

# Confronting the End

## The Interpretation of the Last Judgment in a Novgorod Wisdom Icon

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### Introduction

A large Novgorod icon, dated in the mid-fifteenth or early sixteenth century, has been called a Last Judgment composition by scholarship (plate 1).<sup>1</sup> This icon's size, complexity, and high level of artistic synthesis speak both to its potential importance in its time and its elite appeal. Its role as the progenitor of a new iconographic tradition of portraying the Last Judgment with a serpent is further evidence of its status.<sup>2</sup> However, it evinces an unusual iconography of the Last Judgment. The image of the ringed serpent wending its way up the middle of a seemingly conventional scenario of the Second Coming and resurrection of the dead is unprecedented. So also is the chalice that shines at the icon's apex. These images invite us to question whether the Last Judgment theme encompasses the icon's full meaning.

<sup>1</sup> See *Novgorod Icons 12<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century*, eds. V. Laurina, V. Pushkarev et al., Leningrad 1980, plate 72 that reproduces invoice 12874 of the Tretyakovskiy Gallery, 164x116x4 cm, originally from the A. V. Morozov collection. Its origin is unknown. D. Goldfrank: see D. GOLDFRANK, *Who Put the Snake on the Icon and the Tollbooths on the Snake? – A Problem of Last Judgment Iconography*, Harvard Ukrainian Studies XIX (1995) 180-199, plate 7 mistakenly attributes it to the Novgorod Kirillov monastery. On the datings of this icon, see GOLDFRANK, *ibid.*, 198 and footnote 86.

<sup>2</sup> L. NERSESIAN, *Novye motivy v ikonografii strashnogo suda v russkom iskusstve XVI veka*, a paper, delivered in 1993 at the yearly scholarly conference of the Tretyakovskiy Gallery, D. GOLDFRANK, *Who Put the Snake on the Icon and the Tollbooths on the Snake?* and V. K. TSODIKOVICH, *Semantika ikonografii strashnogo suda v Russkom iskusstve 15-16 vekov*, Ul'ianovsk 1995, 96 have respectively analyzed this icon within the context of a tradition of related Last Judgment icons. Tsodikovich sees this icon as the origin of the snake imagery in Russian Last Judgment icons. L. NERSESIAN in a recent article, *Videnie proroka Daniila v russkom iskusstve XV-XVI vv.*, in: *Drevne-russkoe iskusstvo*, St. Petersburg 2003, 294-314, suggests that there is not necessarily a direct lineage between our icon and later Last Judgment compositions with a snake but rather the later icons represent parallel developments that reflect a common interest in the vision of Daniel: 7. This interpretation does not take into account the repetition of the snake imagery (that does not relate directly to Daniel's vision) throughout the tradition. VI. SARAB'IANOV, *Ikonograficheskoe sodержanie zakaznykh ikon mitropolita Makariia*, *Voprosy iskusstvoznanii* 4/93 (1994) 250-254 believes the now lost Last Judgment icon commissioned by Macarius for the Annunciation cathedral is the crucial link between our Novgorod "Last Judgment" and the later tradition described by TSODIKOVICH in *Semantika strashnogo suda* that represents the Last Judgment with a serpent and with various analogous Wisdom symbols.

Our thesis is that this icon's (hereafter termed LJI) unconventional aspects are deliberate pointers to a hidden poetic structure, accessible only to the initiate.<sup>3</sup> This deep structure is a system of interrelated parts conveying a unity of meaning. Although the links uniting these parts exist on the visual level, they are predominantly a function of subtextual narratives and symbols operating below the surface and realized in the educated viewer's mind. The iconographer relies on the viewer's *silent* co-participation in his creative process to uncover a mystery beyond words. This study constructs an "intellectual vision" of the icon by decoding the poetic language that embeds its esoteric message.<sup>4</sup>

Our decoding shows that this icon has expanded the traditional liturgical function of Last Judgment icons. LJI's content would make it, like other icons of the Last Judgment, appropriate for special worship during the pre-Lenten liturgy of Meatfare Sunday focused on the Last Judgment and the End-time. Indeed, the scripture and narrative of this liturgy informed the content of the Last Judgment icons themselves. At the same time, as we will see, LJI brings into play meanings expressed on the day prior to Meatfare Sunday, the Saturday of the Dead, and of the Sunday that follows it, devoted to Forgiveness. As a result its esoteric language foregrounds the liturgical present as the arena of action rather than the future, and interprets this present in a transcendental light pertaining to the souls' afterlife that is simultaneous with historical time, i. e. on-going and eternal.

LJI's liturgical reinterpretation of the Last Judgment through the lens of Lent involves the integration of Last Judgment imagery with a paradigm celebrating the knowledge of God being offered in the liturgical present – i.e. the paradigm of the "feast" in "Wisdom's house" according to the traditional exegesis of Proverbs 9:1-5.<sup>5</sup> This paradigm's unusu-

<sup>3</sup> Hesychast poetic strategy holds that only those who are able to find a text's mystical sense should be allowed to do so. See *Filoseiia patriarkha Konstantinopl'skogo XIV veka. Tri rechi k Episkopu Ignatiiu s ob'iasneniem izrecheniia pritchei: "Premudrost' sozda sebe dom" i proch., Grecheskii tekst i Russkii perevod*, ed., Episkop Arsenii, Novgorod 1898, 6-26 (hereafter referred to as *Tri rechi*), 18-19. All my English translations from this text are from the Russian.

<sup>4</sup> G. MATHEW, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, New York 1971, 18-19 describes intellectual vision as the basis of Byzantine esthetics.

<sup>5</sup> Solomon holding a scroll with a citation from Proverbs 9:1 "Wisdom builds her house," in the dome of St. Sophia of Novgorod suggests this metaphor's framing function in the Novgorod Wisdom cult. On the Novgorod Wisdom cult see also M. PLUKHANOVA, *O traditsiakh Sofiiskikh i Uspenskikh tserkvei v russkikh zemliakh do XVI veka*, in: Lotmanovskii Sbornik 2, Moscow 1997, 483-510. On the importance of Holy Wisdom as the key theocratic idea of ancient Novgorod, see G. FEDOTOV, *The Russian Religious Mind*, Belmont, MA 1975, 186-195. On the Byzantine Wisdom cult, J. MEYENDORFF in *Wisdom-Sophia: Contrasting Approaches to a Complex Theme*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987) 391 writes: "By dedicating the main religious building of the new imperial capital to Christ as the Wisdom of God, Emperor Constantine placed the concept and the term

al reconstruction of Last Judgment imagery relies on symbolism taken from the Byzantino-Novgorod cult of the True Cross, conveyed by the serpent and the unique treatment of other conventional Last Judgment images. The implicit Wisdom paradigm frames and reinterprets the Last Judgment imagery in a dialog with its explicit meaning. The tension that results expresses the icon's unique agenda of addressing the Church's role in confronting and offering a solution to the end of time. Since both Wisdom and the cult of the True Cross played a central role in Byzantine imperial ideology, the icon is also addressing the Church's mission to actualize the Empire's messianic destiny of manifesting the eschatological "New Jerusalem" on earth and in time.

This analysis enables us to speculate about the icon's sponsorship, dating, purpose and function. Scholars have located it both in the mid-fifteenth and in the early sixteenth century. The agenda that we uncover, – an interpretation of the Last Judgment and Second Coming as an on-going liturgical reality – is relevant to both periods.<sup>6</sup> We will demonstrate that the key to this icon's importance is its capacity to respond to the dual eschatological and imperial crises that challenged Russian identity in different ways in the mid-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, – as a crisis of expectation of the end on the one hand, and as a crisis of unfulfilled expectations on the other. We will argue, however, that its allusions to the Elevation of the Cross, its intense yet succinct and unique poetic organization and its sources in hesychast inspired spirituality make it more likely to come from the earlier period, during the reign of Archbishops Euthymius II and Iona in Novgorod. This supposition and its own succinctness places it at the beginning of a tradition of Last Judgment icons with a serpent that flourished in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century in Rus' and Ukraine. The other icons in this tradition do away with the dialogic tension between the paradigms of the Last Judgment and Wisdom's house and subordinate sophianic imagery to a clear and explicit and ever more elaborate Last Judgment scenario derived from the vision of Daniel 7.<sup>7</sup>

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"Wisdom" at the center of the Greek Christian religious consciousness and civilization." On aspects of the Wisdom cult in Constantinople and Novgorod, see G. FILOMONOV, *Sofia Premudrost' Bozhiia*, Obshchestvo drevne-russkago iskusstva, Vestnik 1-3 (1874) 1-20.

<sup>6</sup> V. I. ANTONOVA and N. E. MNEVA, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi, XI - nachalo XVI veka II*, Moscow 1963, #64, 121-122 dated this icon in the mid-fifteenth century. In personal conversation, scholars associated with the Tretyakovskiy Gallery and the Kremlin museums now assume it is from the sixteenth century.

<sup>7</sup> On these icons, see GOLDFRANK, *Who Put The Snake on the Icon....* and a typescript by John-Paul HIMKA, *Text and Image in Ukrainian Icons of the Last Judgment*. On their relation to Daniel 7, see L. V. NERSESIAN, *Videnie proroka Daniila v russkom iskusstve XV-XVI vv.*, Drevne-russkoe iskusstvo, St.-Peterburg 2003, 294-314.

For our decoding of LJI to be historically credible, it must call upon the intellectual resources that we know were available to the icon's presumed primary audience, the monastically educated Novgorod viewer. The esthetic justification for the icon's poetic organization is the Logos theology that underlies the traditional exegesis of Divine Wisdom as Christ-Logos. Thus the viewer who is alerted to the icon's Wisdom symbolism, would find a structure of meaning that relates Logos (archetype, divine Idea) with corresponding logoi (the created images of the archetypes that exist in eternity and/or in time).<sup>8</sup> This poetics transforms the four hierarchical registers of the icon into a set of correspondences that can be actualized on the level of visual similarity or symmetry, or through hidden meanings derived from subtextual narratives.

