives insight into *Zhitie*'s use of the rhetoric of holy

⁵ See N. S. Demkova, *Sochineniia Avvakuma i publitsisticheskaia literatura rannego staroobriadchestva* (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1998), 7–10.

⁶ This archive has been published by I. M. Kudriavtsev, "Sbornik XVII v. s podpisami protopopa Avvakuma i drugikh pustozerskikh uznikov," in *Zapiski Otdela rukopisei, Gosudarstvennaia biblioteka Lenina* (Moscow: Kniga, 1972), 148–213.

⁷ See Robinson, *Zhizneopisaniia*, 160–62, 163. On Epifanii Slavinetskii as teacher, see O. Strakhkov, *Evangelienubersetzung des Jepifanij Slavyneč'kyj* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), ix–xxi. See also A. M. Panchenko, "Epifanii Slavinetskii," in *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi*, vol. 3, pt. 1 (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1993), 309–14.

⁸ See the draft of *Zhitie* in Gudzi, ed., *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma*, 331–32; and T. V. Panich, "Slovo 'Na nepokorniki Tserkvi'" – pamiatnik rannei antistarobriadcheskoi polemiki," in *Obshchestvennoe soznanie naseleniia Rossii po otechestvennym narrativnym istochnikam XVI–XX vv.: Sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, ed. N. N. Pokrovskii (Novosibirsk: Izd-vo Sibirskoe otdelenie RAN, 2006), 173.

⁹ See Panich, "Slovo," 158–80; and N. S. Gur'ianova, *Starobriadtsy i tvorcheskoe nasledie Kievskoi mitropolii* (Novosibirsk: Izd-vo Sibirskoe otdelenie RAN, 2007), 62–66.

¹⁰ Avvakum used the term *zlokhitrstvo* in the colloquy "On External Wisdom," in *Pustozerskaia proza: Protopop Avvakum, Inok Epifanii, Pop Lazar', D'iakon Fedor*, ed. M. B. Pliukhanova (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989), 106. On *prekhyschrenie*, see Priscilla Hunt, "The Foolishness in the 'Life' of the Archpriest Avvakum and the Problem of Innovation," *Russian History/Histoire russe* 35: 3–4 (2008): 275–308.

foolishness (*buistvo*) to defend mystical theology against Nikonian neo-scholastic rationalism.¹¹

In the *Pervaia chelobitnaia*, Avvakum first made rhetorical use of a kind of verbal play to convince the tsar of his right to speak for the Church. This play framed and justified the autobiographical sections of his discourse. Its goal was to convey his hidden wisdom by sacred foolishness as described by St. Paul (1 Cor. 1–2). In *Pisaneitse* and *Poslanie*, Avvakum used the Pauline paradigm of wisdom/foolery to defend his mystical conception against the Nikonians' secularizing conception of wisdom. Slavinetskii's *Slovo*, in its turn, craftily deprived Avvakum's language of hidden mystery through a systematic process of subversion. My hypothesis is that Avvakum made *Zhitie*'s narrative foolish to restore the mystical meaning of Pauline wisdom and to defend the traditional theology of revelation against Slavinetskii and his kind.

Newly returned from an exile of more than ten years, Avvakum dared to address the tsar directly in the *Pervaia chelobitnaia*. His use of biblical citations from St. Paul at once disguised and revealed his hidden wisdom and his role as a mouthpiece for the transcendental-universal Church behind a mask of foolishness. Paul used foolishness to demonstrate that when he was speaking for the Church, he was not speaking from himself but through God's deep Spirit or hidden wisdom (*sila; premudrost' bozhiiia v taine sokrovennaia; dukh*).¹² In his epistles to the Corinthians, Paul intimates his hidden wisdom indirectly through word play, irony, indirect discourse, and also through a rhetoric of self-denigration. This rhetoric involved a process of inversion and a play with the meaning of *pokhavliat'sia* (Gr. *kauchaomai*, to speak loud, be loud tongued).¹³ Instead of "boasting" of his strengths, Paul inverts the connotations of boasting and boasts of his weakness, his path of persecution and suffering: "Ashche khvalitisia (mi) podobает, o nemoschi moei pokhvaliusia" (2 Cor. 11: 30).¹⁴

Paul presents this inverse boasting as the boasting of a fool: "[I]ako bezumna priimite mia, da i az malo chto pokhvaliusia (2 Cor. 11: 16). This foolish boasting, like other foolish wordplay, points to a paradoxical deeper meaning

¹¹ On this rhetoric, see Hunt, "Foolishness." Paul's synonyms for foolishness, meaning "silliness" and "without sense" respectively, were *môria*, and *aphrôn*. In the Slavonic tradition they were translated variously by *bezumie*, *buistvo*, *iurodstvo*. All Greek translations into English are from Henry George Lidell and Robert Scott et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

¹² All citations from Paul will be from the Slavonic Bible, published in *Bibliia pisaniiia vetkago i novago zaveta* (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia Tipografiia, 1891). See, for example, 1 Cor. 1: 18; 1 Cor. 2: 7, 10.

¹³ *Pokhavliatisia* had the connotations "to eulogize," "to boast," "to glorify oneself." See *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI–XVII vv.*, vyp. 18 (Moscow: Nauka, 1992).

¹⁴ "If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity." See also 2 Cor. 12: 9.

that expresses a mystical asceticism. On an inner level, his embrace of weakness is a source of inner strength derived from his willingness to undergo ascetic trials of faith. This tried and tested faith inspires the repudiation of worldly vanity and fills him with inner wisdom. Paradoxically, however, this ascetic repudiation of vanity appears to the world as foolishness. The fool thus appears to the eyes of the world as opposite to what he is in the eyes of God since God sees the inner councils of the heart (1 Cor. 4: 5) and the deep things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2: 10).

