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Nil's and Iosif's Rhetoric of *Starchestvo*

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Abstract

The ideal master-disciple relationship or *starchestvo* associated with Paisii Velichkovskii (1722–92) and his epigones rests on a complex monastic legacy stretching back to Christian Antiquity and includes early Russia's two greatest native writing elders, Nil Sorskii (1433/4–1508) and Iosif Volotskii (1439/40–1515). Pedagogical networks, circulation of texts, structural continuities, and workings of the hierarchy's nomenklatura system in the 16th century contributed to the solidification of Nil's and Iosif's literary and institutional legacy in which this rhetoric was embedded and expressed. Their genres and sub-genres combine testament, regulation, sermon, systematic exposition, polemic, hagiography, and epistle, all freely utilizing maxims, enthymemes (rhetorical syllogisms, sometimes as questions), emotional appeals, scare stories, and insults, as well as poetic imagery. Both recognize the disciples' active role in master's success, as they address a variety of audiences. Nil's spiritual treatise discusses the need for the "reliable" teacher, while his epistles place each recipient in his proper relationship to authority. Iosif directly speaks in turn to the pastor and the senior elders and officials of their responsibilities; he shows the multiplicity of authority lines within the large cenobium; and he polemically defends formal structures and discipline. His hagiography depicts the ideal elder as advising hesychast-hermit, community disciplinarian, and politically indispensable supplicant to God. Crucial for our overall sense of *starchestvo*, Iosif's applies the New Testament maxims concerning "binding" and "loosing" to the teacher as teacher, while Nil's Tradition/Instruction, specifying that only those qualified to listen and speak guide others, bridges to the modern era.

Keywords

elder, Iosif Volotskii, monasticism, monastic rule, Nil Sorskii, pedagogy, rhetoric, *starchestvo*

Either submit to such a man, who is witnessed in his practice of the word and spiritual knowledge, ... [or] to God by the Divine Writings, but not irrationally as some; ... of such John Climacus ... says: "With self-regulation, rather than direction, they would sail by presumption," which is not for us to have.

— Nil Sorskii

If someone says: “There is no need for so many council brothers,” he is really saying: “There is no need for good order, reverence, and a peaceful administration in the church, refectory, or monastery, but everything shall be irregular and perverse.”

— Iosif Volotskii

Irina Paert's recently published *Spiritual Elders: Charisma and Tradition in Russian Orthodoxy* is chiefly about modern *starchestvo* in Russia and what might be seen as a 'greater Russian' cultural zone, as this phenomenon developed, starting with Paisii Velichkovskii (1722-92) in the eighteenth century, and operated during the Soviet period in Finland and France as well as Russia. For earlier periods, her initial chapter confronts us with the dilemma that our sources are rather scanty and render difficult any summary conclusions regarding the ideal, total discipleship to a master to facilitate the re-formation of one's personality under the latter's guidance – this constituting one way to envision the essence of *starchestvo*. For the modern period, on the other hand, she shows us that eldership entailed a good deal more than such discipleship, as all sorts of people sought out the advice of elders, by direct contact or epistles, and that pilgrimages to the abodes of such masters constituted an integral aspect of this overall phenomenon.¹ Acknowledging my intellectual debt to Professor Paert, and wondering, now, why I never directly addressed the question of the master-disciple relationship as a specific subject in my recent book-cum-translation on Nil Sorskii,² I propose to investigate, not the entire problem of early Rus'/Russian *starchestvo*, but chiefly one aspect, its rhetoric – that is, the modes of conveying the nature and justification of the mentor-disciple relationship as well as the mentor's mentoring. I see in the literature associated with just the *starchestvo* aspects of monastic life – apophthegmatic, erapocritical, hagiographic, heychastic, homiletic, epistolary, and regulatory – the link between the narrow, tighter, mentor-acolyte dyad and the broad, looser connection between the master and his (or her) wider

The author would like to thank the participants of the 2011 Association for the Study of Eastern Christianity conference for their encouraging reception of an abbreviated oral presentation of this paper and Robert Greene for his conscientious and helpful serving as my “outside reader.”

¹ Irina Paert, *Spiritual Elders: Charisma and Tradition in Russian Orthodoxy* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1990).

² David Goldfrank, tr., ed., introd., *Nil Sorsky: The Authentic Writings* (hereafter, *NSAW*) = *Cistercian Studies*, 221 (Kalamazoo: 2008); I do, however, discuss what we know of Nil's possible mentor and disciples and of his relationship with them: 33-36, 37-44, 58-61.

following, which Paert perforce had to address in her monograph. Time and space limit this investigation mainly to one period, the late 15th-early 16th century, when early Russia's two greatest native writing elders flourished and made their mark on monasticism and society. And such limits prevent my discussing at all such other monastic literature of the period relating to the practice and even the very term *starchestvo* as represented by such works as "The Elders' Tradition/Instruction to the Novice Monk" (*Predanie starcheskogo novonachal'nomu inoku*), not to say the convoy of miscellanies that go under the name *Starchestvo*, and could serve as general guides to monastic life.³

The Setting

What can we say about the social and religious environment, where Nil and Iosif operated, and which required that elements of *starchestvo* play a prominent role in their writing? The obvious and the slightly less obvious. First of all, some monastic elders and superiors, not to say founders, were thrust into the role of spiritual mentor. Wherever monasticism existed, so did the basic elements of *starchestvo*, constituting part of the ABC's of instruction in renunciation and obedience, as well as in the eoptics (adept training) of asceticism and prayer. Second, some laymen sought the advice of these experts. How could it be otherwise, when seculars and monastics possessed the same physical and psychic anatomy and functioned within the same intellectual and doctrinal framework of salvation?

Third, stillness or hesychasm, the elite Orthodox spiritual movement of the day, whose advanced practices traditionally required mentorship,⁴

³⁾ See S. A. Semiachko, "Istoriia teksta 'Predaniia starcheskogo novonachal'nomu inoky' i rannaia istoriia sbornika 'Starchestva,'" and "Sbornik 'Starchestvo' v Kirillo-Belozerskom monastyre," in S. A. Semiachko, ed., *Knizhnye tseny Drevnei Rusi: Kirillo-Belozerskom monastyr'* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2008), 25-71, 211-96.

⁴⁾ John Climacus, *Scala Paradisi*, in Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca* (hereafter, *PG*), 161 vols. in 166 (Paris: Migne, 1857-66), 88: 1097D (adapted in a slightly different sense by Nil Sorskii: Gelian M. Prokhorov, ed. and tr., *Prepodobnye Nil Sorskii i Innokentii Komel'skii: Sochineniia* (hereafter *PNSIK*) (St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2005), 196-97; *NSAW*, 223. The reader is reminded or advised that only the German (von Lilienfeld), modern Greek (Grolimund), recent modern Russian (Prokhorov), and my English translations are thoroughly reliable (within reason: none of us is perfect); the French (Jacamon), Italian (Bose Community), and other Russian (Iustin) and English

had rather recently obtained a special boost from Gregory the Sinaite (1263-1346), the founder of a Greco-Slavic community near Paroria in the southeastern Bulgarian mountains, and was textually alive and well in eastern Rus' (Russia).⁵ From his disciples there emerged by the 1360s the *Scete Typikon* – liturgical cell and ad hoc congregational rules for monks living outside of obedience, maybe on the fringes of a genuine monastery, and sometimes requiring interpretation of the readings, confession of inner thoughts, and then directed instruction.⁶ Extant presently (and perhaps always) only in a Greek-influenced Slavic version, this text circulated and was copied in 15th- and 16th-century Russia, providing at the least a model if not functioning liturgical and cell rule for some small communities and a few seasoned cenobitic monks, who functioned outside of the normal obedience structures.⁷ Six such readily identifiable figures for our purposes would be Nil Sorskii, who for a period resided in a cell outside of Kirillov-Belozerskii and left a copy of the *Scete Typikon* in his own hand;⁸ his disciple Innokentii Okhliabinin, who founded his own cloister and whose miscellany contains a copy of this work along with Nil's key monastic writings;⁹ his admirer, if not disciple in the strict sense, German Podol'nyi, who likewise dwelt in a cell outside of Kirillov for

(Izvol'sky, Maloney) translations are not, Justin's pre-Revolutionary explicative paraphrasing of Nil's major treatise having given rise to new redaction, now in several variants: see *NSAW*, xi, 105-09. Please note as well that the paragraph enumerations in my translations of Nil and Iosif are my own for easier analysis and reference.

⁵ Gelian M. Prokhorov, "Keleinaia isikhastskaia literatura (Ioann Lestvichnik, Avva Dorofei, Isaak Sirin, Simeon Novyi Bogoslov, Grigorii Sinaït) v biblioteke Troitse-Sergievoi lavry s XIV po XVII v.," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* (hereafter *TODRL*), 28 (1974): 317-24; and "Keleinaia isikhastskaia literatura (Ioann Lestvichnik, Avva Dorofei, Isaak Sirin, Simeon Novyi Bogoslov, Grigorii Sinaït) v biblioteke Kirillo-Belozerskogo monastyria s XIV po XVII v.," in E. D. Vodolazkin, ed., *Monastyrskaia kul'tura: Vostok i Zapad*, (St Petersburg: Institut russkoi literatury RAN, 1999), 44-48.

⁶ *NSAW*, 262-63.

⁷ E. V. Beliakova, "Russkaia rukopisnaia traditsiia Skitskogo ustava," in N.V. Sinitsyna et al., ed., *Monashestvo i monastyri v Rossii XI-XX veka. Istoricheskie ocherki* (Moscow: Nauka, 2002), 150-62; also Robert Romanchuk, *Byzantine Pedagogy and Hermeneutics in the Rus' North: Monks and Masters at the Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery, 1397-1501* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 2007), 94-104.

⁸ Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, f. Eparkhal'nyi, No. 349, l. 1-8 ob.) (Hilandar Research Library, microfilm); translated in *NSAW*, 259-69.