The most important subtexts are St. Germanus of Constantinople's treatise "On the Divine Liturgy," Eusebius of Caesarea's writings concerning the cult of the True Cross, of Constantine and Elena, and the Prophet Daniel's vision of the final empire. Whereas a Slavonic version of St. Germanus' tract exists in ancient Novgorod, this is not the case with Eusebius' writings.<sup>9</sup> However, it is not unreasonable to assume general knowledge of the traditions deriving from Eusebius' writings because of the importance of the cult of Constantine and the True Cross for the Church of Holy Wisdom (St. Sophia) in Novgorod, and the frequent contacts between Novgorod and Constantinople.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the icon exhibits evidence of an interpretation of "Wisdom's house" articulated by the fourteenth century ecumenical Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, whose writings in Greek or in Slavonic translation have yet to surface in Old Russian manuscript collections. At this point one can only conclude that the iconographer had seen a copy somewhere, probably in Novgorod or Moscow, or by traveling to centers of hesychast writing in Mt. Athos, the Balkans or Byzantium itself and

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<sup>8</sup> These archetypes express the Creator's thoughts according to *John of Damascus* in his authoritative first treatise *On the Divine Images*, Crestwood, N.Y. 1980, 19-20. "There are also in God images and models of His acts yet to come: those things which are His will for all eternity, which is always changeless...just as a man who wishes to build a house would first write out a plan and work according to its prescriptions."

<sup>9</sup> See *S''kazan'e tr'kov'noe* in A. Gorskii and K. Novostruev, *Opisanie slavaian-skikh rukopisei Moskovskoi sinodal'noi biblioteki. Otdel vtoroi. Pisaniia sviatykh ottsev No. 163*, Moscow 1859, 420-421, L. 237 ob. This 12<sup>th</sup> century manuscript, now in the Moscow State history Museum, Sin. 262, was originally from Nikon's New Jerusalem monastery and thus originally from Novgorod. Other evidences of Germanus' importance are his portrayal in the dome of St. Sophia of Novgorod, and his commemoration in the St. Sophia menologion from the 11<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>10</sup> On ties between Novgorod and Byzantium, see O. S. POPOVA, *Iskusstvo Novgoroda i Moskvy pervoi poloviny chetyrnadtsatogo veka. Ego sviazi s Vizantie*, Moscow 1980.



that he likely had knowledge of Greek.<sup>11</sup> The icon testifies to his obvious familiarity with the main trends of Paleologian art, and thus to his broad experience and education.

Our analysis will show that LJI lays bare the hesychast strategy for confronting the end and relates it to Novgorod's experience.<sup>12</sup> L. EVSEEVA has noted the Wisdom symbolism in monumental art of the Paleologian period. She stresses this art's overall agenda of responding to the imminent end, as reflected in a proliferation of themes about the heavenly city, the future triumph of the good, and the future judgment.<sup>13</sup> While EVSEEVA acknowledges that "Wisdom's house" is a dominant metaphor of the age, she has overlooked its impact on the problem of the end.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, she and other scholars, including the catalogers of LJI, have consistently taken eschatological motifs at face value rather than examined their larger frame of reference and their role in a symbolic whole, be it a program of wall paintings or a single icon.<sup>15</sup> LJI's interpretation of the Last Judgment through a higher paradigm of Wisdom's house challenges us to look more deeply at the way the late Paleologian age, and Novgorod in particular responded to the expected end of time. With the appropriate methodological tools we will show that LJI makes a point of shifting emphasis from the chronological end to the

<sup>11</sup> The close relations between the Moscow Metropolitan Cyprian, himself from the Eparchy of Constantinople, and the Patriarch Philotheos make it likely that the Patriarch's writings were known and copied. See L. M. EVSEEVA, *Eskhatologiya 7000 goda*, 414. Pakhomii Serb, arriving from Athos to Euthymius' court no later than 1438, is one of many who could have brought a copy.

<sup>12</sup> On hesychasm, see J. MEYENDORFF, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y. 1996, 41-43, 146 and I. EKONOMITSEV, *Isikhazm i Vostochnoevropeiskoe Vozrozhdenie*, Bogoslovskie trudy 29 (1989) 59-74.

<sup>13</sup> See L. M. EVSEEVA, *Eskhatologiya 7000 goda*, 414-417. She mentions the Last Judgment compositions in the Serbian churches of Grachanitsa (1321) and Dechani (1340's), as well as Andrei Rublev's 1408 composition in the Dormition Cathedral of Vladimir. On the influence of the hesychast spirituality of Mt. Athos and of Philotheos' Orations on Proverbs 9:1-5 on Paleologian monumental painting, see also her *Dve simvolicheskie kompozitsii v rospisi XIV v. monastyrja Zarna*, *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 43 (1982) 134-146.

<sup>14</sup> On the popularity of the iconography "Wisdom builds her house" in fresco painting during the period of hesychast triumph in the church, and on the importance of the hesychast Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos in establishing this trend, see J. MEYENDORFF, *Wisdom-Sophia: Contrasting Approaches to a Complex Theme*, 392-400. See also L. M. EVSEEVA, *Dve simvolicheskie kompozitsii*, 136.

<sup>15</sup> The Patriarch Philotheos, in his *Tri rechi*, 6-26 presents an ardent defense of the use of the symbol as a mystical ladder in the spirit of Dionysios the Areopagite. On the symbol in Wisdom iconography, see P. HUNT, *The Novgorod Sophia Icon and the 'Problem of Old Russian Culture'*, Symposium: A Journal of Russian Thought 4-5, Idylwild, Ca. 1999-2000, 1-41. The symbolic poetics of hesychasm reflected the revived interest in Dionysios the Areopagite's works that were translated into Slavonic in the fourteenth century. See G. M. PROKHOROV, *Pamiatniki perevodnoi literatury XIV-XV vekov*, Leningrad 1987.

present on-going interior life of the Church as a place of revelation, salvation and judgment.<sup>16</sup>

By this shift, the icon expresses a conception of the "end" articulated by the Patriarch Philotheos in his three orations interpreting Proverbs 9:1-5. For Philotheos the "end" is an ontological reality, a manifestation of the Trinity's self-identity without temporal qualifications.<sup>17</sup> He defines it in terms of fullness of divine indwelling and communion without reference to chronological time: "...if you can find an end to that which is without limits, it is rest and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul."<sup>18</sup> Further: the "end and goal of the world is the church's marriage with Christ."<sup>19</sup>

The icon's interpretation of the "last" judgment reflects another hesychast conception of the end by the tenth century mystic St. Simeon the New Theologian, who enjoyed high prestige in Novgorod mystical-ascetic circles.<sup>20</sup> St. Simeon held that the cosmic week of seven millennia culminates in the age of Christ who has already, in time, mystically inaugurated the "eighth day" or "new creation" beyond time. According to St. Simeon, "the Coming of the Lord has already taken place," and "the revelation of Divinity becomes in fact a judgment for those to whom it is revealed." "Neither does he, [the illumined] understand the Day of the Lord as appearing sometime 'then,'" writes St. Simeon, "because by

<sup>16</sup> VI. SARAB'IANOV in *Programmnye osnovy...*, 274 elucidates the tradition informing LJI's use of liturgical symbolism of the cross to interpret the Last Judgment. He notes that the Novgorod area reflected a trend in Russian churches from the middle of the twelfth century to impose liturgical symbolism on traditional subjects. This resulted in new iconographic programs especially in the apse and the cupola and the spread of frescoes of the passion cycle, etc. The traditional interpretation of Wisdom's feast as the Eucharist made the Wisdom paradigm a vehicle of this trend.

<sup>17</sup> Philotheos elaborates on the manifestation of the "all in all" through the Spirit, and in relation to the saints who experience "now" the divine glory. See *Tri rechi*, 102 and 137. 8. His view reflects the influence of Maximus the Confessor on hesychast spirituality. According to L. THUNBERG, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor*, Crestwood, N.Y. 1985, 144, St. Maximus saw "eschatology as a dimension of theology", understood as "a permanent dimension of transcendence opening up everlasting perspectives...[he] did not know of an absolute break between existence *hic et nunc* and life after death".

<sup>18</sup> Here, he quotes from John 14:15, about the coming of the Spirit of Truth who will be with the Church eternally after Christ's crucifixion. See *Tri rechi*, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Onuii konechnuii tsel' vetkhago i novago i vsego Khristova nizrechennago i bozhestvennago domostroitel'stva, razumeiu unevestit'sia Khristu ...tserkvi i sodelat'sia ei telom velikoi onoi Glavy. See *Tri rechi*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> His works were included in early 15<sup>th</sup> century Novgorod manuscripts of the *Lestvitsa* of John of Sinai, for example, from the Lisitskii monastery. See E. S. SMIRNOVA, *Litseye rukopisi Velikogo Novgoroda, XV vek*, Moscow 1994, 189-190, and 33. Miniatures of John's Ladder may have had a direct influence on the portrayal of the serpent in LJI.

virtue of his converse and union with God, he has become wholly a bright and shining day.”<sup>21</sup>

The deliberate imposition of a paradigm of “Wisdom’s house” on Last Judgment imagery in LJI is a manifesto of the hesychast position with a specific rhetorical purpose to confront the meaning of the end. In order to be able to identify this paradigm and its transformational power, we will first familiarize the reader with its conventional elements as explicitly realized in a contemporary icon called “Wisdom builds her house” from the cathedral of the Malo-Kirillov Monastery on Novgorod’s outskirts (plate 2). While no in-depth study of this latter icon has been done, scholars have tended to date it in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. However as E. GORDIENKO has pointed out, it may be a product of the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century with early 16<sup>th</sup> century additions.<sup>22</sup>

We will then turn our attention to LJI. We first describe its obvious Last Judgment imagery which predominates in registers one through three (counting from bottom to top). We examine the conventional meanings of this imagery, and the icon’s subtle subversion of these meanings. We then address how the Wisdom paradigm, embedded in the fourth, highest register, frames and directs our reading of this imagery. We identify the archetypes of Wisdom and its house first in the center and then the peripheries of register four. We read the icon from left to right and from high to low to uncover a narrative expanding on the symbolism of the center. (We orient ourselves from the icon’s internal perspective that is opposite to the viewer’s). This detailed step-by-step reading shows the icon’s “reconstruction” of the Last Judgment scenario to stand for the immediate liturgical union with God signifying Wisdom’s feast. Finally, we describe how two passages from John’s Gospel play a decisive role in integrating the Last Judgment and Wisdom imagery around the central image of the serpent. In conclusion, we describe the crucial differences between LJI and the Malo-Kirillov icon for understanding the former’s unique agenda. We then speculate on this agenda’s implications for the icon’s dating, sponsorship, and for its significance to Novgorod.