Alluding to Paul's extensive list of sufferings (2 Cor. 11: 24–27), Avvakum engaged in his own inverse "boasting" by enumerating his persecutions and degradations for the Church. An opening citation from Philippians 3: 8 expressed his accompanying rejection of worldly vanity: "I sie mne iako umety, da Khrista moego priobriashchu."¹⁵ Implicitly, this ascetic disdain for pain made him appear foolish from a worldly perspective but actually filled him with wisdom. The full passage (Phil. 3: 7–14) shows him progressing into inner mystery (*taina*), towards transcendental knowledge and the power of the resurrection.¹⁶ "Za prevoskhodiashchee razumenie khrista ... vmeniaiu vsia umety byti ... iako razumeti ego i silu voskreseniia ego i soobshchenie strasti ego."¹⁷

Avvakum opened the *Pervaia chelobitnaia* with a metaphorical reference to his inner resurrection. He described himself wondering what to make of the miracle of his survival of certain death to return to speak to the tsar: "[C]hto ti vozglagoliu, iako ot groba vosstav, ot dal'niago zakiucheniia ... svoe li smertonosnoe zhitie vozveshchu tebe ... ilie o tserkovnom razdore reku tebe...."¹⁸ His rhetorical question sets the course for the remaining narrative: By describing his "deathbearing life," he would demonstrate the trials of faith that fill him with inner strength. Then, when he exposed the crisis in the Church, he would be speaking not from himself but with "transcendental knowledge" and the "power of the resurrection."

Avvakum prefaced the list of extreme sufferings under Afanasii Pashkov in Dahuria with another citation that focused on his ascetic restraint from worldly speech: "Ne chelobit'em tebe, gosudariu, nizhe pokhvaloiu glagoliu,

¹⁵ Gudzii, ed., *Zhitie*, 187. "These I have counted loss for Christ."

¹⁶ This mystery (*taina*) was the mystery of the cross celebrated in Slavonic tradition as early as Suprianlensis: "[Se] bo to ti est' marie divno i taino. Iako v'si mureshia a tvoi syn s'mer't' pobedit." See "*taina*" in *Slovník jazyka staroslovenského* (Prague: Academia, 1997), iv.

¹⁷ "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the transcendent knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ... and count them as rubbish ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings...."

¹⁸ Gudzii, ed., *Zhitie*, 185.

da ne budu bezumen, istinnu bo, po apostolu reku."¹⁹ He was alerting the tsar to his ascetic unwillingness, no matter what the consequences, to offer the usual abject petition or flattering eulogy for fear of appearing foolish in the eyes of God for lacking the courage necessary to be a witness to Truth.²⁰

When Avvakum spoke of his refusal to "eulogize" the tsar's worldly authority (*nizhe pokhvaloiu glagoliu*), he was playing with the word for "boasting" (*pokhavliat'sia*) just as Paul did. Paul's statement—"Ashche bo voskhoshchu pokhvalit'sia, ne budu bezumen, istinnu bo reku"—demonstrated his choice not to give in to his desire to boast outloud and profane the mystery of his ascent to the third heaven. Rather Paul chose to "boast" about the truth of his human weakness and to highlight negatively, by maintaining silence, the glory that had come from the Lord.²¹ Thus he prefers to appear a fool (*bezumnna, aphrôna*) in the eyes of the world and disguise his hidden wisdom. Similarly, Avvakum's refusal to eulogize the tsar and his choice to describe his own "deathbearing life" amounted to a silent foolish eulogy to God, an inverse "boasting" about the miracle in his resurrection back to Moscow.

As was typical of fools, Avvakum's (written) speech presented the Truth in a hidden and enigmatic manner that amounted to a provocative "spectacle." It was a challenge to his sovereign's conventional assumptions as well as a veiled threat; it both disguised and intimated Avvakum's refusal to submit to intimidation. Fool as he was, he feared only failing to act as a word of Truth; he dismissed the suffering and death that might result from the tsar's anger as no more than castoffs (*umety*) on his way to Christ. Moreover his foolishness disguised a daring underlying agenda of abolishing in the realm of charisma the hierarchical distance between himself, a formerly disgraced archpriest, and the sovereign of Russia.

This rhetorical strategy conformed to the behavioral model of foolery in Muscovite tradition.²² Avvakum's self-presentation relied on the cultural understanding of the fool's scandalous behavior as a disinterested ascetic feat investing him with sacredness. The Slavonic textual tradition underlined this sacred scandal when it translated Paul's *môria* (foolishness) by *buistvo* with its

¹⁹ Gudzii, ed., *Zhitie*, 187. "I am not writing a petition to you, o Sovereign, nor am I delivering a eulogy, for I will not be a fool, but as the apostle said, I am speaking the truth." All translations of Avvakum are mine (P.H.).

²⁰ For Avvakum Truth and the inner Spirit of Christ's Wisdom were synonyms. See Kudriavtsev, "Sbornik," 180–83, 202. On the inverted antitheses between sacred and profane foolishness, see 1 Cor. 3: 19 versus 1 Cor. 1: 27.

²¹ See 2 Cor. 12: 6. See also 1 Cor. 1: 29, 31: "'that no flesh should glory in His presence.... [a]s it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord'" ([Ia]ko da ne pokhvalitsia vsiaka plot' pred bogom ... da iakozhe pishetsia; khvaliaisia o gospode da khvalitsia).

²² See D. S. Likhachev and A. M. Panchenko, *"Smekhovoi mir" drevnei rusi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1976), 158–65.

connotations of “daring,” and even “disobedience” (*bezchinstvo*).²³ Avvakum counted on the tsar to tolerate his outrageous behavior as sacred *buistvo*. His rhetorical strategy was to invest his presumption with the aura of sanctity.

Avvakum’s foolishness reflected a mystical theology of revelation that would prove central to his repudiation of the Nikonians. On the one hand, Avvakum kept silent and hid his participation in mystery behind foolish speech and biblical citations.²⁴ On the other hand, he spoke through describing “deeds,” actions that manifest hidden wisdom despite his own weakness. As we have seen, Avvakum’s citation from 2 Cor. 12 set his refusal to glorify the tsar’s worldly authority by vain speech against his own silent (in the sense of lived) divine glorification. His speech was silent firstly because it testified not to his personal desires but to the manifest Truth of God within him, and secondly because it embodied a mystical-ascetic verbal self-restraint in the face of experienced mystery.