⁹ *NSAW*, 38-39; M. C. Borovkova-Maikova, ed., *Nil Sorskogo, Predanie i Ustav = Pamiatniki drevnei pis'mennosti i iskusstva*, 179 (St Petersburg: 1912), Prilozhenie, xxv-xxxii.

a period;¹⁰ Iosif's disciples, Nil Polev and Dionisii Zvenigorodskii, who built hermitages near Nil's, studied and, in the case of at least Polev, collaborated with Sorskii, before they returned to Iosifov;¹¹ and the expert Iosifov priest-copyist Simeon *Kliroshanin* or *Pustynnik*, one of whose asecetic miscellanies contains the *Scete Typikon* along with Nil Sorskii's *Predanie* (Tradition/Instruction) and so-miscalled *Ustav* (it's a treatise, not a typicon) in the same order and sub-recensions as the Nil Sorskii-Nil Polev miscellany containing that rule.¹²

Fourth, the evolution of the institution of council brothers or elders (*sobornye startsy/ brat'ia*), where, for example, in Troitsa-Sergeev soon after Ivan IV's death, this elite group forced a quasi-constitutional pledge on their archimandrite not to interfere with the cloister's economic and financial affairs,¹³ renders it hard to imagine that they would accept his or any other person's spiritual direction except on the strictly voluntary basis of the individual seeking the counsel of another.¹⁴ Fifth, the very structure of such monasteries meant that someone who chose to be the disciple of a given superior or eminent elder would at times also be under the supervision of other monastery officials, this creating a fuzzy, flexible zone of joint responsibility for the disciple's behavior, if not his spiritual development. And here as well, the possible division between a cloister superior empowered as father confessor and a personal, non-priestly elder created a sphere of shared responsibility.

Of course the monasticism and *starchestvo* of Nil's and Iosif's day did not emerge *ex nihilo* in Rus' terrain, and before we move on to these two

¹⁰ See *NSAW*, 42–44; Gelian M. Prokhorov, "German Podol'nyi," in Dmitrii S. Likhachev et al., eds., *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi*, 3 vols. in 7 (Leningrad/St Petersburg: Nauka: 1987–2004), 2.1: 150–52.

¹¹ David Goldfrank, "Nil Sorskii's Following among the Iosifo-Volokolamsk Elders," in Michael Flier, Nancy Shileds Kollmann, Karen Petrone, and Valerie Kivelson, eds., *The New Muscovite Cultural History: A Collection in Honor of Daniel B. Rowland* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2009), 210–13; also *NSAW*, 44–48.

¹² Goldfrank, "Nil Sorskii's Following," 214.

¹³ David Miller, *St. Sergius of Radonezh, His Trinity Monastery, and the Formation of the Russian Identity, 1322–1605* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 2010), 162–63; see also Jennifer Spock's contribution to this volume on the fusion of the economic/administrative and spiritual leadership at Solovki and the types supervision there.

¹⁴ See, for example, in this volume, Dykstra's translation of the Iosifov *Zapis'naia kniga*, its page [71], where in 1606 the monastery's *dvoretskii* (majordomo) Lavrentii is named as a disciple of the leading elder Guri Stupishin.

masters, we shall take a backward glance for one set of precedents. From among the most important of the monastic texts representing late 15th-century Russia's legacy from the Kievan period, Nestor's hagiography illustrates the interweaving of the elements of *starchestvo* within his depiction of the two seminal figures of Rus' monasticism, the Kievo-Pecherskii founders, Antonii and Feodosii (ca. 1036-74). Antonii is the initial, authoritative, charismatic figure, though he is not a priest and he appoints others to fill that function. Feodosii seeks out Antonii and becomes his disciple. So does the boyar Ioann's son Varlaam. When Feodosii's bereft and frantic mother arrives in desperate search of him, Antonii greets her and, in Archimandrite Kassian's early 15th-century version, says a prayer and blesses her before their extensive conversation. Later the entire elite of Kiev come to Feodosii, the abbot and hence priest, for confession, and they "depart having received great profit from him."¹⁵ His prestige is so high that he can mollify some of the harsh judgments by magistrates. And on his deathbed, he instructs his successor Stefan how to tend a flock.¹⁶ The master-disciple relationship is no simple matter of the latter's following the former's commands. Antonii has to persuade the young neophyte Feodosii even to see to his mother, whose smothering, possessive clutches he has just recently escaped. As abbot, Feodosii cultivates such humility, partially by shabby dressing, that his disciples "reproach and insult" him for his forbearance of ill-treatment by outsiders. Another disciple, Damian, is perfect in his acquisition of this humility, and so attached that in his death throes he needs to be assured of Feodosii's guiding presence in the afterlife – for sure a hyperbolic model, rather than human material for a future, successful, mentoring *starets* capable of passing his own and metier's accumulated wisdom on to future generations.¹⁷

Embedded in this Life of Feodosii lie two modes of the rhetoric of *starchestvo*. Nestor includes, as an example of Feodosii's teaching, one brief sermon, reminiscent of Theodore the Studite's short orations to his monks and of the several extant pieces of this genre attributed to Feodosii.¹⁸

¹⁵ Paul Hollingsworth, tr., ed., introd., *Hagiography of Kievan Rus'* = Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature, 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1992), 42-43, 45, 58.

¹⁶ Ibid., 88-90.

¹⁷ Ibid., 43-44, 67, 87.

¹⁸ Ibid., 56-57; I. P. Eremin, "Literaturnoe nasledie Feodosiia Pecherskogo," *TODRL*, 5 (1947), 173-83; Rossiiskaia national'naia biblioteka, f. Biblioteka Kirillo-Belozerskogo monastyria, d. 85/210 (c. 1521, one of Guriu Tushin's codices – containing Theodore the Studite's brief *oglasheniia*.)

These works by their very nature apply to the monastic superior as general teacher and guide. More specific to the tutorial, which lies at the core of *starchestvo* mentoring, is communication of a point via the aphorism. This takes us back to the Gospels and beyond, to the Old Testament and generically related wisdom literature with analogies as well in ancient East and South Asian traditions and texts. And none other than Aristotle provides the key to understanding the utility of this device. “Maxims are the premises or conclusions of enthymemes without the syllogism,” the enthymeme itself constituting “a rhetorical syllogism,” which may omit premises, “for the hearer can add it himself.”¹⁹ As pedagogical tools, then, such adages induce the perceptive listener or reader to think through the issue, grasp all the premises, logical steps, and conclusions, and hence become better educated in the process, while s/he simultaneously acquires a mnemonic short cut for remembering and imparting the principle. The Gospel’s camel and eye of the needle snare the young Varlaam Ioannovich for the life of renunciation,²⁰ and then Antonii warns the lad with another of the Savior’s metaphorical dicta: “No one putting his hand to the plough and looking back is worthy of the heavenly kingdom.”²¹ Nestor understood the essence of such pedagogy, for he has Feodosii using parables to “admonish ... indirectly,” hoping that his listener would “quickly realize his fault.”²²

Fast-forward four centuries, and we are at the start of Nil’s and Iosif’s monastic careers. How does *starchestvo* figure in them? Although tradition assigns the role of Nil’s mentor to Paisii Iaroslavov (d. 1501),²³ who presumably would have left his original Spaso-Kamennyi for Kirillov in order to fulfill this role before his rather brief tenure as an unsuccessful, would-be reforming igumen of Troitsa-Sergiev (1479–82), we have no idea if Nil had a genuine mentor with a long-term relationship. As a priest and former abbot, Paisii’s name necessarily stands before Nil’s the few times their

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Technes Rhetorikes*, II.xxi.2 (1394a), I.ii.8, 13 (1356b24, 1357a18–19), in John Henry Freese, ed. with tr., *Aristotle: The “Art” of Rhetoric*, Loeb Classical Library (New York: Putnam, 1926), 278–79, 18–19, 24–25.

²⁰ Hollingsworth, *Hagiography*, 45; Matt 19:24, Mark 10:25, Luke 18:25: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven: – “kingdom of God” in the original.

²¹ Hollingsworth, *Hagiography*, 46; Luke 9:62: “kingdom of God” in the original.

²² Hollingsworth, *Hagiography*, 56.

²³ The source is the very suspect “*Pis'mo o neliubkakh*” (Writ of Enmities or Letter of Animosity), in Ia. S. Lur'e and A. A., Zimin, *Poslaniia Iosifa Volotskogo* (hereafter *PIV*) (Moscow-Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1959), 367, for the text; on its authenticity, see Donald Ostrowski’s contribution to this volume.

names are given together, such as by Archbishop Gennadii, who treats them as among the most knowledgeable residents in the Beloozero region. We stand on firmer ground regarding Nil's disciple Innokentii Okhliabiniin, due to the evidence within the latter's testament-rule (*Zavet*), referring authoritatively to the writings of "my/our Lord (*gospodin*) and my teacher (*uchitel'*), the elder Nil."²⁴ With German Podol'nyi we can observe something of a pedagogical and friendship network. This one-time Kirillov bibliographer has his own pupils, whom he abandons, when he establishes his cell outside of Kirillov around 1501. Nil's epistle to German indicates a loose practical partnership accompanying Nil's ongoing status as former on-site and now periodic distant teacher and spiritual advisor.²⁵ German's recording in one of his codices the deaths of Paisii, of Nil, and of his brother Andrei Maiko, a prominent state secretary, as well as the name of his "friend" Ivan Gavrilov Zabolotskii,²⁶ indicates the existence of such a network. Nil's three other authentic epistles show the prominent, erudite elder Gurii Tushin, the fallen aristocrat Vassian Patrikeev, and an anonymous monastic novice all seeking Nil's spiritual-pedagogical counsel, the third one of them planning to visit him personally, where the real exchange will take place. Gurii, briefly igumen in Kirillov (1484) and subsequently a prolific copyist and organizer of codex production there, has several genuine disciples of his own and cooperates with Nil Polev as one of Nil Sorskii's literary co-executors.²⁷

For our understanding of prevalent notions of *starchestvo*, the Nil Sorskii-Vassian Patrikeev connection is instructive. If Ostrowski and Pliguzov are correct, writings known earliest only from the 1550s and in very few copies, maybe just one, incorrectly associate Nil with Vassian Patrikeev's opposition to monastic control of villages:²⁸ a pseudo-historical tale from Iosifov

²⁴ *PNSIK*, 321-22; *NSAW*, 275.

²⁵ *PNSIK*, 238-45; *NSAW*, 245-49.

²⁶ N(ikolai) K(onstantinovich) Nikol'skii, *Opisanie rukopisei Kirillo-Belozerskogo monastyrja, sostavlennoe v kontse XV veka* = *Pamiatniki drevnei pis'mennosti*, 113 (1897), XXVII-XXVIII; and *Kirillo-Belozerskii monastyr' i ego ustroistvo do vtoroi chetverti XVII veka* (1397-1625) (hereafter *K-BMU*), 2 vols. in 3 (vol. 1, St. Petersburg: Synodal'naia typografia, 1897, 1910; vol. 2, eds. Z. V. Dmitrieva, E. V. Krushitel'nitskaia, T. I. Shablona, St. Petersburg: RAN/SPb Institut Istorii/SPb Filial Arkhiva/Dmitrii Bulanin, 2006), 2:163-64; *NSAW*, 33-37, 42-44.

²⁷ Nikol'skii, *K-BMU*, 2: 157; *NSAW*, 39-41.