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<sup>21</sup> See A. GOLITZYN, *St. Symeon the New Theologian, The Church and the Last Things I*, Crestwood, N.Y. 1995, 25, 97.

<sup>22</sup> It is now in the Tretyakovsky Gallery, Invoice 28830, 146x107x37 cm. See *Novgorod Icons 12<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century*, plate 206. They date it not later than 1548. However, in correspondence, E. Gordienko proposed that its basic composition, use of color, and style has marked affinities with works of the middle to the third quarter of the fifteenth century, while the seven ecumenical councils are a later addition. These works include the deisis and festival icons of the Volotovo Church of the Dormition, and the tablets of St. Sophia of Novgorod. The author is deeply indebted to E. Gordienko for her insights and comments on this study.

### Wisdom's House in the Malo-Kirillov Icon

The Malo-Kirillov icon builds on a tradition descended from a late fourteenth century fresco in the Church of the Dormition at Volotovo, and transferred to icon format in fifteenth century Novgorod. In a sophisticated poetic language, rooted in Logos theology, it offers a normative Christological interpretation of "Wisdom's house."<sup>23</sup> This interpretation and its poetic expression offer insights into the higher frame of LJI that provides the context for reading the Last Judgment imagery. Besides sharing an implicit frame of reference, the two icons have in common certain innovative features. This suggests the possibility of actual influence or, at the very least, emergence within the same spiritual tradition.

Both icons share a central unprecedented image, – a large chalice abiding above the Creator who wears a wisdom star around his head. In both, its presence announces the icons' exegesis of Proverbs 9:1-5. The chalice and the star identify the Creator as Wisdom.<sup>24</sup> In both icons, the chalice's unusual position reflects the hesychast appreciation of Dionysios the Areopagite's exegesis of Wisdom's feast.<sup>25</sup> For St. Dionysios, Wisdom's cup of Proverbs 9 is not just the Eucharistic offering of Christ's body and blood as was traditional; It symbolizes an ontological truth behind this offering and its power to make the Church One: divine Providence, – the Godhead's loving Thoughts and Intentions for His Creation, healing and completing His work by penetrating all things even as they do not depart from divine transcendent unity. Thus for the Areopagite, partaking in Wisdom's feast of the Eucharist meant inner participation in ontological truth and power i.e. in Wisdom itself.<sup>26</sup> The

<sup>23</sup> On the tradition of icons dedicated to this theme, see G. PROKHOROV, *Poslanie Titu-ierarkhu Dionisiia Areopagita v slavianskom perevode i ikonografia 'Premudrost' sozda sebe dom,* Trudy otdela drevne-russkoi literatury Akademii nauk [TODRL] 38 (1985) 7-40. See also D. FIENE, *What is the Appearance of the Divine Sophia*, 454-455. On the Volotovo frescoes, see G. I. VZDORNOV, *Freski tserkvi Uspeniia na Volotovom pole bliz Novgoroda*, Moscow 1989, 57-58 and ill.181 and T. A. SIDOROVA, *Volotovskaia freska 'Premudrost' sozda sebe dom' i ee otnoshenie k Novgorodskoi eresi strigol'nikov v XIV v.*, TODRL 26 (1971) 212-231.

<sup>24</sup> On the star as a Wisdom symbol, see D. FIENE, *What is the Appearance...*, 449, 457. See also my forthcoming article *The Wisdom Star in Byzantino-Slavic Tradition*, due to appear in: *Spor o "Sofii" v khristianskoi kul'ture*, Novgorod 2008.

<sup>25</sup> For the Slavonic text of Dionysios' interpretation and its relevance to the Russian iconographic exegesis of Proverbs 9:1-5, see, G. PROKHOROV, *Poslanie Titu-ierarkhu Dionisiia Areopagita*, 7-17, 33-37. Philotheos cites the Areopagite's interpretation of the Chalice more than once. Moreover, when writing that the Eucharist as Wisdom's feast "fills out all things," he directly echoes the Areopagite's description of Wisdom's chalice as "filling out lacks and imperfections." See *Tri rechi*, 57-58, 100-101, and 128, and *Poslanie Titu...*, 33.

<sup>26</sup> St. Germanus directly associates the eucharistic cup with Wisdom's cup of Proverbs 9: "Or again, the chalice corresponds to the bowl which the Lord depicts, that is Wisdom; because the Son of God has mixed His blood for drin-

Malo-Kirillov icon poetically realizes the idea that the Eucharist immerses the Church in divine Providence – God’s ontological, pre-eternal founding Idea, His Word (Logos), and Wisdom – and thus enters it into transcendent wholeness even as it exists in time.

The chalice motivates the creation of a system of analogies that symbolize the actualization of the divine Idea in the world. The enlarged and foregrounded concentric circles of the Creator’s aureole mark Him as the center of centers containing the archetypal potential of the whole. Separating Him from the remaining space, it contains archetypes standing for His thoughts. On a symbolic and a visual level, the surrounding compositions “mirror” these archetypes and represent their “images” or manifestations relative to time and space. The resulting grid of correspondences unfolds the Providence of the dominant chalice in implicit concentric circles, each symbolizing a sacred center and Wisdom’s house.<sup>27</sup> As we will see, the Church in the upper register is the most comprehensive symbol, subsuming all others, and an apotheosis of Wisdom’s house.

The most important archetypes of the Creator’s thoughts are the Chalice and the Creator’s throne. They represent a compositional unit with significance for the whole icon. The Throne looks like an eucharistic altar. Implicitly, the Creator sitting on it is offering Himself as the eucharistic feast. At the same time the Throne has seven columns projecting from underneath which associate it with Wisdom’s house of Proverbs 9:1.<sup>28</sup> As a composite, the Chalice, the Creator and His Throne are archetypal models of Wisdom offering Himself as the feast in Wisdom’s house. They allude to the liturgy for Great Thursday, celebrating Christ’s instantiation of the Eucharist at the Last Supper: “Cause of all and Bestower of life, the infinite wisdom of God has built His house...Instructing His friends in the Mysteries, the true Wisdom of God

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king instead of that wine, and set it forth on His holy table, saying to all: ‘Drink of my blood mixed for you for the remission of sins and eternal life.’” See P. MEYENDORFF, *St. Germanus of Constantinople on the Divine Liturgy*, Crestwood, N.Y. 1984, 9, 89. On the Wisdom symbolism of Great Thursday, see Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, *The Lenten Triodion*, London 1978, 549. The Patriarch Philotheos elaborated on this theme in *Tri rechi*, 128-129. Germanus’ and Philotheos’ interpretation also reflected the exegesis of “Wisdom’s feast” in the 7<sup>th</sup> century *Questions and Answers of Anastasius the Sinaite* (originally known in Russia from the 1073 *Izbornik* of Sviatoslav). See J. MEYENDORFF, *L’iconographie de la Sagesse Divine dans la tradition byzantine*, Cahiers archéologiques 10 (1959) 260-261, and V. G. BRIUSOVA, *Tolkovanie na IX pritchu Solomona v Izbornike 1073*, in: *Izbornik Svyatoslava 1073*, Moscow 1977, 306, prilozhenie.

<sup>27</sup> On the sacred center, see M. ELIADE, *The Sacred and Profane*, New York 1959, 21, 43, 60, 68, 172.

<sup>28</sup> See Proverbs 9:1: “Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars....”

prepares a table...and He mingles for the faithful the cup of the wine of life eternal."<sup>29</sup>

The corresponding images assimilate time and space to this sacred originating center of divine power by the poetics of analogy. In front and below the Throne and the Chalice we see Wisdom's servants congregated around an analogous altar table with analogous cups. Seven servants implicitly offer seven cups (although only five are visible). They are analogous to the seven columns to indicate that their action is occurring in Wisdom's house. The architectural structure in the upper register has six small and one large cupola. The number symbolism homologizes it to the action below and shows that it is the "house" in which the feast occurs. Moreover its function of unifying seven implies the Church's analogy with the Creation completed by God on the Seventh Day. This symbolism associates the Church with the transcendental Empire of the Seventh Millennium, in the spirit of the Byzantine chronicle tradition.<sup>30</sup> (To underscore the Church's role of bearing the imperial mission, the seven ecumenical councils with their seven emperors were added later.)<sup>31</sup> As such, this large image of the Church as Wisdom's house symbolizes the fulfillment of the Creator's plan and the apotheosis of His work.

The images below the Church embody its Providence. They thus occupy an intermediate place in the chain of correspondences mediating between the archetypal Chalice and Throne and the Church/Empire. Surrounded by an aureole like the Creator, the Mother of God with Child on the right enjoys archetypal status relative to the scenes below and above. Yet relative to the Creator, she is an image (raised to the status of archetype). The incarnate God in her lap is the same person as the archetypal Creator-Wisdom, and actualizes the latter's Self-offering as Wisdom's feast.<sup>32</sup> She offers Him, the Child, as the Creator offers His

<sup>29</sup> See *The Lenten Triodion*, 549.

<sup>30</sup> The chronicles viewed the Empire as "...the last of the great universal monarchies foreseen by the prophet Daniel...the last day of the universal week of 7000 years...." See G. DAGRON, *Empereur et prêtre: étude sur le 'césaropapisme' byzantine*, Paris 1996, 167-168. See also G. PODSKALSKY, *Représentation du temps dans l'eschatologie impériale byzantine*, in: *Le Temps chrétien de la fin de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge, III<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Colloques internationaux du CNRS, no. 604, Paris 1984. Tradition interpreted the seven millenia by analogy to the seven days of Creation.