Avvakum’s rhetoric expressed a conception of the Logos manifest in Being that was articulated as early as the second century by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch on his way to confront his martyrdom. “It is better to be silent and to be,” he wrote, “than to talk [*laleo*] and not to be.... He who has the word of Jesus ... can also hear his silence [*tis hesukhias autou akouein*].”²⁵ Avvakum’s foolishness appealed to a poetics of revelation characteristic of Byzantine-Muscovite Logos theology.²⁶

²³ See 1 Cor. 1: 21. M. Fasmer, *Etimologicheskii slovar’ russkogo iazyka* (Moscow: Progress, 1964) defines a person who exhibits *buistvo* as: “*sil’nyi, otvazhnyi, smelyi, derzkii, svoevol’nyi, sklonnyi k bezchinstvu, bezumnyi, glupyi*.”

²⁴ Avvakum’s tradition linked “mystery” with “silence.” “*Taina*” refers to the hidden (*sokrovennoe*) and a “*tainik*” to one who keeps silence (*molchatele*), a hesychast. See Ulla Birgegård, ed., *Lexicon Slavonicum*, vol. 4 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell Tryckeri, 1990). On the fool’s silence and its link with hesychasm, see Likhachev and Panchenko, “*Smekhovoi mir*,” 96, 122, 145. Avvakum’s rhetoric of foolery took to its outer limit the tradition of hiding deeper meaning in a structure of biblical citations. See M. Garzaniti, “Bible and Liturgy in Church Slavonic Literature: A New Perspective for Research in Medieval Slavonic Studies,” *Revue des études slaves* 79: 3–4 (2008): 63–84, esp. 67.

²⁵ See “To the Ephesians,” 15, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. B. D. Ehrman, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1: 234. Avvakum collected quotations to emphasize that testimony to inner faith/wisdom must be experiential. See Kudriavtsev, “*Sbornik*,” 181, l. 215, 215ob.; 186, l. 230ob.; 187, l. 232ob. For a jotting that contrasts mystical silence to philosophizing—the equivalent of *laleo* (to chatter, talk) for Ignatius—see Kudriavtsev, “*Sbornik*,” 159. “*Rtsy nam, otche, eshche na polzu. Starets zhe molchashe. Paki zhe glagolasta emu filosofy: Ne otveshchiaeshi li nama niche-sozhe.... Togda starets reche ima: Vem, iako vy slavoliubtsa esta, a ne istinnoliubtsa filosofa, se tochiu navykosta, ezhe slovesy itiazatisia ... delo se, ezhe prisno pouchatisia smerti i molchanie imeti – bliusti um s tainym pouchniem*” [my italics, P.H.].

²⁶ On the poetics of silence in scriptural and patristic tradition and the influence of St. Paul, see L. Bouyer et al., *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1963), 238–55, 265–73; E. A. de Mendieta, *The “Unwritten” and*

The rhetoric of foolishness in the *Pervaia chelobitnaia* laid the groundwork for Avvakum's battle against the Nikonians. His weapons were a set of inter-related Pauline antitheses setting the profane against the sacred: worldly vs. divine wisdom; foolishness in the eyes of God vs. in the eyes of man; loud self-glorifying speech vs. the word of silence where described experience (Being) manifests divine power and glory.

In his *Pisaneitse* to Fedor Rtishchev, Avvakum put this rhetorical stance to polemical use. He called the Nikonians exponents of "external Wisdom" (*vneschniaia premudrost'*).²⁷ Their arrogant displays of worldly wisdom in philosophical disputation (*filosofskoe kichenie*) were equivalent to loudmouthed "boasting in the flesh."²⁸ They were seductive as well, misleading their audience as to wisdom's true nature (*i tebia obmanyvaiut*);²⁹ the Nikonians refused to give themselves over to the inner Spirit (*plotskaia mudr'stvoiut ... ne priemliut dukhovnaia*).³⁰ His polemic called on Paul's antitheses between divine and worldly wisdom, the things of the spirit and of the flesh, the inner and the outer (*vneshnii*) man, the "things which are not seen" and "the things which are seen" (*ne smotriaiushchym nam vidimyykh, no nevidimyykh: vidimaia bo vremenna, nevidimaia zhe vechna*).³¹

By contrast, true Christian wisdom acknowledged Christ's spiritual mystery (*Khristovy tainy*), derived from faith and gave voice to the Spirit Who tests out (*ispytuets*) Truth in argument (*bran'*).³² It reflected "purity of heart"

"Secret": *Apostolic Traditions in the Theological Thought of St. Basil of Caesarea* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), esp. 7, 49–52; E. L. Fortin, "Clement of Alexandria and the Esoteric Tradition," *Studia Patristica* 9 (1966): 56; *Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 1991), bk.1, 63. On Dionysius the Areopagite, see Priscilla Hunt, "The Wisdom Iconography of Light," due to appear in *Byzantinoslavica* 67 (2009). See also Gervase Mathew, "The Hidden Meaning," in Mathew, *Byzantine Aesthetics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 38–48.

²⁷ The *Pisaneitse* in conjunction with his draft epistle to Rtishchev set the stage for his later colloquy "On External Wisdom." See Kudriavtsev, "Sbornik," 180–92; and Avvakum, "O vneshnei mudrosti," in *Pustozerskaia proza*, 104–05. On "external Wisdom" in Muscovite and Old Believer culture, see Olga B. Strakhov, *The Byzantine Culture in Muscovite Rus': The Case of Evfimii Chudovskii (1620–1705)* (Weimar: Bohlaus Verlag Köln, 1998), 27–28.

²⁸ He collected citations on this theme. See Kudriavtsev, "Sbornik," 185, nn. 74, 60, l. 227ob., l. 228. In *Pisaneitse*, 10, Avvakum provides an example of a philosopher being forced to silence himself (*umolknuti*) at the first ecumenical council.