²⁸ Donald Ostrowski, "Loving Silence and Avoiding Pleasant Conversations: The Political Views of Nil Sorskii," in Nancy Shields Kollmann, Donald Ostrowski, Andrei Pliguzov, and Daniel Rowland, eds., *Kamen' kraeiug"l'n": Rhetoric of the Medieval Slavic World*.

and an abbreviated pseudo-Vassian treatise against Iosif, originating probably in Solovki,²⁹ but not, we might note, the polemical transcript of Vassian's heresy trial, found only in a late sixteenth-century manuscript.³⁰ All three of these writings treat Vassian as Nil's disciple; in two Vassian calls Nil "my elder,"³¹ and in one both of them have disciples. So we encounter by the 1550s or 1560s an imagined earlier discipleship network, originating with Paisii, bolstered by Nil's having visited Mount Athos, supported by Maksim Grek and his following, and led after Nil's death in 1508 by Vassian. Reciprocally, in his trial, Vassian calls the mentor of the hostile witness Dosifei "your Iosif," as if the battle were in part between *moi starets Nil* and *tvoi Iosif*. More curiously, at one point in the trial, at least according to the transcript, Vassian allegedly says: "Elders from Iosifov Monastery have not been in my cell; I do not allow them in; my affairs have nothing to do with them," as if these discipleship lines had created social barriers. But Dosifei, this being Iosif's nephew or junior cousin and disciple Dosifei Toporkov, the creator of the combined Biblical-Roman-Byzantine-South Slavic-Rus' *Russkii Khronograf*, shows such to be a lie, and Vassian admits it: "My Lord Dosifei is a great and fine elder and has often been in my cell."³² Like the Tories and Whigs of the 1830s-1840s, who all had gone to the same schools, belonged to the same clubs, and read the same newspapers, or, more so, like their contemporary Russian Slavophiles and Westernizers, such rare learned folk in Muscovy as Dosifei and Vassian, despite any differences, had too much in common totally to ignore each

Essays Presented to Edward L. Keenan on His Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students (Cambridge, MA: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 19 [1995] 1997): 476-96; Andrei Pliguzov, *Polemika v russkoi tserkvi pervoi treti XVI stoletii* (Moscow: Indrik, 2002), 81-178, 253-77.

²⁹) "Pis'mo o neliubkakh" and "Prenie s Iosifom," respectively in *PIV*, 367, and *N(adezhda)* A. Kazakova, *Vassian Patrokeeve i ego sochineniia* (hereafter, *VPS*) (Moscow-Leningrad, Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1960), 278-80. For a defense of accuracy and slightly earlier dating, see A. I. Alekseev, *Pod znakom kotsa vremeni. Ocherki russkoi religioznosti* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2002), 245-315. The "Prenie" has Iosif calling his opponent "Vassian Pustynnik," a clever *nom de plume*, which could fit for part of his initial period as an involuntary monk, when, exiled to Kirillovo, when Vassian might have been in a position to establish or simply live in an attached hermitage, but maybe no longer, and suspect after Vasilius (future III) won the succession struggle, and Vassian returned to Moscow to a (likely) plush existence in Simonov Monastery.

³⁰) *VPS*, 285.

³¹) *VPS*, 280, 296

³²) *VPS*, 296.

other in what I have termed elsewhere Middle Muscovy's "republic of sacred letters."³³

The sources connected to Iosif reveal some of the same and some other aspects of the *starchestvo* of this era, which we have already seen in Nil. Iosif himself consciously stands in a straight line stemming from Sergii of Radonezh through one of his disciples Nikita of Vysotskii Monastery in Borovsk, and the latter's disciple, Iosif's "own father," Pafnutii of Borovsk.³⁴ Iosif's Lives portray him as an indefatigably and compulsively responsible teacher and spiritual guide for his monks. Elite laymen flock to him as father-confessor, as earlier to Feodosii Pecherskii, and Iosif takes it upon himself at times to use his moral authority to influence public policy. Among his initial collaborators in founding his own cloister is another of Pafnutii's disciples, Kassian Bosoi, who accepts Iosif's command to limit the most extreme ascetic practices, but has his own disciples. These include Iona Golova, whom the rank-and-file Iosifov monks allegedly hold as their elder "in Iosif's place" when the latter dies,³⁵ and the writer Fatei, himself the mentor of Vassian Koshka, another monk-writer. Curiously, for the intersection of pedagogy and this monastic mentorship, in their earlier lives Kassian is an elite archery instructor at the Moscow court, Iona a teacher at the court of Iosif's original prince-patron, Ivan III's brother Boris of Volokolamsk and Rusa, and Fatei the secular preceptor of a southern Rus' prince captured by Muscovite forces.³⁶ Nil Sorskii's younger

³³ David Goldfrank, "Essential Glue: Muscovy's Republic of Sacred Letters," in *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 76 (2010): 333-60.

³⁴ Makarii, Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia, *Velikiia Minei chetii, sobrannye vserossiiskim mitropolitom Makariem* (hereafter *VMCh*), 22 vols. (St. Petersburg: Arkheograficheskaia kommissiia, 1868-1917), Sept., 559; T. V. Suzdal'tsev, ed., *Drevnerusskie inocheskie ustavy. Ustavy rossiiskikh monastyre-nachal'nikov* (hereafter, *DRIU*) = expanded reissue of Metropolitan Evgeni Bolkhovitinov and Bishop Amvrosii A. Ornatskii, eds., *Istoriia Rossiiskoi ierarkhii*, 6 vols in 7 {Moscow: Holy Synod, 1807-1815; 2nd ed., 1822}, vol. 7 (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2001), 109; tr. David Goldfrank, *The Monastic Rule of Iosif Volotsky* (heresfter, *MRIV*) = Cistercian Studies, 36 (revised ed., Kalamazoo, 2000), 237-38.

³⁵ V. I. Zhmakin, *Mitropolit Daniil i ego sochineniia* (Moscow: 1881; also in *Chteniia v Imperatorskoi obshchestvom istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh* (hereafter, *ChOISR*), 1881, books 1-2), *Prilozhenie* 19: 55-57.

³⁶ The Lives of Kassian and Fatei, the latter surely the former possibly by Vassian Koskha, are published, in L. A. Ol'shevskaia and S. N. Travnikov, eds., *Drevnerusskie pateriki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1999), 213-17, 223-26; tr. T. Allan Smith, *The Volokolamsk Paterikon. A Window on a Muscovite Monastery* = Studies and Texts, 160 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2008), 193-207.

Iosif-trainee-on-loan, Dionisii Zvenigorodskii, has a Iosifov disciple, Anufrii, whose own miscellany evinces deep respect for Nil.³⁷

We cannot fully reconstruct the pedagogical-mentoring networks, either for purely spritual development or for the making of successful careers as princes of the church, but we later see the post-Pafnutii, Pafnutiev graduate, Makarii, collaborating as Archbishop of Novgorod (1526-42) with the post-Iosif, Iosifov-trained Feodosii, igumen of Novgorod's Khutynskii Monastery (1531-42) – that is, before Makarii becomes Metropolitan of Moscow (1542-63), and Feodosii Archbishop of Novgorod (1542-51). As archbishop, Makarii, *inter alia*, commissions as a gift for Pafnutiev a beautiful, large copy of Iosif's *Book Against the Novgorod Heretics* (now called *Prosvetitel'*).³⁸ As metropolitan, Makarii's most prestigious assistant is the Moscow-residing bishop of Krutitsy/Sarai, a position held by two more Iosifov graduates, Savva Chernyi (1544-54) and Nifont Kormilitsyn (1554-59), each of whom previously headed an elite Moscow monastery. And under Makarii, two of the first three top prelates in newly conquered Kazan are also Iosifov trainees: Archbishop Gurii Rugotin (1555-63) and his successor, German Sadyrev i Polev, Archimandrite of Sviazhsk-Bogoroditskii (1555-64).³⁹ Earlier, in 1530, when Iosif's successor as igumen, Daniil of Riazan (1515-22), is Metropolitan (1522-39), Vasilii III has Kassian Bosoi (now aged almost 100) and another disciple of Pafnutii, the cenobiarch Daniil of Pereiaslavl, baptize the long-awaited heir, Ivan (IV).⁴⁰ So the personal and institutional relationships, which develop out of Pafnutiev's

³⁷ Ieromonakh Iosif, *Opis' rukopisei, perenesennykh iz biblioteki Iosifova monastyria v biblioteku Moskovskoi dukhovnoi akademii* Moscow, 1882 = *ChOIDR* 1881, book 3), 231-34 (this is: Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka {hereafter RGB}, f. Volokolamskii, d. 189/577); see also Goldfrank, "Nil Sorskii's Following," 213.

³⁸ RGB, f. Rumiantseva, d. 204.

³⁹ P. M. Stroeve, *Spiski ierarkhov i nastoiatelei monastyri rossiskiiia tserkvi* (St Petersburg: V. S. Balashev, 1877), 287, 291-92; A. A. Zimin, *Krupnaia feodalnaia votchina i sotsial'no-politicheskaia bor'ba v Rossii (konets XV-XVI v.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 305-07, 309, 317, and especially n. 138, 152: the third of these, Varsonofii, first archimandrite of Kazan's Preobrazhenskii Monastery (1555-67), had been a prisoner in the Crimea for three years, before becoming an archdeacon under the Iosifov-trained Bishop Akakii of Tver (1522-67), and so maybe knew a thing or two about the Tatar language and Muslim religion of the leading conquered subjects of Kazan. Zimin shows that a straight line of such Kazan-linked discipleship leads to Patriarch Germogen, and hence to some of the major inspiration of Russia's successful, patriotic resistance to foreign occupation during the Time of Troubles.

⁴⁰ *Drevnerusskie pateriki*, 216; the translation in Smith, *Volokolamsk Patericon*, 199-200, lacks the variant that adds the name of Daniil of Pereiaslavl, as in the chronicles, for example,

and Iosifov's connected pedagogical and spiritual discipleship are strong and serve some of its representatives and likewise the church hierarchy and state needs quite well. Meanwhile, cashiered from his archbishopric and sent back to Iosifov in 1551, Feodosii has among his new disciples there Evfimii Turkov, later a taxiarch/choirmaster (*ustavshchik*—Iosif had done that too under Pafnutiev—surely the best road to total mastery of the liturgies) and then igumen (1575–87). This last of the great Iosifov Monastery “Iosifites” combines the talents of registrar, entrepreneur, and writer, as well as director of souls.⁴¹ Thus from what we have seen so far, we can conclude that the Russia of the epoch of Nil, Iosif, and their disciples, has an active and influential mode of personal, pedagogical, and institutional *starchestvo*, which involves both the abbot, who is either a founder or potentially a bishop, and non-ordained elder, who remains as such, even if he heads his own community.