<sup>31</sup> E. Gordienko in personal correspondence notes that the depiction of the emperors and bishops differs from the rest of the icon in color and style. This and the emperors' untypical placement on columns indicates that they are a later addition, not earlier than the second quarter of the sixteenth century. On the importance of the ecumenical councils in an early sixteenth century Epistle attributed to Filofei of Pskov, see N. V. SINITSYNA, *Tretii Rim: Istoki i evolutsiia russkoi srednevekovoi kontseptsii*, Moscow 1998, 229-30.

<sup>32</sup> On the crucial role of the incarnation in the exegesis of "Wisdom builds her house" see the *Questions and Answers of Anastasius the Sinaite* in MEYENDORFF,





Plate 1





Plate 2



own blood in the eucharistic Chalice.<sup>33</sup> The cups on the altar table below reenact their offering in liturgical time, and the Empire/Church is the place of this offering, fulfilling the Providence of the Incarnation.<sup>34</sup>

If her Child is the “image” of the Creator, she is the “image” of the Throne with seven columns on which the Creator sits. She is therefore analogous to the altar table and ultimately to the “house” where the altar table dwells. When the Creator looks over His shoulder towards her, He is indicating that she is His beloved and equal, His partner in realizing Providence. His gesture personifies the relationship between Wisdom and its house (Christ and the Church) epitomized in the liturgical life of the Empire/Church.<sup>35</sup>

The icon has introduced three major themes in its visual realization of “Wisdom’s house” that mark a spatio-temporal sequence expanding outward from the sacred center of Christ’s creative thoughts, – the Incarnation, the Eucharist and the theocratic empire. King Solomon and his Temple/City/Kingdom behind the Creator introduce the fourth, the all-important Jerusalem theme. They embody the beginning of the providential sequence that expresses the divine Idea of building a “house” in which the Godhead lives. Like the Mother of God, Solomon is the created image of the archetypal Creator; only he builds a temple instead of conceiving a child.<sup>36</sup> His personal Wisdom and royalty mirror in human terms the Creator’s divine nature but before the actual Incarnation has taken place. He thus leans toward the Child who fulfills his Providence.

The Jerusalem temple behind Solomon embodies the original instantiation of “Wisdom’s house” according to the tradition that Proverb’s author “Solomon,” was referring to his temple in chapter 9:1. This temple thus mirrors the Creator’s Altar-Throne with its seven columns of Wisdom’s house. Overlaying the historical temple at the

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*L’Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine...*, 260-261. The Patriarch Philotheos harkens continuously on its significance in *Tri rechi*, 110-111, 114-116, 120, etc.

<sup>33</sup> On the eucharistic symbolism of the Mother of God as Wisdom’s house in the verses for Great Thursday service by Cosmas of Maiuma, see J. MEYENDORFF, *Wisdom-Sophia: Contrasting Approaches*, 393. This icon portrays this hymnographer pointing to a scroll that contains the relevant liturgical verses. By alluding to the Mother of God’s eucharistic symbolism, the verses associate her with the Chalice above the Creator’s head.

<sup>34</sup> On the Incarnation as a paradigm of Byzantine identity, see D. M. NICOL, *Byzantine Political Thought*, in: *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-c.1450*, Cambridge 1988, 53-55, and J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology*, 214.

<sup>35</sup> Philotheos describes the Mother of God as Wisdom’s house by analogy to the Church, and stresses her role as bride and repository of Isaiah’s seven spirits of Wisdom. These spirits are portrayed in the icon in seven aureoles above the Church. See *Tri rechi*, 47-48, 118, 120-121.

<sup>36</sup> The words on his scroll from Proverbs 9:1 “Wisdom builds her house” underscore his analogy to the Creator.

front-center, the Altar-Throne symbolizes the latter's innate Wisdom. The temple exists in a series with the Altar-Throne's other mirrors – the Mother of God, the altar table below, and the Church/Empire above. By leaning towards her and the Child, Solomon implies that she renews the Jerusalem temple in the “temple” of Christ's flesh. The Church/Empire above fulfills the providence of Solomon's temple and of Christ's Incarnation. In its capacity as Wisdom's house, it is, implicitly, the renewal of Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup>

A servant slaughtering a calf elaborates this providential series further and clarifies the action which implicitly take place within the Empire/Church. Although he stands “in front of” Solomon's temple, he is, according to the icon's poetic system, enacting the temple sacrifice within.<sup>38</sup> A combination of position and viewpoint express his wisdom. The calf is sacrificed “under” the Creator's Throne and Chalice to show that it manifests the Creator's ontological self-offering. At the same time, the servant looks to the divine Child and the eucharistic feast to show that the calf foreshadows the Creator's sacrificial kenosis into human flesh and the eucharistic body and blood.<sup>39</sup> This providential series “in front of” the Empire/Church implies that the Eucharist occurring within fulfills the original creative Idea of making God present in a renewed Jerusalem temple, “Wisdom's house.”

The icon also draws on the Jerusalem theme to express the transcendence of Wisdom's house, its simultaneous communion with the eternal.<sup>40</sup> The paired aureoles of Christ and the Mother of God, their mutual enthronement and personal intimacy allude to the archetypes of the New Jerusalem in *Revelation* 19 – the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, the Union of heaven and earth. Within the context of the icon these implicit eschatological archetypes function ontologically, i.e. as a Logos capable of temporal manifestation *before* the end of time through

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<sup>37</sup> The association of Wisdom's house with the renewed Jerusalem is as old as Hippolytus' third century exegesis of Proverbs 9:1-5. See *Hippolytus zu den Proverbien*, in: Hippolytus, Werke XV, Leipzig 1897, 162.

<sup>38</sup> See B. USPENSKY, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*, Lisse 1976.

<sup>39</sup> The sacrificed beast alludes to the Creator's nature as the pre-eternal Sacrificed Lamb. The juxtaposition of these two images reflects the influence of a tradition of Novgorod and Pskov Church decoration described in SARAB'IANOV, *Programmnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii*, 301. The Great Thursday Matins service refers to how “Wisdom offers its feast” and alludes to this kenosis. See *Lenten Triodion*, 549.

<sup>40</sup> A. LIDOV, *Nebesnyi Ierusalim v vostochnokhristianskoi ikonografii*, in: *Ierusalim v russkoi kul'ture*, ed. A. Batalov and A. Lidov, Moscow 1994, 22 describes a twelfth century miniature in the Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus that uses the complex of imagery associated with Wisdom's house, and especially the symbolism of the number seven to evoke the transcendental New Jerusalem.

the liturgy of the Church.<sup>41</sup> Implicitly the eucharistic feast being offered in the Church is the “image” of the archetypal marriage feast of Christ and the Mother of God. This correspondence indicates that the Church/Empire, a renewed Jerusalem, is the revelation of the mystical New Jerusalem on high.

The icon gives subtle visual evidence of the Eucharist’s power to initiate humankind into the transcendence of the heavenly Jerusalem. Two of Wisdom’s servants hold their cups high, parallel to Solomon’s Jerusalem tower and the adjacent Mother of God. They pay homage to her ascension that 1) realized the providence of the Incarnation, the deification of the flesh, and 2) foreshadowed the general resurrection in the New Jerusalem. Implicitly, their cups mystically offer her and humankind’s ultimate experience to all who dwell at the sacred center in liturgical time. Drinking their wine expiates sin and renews the flesh, mystically filling the body with the inner light of transfiguration and eternal life. The servants’ offering shows that as Wisdom’s feast, the liturgy actualizes ontological Truth, the Providence of the beginning, and “realizes” eschatological wholeness, the Providence of the end. It empowers the Church/Empire to transcend its historical limitations – to manifest heaven on earth, eternity in time. In this way the servants’ gesture fills out the implications of the mystical marriage between Christ and the Mother of God, functioning as a symbol of the Church. It plays on the Jerusalem theme to show that the Church/Empire of the Seventh Millennium reveals the Eighth in advance.

When read with the eye of the mind, the icon exhibits a sequential layering of images that express the Creator’s Wisdom by unraveling the potential of His archetypal thoughts. Viewpoint indicates the direction of this unraveling and associates it with intimate personal knowledge and vision. This movement through a series of sacred “centers” signifies the dimensions of Wisdom’s house. Thus the Creator as Logos (center one) looks in the same direction as Solomon (in the Old Jerusalem at center two) who faces the Mother of God and incarnate Child (center three) who fulfill his and Christ’s Providence. Solomon, she and the Child behold the eucharistic feast that fulfills the Mother and Child’s Providence (center four). Here, Wisdom’s servants and guests face one another in a dynamic stasis that signifies arrival. Here knowledge and communion occur simultaneously rather than sequentially. Another dynamic stasis

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<sup>41</sup> A prayer of the Matins service for Good Thursday alludes to the believer’s participation in this marriage. See the *Lenten Triodion*, 554. On the eschatological nature of the liturgy and the Eucharist, see K. CH. FELMY, *Verdrängung der eschatologischen Dimension der byzantinischen göttlichen Liturgie und ihre Folgen*, in: *Liturgiia, arkhitektura i iskusstvo vizantiiskogo mira*, ed. K. K. Akent’iev, Sankt-Peterburg 1995, 39-50.

(center five) is the implied marriage of the enaureoled Christ and Mother of God alluding to the eschatological New Jerusalem that is being realized in history below (center four).