²⁹ For an example of a 1671 disputation, see I. F. Golubev, "Vstrecha Simeona Polotskogo, Epifaniia Slavinetskogo i Paisiia Ligarida s Nikolaem Spafareim i ikh beseda," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury ANSSSR* 26 (1971): 294–301.

³⁰ *Pisaneitse*, 10. See 1 Cor. 2: 14.

³¹ 2 Cor. 4: 16, 18; 2 Cor. 10: 7.

³² *Pisaneitse*, 10. See also Kudriavtsev, "Sbornik," 197n80. In his archive, Avvakum cites from Chrysostom's exegesis of 1 Cor. See 1 Cor. 2: 10: "dukh bo vsia ispytuets, i glubiny bozhia" (For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God).

and emerged through “simplicity” (*prostota*), “childishness” and “foolishness.”³³ However, true to his Pauline model, Avvakum advocated foolishness (*buistvo*) as the most powerful manifestation of Wisdom/Spirit: “Ashche kto ne budet bui, sirech’ ashche ne vsiako umyshlenie i vsiaku premudrost’ istoshchit i vere sebia predast’, – ne vozmozhet spastisia.”³⁴ His *buistvo* thus offered a sacred ignorance (elsewhere termed *nevezhestvo*) as the antithesis to the Nikonians’ worldly wisdom.

In *Pisaneitse*, Avvakum transformed his rhetorical stance in the *Pervaia chelobitnaia* into an ideological attack against the Nikonians. Avvakum performed a similar operation in *Poslanie*. He made the archetype of the resurrection that had informed his self-representation in the *Pervaia chelobitnaia* into a polemical weapon. In the *Pervaia chelobitnaia*, the “power of the resurrection” (Phil. 3: 10) had signified the source of his deliverance and ability to speak the divine Word of Truth; in *Poslanie*, it signified the force that undid the impact of the Nikonians’ suppression of the Truth by their corrections to the Church books.

Christ’s prophecy “‘And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [the Church]’” (*no i samaia vrata adova ne odoleiut ei*) (Matt. 16: 18) served as a leitmotif for Avvakum’s exposure. The icon of the resurrection embodied the meaning of this prophecy.³⁵ There Christ delivers the Church from captivity, surrounded by Light signifying manifest hidden wisdom.³⁶ He draws the righteous through the open gates of hell, which cannot stand up against His power of revelation. Avvakum’s leitmotif evoked in his readers’ inner eye an image of the Nikonians’ inevitable defeat, despite their attempts to suppress the Truth of the Church. The exegesis he wove around Matthew 16: 18 showed the ineffectuality of the Nikonians’ attempt to shut out Christ’s hidden Wisdom-Light by “correcting” the words that had conveyed Christ’s power. It indicated that they would not succeed in keeping the faithful in captivity to the same outer darkness as they were in themselves.

³³ See *Pisaneitse*, 9, 10; Kudriavtsev, “Sbornik,” n. 80 and 2 Cor. 11: 3. In *Poslanie*, he writes, “ot nikh zhe bo utail est’ Gospod’ tainy blagodati svoeia, a otkryl est’ to mladentsem, da *buistvom* propovedi spaset veruiushchikh...” (Matt 11: 25; 1 Cor. 1: 21). See Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii starobriadchestva*, 879. Nikita Dobrynin (Pustosviat), during his public demonstration for the Old Belief in 1682, revealed the link between childlikeness and foolish silence by mouthing babyish nonsense speech with esoteric, scriptural meaning. See Likhachev and Panchenko, “*Smekhovoi mir*,” 124–25.

³⁴ *Pisaneitse*, 9. He was quoting from Chrysostom’s commentary on 1 Cor.: “If you are not foolish, that is, if you don’t empty yourself of all kind of calculation and wisdom and give yourself over to faith, you cannot be saved.” See Kudriavtsev, “Sbornik,” 196n71, 196n73, 196n78.

³⁵ See, for example, catalog no. 77 in *Sofia Premudrost’ Bozhiia* (Moscow: Radunitsa, 2000), 226.

³⁶ See Hunt, “The Wisdom Iconography of Light” (in press).

First Avvakum inveighed against the attack on hidden mystery by the Nikonians' "corrections" of the Church books.³⁷ Not speaking from himself, he paraphrased their argument, underscoring their hypocrisy with wordplay on "wise" (*mudr'*): "'my zhe nyne, ko ispravleniiu umudrivshesia, pogibshee obretaem, neistovaia ispravliaem, stropotnaia gladka sotvoriam [Is. 40: 3–5; Luke 3: 5]'; a ezhe Tserkvi Khristovoi vrata adova ne odoleiut, sego i voprositi stydiatsia za velikoiu mudrostiiu."³⁸ Avvakum's irony implied that despite their "great wisdom" in trying to rid the books of all "troublesome" (*stropotnaia*) places, the Nikonians prophetically stopped short at correcting the very passage that heralds their doom.

Avvakum further prophesied their doom through a biblical citation (Rom. 1: 18) that accused them of bringing divine wrath on themselves by openly misrepresenting the truth (*soderzhit istinnu v nepravde*).³⁹ The ensuing lines are integral to Avvakum's message. Building on his concept of hidden wisdom (1 Cor. 2: 7), Paul notes that Truth is inviolable, invisible and manifest in Being (Rom. 1: 18–24). Those who misrepresent it are personally responsible for refusing to see the invisible within the visible: "nevidimaia bo ego ot sozdaniia mira tvoren'mi pomyshliaema vidima sut', i prisnosushchnaia sila ego i bozhestvo, bo ezhe byti im bezotvetnym" (Rom. 1: 19).⁴⁰ This blindness limits them to the world of the profane and guarantees their own

³⁷ Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 885. They "do away with the indirect" and make the "crooked straight" (*kosvennaia otrevaeete, krivoe pravite*).