The Rhetoric of Mentorship and Discipleship

Both Nil and Iosif understand their reading and listening audiences to be students, teaching to be central to their function as writers, and speak of it as such. Adapting from one of their chief common sources, Nikon of the Black Mountain, Nil (though never once mentioning it), starts his quasi-testamentary *Predanie* (Tradition or Instruction), as if hiding behind the safe humility of common brotherhood with an apologetic, self-abnegating proemium:

I have written this soul-profiting writing for myself and my genuine lord brothers, who are of my ethos. I so call you, and not disciples, for we all have but one Teacher – the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who has given us the Divine Writings. And the holy Apostles and saintly Fathers, having instructed and instructing humankind toward salvation, insofar as all of them first did good, and thus instructed others – yet I have done nothing good whatsoever, but only speak the Divine Writings to those who accept them and would be saved.

Nobody is fooled; everyone knows that Nil is the one who can structure and interpret these divine writings for those “who are of his ethos ... and would

Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei (hereafter *PSRL*) (vols. 1-24; St. Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad: 1841-1921; 2nd ed. 5 vols. Leningrad, 1925-29; reprints, new editions and volumes, Moscow et al., 1959–), 8 (Moscow: *Iazyki russkoi kul'tury* rpt. of the 1859 ed.), 273-74.

⁴¹ Goldfrank, “Nil Sorskii's Following,” 219-20.

be saved.” He in fact is in charge, though he admits that he is trapped once he has accepted someone; therefore he tropologically protects this own salvation:

And if anyone has no wish for this, let him cease to harass my wretchedness, for I send such idlers away, as I have said above. To such I do not come wishing to be in charge; rather those who come compel me to do this. And if those living with us do not endeavor to preserve these and do not obey our words, which I speak to them according to the Divine Writings, I shall not answer for their self-regulation and am blameless.⁴²

Innokentii’s referencing as authoritative for the practical matters discussed in the *Predanie* “the composition of our Lord and my teacher, the elder Nil, in the front of this book,”⁴³ shows that the *Predanie* served its purpose.

Iosif commences his testamentary extended rule (*Dukhovnaia gramota*) with similar themes, adapted and mixed from half a dozen sources, and, while also containing the standard self-abnegation, does not at all conceal his position of authority or the existence of terrestrial gradations:

I, the wretched hegumen Iosif, in keeping with my strength and for the sake of the love of Christ and of my own and all my brothers’ in Christ salvation, openly make my testament to the spiritual superior who follows and to all my brothers in Christ, from the first down to the last. I have issued these writings while I am still alive, in order that you treasure them while I am with you and after my departure.

Indeed he speaks as if compelled to do so by the teleo-logic and eschatologic of his situation as a spiritual superior approaching death, and likewise given his need to protect his own salvation:

The years have approached old age, and the mortal cup is prepared. I have fallen sick with numerous and diverse illness, and nothing summons me, but death and the terrible judgment of my Lord, Christ God.⁴⁴ Therefore I fear and tremble, for I hear the Divine

⁴²⁾ *NSAW*, 113-14: The italics identify the borrowed words and phrases, here from Nikon; for a detailed comparison of the Slavic texts, see Goldfrank, “Nil Sorskii and Nikon of the Black Mountain,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 33, no. 2-3-4 (2006): 370-72, 378-79. Nil’s introduction, we note, was adapted into the cenobitic *Ustav* of Kornilii Komel’skii (1452/5-1537), which was, however, much more influenced by Iosif’s Rule: see *DRJU*, 168-69; *NSAW*, 56-58.

⁴³⁾ *PNSIK*, 320; *NSAW*, 274.

⁴⁴⁾ Here we can see the distant influence of testaments attributed to Theodore the Studite and Athanasius of Athos, and the more immediate influence of the testaments of

Writings say: *The superior shall be called to account for all who are under him. If he is able to cut them off from evil, but fails to do so, God will demand their blood from his hand, and he himself will perish with them as indifferent and lazy. If he rebukes and forbids them and is still unable to cut them off from evil, then he has delivered his own soul, and they will die in their own sin.*⁴⁵

Yet, his emotional appeals to his readers and listeners also lay bare the abject dependence of a teacher upon his students for his success so far as they are concerned:

Therefore, I, your unworthy brother and servant, exhort you, my fathers and brothers and beloved sons, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins. Let us be responsible for our souls. Let us grieve for the transience of our lives. Let us struggle for future blessings, lest we pass our lives lazily and indifferently and be condemned at the terrible Second Coming of the Lord.⁴⁶

Just as the testamentary-regulatory genre of Nil's *Predanie* and Iosif's Extended Rule determines their similar, initial justifications for writing, so the essential thematic difference between Nil's treatise "On Mental Activity" and Iosif's Extended Rule explains the vast difference in their explicit references to teaching within these writings. Nil's treatise commences with authoritative statements concerning the requirement of "activity of the

Metropolitans Kipriian and Fotii, and Kirill of Beloozero, all thereby contributing to Iosif's rhetoric of *starchestvo*: besides *MRIV*, 163-64; also *PSRL* 5: 254-56, 11: 195-97; D. S. Likhachev et al., eds., *Biblioteka literaturny Drevnei Rusi* [v 20-ti tomakh], 16 vols. to date (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997-), 6: 436-39; N. A. Kobiak et al., eds., *Sochinenie: Kniga glagolemaia Fotios* (Moxcow, Indrik, 2005), 348.

⁴⁵⁾ *DRIU*, 57-58; *VMCh*, Sept, 499-500; *MRIV*, 164: here a Climacus *scholion* and ultimately Ezk 3:19-20. Iosif's introduction, we note, influenced such diverse figures as the first abbess of Novodevichii in the 1540s and Patriarch Nikon in the 1660s: "Sisterhood Just Might Be Powerful: The Testament-Rule of Elena Devochkina," *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, 34, no. 1-4 (2007): 198-99; S. K. Sevast'ianova, "Sviateishii Patriarkh Nikon. Dukhovnoe zaveshchaniie-ustav," *Stavrograficheskii sbornik*, 3 (2005): 317-18.

⁴⁶⁾ *DRIU*, 58; *VMCh*, 500; *MRIV*, 163-64: unlike my later translation of Nil, accomplished in the early 2000s with access to Slavic manuscript versions of the sources in the Ohio State University's Hilarar Research Library or in St. Petersburg and Moscow, most of the source work for my Iosif translation was done with published Greek originals or translations into English or modern Russian. The italics in my published translation of Iosif's Rule indicate the direct quotations, rather than the words found in the sources, as in my translation of Nil's writings, which aims also to indicate how the latter manipulated his sources.

heart, mental preservation, and guarding of the intellect,” which the presumably rare Russian adept in these texts might recognize as cobbled from the standard “Symeon the New Theologian.”⁴⁷ Nil then necessarily confronts the problem of how to find proper instruction, and he does so in such an authoritative way – explicitly with “Symeon” and Gregory the Sinaite (and furtively again from Nikon) – in order abstractly, indeed quasi-syllogistically, to justify the rare autodidact and, *per extensio* perhaps, himself, as a teacher, that is, so long as he stays within the bounds of the “Divine Writings” and, specifically, Scripture:

*And this great and exquisite and light-generating activity, said Symeon the New Theologian, accrues for many through instruction, but the rare ones, without instruction, have received this from God by the vigor of activity and the heat of faith. So speaks Gregory the Sinaite and other saints: It is no small feat, they said, to find a reliable mentor in this wondrous activity; and they called him ‘reliable’, whose activity and prudence are witnessed in the Divine Writings, and who has acquired spiritual discretion.*⁴⁸

Now comes the enthymeme:

And as the saints said that even then a reliable teacher for such things was hardly to be found, now with extreme scarcity it is proper to search industriously.⁴⁹ *And if one cannot be found, the holy Fathers directed us to meditate on the Divine Writings, having heard the Lord himself saying: ‘Study the Scriptures, and in them you shall find eternal life’ (John 5:13). ‘For whatsoever was written afore time in the Holy Scriptures, was written for our instruction’ (Rom. 15:4), says the holy Apostle.*⁵⁰

And again employing syllogistic logic, Nil’s lengthy *Slovo* 2, which is devoted to hesychastic prayer, utilizes and explains Symeon Metaphrastes’s paraphrase of pseudo-Macarius both to characterize the bliss of attainment by

⁴⁷) *PNSIK*, for the original; *NSAW*, 126, for the sources as well as the translation.

⁴⁸) *PNSIK*, 100-03; *NSAW*, 129, with the indication of how Nil adapts from Gregory the Sinaite’s adaptation of “Basil” (of Caesaria).

⁴⁹) Note here Nil’s use of a simple *a minore ad maius* enthymeme with only one unstated premise: see David Goldfrank, “Adversus Haereticos Novgorodensis: Iosif Volotskii’s Rhetorical Syllogisms,” in a forthcoming *Slavica festschrift*,” n. 24 and text thereto. The rest of the above cited passage is an extended proof or polyenthymeme, with recourse to authority and several unstated premises and logical processes, as is the upcoming Pseudo-Macarian citation.

⁵⁰) *PNSIK*, 100-03; *NSAW*, 129-30, with the sources indicated.

contrasting it with teaching and to underscore the divinely mandated duties of the adept as instructor and minister:

But in his mercy God has caused *grace* to diminish from the saints for a while, so that they may accomplish *the provisioning and the care of the brothers with a discourse of ministry*, that is, instruction in piety, as Saint Macarius says of those who have attained perfection: *They are entirely sacrificed to the love and sweetness of those wondrous visions. And if, he said, someone always possessed grace such as this, he would not be able to undertake the construction and labor of discourse, or hear or speak of things here, or have the slightest care for this.* And with a parable, he expounded on those made perfect by grace: *that one is ascended to the twelfth rung, but grace, he said, weakens, and, having descended one step, he stands on the eleventh, as it is said. And therefore the perfect measure is not sustained for them, so that they will have time to devote to the brothers and to provide with a discourse of ministry.*⁵¹

Iosif's magnum monastic opus is structurally more complex, and he takes two rhetorical approaches to this problem in the Extended Rule. An entire discourse (*Slovo* 11), entitled, "An Account from the Divine Writings, that It Is Proper for the Superior to Teach and Admonish Those under Him," is devoted to the cloister's mentor-in-chief. Starting off with a citation from one of his literary models here, Climacus's "Discourse for the Pastor," Iosif boldly stretches the standard sense of the Gospels' transmission of binding authority to the teacher, as if this were a categorically logical necessity:

It is proper for the superior to display all his zeal and to provide and care for the souls given him by God: *"For the whole world is not worth one soul; the one passes, the other is imperishable and abides."*⁵² On this account pastors and teachers have received from the Lord Christ the authority to bind and loose on earth and in heaven. For the Lord said to them: "Whomever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whomever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18-19); he who hears you hears me; and he who rejects you rejects me." (Luke 10:16).