The large frontal image of the Church adds yet another dimension to this total picture.<sup>42</sup> Embodying the stasis of the center in a historical-spatial arena, encompassing the total Providence below in its own ongoing Eucharistic rites, it alludes to the universal Church/Empire. Indeed, with the ecumenical councils and presiding emperors represented on its steps, it stands for Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the archetype of universal Church/Empire. Solomon leaning from His tower, with his temple/city behind, alludes to Hagia's Sophia's interpretation as a renewed temple of Solomon and an image of the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup> The combination of Creator, Mother of God with Child and the Eucharistic feast may even allude to Hagia Sophia's iconography – to the Creator in the dome, Mother of God in the apse and the altar below them. The appearance of the Mother of God and Child suggest this since they are exactly as they appear in the apse of the actual church.<sup>44</sup>

This reading of the icon, *Wisdom Builds Her House*, from the point of view of Logos theology presents us with a highly structured and sophisticated composition. In a condensed fashion, the icons brings into play several levels of patristic exegesis of the meaning of Proverbs 9:1-5 where "Wisdom builds her house" refers to 1) the building of the Jerusalem temple; 2) the incarnation; 3) the renewal of the temple in the universal Church; 4) the realization of the New Jerusalem on high within this Church and its liturgy. Wisdom's feast refers to the Eucharist, and to the knowledge of God's Logos or Idea-energy for the world that is available through the Church and its councils. Its realization of the identity between archetype and image takes into account the providential movement of sacred time. It thus shows that the fullness of the Godhead's creative Idea for all time is reflected in the Church existing through time.

The icon's representation of the eschatological marriage of Christ and the Church as a transcendental dimension of the historical liturgy expresses the hesychast conception of the "end:" Here the "end" is not

<sup>42</sup> According to E. A. Gordienko, the Church was in the original fifteenth century icon while the portrayal of the ecumenical councils was added in the early sixteenth century.

<sup>43</sup> For ninth century sources comparing Hagia Sophia to Solomon's Temple in the *Byzantine Tale of Hagia Sophia* and the *Épistle of the Patriarch Photius to the Catholicos Zacharius*, and their availability in Rus', see K. K. AREN'IEV, *Mozaiki Kievskoi sv. Sofii i 'Slovo' mitropolita Ilariona v vizantiiskom liturgicheskom kontekste*, in: *Liturgiia, arkhitektura i iskusstvo vizantiiskogo mira. Vizantinorossika. Trudy XVIII Mezhdunarodnogo kongressa vizantinistov* (Moscow 8-15 Avgusta, 1991) t. 1, 76.

<sup>44</sup> On the Mother of God and Child in the apse of Wisdom Churches, see V. G. BRIUSOVA, *Tolkovanie na IX pritchu Solomona..*, 302-303.

first and foremost associated with chronological time but with the ontological reality of divine indwelling; The icon shows that this indwelling realizes the transcendence of the historical Church continuously up to and through time's chronological end. The icon thus realizes the dimensions of Wisdom's house, its participation in the divine self-identity, symbolized by the archetypal Chalice above the Creator's head. Its poetic structure reveals the way providence flows out into the world and time even while remaining in an unmovable self-sameness beyond time, a self-sameness that is also the goal and "end" of the creation.<sup>45</sup>

Our analysis of the paradigm of Wisdom's house in the Malo-Kirillov icon prepares us to look at the analogous paradigm in LJ1 where the Chalice above the creator's head is also the dominant metaphor. It and other Wisdom metaphors in register four frames the Last Judgment imagery below to express an analogous conception of the Church/Empire. The deliberate and unusual choice of Last Judgment imagery implies a marked strategy of reinterpreting the "end" in a hesychast way, i.e. as an ontological rather than chronological reality. LJ1's interpretation of Wisdom's feast makes the liturgy's power to "realize eschatology" a focus of meaning.<sup>46</sup>

In LJ1 the Chalice has an analogous function as in the Malo-Kirillov icon. Its placement at the center and the icon's highest point suggests that it announces the Logoi (archetypes) whose corresponding "images" (logoi) will be represented below. In the same way the foregrounded Chalice in the Malo-Kirillov icon was associated with the set of correspondences unraveled in the icon as a whole. As in the Malo-Kirillov icon, an image's orientation in space, visual similarity with other images, and relation to literary subtexts serve as the bases of analogies that may not be obvious on the surface. Viewpoint and symmetries also serve as markers of meaningful interrelationships and connections. These and other poetic devices form a correlative grid that signifies the Godhead indwelling in the Church.<sup>47</sup> Relying on our knowledge of a poetics based

<sup>45</sup> On Philotheos' conception of the "end" as the Church's marriage with Christ and the self-identity symbolized by the Chalice, see *Tri rechi*, 59, 101. Of the Chalice he writes, echoing Dionysios the Areopagite: "ona [chasha] mnogi-mi priznavalas' simvolom beznachal'nago i neskonchaemago, prostiraiushchagosa na vse i v sebe togdazhe prebyvaiushchago velikago promyshleniia Bozhii...Promysl ne est' chto libo iz vsego, prevoskhodit vse sushchestvuiushchee...to v Sebe samom vsegda takim zhe obrazom prebyvaet." This Providence refers to the "obshchee deistvie vsei edinosushchnoi i ne razel'noi Troitsy" of *Tri rechi*, 103.

<sup>46</sup> J. MEYENDORFF used this term to describe the Byzantine idea that the Kingdom of God had already appeared "in power" in his *Byzantine Theology*, New York 1974, 214, 215. See also G. PODSKALSKY, *Représentation du temps dans l'eschatologie impériale byzantine*, 439-450 and *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie*, Munich 1972.

<sup>47</sup> On this spatial continuum, see L. F. ZHEGIN, *Iazyk zhivopis'noy proizvedeniia*, Moscow 1970 and E. SENDLER, *The Icon*, Torrance, CA 1995, 139.

on Logos theology, scripture and tradition, the iconographer challenges us to decipher new symbolic pathways for embodying a multi-faceted and multi-purposed paradigm of Wisdom's house.<sup>48</sup>

### The Last Judgment imagery in LJI

The iconographer subtly subverts the explicit Last Judgment images that have informed scholarship's interpretation of the icon up until now to project them onto the transcendental dimension of eternity. The conventional representation of Last Judgment imagery embodies a specific moment at the end of time. It reflects the liturgical service of Meatfare Sunday that initiates the season of Lent and its work of repentance through reminding the faithful of what they must prepare themselves to face at the end of time. Both the service and Last Judgment iconography elaborate on the eschatological vision of the Book of Daniel, chapter 7 that Christ saw as a prophecy of His Second Coming. Christ identified Himself as the "Son of Man" of Daniel 7 in His apocalyptic prophecies of Matthew 19 and 25.<sup>49</sup> LJI's specific debt to Daniel reflects the influence of a fourteenth century fresco of the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of the Pskov Snetogorskii monastery. This fresco was the first in a uniquely Russian iconographic tradition of interpreting the Last Judgment specifically through Daniel's vision (The serpent, which does not relate to the vision, had not yet been added).<sup>50</sup> Like the fresco, our icon includes Daniel's figure in a marked place on the left side of register one, sitting on a mountain overlooking the general resurrection with an angel behind him.

On the surface, register three, featuring Christ as Son of Man shows the least variation from the norm of Last Judgment iconography. The "Son of Man" who has "inherited" the throne of the Ancient of Days is the enthroned Christ in glory surrounded by the enthroned apostles.

<sup>48</sup> The transposition of themes and new combinations of old images was especially characteristic of Wisdom icons as a genre, and of Pskov and Novgorod iconography as a "school." See L. OUSPENSKY and VI. LOSSKY, *The Meaning of Icons*, Crestwood, N.Y. 1989, 15-21, 40-43 and VI. SARAB'IANOV, *Strashnii sud' v rospisiakh sobora Snetogorskogo monastyria v Pskove i ego literaturnaiia osnova*, in: *Problemi na izkustvoto* 2, 30-A (1996) 30 and his *Ikonograficheskoe sodержanie....*

<sup>49</sup> For the conventions of Last Judgment iconography, see N. V. POKROVSKY, *Strashnyi sud v pamiatnikakh vizantiiskago i russkago iskusstva*, in: *Trudy VI arkheologicheskago s"ezda v Odesse* III (1884), Odessa 1887, 285-381, and D. GOLDFRANK, *Who Put the Snake on the Icon....*, 181-183.

<sup>50</sup> On the Snetogorskii fresco, see VI. SARAB'IANOV, *'Strashnii sud' v rospisiakh sobora Snetogorskogo monastyria*. See L. NERSESIAN, *Novye motiivy v ikonografii Strashnogo Suda....*, in: *Programmnye osnovy....*, 297-300, Sarab'ianov indicates how the orientation on vision of the Last Judgment frescos reflects an overall emphasis on contemplation and theophany characteristic of the church's liturgical symbolism. Similarly, LJI explicitly subordinates its Last Judgment imagery to liturgical theophany.

John and Mary and Adam and Eve are directly before the throne in attitudes of intercession and prayer. In the broadest sense, they stand for the saints before the throne in the "eternal kingdom" of Daniel 7: 16. Their presence typically testifies to the general resurrection of time's end and the mystical unity of the Church in Christ. The twelve enthroned apostles allude to Matthew 19:28 where Christ both names Himself Daniel's Son of Man, and prophesies that at the final judgment the apostles will sit in court with Him "on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Implicitly then, He Himself is on a judgment seat. Normally, a fiery river proceeds from the seat to hell, visiting God's wrath on the damned, according to Daniel's prophecy, "a river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him (7:10)."

However, the icon presents us with a serpent in place of the fiery river and radically transforms the import of the imagery alluding to Matthew 19 and Daniel 7. This serpent occurs for the first time in this specific context in a late fourteenth century Moscow Last Judgment icon.<sup>51</sup> There, it is directly analogous to the fiery river, both in color and in position.<sup>52</sup> Here the serpent represents a path out of rather than into hell. This together with the absence of the fiery river, except at the very left hand corner of the icon, suggests that the interpretation of the Last Judgment here is in the spirit of Paleologian art: It represents a triumph of the Good, the glory of the great gathering together at the Second Coming rather than the terrible reckoning. The earlier Moscow Last Judgment icon that portrays the fiery river as a serpent exhibited this thematics.<sup>53</sup> However, other differences raise the possibility that the serpent in LJI exists in an entirely new context of meaning. The serpent occupies the icon's central lower rather than upper axis. It is green instead of red and it is surrounded with twenty circles. They signify the tollbooths of the afterlife, and allude to the duration and difficulty of the soul's ascent, the so-called "minor judgement."<sup>54</sup> This new context suggests that the ser-

<sup>51</sup> See E. SMIRNOVA, *Moscow Icons 14<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> century*, Leningrad 1989, plate 113, Cathedral of the Dormition, invoice 3225.