³⁸ Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 880–81. Avvakum opened this passage with: "Glagoliut bo: pobludisha otsy nasha v tserkovnykh dogmatekh i mnog vremia v porushenii prebyst', dazhe do nas." "Our fathers erred ... and we now have become knowledgeable enough to correct them, we find what was lost, correct what is wrong and we make the jagged smooth and we have, in our great wisdom, enough shame not to scrutinize the phrase, "the gates of hell will not prevail over the church of Christ." Here Avvakum is paraphrasing Isaiah 40: 3–5 from Luke 3: 5: "vsiaka debr' ispolnitsia, i vsiaka gora i kholm smiritsia: I budut stropotnaiai v pravaia i ostrii v puti gladki." His adversaries' attested allusion to Luke 3: 5 distorts Luke's original meaning. The gospel passage referred not to the power of the mind to correct but to the power of repentance preached by John the Baptist. Avvakum's deliberate misuse of scripture justified his mockery of the Nikonians' use of scripture: "smekh sebe sotvoril esi." See Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 882. On the correction of Church books and the system of translation under Nikon and later, see Strakhov, *Byzantine Culture*, 30–34; and Panchenko, *Slovar' knizhnikov*, 311.

³⁹ The evildoers "suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

⁴⁰ "[H]is invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made ... they [who misrepresent the truth] are without excuse." For Avvakum, the Nikonians' lack of inner vision determined their place of hell. See Avvakum's writing of 1664–65 from Mezen', "Poslanie Igumenu Feoktistu," in Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 907: "[N]e vidish'. Glaza u tebia khudy. Ne ... zabredi, brate, so slepykh ... v gorkoi Sion!"

perdition. Their claims to wisdom are foolishness (*iurodstovovanie*) in the eyes of God.⁴¹ Their blindness gives rise to vanity (*usuetsisha*), to darkness and impurity of heart (*omrachisia nerazumnoe ikh serdtse*). It relegates them to serving the creation instead of the creator (*posluzhisha tvari pache tvortsa*); it leaves their minds “corrupt” in the sense of unpurified by experiential tests of faith (*ne iskusen um*).⁴²

Paul’s characterization of misrepresenters of the truth in Romans 1 and 2 expressed many of the characteristics that Avvakum attributed to the Nikonians in *Pisaneitse* and the *Poslanie*, and in his later writings. The implied attribution to them of a “depraved mind” (*neikusen um*) suggested that their appeal to abstract, intellectual exercise as a path to Truth left them untried by the Being through which the Spirit manifests itself; it left them open to false preconceptions of perfectibility, correctness, and their own importance.⁴³ Avvakum believed that their pretense to improve Church tradition meant that that they equated the Church with themselves (*a sebe samikh naritsaiut tserkov’iu*).⁴⁴ Their blind solipsism gave rise to heresy.⁴⁵ Each act of “smoothing out the uneven” placed them deeper in hell’s pit because each correction tried to undo the paradoxical and sometimes even scandalous way that the visible manifests the invisible.⁴⁶ The leitmotif from Matthew as well as the allusion to Romans 1: 18–32 and 2: 1–12 revealed the irony that the Nikonians’ attempts to shut out divine Light would place them forever in hell’s darkness.⁴⁷

By contrast to their presumptuous pride of knowledge, a childlike *buistvo* manifested Christ’s hidden mystery (*taina*).⁴⁸ *Buistvo* was Avvakum’s answer to the Nikonians’ corrections because it made a spectacle of the incorrect, and the indirect; it manifested inner truth through “difficult” and obscure words and actions; Its ascetic repudiation of worldly vanity glorified the “crooked”

⁴¹ Rom. 1: 22: “[G]lagoliushchesia byti mudri, obiurodesha” (Gr.: *emôranthêsan* from *môria*).

⁴² Gr.: *adokimon noûn*, a mind that does not stand the test. “I iakozhe ne iskushisha imeti boga v razume, (sego radi) predade ikh bo v neiskusen um” (Rom. 1: 28) [my italics, P.H.]

⁴³ On the Nikonian ideal of perfectibility as expressed by Simeon Polotsky, see Eleonskaia, *Ruskaia publitsistika*, 137–86.

⁴⁴ Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 880.

⁴⁵ In *Poslanie*, Avvakum addresses the Nikonian heresies that he first mentioned to the tsar in *Pervaia chelobitnaia* (see Gudzii, ed., *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma*, 189). Corrections in the sign of the cross signify a violation of mystery, a refusal to acknowledge the incarnation, the resurrection, and the truth of the Holy Spirit, and an embrace of the Latin Trinitarian heresy.

⁴⁶ Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 881.

⁴⁷ “[F]or in whatever you judge another, you condemn yourself” (Rom. 2: 1).

⁴⁸ Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 879.

(in the sense of the sinful and weak [*nemoshchnyi*]) and showed it to be the vehicle of Christ's light.⁴⁹ The fool's unwillingness to play by the rules of the world signified an inner resurrection that alone could free the Church from captivity and restore the meaning of the word. Since Avvakum's primary battleground with the Nikonians was in the realm of language, he realized that his *buistvo* must be in a provocative use of words, a supposition that bore fruit in *Zhitie*.

Slavinetskii was cognizant of Avvakum's strategy and set out to disarm it. Without mentioning Avvakum personally, he divested Avvakum's vocabulary of its deeper spiritual sense, reinterpreting it from a rationalistic and authoritarian perspective. Avvakum's embrace of the indirect and mysterious nature of revelation expressed for Slavinetskii a rebellious and arrogant desire to hide the truth. Avvakum's deliberate obscurity was simple dishonesty and disobedience. Avvakum's emptying of the mind was no more than ignorance. The term for mystical silence, *bezmolvie*, now referred to the virtue of keeping quiet before one's betters.⁵⁰

Slavinetskii thus "smoothed out the uneven" in Avvakum's vocabulary by depriving it of depth. He then used this vocabulary as a weapon against Avvakum, attacking him from the vantage point of the "external wisdom" that Avvakum had exposed as a misrepresentation of Truth. Despite this expurgation of hidden wisdom, Slavinetskii claimed to be upholding Church dogma and meaning unchanged (*tverdo i nedvizhno*).⁵¹ He viewed his attack on meaning as a clarification of the obvious against minds obscured by lack of education and provinciality.