In this spiritual environment, hearkening back to when prophets and other popular leaders challenged Jerusalem Temple priests, can the charismatic *starets*-teacher, whose blessings people do in fact seek, actually and effectively "bind and loose," as the formally ordained priesthood is

⁵¹ *PNSIK*, 242-43, *NSAW*, 149-50, with sources indicated (this is adapted from Symeon Metaphrastes' *Paraphrase of [pseudo-] Macarius*).

⁵² Climacus, *Liber ad Pastorem*, 13, in *PG*, 88: 1196D.

empowered to do?⁵³ If pressed, the Iosif surely would have stood by the canons concerning ordination in this matter and produced a clever argument with rhetorical punch, linking the graced, non-ordained teacher or *starets* to a licit process. And yet another of his flat statements, without identifying his intermediary source as (Pseudo-) Basil of Caesarea's *Asketikon*, is just as fuzzy, thus indicating that the function of teacher, in at least the rhetoric hearkening back to the pre-canonic Apostolic era, is central:

The business of the righteous and true pastor is to provide and be responsible for all; the business of the flock is to submit completely to the director and teacher and in no way murmur, be contumacious, or disobey, but rather wholeheartedly and seriously to have obedience and complete veneration, submission, and benevolence. Indeed: "Whoever opposes authority opposes God's ordinance" (Rom. 13:2), says the Apostle. And again: "Let every soul be subject to authority and to those more powerful" (Rom. 13:1). And again he says: "Submit yourselves to your directors, for they watch over your souls" (Heb. 13:17).⁵⁴

Iosif's second approach, most likely prompted by criticism inside his cloister by the routinization of institutional authority or outside the monastery by opponents of his great prestige, is a trenchant polemical defense of teaching by writing as well as by speaking. His model here is the apologia of the otherwise obscure, late 11th-century, Philipp Monotropos located toward the end of the latter's *Dioptra*—a "Response to the Censorious," which rhetorically insults the opponent:

All of you, fathers and brothers in Christ, who have read through these writings: although they are crude, they are in keeping with the witness of the Divine Writings. Let no one suppose in any way that conceit is the cause or that I am hunting for glory among men. That is not so; no, not at all; let Christ be my witness! If someone is overweening, very boastful, stiff-necked, presumptuous, querulous, and censorious and says⁵⁵: "In earlier times

⁵³ The whole point of Iosif's *Prosvetitel'*, *Slovo* 12, is that the ordained priest (hence bishop or abbot too) can only "bind and loose" effectively if he is Orthodox and non-heretical: see Goldfrank, "Adversus haereticos," where every one of his arguments is presented as enthymeme and also converted in the appendix into mathematical logic.

⁵⁴ *VMCh*, Sept., 565; *DRIU*, 113-14; *MRIV*, 245.

⁵⁵ The italicized, with Iosif's insert, is from *Dioptra*, before Iosif substitutes for the objection which Philipp faces: G. M. Prokhorov, Heinz Miklas, A. B. Bil'diug, and M. N. Gromov, tr. and eds., "*Dioptra*" *Filippa Monotropo. Antropologicheskua entsiklopediia pravoslavnogo srednevekov'ia* (Moscow: Nauka, 2008), 119 (14th c. Rus' text), 314 (modern Russian tr.), 503 (Greek original).

our holy Fathers instituted in writing the coenobitic teachings and traditions; now is it not proper to do so, but only to teach by word” –

Iosif comes back immediately with one of his favorite polemical devices, found also in one of his biting extracts from Chrysostom,⁵⁶ the if/then rhetorical question – in this case, containing a clinching, damning, second such rhetorical question, taken from authority and, for the knowing, hearkening back to an ecumenical council canon:

If this were so, then why does our reverend father Nikon say: *Just as in ancient times, now it is proper that each superior, especially in his own cloister, compose or render, by words and writings, precepts and admonitions which are consonant with the teachings of the Divine Writings; it is not proper for the flock to be contentious or to act or to speak adversely; rather, they should do only that which has been said by the father; for if the superior acts and teaches, what kind of response will the disobedient give?*⁵⁷

This retort, as well the preceding citation from the *Asketikon*, leads us squarely to the disciple side of *starchestvo*, and here the setting creates several rhetorical possibilities for Nil and Iosif in relation to their specific addressees. A principle from the popular, inclusive “Ascetic Sermon,” attributed to Basil of Caesarea, perhaps mediated by Gregory the Sinaite, provides the basis for subtly differing approaches to discipleship in Nil’s epistles to Gurii, German, and Vassian. To the exiled, forcibly shorn, but educable Vassian, now a cenobitic neophyte in Kirillov, Nil writes:

Have obedience to the *mentor* (nastavnik) and the other fathers in the Lord *in every good deed*. ... Strive to submit to those *having the knowledge of the Divine Writings and spiritual prudence* and a lifestyle *witnessed in virtues*, and to be an imitator of their life.

To the strong-willed, well-read, hermitage-dwelling German:

Either *submit* to such a man, who *is witnessed* in his practice of the word and *spiritual knowledge*, as Basil the Great writes in his discourse, whose incipit is, ‘*Come to me all*

⁵⁶) *VMCh*, Sept, 577; *DRJU*, 124; *MRIV*, 260: see below, text to note 78.

⁵⁷) *DRJU*, 98; *VMCh*, Sept., 547; *MRIV*, 225-27, with Nikon and his canonic inspiration indicated. Piling on the authorities, as both Nil and Iosif sometimes do for effect, the latter continues with similar excerpts from three more major authorities: John Climacus, John Chrysostom (edited by the addition of “writings”), and Symeon the New Theologian (though the source in Symeon/Pseudo-Symeon is not yet identified).

who toil' (Mt. 11:28). If you do not find such a one, then submit to God by the Divine Writings, but not irrationally, as some.

And to the seemingly irreproachable, senior Kirillov elder and former igumen, Gurii:

In everything be an emulator of those whom you see and hear in the holy Writings containing *the witnessed life and prudence*.⁵⁸

For Nil, after all, as for “Basil” and ultimately Basil’s Egyptian inspiration, the disciple is an active seeker of authority and guidance. The neophyte Vassian is still in the obedience phase of his training. German ought to know what he is doing, but Nil warns that bibliographic specialist with a stinging, metaphorical gnome by the master of this venerable genre, John Climacus:

And when in the monastery with the brothers, who, reckoning themselves in submission, shepherd themselves irrationally with self will, and similarly effect solitude without knowledge, leading themselves by fleshly will and undiscerning knowledge, incognizant either of what they effect or of what they are convinced – of such John Climacus, discerning in the Discourse “*On the Differences of Stillness*,” says: *With self-regulation rather than direction, they would sail by presumption, which is not for us to have*.⁵⁹

Nil envisions Gurii, in contrast, at the accomplished stage of the teacher, who, like the rabbis of so many jokes, needs only to consult the books.

Iosif, on the other hand, separates the neophytes and rank-and-file from the seasoned elders and their relationship to both human and written authority in a quite different fashion, starting with Climacus’s extreme principle:

Therefore blessed is he who has completely killed his own will and has given up responsibility for himself to his teacher in the Lord. That person stands at the right hand of the Crucified One. Let all of us who would fear the Lord struggle with all our strength

⁵⁸) *PNSIK*, 226–27, 228–29, 238–39, 242–43; *NSAW*, 234, 236, 243, 247: Basil/Pseudo-Basil, *Ascetic Discourse*, 63; *PG*, 31: 632B, and the *NSAW* notice of Hilandar (Serbian Church Slavic) and English translations.

⁵⁹) *PNSIK*, 242–43; *NSAW*, 247–48; *PG*, 88: 1105A, and notice of the *VMCh* Russian Church Slavic version.

completely to kill our will, just as did our reverend Fathers who lived in obedience and humility. ...

Rhetorically speaking, Iosif takes us back to the literary origin of envisioning such total obedience as the highest virtue by employing a string of apophthegmata, mostly found in Climacus or Nikon, and extracts from the Lives of Anthony the Great and John of Damascus:

Concerning blessed Mark, the calligrapher, ... *one day while he was doing calligraphy, his elder summoned him for a mission; at that moment he was writing an ω and he had already written υ, but he stood right up and ran to work. ... of Acacius, ... that his teacher not only tried him with insults and indignities, but also tormented him every day with strokes. ... And that great Saint John of Damascus, most renowned for his great wisdom, was commanded by the elder to clean up the monks' filthy latrine with his own hands.*

As for principles:

An elder said: "He who is settled in obedience to his spiritual father will have a greater reward than he who is settled in the desert and lives by himself. ... The hospitable one does his own will. Similarly that one went off to the desert of his own volition. This one, who had obedience, abandoned his own will completely to depend upon God, his⁶⁰ Father."... Saint Syncletica says: Those in monasteries should acquire obedience more than asceticism; the latter teaches pride, while the former teaches humblemindedness.⁶¹

In the real world of Russian monasticism, we might note, such extreme authoritarian principles proved no hindrance to the elite elders Nil Polev and Dionisii Zvenigorodskii in their relocating close to Nil Sorskii, since this move had Iosif's blessing.⁶²

Iosif's rhetoric of subordination in the Extended Rule has two other crucial aspects. Its regulatory nature lets everybody know that they are subordinate to a system that includes authoritative texts, structured hierarchies, devotional and dining rituals to be followed to the letter, supervisory and

⁶⁰) *and his* in the original, but Iosif's sense is the same.

⁶¹) *DRIU*, 86-88; *VMCh*, Sept., 532-35; *MRIV*, 205-09, with sources indicated, except that *MRIV*, 205-06, carelessly indicates the translation paragraphs as 4.49 and 4.11, instead of 4.44 and 4.110; also *St John Climacus. The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, tr. Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, introd., Muriel Heppell (New York: Harper, 1959), 82-83.

⁶²) See *NSAW*, 44-48, concerning the relationship of Nil Polev and Dionisii Zvenigorodskii to Iosif and Nil Sorskii, and specifically concerning the sources for them and the controversy over their going from Iosifov to the Sora in Donald Ostrowskii's contribution to this volume.

supervised mandatory labor assignments, monitors for every other aspect of the cloistered life, a specified monastic penance for each infraction, and the duty to inform when the preferred private corrective counseling fails. A young monk or neophyte has three direct supervisors: cellmate-elder, work-foreman, and the superior as father confessor.⁶³ With such a document out in the open – indeed containing a brief, regulatory version for public reading (*Slovo* 12) –, one knows what enrolling in Iosifov potentially entails.