<sup>52</sup> V. K. TSODIKOVICH, *Semantika ikonografii strashnogo suda*, 96 sees this icon as the origin of the snake imagery in Russian Last Judgment icons, and discusses what he believes to be its original evolution from the fiery river. For a full treatment of the snake in both a Christian and pagan context, see his chapter two.

<sup>53</sup> EVSEEVA in *Eskhatologiya 7000 goda...*, 417 notes that it is close in meaning to Andrei Rublev's 1408 depiction of the Last Judgment as the triumph of the good in the Dormition Cathedral of Vladimir.

<sup>54</sup> V. K. TSODIKOVICH, *Semantika...*, 96 describes the origin of the tollbooth symbolism from the serpent's association with the cleansing function of the fiery river. *Slovo o iskhode dushi i o mytarskvakh*, a twelfth or thirteenth c. text attributed to Avraamii of Smolenskii, itself informed by the *Zhitie Vasiliia Novogo*, also interprets the tollbooths in this light. See also D. GOLDFRANK, *Who Put the Snake...*, 180-181, 190-193. Apparently unaware of the Tsodikovich article, Goldfrank proposes that the snake symbolizes the Antichrist.

pent may reflect the influence of the Last Judgment cycle of the twelfth century Novgorod Nereditsa Church: There a rising serpent drinking from a chalice appears in the scene of the earth giving up its bodies.<sup>55</sup>

The so-called Prepared Throne (*hetomasia*) under Christ's judgment throne is at the center of register two as was typical of Last Judgment iconography.<sup>56</sup> However, just like the serpent, it is placed lower in the composition than the viewer might expect. In authoritative early fifteenth century Russian compositions, the Prepared Throne normally appears on high to emphasize its eschatological connotations.<sup>57</sup> Its symbolism reflects the patristic view of the altar as "the place which reveals the Second Coming of the One enthroned upon it, who will judge both the living and the dead."<sup>58</sup> It is composed of an altar table with the open book, the cross and the instruments of Christ's passion. Below a small table holds a vial with Christ's blood, shed at the crucifixion. Underneath it a palm, signifying the hand of God holds the scales of justice.

The peoples facing the Prepared Throne are traditionally interpreted as the righteous on the icon's right and the damned on the left according to Matthew 25:32-46. Here we see the traditional orders of the saints on the right and the sinners on the left. The latter include foreigners and the pharisees, identifiable by their white headdresses. As was conventional, neither side wears haloes. In traditional Last Judgment imagery, the absence of haloes associates them with historical time but as a finished, completed totality, a summation of all human experience prior to death. Implicitly this experience is being brought together in one instant to be weighed in the scales of justice that are located under an elevated Prepared Throne. The peoples typically stand or kneel in groups under or on either side of the scales. Here, both saints and sinners are in long columns on either side of the Prepared Throne that is on their level, and the sinners move forward while the saints

<sup>55</sup> See N. V. PIVOVAROVA, *Freski Tserkvi Spasa na Nereditse v Novgorode*, ill. 182, 171 (p.152) and p. 82. A very similar scene is also in the fourteenth century frescoes of the Church of the Nativity of the Snetogorsk monastery of Pskov and of the Annunciation at the Vatoped monastery on Mt. Athos. At Nereditsa, the serpent spirals above one of the choir doors and from under the figure on a beast personifying the Earth. The serpent circles around over the figure's head to drink out of a chalice the figure is holding with its left hand while its right holds flowering branches. Bodies emerge directly above the serpent and the Earth's head.

<sup>56</sup> N. V. POKROVSKY, *Strashnyi sud v pamiatnikakh...*, 296, and 337 notes its central importance in Last Judgment compositions.

<sup>57</sup> See the Moscow Last Judgment icon mentioned above and Andrei Rublev's and Daniil Chernyi's Last Judgment fresco in the Dormition Cathedral in Vladimir na Kliazme where the Prepared Throne appears with three circles under it referring to the Wisdom of the Trinity in N. V. POKROVSKY, *Strashnyi sud v pamiatnikakh...*, 309-311 and the corresponding plates.

<sup>58</sup> See L. OUSPENSKY, *The Problem of the Iconostasis*, 192.



remain stationary. As we will see, these changes imply a different time dimension of duration – on-going movement – rather than a summation of historical time.

The portrayal of Moses twice and in an unusual way is another innovation in register two.<sup>59</sup> First of all Moses appears in front of the sinners and points upward just as he does in the Snetogorsky fresco. In the fresco, he holds up a scroll of denunciation directed particularly to the pharisees, reading “They gaze on him whom they crucified.”<sup>60</sup> In our icon, however, Moses gestures upwards towards a scroll held by an angel, while he drops the arm holding his scroll, presumably with his traditional words of exhortation.<sup>61</sup>

Moses gestures towards words of invitation, “Come O blessed of my Father.”<sup>62</sup> They allude to the Gospel words the enthroned Christ displays in fresco renditions of the eschatological triumph of the Good, for example in the Serbian churches of Grachanitsa and Dechani.<sup>63</sup> The text is from Matthew 24:34 where Christ prophesies that He is Daniel’s Son of Man who will inherit Ancient’s kingdom: [“Then the King will say to those on His right hand,] “Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”” The Angel’s invitation to the peoples on the “left hand,” and even to the pharisees alerts us to a shift of meaning. Moses’ rhetorical gesture suggests that in contrast to the Snetogorsky fresco, those who appear on the left share the status of those on the right as invitees into the kingdom. Accordingly, Moses appears again at the head of the saints on the right as though to imply that the peoples on the left are not far behind. Like the words on the scroll, these two appearances undo the dichotomy between left and right that the viewer would naturally assume in Last Judgment iconography and suggests that the saints and sinners are on one continuous path.

Traditional images of the general resurrection occupy register one. The left-hand circle represents the Earth and Sea giving forth souls that look like small swaddled infants. From there our eye moves to the lower middle where we see the resurrected saints in their bodies proceeding through the door of Paradise on the right. The Mother of God in Paradise receives them with a gesture of blessing. Next to the circle of Paradise is a smaller one holding the four beasts of Daniel’s vision rep-

<sup>59</sup> L. NERSESIAN, *Novye motivy*....

<sup>60</sup> For a discussion of the liturgical source of this inscription and its larger context see SARAB’IANOV, ‘*Strashnyi sud*,’ 23-24.

<sup>61</sup> This is the hypothesis of NERSESIAN, *Novye motivy*....

<sup>62</sup> L. NERSESIAN has deciphered the words, “Priidite blagoslovennye Ottsa moego...” in *Novye motivy*....

<sup>63</sup> See L. EVSEVA, in *Eskhatologiya 7000 goda*..., 414: “Pridite, blagoslovenii Ottsa Moego, nasleduite tsarstvo, ugotovannoe vam ot sozdaniia mira.”

resenting the four universal kingdoms which succeed one another up to the end.<sup>64</sup> In the Snetogorskii fresco, the fourth beast symbolizes the kingdom of the Antichrist according to Hippolytus' "Oration on the Antichrist."<sup>65</sup> Here their position contiguous to Paradise's door and almost touching the serpent is unusual, pointing to a different context of interpretation for the fourth beast that derives from a tradition established by Eusebius and Cosmas Indicopleustes.<sup>66</sup>

A large proportion of the icon's space is given over to Last Judgment imagery. However, a number of innovative features jolt our expectations. Their meaning comes into focus when the iconographer incorporates the traditional hierarchical organization of Last Judgment iconography into the grid of correspondences between archetype and image, symbolizing Wisdom's house of Proverbs 9:1-5.<sup>67</sup> The hidden correspondences between the upper fourth and the lower three registers reinterprets the "Last Judgment" motifs and explains the lowering of the Prepared Throne, the function of the serpent, why the peoples on the left move and are receiving an invitation, Moses' dual appearance, the meaning of the fourth beast, etc. The fourth register conveys the icon's thematic dominants and its poetic strategy for assimilating eschatological motifs into a larger frame of reference. Our examination of the icon's correlative grid begins with the central axis. It then proceeds from the left to the right in a circle that elaborates on the meaning of the center.

### **The Archetypes of Register Four and the Structure of Analogies: The central axis**

As in the Malo-Kirillov icon, the Creator and His aureole contain the dominant archetypes directing our reading – the ontological models (Logoi) signifying the Wisdom of the divine mind. The archetypes within the Creator's green fourth concentric circle – the Chalice, six circles on

<sup>64</sup> This interpretation is based on the inscriptions above these beasts in the Snetogorskii frescoes. See SARAB'IANOV, 'Strashnyi sud,' 26-27.

<sup>65</sup> For the popular medieval Slavic translation of the "Oration," see G. PODSKALSKY, *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie. Die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und dem tausendjährigen Friedensreiche (Apok. 20). Eine motiugeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Munich 1972, 66, fns. 395-397.

<sup>66</sup> See L. NERSESIAN, *Videnie proroka Daniila...*, 299.