Demonstrably not caring to disguise his presumed authority (as Avvakum did in the *Pervaia chelobitnaia*), Slavinetskii spoke in the voice of the personified universal Church: She addressed the constituency under attack by Avvakum and others, now subsumed under a Nikonian neologism, "narode pravoslavnorossiiskii." Characterizing herself through the traditional Pauline concept of the mystical body of Christ (1 Cor. 12) she attempted to lull the Orthodox people into accepting her corrected forms of the Credo and dogma: "az, mati vasha ... dukhovno porodivshaia vy kupleiiu sviatago kreshcheniia i pitaiuschai vy amvrosieiu netel'noiu—telom ... Iisusa Khrista.... Moliiu vy, ne ofluchaitesia ogrady moeia, glagloi zhe; dogmat i Simvola...."⁵²

In her voice, Slavinetskii waged war on the central term in Avvakum's mystical discourse, *buistvo*. Demoting its meaning to plain rebelliousness, he

⁴⁹ The archetype for this idea was Christ's debasement of Phil. 2: 5–7 which Avvakum cited in Kudriavtsev, "Sbornik," 197n82 and 184 l. 225ob.

⁵⁰ Panich, "Slovo," 175, l. 498ob: "Ne tochiu zh muzhie, no i zheny, ... povelesia zhe v bezmolvii uchitisia so vsiakim pokoreniiem" [my italics, P.H.]

⁵¹ Ibid., 177, l. 499ob: "[N]e vera v dogmatekh svoikh ispravliaetsia ... no tokmo rechenii nekaia ot dobrykh i pravednykh prevodov...." See also ibid., 166.

⁵² Ibid., 172–73, l. 496.

reduced Avvakum and other mystics to the status of common, violent troublemakers (*miatezhniki*).⁵³ They rend Christ's body and her very "heart," the wisdom and apostolic legitimacy of the Nikonian clergy.⁵⁴ They separate the people from their true ministers, bringing about a cosmic split that undoes the very force of the incarnation (*razdeliaiushch ot Boga cheloveky, tvar' ot Tvor-tsa*). Here Slavinetskii went so far as to equate the Nikonian clergy with God-Creator in answer to Avvakum's implied claim that the Nikonians serve the creature rather than the Creator.⁵⁵ Slavinetskii refuted Avvakum's claim that the Nikonians place themselves higher than the Church by stating that the rebels act only from themselves and, unlike the Nikonian clergy, are not sent by God (*ne poslanii ... sami izidosha*).⁵⁶

Slavinetskii mocked Avvakum's self-representation as a teacher of mystery by referring to the rebels as "*tainouchitei*."⁵⁷ He interpreted *taino* to mean underhanded, and accused them of undercutting authority with their poisonous words: "*taino usekaete slavu liudei ... raskol i smiatenie tvorite*."⁵⁸ Slavinetskii noted that true successors to the apostles preach openly and make meaning clear.⁵⁹ Echoing Avvakum's play with *pokhvaliat'sia* in the *Pervaia chelobitnaia*, Slavinetskii insisted that it is not customary to glorify truth in a secretive way (*ne est' bo obychni pravde taino kkhvalitisia*).⁶⁰

Slavinetskii claimed that instead of theologians of hidden mystery, the troublemakers are ignoramuses (*nevezhdi*), blind (*slepy*) speakers of wild and rebellious ideas (*bueslovtsy* vs. *bogoslovtsy*):

Tii zhe izriadneishii suesloviatsia byti bogoslovtsi i sokrovennykh
Bozhestvennykh Pisanii tainstv iskusneishii skazatele poiavstvui-
iutsia, v dele zhe samom sut' bueslovtsi, i slepii i nevezhdi.⁶¹

⁵³ On foolery as social protest, see Likhachev and Panchenko, "*Smekhovoi mir*," 139–83. The bishop Pavel of Kolomna was the first among the anti-Nikonian clergy to embrace "holy foolishness" after Nikon deprived him of his rank. Nikon treated him as a common criminal and had him murdered as he wandered. See *ibid.*, 158.

⁵⁴ Panich, "*Slovo*," 178, l. 501.

⁵⁵ See Rom. 1: 25.

⁵⁶ Panich, "*Slovo*," 175, l. 498ob.: "*Sikh zhe tainouchitelei nizhe Bog posla, nizhe arkhieriee ... no sii sami izidosha,...* "

⁵⁷ The word *tainouchenie* refers to hidden mystery manifest to believers. See the reference to the incarnation as a secret teaching in a text of 1097: "*Tvoe tainouchenie vernym iavisia*," in I. I. Sreznevskii, *Slovar' drevnerusskogo iazyka* (St. Petersburg, 1890–1912; repr., Moscow: Kniga, 1989), vol. 3, pt. 2.

⁵⁸ Panich, "*Slovo*," 175, l. 498.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 174, l. 497ob.: "*Vlast' zhe dadesia ... vsego Bozhestvennago Pisanii razsuzhdeniia ne tainouchitelem, no apostolom i tekhn preemnikom-arkhierieem, ikh zhe polozhe Bog vo mne, Tserkvi....*"

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 178, l. 501 [my italics, P.H.].

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 174, l. 497.

The term *bueslovtsi* undoubtedly referred to Avvakum's verbal trouble-making with the tsar and with Fedor Rtishchev to undercut Slavinetskii's own authority in the latters' eyes. Slavinetskii expressed outrage that the "rebels" dare to vilify the tsar, not to speak of his inner council (*siglit*) and the ongoing Church council. Mocking their pretenses to be "tried and tested interpreters of hidden wisdom" (*sokrovenykh Bozhestvennykh Pisanii tainstv iskusneishii skazatele*), Slavinetskii called their *buistvo* an absence of education. Not only are they untried (*neiskusnye*) by the disciplines of rhetoric, philosophy, and theology but they haven't even mastered grammar, and yet they have the gall (*bezumie, buistvo*) to presume to interpret Scripture!