And as the internal evidence in the Rule indicates, the development away from an original, personal style of abbatial authority and leadership does not please everyone:

If someone says: “Why was there not from the beginning the tradition that not only the superior, but also the major and council brothers take responsibility for good order in the church, refectory, and monastery; that together with the superior they administer penances to transgressors and absolution to the penitent; and that the preeminent and council brother rebuke and forbid transgressors with a penance and absolve the penitents?”

Idealizing the monastery’s early years and underscoring the contingency of the initial *modus operandi*, Iosif in turn provides a polemical, autobiographical explanation to silence those monks who object to the new system:

This shall be said to him: In the beginning, when I came here, the brothers who accompanied me and I possessed great zeal and aptitude for struggle. We came here in order to act just as we have written in the *Will and Testament*. Then it was still the beginning, and there were neither senior nor lesser brothers. So who was here to administer penance and who was here to receive it from them?

Practicalities dictated leniency back then, and appropriate citations explain it away:

And there was still a great deal of want, of food, drink, garments, boots, and even cells fit for living. There was incessant work and all kinds of labor. We only cared that someone might simply come here to live or be tonsured, and we greatly condescended to their weaknesses.” The Divine Writings bear witness to this: One should not quickly apply a heavy cross-bar to those who come to be under the yoke of Christ. As Gregory the Theologian says: *Neither can one quickly straighten out a crooked sapling with one’s hands, for it becomes injured and breaks and is not straightened, nor can one quickly lead*

⁶³ For a pertinent text, see below, text to note 70, and for more elaboration on the similar situation in Solovki, see Jennifer Spock’s contribution to this volume

a savage and uninstructed youth under a heavy yoke, if he does not first learn under a light one.

But today things are as we desire, and decorum comes first:

Now, thanks to the charity and mercy of Our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and of his Immaculate Mother, the most glorified Mother of God, Mary, our common hope and protector, we have an abundance of all physical necessities, and it is proper for us to display total zeal and struggle solely over spiritual things: humility, obedience, chastity, and asceticism, and our good order and reverence in the church, refectory, and monastery.⁶⁴

Interpreting the above passage within the framework of the entire Extended Rule with its variety of requirements, we find the new element of *starchestvo* and obedient discipleship to be a realistic fixation on the brotherhood and the institution. For if it is true, regarding the relationship of “good order in the church, the refectory, and the monastery” to salvation, that one rotten apple indeed spoils the bunch, then Iosif’s syllogistic smashing of the opposition to his supervisory structure, by drawing out the necessary logical conclusion to their position, makes absolute sense:

If someone says: “There is no need for so many council brothers,” he is really saying: “There is no need for good order, reverence, and a peaceful administration in the church, refectory, or monastery, but everything shall be irregular and perverse.”

How far apart are Iosif and Nil in these matters general matters regarding mentorship and discipleship? One should not imagine that Iosif’s strictures regarding good order were all that foreign to Nil’s world. The latter’s hermitage had a little church with services, one of which he may have composed.⁶⁵ His instructions for self- or non-priestly administration of already sanctified communion bread were normally ritualistic.⁶⁶ The Scete Typikon, which accompanied his *Predanie*, assumes that if there be an available church, one attends it for festal vigils and liturgies.⁶⁷ And as Iosif

⁶⁴) *VMCh*, Sept., 586; *DRIU*, 130-31; *MRIV*, 269-70. The first dictum is not identified; I. I. Sreznevskii employs a section of the Gregory Nazianzus’ citation as an example for the word *prut* = sapling: *Materialy dlia slovaria drevnerusskago iazyka*, 3 vols. (St Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia nauk: 1893-1905; several rpts.), 2: 1614.

⁶⁵) *NSAW*, 21-22.

⁶⁶) *NSAW*, 270-72.

⁶⁷) *NSAW*, 261.

presumably would argue, utilizing one of his favorite syllogistic devices, if *skitniki* and hermitage-dwellers are attending a church service properly, then they are observing and promoting good order, and they want the chant to proceed correctly and those in charge to curb unruliness and expel any refractory miscreants as much as any pious cenobite would so desire.

The same convergence of principles holds regarding the ultimate, self-generated sanction, and its antedote, remembrance of death, which occupies Nil's *Slovo* 7. Just as Iosif's daily routine allows for ample time for hesychastic activities, during one's private cell hours, *Slovo* 4 (or Brief Rule *Slovo* 6) speaks of the time after Compline and of confession of any sins committed during the past twenty-four hours:

... having thus received absolution from the Superior as if from God himself, one should apply oneself with stillness in prayer and handicraft or reading, be soberly mindful of oneself with prayers and tears, and repent and confess all transgressions to the Lord.

Containing here the positive essence of Nil's treatise in a nutshell, the structure of Iosif's recommended nightly confession to the superior, albeit framed as insurance against sudden death in a state of sin – "In that state I find you, I shall judge you" (Ezk. 21:30) –, allows for the type of hands-on mentorship promoted by later *starchestvo*. This is not so different from Nil's warning: "What shall we then do, if before that time we have not been concerned, have not schooled ourselves in this, and are found unready?"⁶⁴⁸ Both are essentially strategizing with the age-old principle of many catechism classes and a multitude of parental and grandparental warnings in a variety of faiths: a little fear of hellfire goes a long way! Iosif's principle, if not expressed mode of such daily supervision, found expression later in the *Volokolamsk Patericon*, where the elder Elevation Volynskii would confess his thoughts every day at liturgy, and Iosif would counsel the monk concerning his visions and imaginings to prevent some evil outcome.⁶⁴⁹

Rhetorical Modes for Gerontical Modulations

So far we have been examining chiefly points of contact regarding *starchestvo* in Nil's and Iosif's writings, but we need to focus a bit on more

⁶⁴⁸ *PNSIK*, 168–69; *NSAW*, 195.

⁶⁴⁹ *Drevnerusskie pateriki*, 87; Smith, *Volokolamsk Patericon*, 88.

of the rhetoric of direct address in Iosif's Rule. Such appears in four distinct places regarding four different aspects of *starchestvo* as envisioned by Iosif for his communal monastery, where the mentor-disciple relationship is not the only one which matters. The simplest concerns the on-site supervisor of any activity, for which the brief, straightforward regulation suffices, but Iosif may include a maxim for overall effect:

The brother to whom the mills are assigned shall not permit any brothers to come there to eat and drink. And the brother to whom the villages are assigned shall take this responsibility: if he sees or hears of any brother going to the villages without a blessing, he shall report to the superior, *for a little negligence intercedes to effect a great calamity.*⁷⁰

Second, we have *Slovo* 11, which we have already encountered, directed specifically to the superior. The eight named authorities – Christ, Peter, Paul, Jude, Ezekiel, Pachomius, Mark the Hermit, and Climacus – plus four possibly identifiable if unidentified – Jeremiah, Basil, Chrysostom, and Nikon – provide virtual foolproof testimony. The sermon takes the reader or listener from the immeasurable value of a single soul to a panegyric (verbatim from Pseudo-Basil) to the jointly saved, harmonious community enjoying eternal heavenly delights under its pastor, and en route, lauds him, reminds him that the flock's needs take precedence, recognizes that his success requires “self-censure” of the corrected, directs him to employ discretionary flexibility favoring mild over harsh measures, and even kerygmatically addresses the problem of combating Satan, which so bedeviled the spiritual theoreticians from Evagrius of Pontus (pseudo-Nilus the Sinaite) to Nil Sorskii:⁷¹

*In truth, the devil himself would give up in the face of such a contingent, as he is no match for so many champions who are protected by so much love for one another and whom celestial love has combined and united to one another.*⁷²

Iosif can then end this sermon with a characteristic mixture of poetic optimism and logical necessity:

⁷⁰) *VMCh*, Sept., 605; *DRIU*, 146; *MRIV*, 294.

⁷¹) See, for example, Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos: Chapters on Prayer*, tr., introd., notes, John Eudes Bamberger OSCO = Cistercian Studies, 4 (Spencer MA: 1970); *NSAW*, 131-38, 162-90.

⁷²) Pseudo-Basil, *Constitutiones*, 18; *PG*, 31: 1385 C.

The cause of all this is the pastor's zeal, diligence, and love for his flock, and the flock's obedient, symphonic, and warmest unanimity with the pastor and faith and love such that when the Lord comes, he will take joy in the pastor, revel in the sheep, and honor them with the blessed and sweet voice which summons the worthy and righteous to the heavenly, praiseworthy, and blessed kingdom, which all of us shall obtain through the grace and philanthropy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory forever and ever. Amen.⁷³

Third stands the very fact that *Slovo* 13, the longest of the Rule and directed to the council brothers and monastery officials, constitutes a rhetorical assertion of the bigger picture, where a combination of God, Iosif as founder-legislator and super-mentor of everyone, “the divine writings” and “cenobitic” or “patristic traditions” in general, and Iosif's Rule in particular are charging these elite elders with the role of executing some of the superior's directing functions and at times doing the whole job themselves. In this regard, though not quite stated as such, just as *Slovo* 11 has asserted that as the cloister is communal and its monks' salvation is communal, so here necessarily will some aspects of the monastery's *starchestvo* be communal. The initial parts of this discourse are reminiscent of *Slovo* 11, in that Iosif singles out this elite and praises it with such passages from Scripture as “Many are called, few are chosen” (Matt. 20:16); “If you extract the precious from the vile, you shall be as my mouth” (Jer. 15:19), and “Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory” (John 17:24).⁷⁴

This allows Iosif once more to claim kerygmatically that what he is instituting and urging is a necessary prerequisite for the desired heavenly scenario:

The cause of all this is the responsibility, diligence, and love for the flock, and also the obedience to one another and to the pastor, and the humility and unanimity of the senior and council brothers, who have received the direction of the monastery, together with the superior or in the absence of the superior, and of all the monastery officials, that together they can harmoniously be responsible for good order and reverence in the church, monastery, and refectory.⁷⁵

⁷³ *VMCh*, Sept., 566; *DRIU*, 114; *MRIV*, 246.

⁷⁴ *VMCh*, Sept, 571-72; *DRIU*, 118-19; *MRIV*, 252-54: the second of these is also employed for the superior in *Slovo* 11.

⁷⁵ *VMCh*, Sept., 572; *DRIU*, 119; *MRIV*, 254.

And conversely, regarding recorded disasters:

The cause of all these calamities, the desolation of the monastery and the slaughter of the brothers, was neglect and contempt for the ordering of the monastery, church, and monks on the part of the superior and the council brothers, who had received the direction of the monastery.