<sup>67</sup> Typically the Last Judgment composition is layered in three, but sometimes four or even five tiers. For examples of four and five tiered renditions, see N. V. POKROVSKY, 'Strashnyi sud; v pamiatnikakh...', 291, 298, 302-305. In virtually every case the uppermost tier contains the image of Christ enthroned in glory and judgment above the The Prepared Throne. However a twelfth century mosaic from Torcello (portrayed on p. 291) adds a fifth tier which portrays the victorious Christ rising through the "door" of hell and taking the redeemed with him, confounding the Last Judgment with the Resurrection that accomplished mystically the action revealed at time's end.

either side, and St. Paul with a scroll – refer specifically to His Ideas for His creation which will be actualized below.<sup>68</sup> Here we see the Chalice in a position analogous to the Malo-Kirillov icon, but it is surrounded by a circular halo of Light. This halo signifies that the act of Eucharistic communion entails a vision of divine Providence that is Wisdom's feast. It is an archetype of the inner vision or illumination that places the Church in contact with the divine Ideas (Logoi); it alludes to the important role of the Spirit-Light in the icon's system of meaning. All the figures below are in a state of vision that symbolizes their reception of Wisdom's feast; they see the theophanies of divine Providence modeled along the central axis.<sup>69</sup> Unlike its counterpart in the Malo-Kirillov icon, the Chalice itself is visibly filled with red blood. The Blood has an archetypal function and implies that the eucharistic offering of Christ's blood, shed on the cross is the source of the vision that is manifest along this axis. Its "image" (created logos) is the blood in the vial under the Prepared Throne below. This blood refers to the eucharistic communion-vision the peoples are experiencing in register two.

The icon introduces the definitive theme of the cross as a source of vision in an esoteric manner. The Chalice with six circles on either side forms an archetype of the True Cross, the apocalyptic Tree of Life. Each circle contains a crowned head, symbolizing the fruits of this Tree, – the temporal rounds through which the Wisdom of the Cross manifests itself.<sup>70</sup> The left and right sides of register four recapitulate visibly this hidden Cross: On the left, we note the True Cross on Golgotha where Christ was crucified; on the right, we see a front faced Cross underneath a canopy that as we will show later, stands for the True Cross at the center of the Empire/Church. Below, their "image" is the cross on the Prepared Throne.

In this way the icon indicates that the cult of the True Cross will serve as a symbolic vehicle for interpreting the Eucharist's power to give the knowledge of God that signifies Wisdom's feast. This cult was developed in Byzantium to symbolize the Empire's messianic destiny, and centered on the liturgical feasts of the Elevation of the Cross and the Renewal of the (Jerusalem) Temple. Here it invests the icon's paradigm of Wisdom's house with rich theocratic connotations parallel to those of the Malo-

<sup>68</sup> L. NERSESIAN in *Novye motivy* interprets the figure with the scroll as Moses. However, as E. Gordienko has clarified, his pointed beard identifies him as St. Paul.

<sup>69</sup> The poetics of the icon work together with the semantic level of meaning to convey the act of vision. In general, whatever appears frontfaced is implicitly an object of mystical contemplation. The figures appearing three quarters face are implicitly in front receiving this vision, See I. GRABAR, *Plotin et les origines de l'esthétique médiévale*, Cahiers archéologiques 1 (1945) 15-35.

<sup>70</sup> The twelve crowned heads in the circles are astrological symbols of the months. See ANTONEVA and MNEVA, *Katalog drevnerusskoi ikonopisi* II, 122.

Kirillov icon.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, cross symbolism in the fourth register motivates the serpent's interpretation as a symbol of the Golgotha cross. This interpretation in turn defines the serpent's crucial role in projecting the eschatological scenario onto the liturgical present.<sup>72</sup>

The hidden Tree of Life and the Creator below indicate the icon's poetic strategy for using eschatological imagery to express ontological truth. They both have eschatological significance that is subverted by their context. The Tree of Life from the book of Revelation is a symbol of healing, wholeness and completion that occurs in the New Jerusalem after time's end. However, the Chalice's position above the Creator's head associates it with the Creator's Thought so that the Tree of Life is a Logos, an archetype with corresponding "images" (logoi). The hierarchy of corresponding logoi occupies the central axis. They include the cross symbolized by the serpent together with the apostles on either side of register three (by analogy to the twelve crowned heads in register four), and the cross on the Prepared Throne. As we will see, these lower levels respectively manifest the Tree in eternity and in time i.e. in coexistent domains of duration (unending, and temporal-historical with an end). This self-sameness of Logos and logoi manifests the ontological truth of the divine self-identity.

On the eschatological level, if the Creator is Daniel's Ancient of Days (7:9), then the Christ beneath Him is Daniel's Son of Man. He has returned to the Ancient with "authority, glory and sovereign power" to inherit the messianic eternal kingdom (7:14). However, the Ancient's star identifies Him as Wisdom and source of ontological Truth. In this capacity, the Ancient alludes to Dionysios the Areopagite's interpretation of the name "Ancient." For him, this name signified the Creator's pre-eternity that both transcends and encompasses eternity and time.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> On the central importance of worship of the cross and the cult of the Exaltation of the Cross in Old Russia, and particularly Novgorod, see G. PODSKALSKY, *Principal Aspects and Problems of Theology in Kievan Rus'*, Harvard Ukrainian Studies XI, 3/4 (1987) 282. He notes that the canonical questions and answers of Deacon Kirik of Novgorod depict the rite followed in Byzantium. See *Constantine VII Porphyrogénète, Le Livre des cérémonies I*, ed. A. Vogt, Paris 1935, 116-118. See also M. B. PLIUKHANOVA, *Stuzhety i simvoly moskovskogo tsarstva*, St.-Peterburg 1995, 105-139, and ead., *Tserkovnoe predanie o Konstantine, Elene i o vozdvizhenii kresta v tserkovnoi zhizni i v slovesnosti drevnego Novgoroda*, in: *Contributi Italiani Al XII Congresso Internazionale Degli Slavisti* (Cracovia 26 Agosto – 3 Settembre 1998), Associazione Italiana Degli Slavisti, Napoli 1998, 61-86.

<sup>72</sup> John of Damascus canonized the role of the serpent as a symbol of the cross. See *On the Divine Images*, trans. D. Anderson, Crestwood, N.Y. 1980, 21: „The brazen serpent typifies the cross and Him who healed the evil bite of the serpent by hanging on it.” His authority was Severianus of Galilea's *On the Dedication of the Cross* whose primary source was John 3:14: „And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”

<sup>73</sup> See *Pseudo-Dionysios, On the Divine Names*, in: *The Complete Works*, New York 1987, 121.

Accordingly, the eschatological Son of Man below is also the Son and Word of God, the source of form, meaning and direction for the creation in eternity and, after the fall, in time. Finally, their intersecting aureoles refer to the Spirit Who realizes Christ's mystical body in the Church and manifests the eternal within time. Together they realize a variant of Trinitarian iconography called the "Fatherhood."<sup>74</sup>

The placement of Wisdom's Chalice above the Trinity's combined "head" makes the Fatherhood the predominant archetype of the divine self-identity.<sup>75</sup> It is a vertical theophany of the Godhead's wholeness and a Logos of God's relation to the world. It refers to the revelation of the Trinity's intercommunion outside itself, through the Incarnation, the Crucifixion and resulting Descent of the Spirit on the historical Church.<sup>76</sup> The Chalice-Tree suggests that the Eucharist is the apotheosis of this life-giving economy, manifesting the power of the Crucifixion, the defeat of the Devil and death. The Eucharist continues the Spirit's descent into the Church, on the bread and wine. Also, as we will see, it continues the judgment of the Cross that destroys hell's dominion, and constantly opens the door into the kingdom, adding new fruits to the Tree of Life. The portrayal of the Trinity rather than just Christ as the source of this Wisdom reflects Philotheos' conception.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the "Fatherhood" actualizes Philotheos' ontological idea of the "end" as a wholeness available to

<sup>74</sup> See K. ONASCH, *Identity Models of Old Russian Sacred Arts*, in: *Medieval Russian Culture*, eds. H. Birnbaum and M. Flier, Berkeley 1984, 191-194 and figure 4; L. S. RETKOVSKAIA, *O poiavlenii i razvitii kompozitsii 'otchestvo' v Russkom iskusstve XIV-XVI vekov*, in: *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo* Moscow 1963, 235-262; and VI. SARAB'IANOV, *Programmnye osnovy...*, 272, 283. RETKOVSKAIA, 237, notes that fourteenth century Novgorod was a center for this composition's dissemination. VI. Sarab'ianov describes "Fatherhood" iconography in the Church of the Savior on Nereditsa (1199) in a context analogous to our icon. In the dome of the bema above the Prepared Throne in the apse is Christ as Ancient of Days with the Emmanuel below. A flowering cross (an archetype of the Cross as Tree of Life) is opposite the Emmanuel on the "cheek" of the supporting arch.

<sup>75</sup> As the shared thought-objects of the Trinity's interpersonal union, the Chalice-Tree functions analogously to the Chalice at the center of Andrei Rublev's famous Old Testament Trinity icon.

<sup>76</sup> Typically the Son would be represented as Isaiah's Emmanuel (7:14), a child, symbolizing the Incarnation, while the dove which typically appeared above His head alludes both to Christ's baptism and the descent of the Spirit on the Church. Here the Son of Man and the intersecting aureoles displace the child and the dove respectively while sharing their function. The ensuing analysis of register four-left will show the Son's direct identification with the Incarnation.

<sup>77</sup> The iconographic program of the early fourteenth century Georgian monastery of Zarma set a precedent for embodying Philotheos' idea. It portrays the Trinity as a figure with three heads offering Wisdom's feast by direct analogy to a symmetrical composition of Christ as High Priest offering his mystical body and blood. See L. EVSEVA, *Dve simvolicheskie kompozitsii v rospisi XIV v. monastyrja Zarma*, 134-146.

the historical Church. Its presence thus destabilizes the representation of the chronological end on the surface of meaning.