O bezumiia! O, prederzosti! O, tshcheslaviia! *Buii* i neiskusnii chelovetsi, edva pisma slagati navykshii, grammaticheskiiia zhe khitrosti, ne pomianu ritorskiiia, filosofskiiia i bogoslovskiiia imi zhe vse sostoitsia Pisanie Bozhestvennoe, nizhe nachenshii vkushati, derzaiut Bozhestvennaia Pisaniiia po svoemu nevezhestvu tolkovati.⁶²

This outburst undercut Avvakum's appeal to sacred "ignorance" (*nevezhestvo*). Furthermore, the rebels' innocence of the tools of interpretation and inquiry made them "shockingly audacious outsiders" (*derzostnitsi zhe vneshnii*) to the science of teaching about scriptural wisdom. How dare they, like Avvakum, critique the Nikonians for "external wisdom" and for refusing to become childlike and open themselves to the "deep things of the Spirit?" His adversaries' illusion that they can interpret scripture made them, not the Nikonians, creatures of vanity and deception (*vskuiu liubite suetnaia i ishchete lzhu*).⁶³

Epifanii did not fail to address the meaning of divine wisdom itself. He equated wisdom, the heart of the Church, with the clergy as an institution, implying that the higher his rank, the more the Nikonian priest possessed wisdom: "'iako zhe serdtse mudrosti est' mesto, tako sviashchennitsi, kol'mi pache episkopi, sut' priiatelishcha dukhovnyiia mudrosti.'"⁶⁴ Slavinetskii next turned to the ancient Byzantine-Muscovite tradition of exegesis of Proverbs 9: 1–5 and transformed it into a weapon against the rebels' mysticism. Traditionally this exegesis served to prophesy the role of the universal church-empire as a locus of mystical wisdom and a participant in God's transcendental reality.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., 174, l. 497. N. Gur'ianova argues that this more rabid passage is a slightly later insert (after the Council) by Evfimii Chudovskii (*Tvorcheskoe nasledie*, 61).

⁶³ Panich, "Slovo," 179, l. 502.

⁶⁴ See Panich, "Slovo," 178, l. 501. Here Epifanii used against his adversaries Avvakum's favorite authority, John Chrysostom.

⁶⁵ Proverbs 9: 1–5 was traditionally viewed as a revelation of the wisdom and providence indwelling in the Church through the incarnation. On its use to sanction a theo-

Now Slavinetskii presented the Nikonian universal Church as Wisdom building her house and sending out her servants (the clergy) to call him who is "simple" (*bezumen*) to her feast of knowledge. The literal translation of the Greek term for "simple," *aphrôn*, by the Slavonic *bezumen* allowed Slavinetskii to direct this call to his adversaries.⁶⁶ Up to this point he had interpreted their *bezumie* as rebelliousness and lack of education. Now he could identify their *bezumie* with a mental vacuity that could only be remedied by the particular, worldly brand of wisdom offered by the Nikonian church. Thus he found material for desacralizing his adversaries' appeal to a Pauline mystical-ascetic concept of *bezumie* in a passage that had previously been a centerpiece of mystical exegesis for the meaning of the theocratic state.

Slavinetskii used Proverbs 9 to evince the same authoritarian model that had informed his earlier reinterpretation of the mystical union of God and Creation. Earlier he had implied an analogy between the union of creation and God and the subordination of the people to ecclesiastic authority. Now, his conception of Wisdom building her house entailed a call for the uneducated self-proclaimed teachers to subordinate themselves to the clergy's authority or face divine judgment. This rhetorical device was thus Slavinetskii's final answer to Avvakum's prophesy of the judgment that faces the Nikonians for denying hidden wisdom.

Slavinetskii described the Nikonian Church as the place of the Trinity's hypostatic divine wisdom: "Se i mudrost' Bozhiiia ipostasnaia sozda sebe, mene khram." For him the process of rational investigation and scholastic debate mastered by the elite Nikonian clergy clarified and refined hypostatic wisdom. This debate distinguished between truth and falsehood: "No *iskushaite* dukhy.... Est' bo dukh istinny i dukh lesti."⁶⁷ The reference to *iskusit'* answered Avvakum's implicit reference to the Nikonians depraved mind (*neiskusn um*) by reinterpreting the meaning of *iskusit'* (to test, try) in a rationalistic sense. The reference to *dukh* both alluded to and subverted the meaning of 1 Corinthians 2: 10, the passage that informed Avvakum's idea

cratic conception of Muscovy, see Priscilla Hunt, "Confronting the End: The Interpretation of the Last Judgment in a Novgorod Wisdom Icon," *Byzantinoslavica* 65 (2007): 275–325; T. E. Samoilova, *Kniazheskie portrety v rospisi Arkhangel'skogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremliia* (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2004), 79–85; Priscilla Hunt, "Ivan IV's Personal Mythology of Kingship," *Slavic Review* 52: 4 (1993): 769–809; V. G. Briusova, "Kompozitsiia 'Novozavetnoi Troitsy' v stenopisi Uspenskogo sobora," in *Uspenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremliia*, ed. E. S. Smirnova (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 87–100; O. I. Podobedova, *Moskovskaia shkola zhivopisi pri Ivane IV: Raboty v Moskovskom Kreml'e 40-kh – 70kh godov XVI v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), 51, 62–64.

⁶⁶ *Aphrôn* literally meant "lacking 'mind' (*bez-um*).

⁶⁷ "Test out the spirits ... for there is a spirit of truth and a spirit of lie." See Panich, "Slovo," 180, l. 502ob. When speaking of spirits, Paul opposes the spirit of man and of God (1 Cor. 2: 10) (*dukh bozhii* and *dukh cheloveka*).

that the Spirit, not the mind, searches out (*ispytovat'*) truth in argument.⁶⁸ Epifanii's reinterpretation of the meaning of *iskusit'* also showed the lie in his antagonists' reputed claims to be tried (*iskusneishi*) expounders of hidden mystery.