Hyperbole and scare tactics follow, as Iosif creates an exaggerated, causal historical phenomenon:

And not only did that monastery so suffer and obtain such a sentence on account of negligence and unruliness, but countless monasteries and divine churches were sentenced to desolation for no other reason than the unruliness and negligence of the pastors and especially the senior and council brothers to whom the direction of the monastery was entrusted.⁷⁶

Iosif next muses on the practicalities of the situation, here the superior's need for help, a paradigmatic situation rhetorically resolved by apophthegmatic analogies to the helmsman and the general.⁷⁷ But the actual process of correcting or reporting is problematic, since this intersects the type of judging which one ought to avoid. Iosif's solution is to present a set of useful authoritative paragraphs, including the prescriptions of the Gaza ancients Dorotheus and Barsanuphius, and then (Pseudo-) Basil's and Chrysostom's reconciling the diverse scriptural statements with the latter's cutting, enthymematic rhetorical questions:

What? It is not proper to rebuke the sinner? Then why did the Apostle say: "Reprove, rebuke, exhort" (2 Tim. 4:2), and "Rebuke those who sin in the presence of everybody, so that others may also fear" (1 Tim. 5:20)?⁷⁸

This section of *Slovo* 13 reaches its logical conclusion with the practical prescriptions concerning who at what level reports to whom, and then what to do if someone does not accept correction. Once more (Pseudo-) Basil's *Asketikon* provides the conceptual and textual solution, neatly encapsulated in an expanded Old Testament maxim:

⁷⁶) VMCh, Sept., 573; DRIU, 120; MRIV, 255.

⁷⁷) VMCh, Sept., 573-74; DRIU, 121; MRIV, 255-56.

⁷⁸) VMCh, Sept, 577; DRIU, 124; MRIV, 260, with the Chrysostom source, via Nikon of the Black Mountain, cited.

And Basil the Great says: “‘Cast out,’ so it is said, ‘the pest from the assembly, and contention shall go out, lest he give others his scabs.’”⁷⁹

Just as spiritual masters asserted that the healthy individual must reject the assault of pernicious urges or thoughts (*logismoi*) and instructed in ways to do so or to get rid of them once they had settled within, so too the cenobitic masters directed the healthy community to eject the terminally refractory, when no other cure worked.

Fourth, last, and maybe most important for our purposes here, we have the charismatic figure, closest of all to the ideal type of “eldership.” In the words of an insider and believer, which take us beyond the limits of the species of scholarship which I consider myself qualified to undertake, we are speaking of a “a special gift of grace, a charisma exercised under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, a special kind of sanctity.”⁸⁰ Such figures appear in Iosif’s hagiographical middle section of *Slovo* 10, his “Brief Account of the Holy Fathers of the Land of Rus’,” which serves as an ingenious means of sidestepping the charge that the earlier and now authoritative model Rus’ cenobiarchs did not compose written rules:

If someone begins to say: “Although the ancient holy Fathers admonished with traditions, penances, writings, and words, our holy Fathers in Russia did not write traditions and penances for monks, but only admonished them with words,” let us respond to them: “Our holy Fathers, who shone forth in Russia – Antonii and Feodosii Pechersky, Sergii, Varlaam, Kirill, Dimitrii, Dionisii, Avramii, Pavel, and the others, their disciples – were of steadfast mind, and they had understanding and perfect love for God and their neighbor. And just as the blessed Anthony and Pachomius and others who were monks in ancient times treasured all of God’s commandments, so in our country the blessed Antonii, Feodosii, Sergii, Varlaam, Kirill, and the other aforesaid holy Fathers executed all of God’s commandments and became worthy of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The wonders and the healings which they worked and which they still now work, because they lived virtuously and in a manner pleasing to God and similarly taught and admonished those under them, bear witness.” He who would contemplate this exactly and truthfully should read through their Lives and he will comprehend how they lived very pain-racked and toil-stricken lives and what kind of grace they became worthy of obtaining from the Lord Christ.⁸¹

⁷⁹) *VMCh*, Sept., 579; *DRJU*, 125; *MRIV*, 262; cf. Prov. 22:10: “Basil” or his source added *from the assembly*; Iosif or his source added *lest he give others his scabs*.

⁸⁰) I. M. Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia* (St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1988), 70.

⁸¹) *VMCh*, Sept., 548-49; *DRJU*, 99-100; *MRIV*, 227.

Generally, in terms of *starchestvo*, Iosif is saying that these saintly founders, with their special grace, could function as elders, but he also will assert that they directed others according to the same pedagogical and disciplining principles which he has solidified by composing this rule.

We can envision this account in several ways, but foremost as a specimen of Iosif's inspiring, myth-making, narrative art, aiming to surround the audience with a Rus' past peopled with model super-ascetics, among them the above noted charismatic founders, as well as widely sought-after hermits, outstanding iconographers, and leader elders enforcing founders' rules, sometimes against the opposition of successor abbots. These tableaux are either culled from existing, native writings, such as the *Pecherskii Patericon* and the Lives of Sergii and Kirill, or it is Iosif's "incipient hagiography," to quote myself,⁸² based, he claims, on what he saw or heard in his youth from some of these figures or their disciples. Oral tradition and written literature fuse here, and Iosif appears as a *starets* recounting traditional tales of others for the edification of disciples. For our special purposes here, among his most important subjects are two hermits, first Varsonofii Neumoi of Tver's Savvin Monastery:

The blessed Varsonofii remained five years as hegumen and then departed to a hermitage, gave the abbacy to ... [*his brother*] Savva and commanded him to obtain the priestly rank. (He himself witnessed for him that he was pure from the womb of his mother and worthy of such grace.) He lived in the hermitage for forty years and in those years he had no work other than praying, chanting, and reading books. He accepted books from devotees of Christ, read them, returned them, and took from others. The blessed one was such that he possessed nothing of his own, not even one copper coin, for he truly loved non-possession and Christ-like poverty. Because of his great attention, silence, prayers, and reading, he was worthy of so much divine grace that he could remember all the Divine Writings, carry them on his tongue, and render no scant amount to all who were in need. Many came to him from all parts, monks and noble laymen, some for a profitable word, others seeking an analysis of the Divine Writings. Even that great hierarch Fotii, Metropolitan of All Russia, himself had to send to him to analyze some unknown words of the Divine Writings which had been a bone of contention between himself and some others.

Iosif ends his tale of this perfect hermit in an unexpected way for this hagiographic genre, if not for Iosif himself and his Rule:

⁸² See the analysis in *MRIV*, 92-98.

When the blessed Varsonofii attained a very old age, Saint Savva commanded him to be brought to the monastery. His arrival was joyful and delightful for all the brothers, for he was a healer and a doctor for the sufferings of the body and the soul. So long as the blessed Savva and Saint Varsonofii and their supporters remained alive, everything in that monastery was done in good order and in a meek, calm, and peaceful manner, because of their admonitions and teachings. When someone had a perverse habit, they did not allow him to do as he wished.⁸³

The other charismatic would-be loner, Evfrosin of Tver's Savvateev Hermitage, illustrates the contradictions of such *starchestvo* in the fifteenth century, where the holy man seeks solitude, but is himself sought out, presumably for counsel, as well as, in one spectacular, successful case, the healing of the severely ill young princess (Maria Borisovna) of Tver, already betrothed to the future Ivan III:

This blessed man lived for sixty years at the hermitage and did not go outside anywhere. Many monks, laymen, princes, and boyars visited him and interrupted his stillness.⁸⁴ He became indignant and fled from there to Great Novgorod, found an island in the great Lake Nevo [*Ladoga*], settled there, and lived for many years. When the local Christians who lived in the villages heard of him, they visited him with their wives and children. He then fled back to Savvateev Hermitage.

It is back at Savvateev, where he effects his cure of the princess in the church with the aid of a Theotokos icon and prayer services to her and to St. Nicholas.⁸⁵ So the fervent monastic piety of person at the shrine of the well-ordered monastery is the key for such success, as in the case of the master iconographers Daniil Chernyi and Andrei Rublev within Moscow's Andronikov Monastery, founded under Metropolitan Aleksii's patronage by one of Sergii's disciples, and maintained by Andronik's named disciples Savva and Alexander.⁸⁶

As the narratives continue, "that blessed elder, the igumen Makarii, founder of Kaliazin," describes the salvatory monasterial *starchestvo*, which Iosif himself is trying to institute:

"When," he said, "I came to this place, along with seven elders from Klobukov Monastery, they were so perfected in virtues and in the ascetic and monastic life that all the

⁸³) *VMCh*, Sept., 554-56; *DRIU*, 104-06; *MRIV*, 233-34.

⁸⁴) *bezmolvie* in the original, and translated as "quiet" in *MRIV*; for the early use of *hesychia*/*bezmolvie* for the anchorite's solitude, see *NSAW*, 75.

⁸⁵) *VMCh*, Sept., 556-57; *DRIU*, 106-07; *MRIV*, 235-36.

⁸⁶) *VMCh*, Sept., 557-58; *DRIU*, 107-08; *MRIV*, 236.

brothers visited them to receive instructions and something of profit. They enlightened everybody, taught them what was profitable, strengthened those living in virtue, reprimanded and forbade those who leaned towards unruliness, and did not allow them to follow their wills.”

Therefore “that great Elder Mitrofan Byvaltsov,” who earlier made a charismatically compelling heroic journey to Mount Athos and lived nine years there, is able to give an answer to that archetypal, biggest-of-them-all question posed to the sage: how can I be saved?

He said to the brothers: “I labored in vain and to no avail, for I walked such a long way to the Holy Mountain and bypassed Kaliazin monastery. It is possible for those living here to be saved, for here everything is done just as in the cenobia of the Holy Mountain.”⁸⁷

Iosif then refers back the central role of written hagiography in the transmission of elder wisdom. Earlier, as we cited, he refers his audience to saints’ lives as proof texts for his principles of asceticism and supervision. Now these works serve a different function:

We did not see the earlier holy Fathers who shone in our land namely, the great Sergii, Varlaam, Kirill, and the others like them, but I saw many who were their disciples. They had such great virtues, labor, asceticism, humility, and mortification, because they had read through the writings of the earlier holy Fathers, Anthony, Pachomius, and the others. They kept these as a living model and a seal on their hearts, which cleansed them not only of sins, but also of passions – just what we saw in our own father, Saint Pakhotii, who was a disciple of Sergii’s disciple, the elder Nikita, the Archimandrite of Vysotsky Monastery.⁸⁸

So the *starchestvo* of a personal laying on of the hands takes us back to literary *starchestvo* of the saint’s life, thrust into the role of essential transmitter of wisdom to those worthy of grace. This allows us to link up again with Nil Sorskii, who redacted his own *Sobornik* of twenty-four monastic saints’ lives arranged by the liturgical calendar, commencing chronologically with a predecessor of Anthony, and ending with the founders of Athos as a monastic abode.⁸⁹

⁸⁷) *VMCh*, Sept., 558-59; *DRIU*, 108; *MRIV*, 237.

⁸⁸) *VMCh*, Sept., 559; *DRIU*, 108-09; *MRIV*, 237-38.

⁸⁹) *NSAW*, 24-30.

One of Nil's few autobiographical tidbits, ostensibly written for the edification of German Podol'nyi, claims hagiography as central to his inspiration:

And, especially investigating the Divine Writings, first the Lord's commandments and their interpretations and the apostolic traditions, and then the Lives and teaching of the holy Fathers, I attend to them. And what is in accord with my knowledge for *the goodly-pleasing of God and for the soul's profit*, I inscribe for myself and meditate on it— and therein I hold my life and breath.⁹⁰

Such accords with Nil's own characterization of his spiritual treatise:

The knowledge within these writings encompasses the following: what activity is proper for a monk to have, who wishes in truth to be saved in these times – that it is proper to act both mentally and sensibly, according to the Divine Writings and according to the lives of the holy Fathers, as much as possible.⁹¹

Specifically, moreover, as Nil cribes from Gregory the Sinaite, reading saints' lives is a useful, stabilizing activity when one is attempting hesychastic prayer:

*Therefore it is necessary to sing in measure, as the Fathers said, devoting oneself more to prayer, though when sluggish, to sing or read the deed-filled lives of the Fathers. For a ship needs no oar when the wind swells the sail and carries it across the passionate sea, but when at a standstill, is pulled across by oars or a galley. ... And never did all the ascetics, now or of old, tread the same path or keep to it to the end.*⁹²

And hagiography figures in Nil's revision of Climacus's recommendations regarding the acquisition of tears:

There are some, who have not yet acquired the gift of tears in its perfection, who gain it by one or another means: this one *from* the mysteries of the designs of the Lord's love of man; that one from reading the stories of the lives and struggles and teachings of the saints; this one by the simply-worded Jesus prayer; still another comes to compunction by some prayers created by the Saints; yet another becomes remorseful *from* certain canons or troparia; a different one by recalling his sins; and another *from memory of*

⁹⁰) *PNSIK*, 240-41, 254; *NSAW* 246, 252: Nil more or less repeats the italicized phrase in the Forwards to his *Sobornik* codices.

⁹¹) *PNSIK*, 96-07; *NSAW* 124.

⁹²) *PNSIK*, 116-17; *NSAW* 145-46, with sources indicated: cf. *PG*, 150: 1330D-1336B.

death and the judgment; and still another *from* the longing for future delights; and *from* various *other* methods.³³

This essay lacks the space even to commence a systematic analysis of how *starchestvo* appears in Nil's *Sobornik*. Suffice it to say here, that while some of these saints evince the independent grace and charisma, whereby one shines with wisdom well before his time and fulfills a variety of counseling and healing functions, they function within the same controlled world that Nil recommends. None of them is a dedicated hesychast like Isaac the Syrian or Symeon the New Theologian. Rather, the *Sobornik* elders are much closer to those of Iosif's "Brief Account" than to how Nil presents either himself or some of the great spiritual masters as teachers of stillness in his treatise. And Nil's redaction of the Life of Athanasius of Athos has precisely some of the model supervisory structure, which Iosif notes in his Rule.³⁴ All of the above justifies our treating Nil and Iosif together to generalize about the Russian modes and rhetoric of the *starchestvo* of their day.

Some Closing Thoughts

To impart their messages, train disciples, and influence outsiders, Nil and Iosif employed all of the available rhetorical didactic modes: apophthegmatic, erapocritical, hagiographic, systematic-expository, homiletic, epistolary, and regulatory. And they freely employed maxims, enthymemes, emotional appeals, scare stories, and even insults, as evident in Nil's warning against unnecessary conversations, taking virtually verbatim from Isaac the Syrian:

³³ *PNSIK*, 180-83; *NSAW*, 207. Structurally and slightly textually adapted from Climacus: cf. *PG*, 88: 808BC. Climacus's more dynamically complex list is: "... from nature, from God, from adverse afflictions, from the praiseworthy, from vainglory, from fornication, from love, from memory of death, and many other things."

³⁴ Cf. Tamara Lønngren (Lønngren), ed. *Sobornik Nila Sorskogo* 5 vols. (3 for the 3 codices, 2 for her *Ukazatel' Slov*) = *Studia philologica* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2000-05), 1: 306-09; *VMCh.*, Sept., 584; *DRIU*, 129; *MRIV*, 267. Lønngren's invaluable work on Nil's *Sobornik* and other hagiographic autographs continues: "Avtograf Nila Sorskogo: 'prepisana byst s knigi startsa Nila.'" *Palaeoslavica* 18, no. 1 (2010): 197-242; "Oshibki' Nila Sorskogo," *Palaeoslavica* 18, no. 2 (2010): 289-98.

*And if the conversation of those abstaining from something, but having a small deficiency of something, usually harms the soul, how much more so is the spectacle and babble of commoners (prostets = idiotōn) and fools (iurodivykh = mōrōn) not to say laymen!*⁹⁵

The Russian *starchestvo*, analyzed here, of Nil's and Iosif's time and expressed and reflected in their writings, is clearly marked by subordination to hierarchical structures and the church canons – the two masters, after all, did collaborate against the Novgorod Heretics (so-called “Judaizers”),⁹⁶ and more than half of Nil's *Sobornik* saints fought for Orthodoxy.⁹⁷ But at the same time the potential tension between charisma and office that continuously crops up in organized religion is clearly present their texts. Both the introduction to Nil's *Predanie*, cited earlier, and the title given what we term Iosif's earlier “Brief Rule” – “Avva Iosif's Discourses for His Disciples from the Divine Writings on the Cenobitic Life,”⁹⁸ present an ideal personal relationship, however much admittedly framed and constrained by the huge body of sacred literature and canons and the structures these support. Neither master allows anarchy, Nil's (really Climacus's) aphoristic stricture against “self-regulation” being matched by another set of Iosif's syllogistically rhetorical and downright insulting polemics against those who “shriek and say: ‘It is better to live where laws and canons do not exist.’”⁹⁹ And just as Iosif promotes, rhetorically as well as institutionally, the council brothers and senior officials as a co-governing check on the superior, so Nil does not fully trust any individual to practice hesychasm on his own. Rather, at the end of his treatise, he cites or adapts a string of adages from Climacus, who, while conceding that living the solitary life can work for a few, advises against it, himself adapting from Ecclesiastes:

⁹⁵ *PNSIK*, 190-91; *NSAW*, 217, with source indicated: Nil reverses the order of the gen. pl. *iurodivykh i prostets* in the Slavic translation of the Greek “Isaac:” the earliest text of this, which Prokhorov published, lacks the “i” and hence may translate, as he does, to “simple idiots” (*prostykh gluptsov*) – whichever one chooses, this is a rhetorical insult.

⁹⁶ David Goldfrank, “Nil Sorskii and *Prosvetitel*!” in Chester S. L. Dunning, Russell Martin, and Daniel Rowland, eds., *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom Revisited: Essays in Russian History and Culture in Honor of Robert O. Crummey* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2008), 215-30.

⁹⁷ *NSAW*, 28.

⁹⁸ *PIV*, 297; *MRIV*, 120.

⁹⁹ *VMCh*, Sept., 559-62; *DRJU*, 109-11; *MRIV*, 238-40, esp. 239.

Indeed the middle of the above-mentioned has been the most suitable for many, that is, stillness with one or two. 'Woe to him who is alone', he [Ecclesiastes] said: 'if he falls into despondency or sleep or sluggishness, or despair: there is none among men to raise him up' (Eccl. 4:10).¹⁰⁰

Climacus's poetic prose also provides the optimal situation for those select few, whose control of their passions qualifies them to dare "touch stillness:"

Human cohabitation is completely opposed to them, their being able with a mentor to ascend from stillness, as from a harbor, to heaven, not needing to cohabit with coenobitic clamor and scandals, and not tempted.¹⁰¹

A characteristic maxim for Iosif's notion of the mentor, disciple and everything else, on the other hand, might be one from Ephrem of Syria, as found in the Sabaite (Jerusalem) *Tüpikon* convoy:

"There is a great calamity where laws and canons do not dwell."¹⁰²

And from the totality of their writings, one would have to concede that both Nil and Iosif would envision a time and a place for foregrounding each of these maxims, at least for some monks.

So I would be very surprised if both Nil and Iosif, or at least the logic behind both of them, did not figure as part of the Muscovite legacy to Imperial Russian *starchestvo*. That is, at least the brand that had the support and approval of Metropolitan Filaret Drozdov of Moscow (1821-67), who favored cenobitism as a vehicle for monastic reform and recommended the "ascetic writings" of Basil, Climacus, Dorotheus, Ephrem, Macarius, and also Nil Sorskii to all monks for cell-reading, but not Isaac, Barsanuphius, or the *Philokalia* (*Dobrotoliubie*) Fathers without some prior training and

not without the supervision and direction of experienced people, especially the latter, lest the lofty reading undertaken turn into a opportunity for the inexperienced for an

¹⁰⁰) *PNSIK*, 196; *NSAW*, 222; with sources indicated (*PG*, 88: 641D-644A)

¹⁰¹) *PNSIK*, 196; *NSAW*, 223; with sources indicated (*PG*, 88: 1073B)

¹⁰²) *VMCh*, Sept., 561; *DRJU*, 110; *MRIV*, 240, with sources and parallels in Nikon and the Jerusalem *Tüpikon* indicated.

incorrect application of insufficiently understood teaching and for reverie instead of genuine success in spiritual life.¹⁰³

So besides some totally institutionalized types, whom we can see in parts of Iosif's Rule and a few places in Nil's *Sobornik*, controlled and checked *starchestvo* charisma and pedagogy stood as the Orthodox ideal, which both Nil and Iosif read, experienced, taught, and either themselves or via their linked networks of disciples and institutional connections, transmitted to later generations. For as Nil stated so clearly in his *Predanie*:

... it is proper that only those, whom we ascertain to possess the artistic power to listen and speak profitably and so make discourse effecting the edification and rectification of souls, advise brothers and outsiders.¹⁰⁴

And as Iosif said in his *moralia* for all believers

Seek out one man, who fears God and serves Him with all of his strength, and glue yourself to him, body soul and body. If you find such a man, then lament no longer, for you have found the key to the kingdom of heaven, and follow him in all things, and attend to his words, and do what pleases him.¹⁰⁵

И яже оубо о сихъ до здѣ.

¹⁰³ Reproduced in *Pravila blagoustroistva monastyrskoi zhizni* (Kazan: Tipo-litografiia Imperatorskogo Univ., 1910), 11, and cited in *NSAW*, 104; cf. Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, 91.

¹⁰⁴ *PNSIK*, 80-89; *NSAW*, 120-21.

¹⁰⁵ *AJED*, 358; *Prosvetitel'* [*Slovo* 7], 326.