Almost every word of Slavinetskii's sermon can be seen as a response to and attack on Avvakum's hidden message.⁶⁹ Slavinetskii set out to desacralize Avvakum's mystical vocabulary just as he had desacralized the Church books in Avvakum's eyes by "smoothing out" their meaning. Later Avvakum lamented in *Zhitie*: "Akh true-believing soul! Everything high has been brought low" (Okh, pravovernoi dushe! Vsia gorniaia dolu bysha).⁷⁰ Avvakum knew that Slavinetskii had degraded Pauline mystical vocabulary to its inverted antithesis, the profane worldly dimension of meaning and that he had misrepresented the truth by presenting the worldly meaning as the only meaning.

Avvakum's rhetoric brought into the open the changed conception of wisdom that underlay the Nikonian corrections and their persecution of the traditionalists.⁷¹ Slavinetskii openly acknowledged wisdom to be rationally

⁶⁸ *Ispytovat'* is a synonym for *iskusit'*. See *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI–XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), vyp. 265.

⁶⁹ Even Slavinetskii's reference to his adversaries' "tainosheptaniia ... razvrashchenno-glagonnikov" referred to the "whisperers" (*shepotniki*) of Romans 1: 30, a passage that Avvakum had implicitly aimed against the Nikonians in *Poslanie*. See Panich, "Slovo," 173, l. 496. Slavinetskii's attack also must have been aimed at the writings and preaching of the priest Lazar. Lazar shared a similar fate as Avvakum before and during the Council and became Avvakum's co-exile in Pustozersk. His appeal to Paul's conception of Wisdom (1 Cor. 1) and his defense of a hidden language resonate with Avvakum's. Rather than appeal to foolishness, however, he quoted Christ (Luke 8: 9) to defend the hidden: "[V]am est' dano razumeti tainy tsar'stva nebesnago, a protchim v pritchakh. I togo radi prikrovenny. Da ne budem prezirately slovu Bozhiiu." Slavinetskii responded by using the same quotation in *Slovo* (Panich, "Slovo," 176, l. 499). M. Pliukhanova notes that Iurii Krizhanich called Lazar *buen* and accused him of drunkenness, which behavior, more likely, reflected his spiritual exaltation (*apostol'skoe op'ianenie*) while preaching during his exile in Tobolsk. See *Pustozerskaia proza*, 206, 217, 351–52; and Ia. L. Barskov, *Pamiatniki pervykh let russkago staroobriadchestva* (St. Petersburg: Tip. M. A. Aleksandrova, 1912), 53.

⁷⁰ See *Zhizneopisaniia*, 171. Avvakum saw degradation of the high as a descent into hell's pit (*Poslanie*, in Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 881) and also as an inverted climb up a "bitter Sion." See "Pis'mo igumenu Feoktistu" (1664 or 1665), in Platonov, ed., *Pamiatniki istorii staroobriadchestva*, 908. Lazar, during the same period, had appealed to the Tsar to keep in view the ever-abiding Mt. Sion (Ps. 125: 1) even if it means fleeing into the actual mountains to avoid the Nikonians (as prophesied in Mark 13: 14). See *Pustozerskaia proza*, 210–11.

⁷¹ The monk Tikhon from the Makarievskii Zheltovodskii monastery wrote: "O sila bozhia, premudrosti bozhii, kak udalikhomsia?!... Gde tamo Solomonii premudrost'?"

explicit, a function of institutional structure and authority based on neo-scholastic education, abiding in the virtues of clarity and rational consistency and of obedience to one's institutional superiors. Slavinetskii's technique of subversion glossed over his dismissal of the traditional moral-ascetic-mystical interpretation of wisdom. This technique disguised his normalization of one-dimensional meanings and set the church on a path of secularization. His desacralization of *buistvo* opened the way to the Church's condemnation of so-called fake-foolery (*lzheiuodstvo*) at the Council of 1666–67.⁷² His *Slovo* was a symptom of mystical theology's imminent death in the institutional church. Its pomposity and verbal ingenuity covered over the loss of mystical silence. They opened the door to the future panegyrics through which the literary elite of the church would serve the court.

Avvakum had confronted this new poetic practice and its underlying ideology with foolery as early 1664. The "evil craftiness" (*zlokhitrstvo*) in Slavinetskii's *Slovo* inspired Avvakum to new heights of foolish play (*prekhyshchrenie*) so as not to allow Slavinetskii and his kind to get away with eulogizing the Church and State elite in place of God. In 1664 Avvakum had developed the core components of his future lived testimony to the power of the word: a proto-autobiographical narrative with hidden meaning, an archetypal structure, a coherent ideological message and rhetorical method. Synthesizing these components, he daringly transformed the conventions of the martyr's life to produce *Zhitie*, a holy foolish alternative to the corrupted Church books. His poetic practice in *Zhitie* was a last defense of the mystical theology that had sanctioned both Church and State. Mute to the ears of the new elite, it was resonant with silence to the ears of his followers.⁷³ It offered them a liberation theology, freeing them from the Nikonian captivity by resurrecting the wisdom of the word.

Milosti ostavi nas, obretokhom goresti bezdnu...." [my italics, P.H.]. See Kudriavtsev, "Sbornik," 169.

⁷² See S. A. Ivanov, *Blazhennye pokhaby: Kul'turnaia istoriia iurodstva* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2005), 310–16; and Likhachev and Panchenko, "Smekhovoi mir," 138.

⁷³ On the transmission of esoteric knowledge to the faithful, see R. O. Crummey, "The Old Belief as Popular Religion: New Approaches," *Slavic Review* 52: 4 (1993): 700–13; and Priscilla Hunt, "Avvakum's 'Fifth Petition to the Tsar' and the Ritual Process," *Slavic and East European Journal* 46: 3 (2003): 483–510, esp. 485, 501–02. For an updated Russian version, see "Piataia chelobitnaia Avvakuma k tsariu i ritual'nyi protsess," *Germenevika drevnerusskoi literatury* 15 (2009), forthcoming. On the theology in *Zhitie*, see P. Khant [Hunt], "Premudrost' v Zhitii protopopa Avvakuma i problema novatorstva," in *Provintsiia v kul'ture: Literatura, iskusstvo, byt*, ed. V. N. Alekseev, III Remezovskie chteniia (Novosibirsk: SO RAN, forthcoming 2009).