The unusual appearance of the Apostle Paul on the right side of the Creator's aureole again reflects Philotheos' influence. Philotheos describes Paul's ascent to the third heaven, (2Cor. 12:2-4) to present him as witness to the divine love for humankind. For Philotheos, Paul apprehends the paradox that the unknowable Wisdom of God finds a "house" in any human soul desiring to "know."<sup>78</sup> His presence alerts us that the icon is communicating a model of divine inclusiveness. This accounts for the radical reinterpretation of the peoples on the left of register two as invitees into God's kingdom. The following passage in Philotheos' treatise clarifies why the pharisees are in their ranks:

"I think that he is not departing from the truth who says that the personal Wisdom of God prophetically spoke of himself, saying in so many words, 'in the last times after the law and the prophets I Myself will try to teach the evil and dishonorable lawmakers and pharisees...I will not abandon them but will... add teachings and exposures...so as not to be unfair to those who can be convinced to believe and to reform. Because many from that wretched caste of pharisees, including the leaders and honored among them will convert and believe and it is not just to push good listeners away because of the evil ones....'"<sup>79</sup>

Paul's figure provides a clue about how the icon will treat the soul. He holds a scroll that alludes to his apocryphal "Vision" of the soul's afterlife, when it is tested by the sins and brought to heaven or to hell.<sup>80</sup> The icon bears out these implications: In this context, the departed peoples on the left and the right of register two do not so much symbolize the resurrection of the body as in Last Judgment iconography but the resurrection of the soul. The serpent marks their path of ascent through tollhouses to be tested by the sins until they arrive at a vision of God, testifying that the Spirit of the Trinity above is within them and they are realizing the divine self-identity as "houses" of Wisdom.

Thus the archetypes of the Creator-Wisdom and the contents of his fourth aureole serve as Logoi relative to the logoi on the central axis below. They set up a frame of reference for reinterpreting the icon's

<sup>78</sup> See *Tri rechi*, 41.

<sup>79</sup> *Tri rechi*, 137-138. Here Philotheos alludes to Christ's dialog with the pharisees in John 9 where he confronts them with their unwillingness to see the Light which judges the world. The iconographer's choice to show them seeing this very same Light seems to be expanding on Philotheos' thought.

<sup>80</sup> See *Videnie Apostola Pavla*, in: V. Мил'ков, *Apokrify drevnei Rusi: Teksty i issledovaniia*, Moscow 1997, 59-94. Mil'kov is presenting a Russian translation of a 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript. The 15<sup>th</sup> century inclusion of passages about the fate of the dead in the afterlife in the compilations *Zlatoust* and *Izmaragd* testify to their importance for the time.

meaning. The compositions on register four's peripheries provide mediating links between the archetypes of register four-center and their corresponding "images" below. The left side elaborates on the liturgical and Christological aspects of the icon's interpretation of Wisdom's feast as a vision of divine Providence. It provides eternal models for the icon's inner movement. The right side embodies the idea of arrival and mirrors the left. The implied identity of the two sides thus equates arrival with the providential process of getting there. They provide keys to how this equation will be manifest below.

### Register four-left

Register four-left is comprised of two symmetrical compositions – Golgotha on the right, and the descending Christ on the left. They derive symbolic import from a set of subtexts that include St. Germanus' authoritative eighth century commentary on the Divine Liturgy, the cult of the True Cross initiated by Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century, and the feast of the Elevation of the Cross that elaborates this cult. Together Golgotha and the descending Christ allude to the mythic narrative that underlies the liturgical ritual of the Eucharist. They embody providential movement – the source of the Light around the central Chalice. Here this movement-Light is manifest as an archetypal circle. It begins and ends with the descending Christ and turns indefinitely on itself. On one level, it alludes to the divine economy – the Creation, the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Descent of the Spirit – as an offering of the knowledge of God. On another level it refers specifically to the liturgical expression of this knowledge – the divine economy's reenactment during the Small Entrance, the preparation of the elements (*Proskomidia*) and the Great Entrance. Also, Golgotha and the descending Christ act as mirror images expressing self-identity. In this capacity, they both signify a liturgical vision of Christ on the Golgotha cross, a vision that condenses the economic and liturgical levels in a single divine manifestation that expresses the content of the Light around the Chalice.

The descending Christ initiates and ends the economic sequence by recapitulating both the appearance and function of the Son on the icon's central axis. Implicitly He is again the Son Whom the Father is sending out to realize Their pre-eternal Thought. Moving earthward on a diagonal, He alludes both to the creation and the Incarnation.<sup>81</sup> We then turn to the Golgotha archetype to continue the narrative. The axis of the Golgotha cross rises from a cave that symbolizes Christ's tomb. It implies

<sup>81</sup> The open scroll above with the two green and red circles allude to the First Day of Creation, according to the symbolism of the *Tolkovaia Paleia* described in T. B. VILENBAKHOVA, *Ikona 'Troitsa v deianiakh' i ee literaturnaia osnova*, TODRL XXXVIII (1985) 128. On the scroll in traditional Last Judgment imagery, see N. V. POKROVSKY, *Strashnyi sud v pamiatnikakh...*, 342.

that Christ has implicitly changed direction, and is returning upward “to the Father” through the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

To complete this sequence we come again to the descending Christ who now realizes the promise of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion, – the Descent of His Spirit to the Church, defeating the Devil and Death. Three archangels in a dark green circle behind Him spear a small black circle in front of Him signifying sin and death.<sup>82</sup> On the one hand, they allude to the final archangelic battle of *Revelation*, enacting the judgment and victory of the Son of Man. On the other hand, they refer to a continuous event, enacting the cross’s power to defeat death and make God present in the world by analogy to the Incarnation. Thus the descending Christ embodies both the beginning and the end of the economic sequence. It reenacts the function of the Fatherhood iconography to symbolize Christ’s spiritual descent into the Church, here represented as the faithful’s ascending souls.

At the same time, the descending Christ alludes to the sequential unfolding of the liturgy that enables the Church at any given moment of time to mystically experience the Spirit and its eternal life. In his interpretation of the Small Entrance with the gospel St. Germanus explains:

The Gospel is the coming of God, when He was seen by us...He was seen by us as a gentle and peaceful king who descended quietly ...*and we have beheld his glory as of the only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth* (Jn1:14)...We have heard and seen with our eyes that He is the wisdom and word of God....[my italics].<sup>83</sup>

The descending Christ manifests the vision of the “only-begotten Son” that St. Germanus associates with the presentation of the Gospel at the Small Entrance. The descending Son is therefore St. Germanus’ “wisdom and word of God.” He is liturgically recapitulating His initial self-revelation through the Incarnation according to John 1:14.<sup>84</sup>

These connotations determine the descending Christ’s correlatives below, beginning with the gospel on the Prepared Throne. Having implicitly arrived on the altar after the Small Entrance, this gospel mystically manifests the Wisdom and Word of God to the inner eye of the viewer and of the peoples on the right and left.<sup>85</sup> The Christ portrayed

<sup>82</sup> V. I. ANTONEVA and N. E. MNEVA describe these angels in *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi* II, 121-122.

<sup>83</sup> *St. Germanus on the Divine Liturgy*, 81.

<sup>84</sup> On the role of John 1 in the patristic exegesis of building Wisdom’s house, and offering Wisdom’s feast, see *Questions and Answers of Anastasius the Sinaite*, in: MEYENDORFF, *L’iconographie de la Sagesse Divine*, 260-261. St. Germanus reveals his debt to this exegesis when he interprets the “coming” of the Gospel as the Church’s vision of the Son’s incarnate Wisdom.

<sup>85</sup> This book on the “throne” is analogous to the Child in Mary’s lap in the Malo-Kirillov icon.



immediately above objectifies this interior manifestation. He is the Wisdom and the Word, the revelation of a mystical vision experienced during the liturgy. Both He and the gospel appear front faced and open to symbolize the idea of "beholding" and "seeing" the descending Christ.

Besides alluding to the beginnings of the liturgical drama whereby the Small Entrance reenacts the Incarnation, the descending Christ refers to the end of this same drama, the liturgical reenactment of the power of the cross to give spiritual knowledge of God. His footstool alludes to the raising of the True Cross as a theophanic vision of Christ:

"Lifted high upon the Cross, O master, with Thyself Thou hast raised up Adam and the whole of fallen nature...we...now *behold the footstool* on which Thine undefiled feet rested, Thy precious Cross...as we *behold* the Wood of the Cross exalted on high, let us magnify God...For there it was He that killed our slayer and brought the dead to life again...and counted us worthy to be citizens of heaven... [*my italics*].<sup>86</sup>

The above passage explains the presence of the footstool. It also relates the descending Christ to the icon's dominant symbolism of the cross as an instrument of Wisdom's liturgical feast of knowledge. At the same time it motivates the descending Christ's relation to the adjacent images. The open tomb in Golgotha with Adam's head symbolizes "raised human nature," and the archangels behind Him are "slaying" the slayer.

This passage indicates that the cross on the Prepared Throne below is a correlative of the descending Christ, like the book. This correlation alludes again to the peoples' liturgical vision of Christ's divinity manifest above. The Christ in the Trinitarian "Fatherhood" composition is also mystically "lifted high" on a cross that is implicitly His throne, and He the Lamb upon it.<sup>87</sup> The serpent, in its capacity as a symbol of the Golgotha cross, is the vertical axis of the cross-throne. The horizontal axis is the apostles in heaven, the fruits of His Tree of Life. The serpent's head directly faces Christ to dramatize that He represents a theophanic vision of the Trinity's Wisdom, associated with the peoples' liturgical adoration of the cross.

The images surrounding the theophanic Christ are correlative to the archetypes in register four-left around the descending Christ. Adam and Eve kneeling before Him testify that His "lifting up" has indeed "raised up Adam and the whole of fallen nature," as promised by Golgotha's open tomb above. The archangels warring against little devils around the

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<sup>86</sup> See *Festal Menaion*, 131.

<sup>87</sup> As Lamb He is attains a meaning similar to the Creator by analogy to the sacrificed calf in the Malo-Kirillov icon.

serpent's body testify that Christ's "lifting up" indeed "kills" the slayer by analogy to the Angels spearing the black circle above.

Thus the footstool of the descending Christ is the key to the context of interpretation by which the lower central axis – the serpent, the cross and book on the Prepared Throne – manifest the knowledge of God and His spiritual power-Light. This context indicates that the apparent depiction of the Last Judgment in fact stands for an interior liturgical vision of the power of the cross, "[bringing] the dead to life again" so they can be "citizens of heaven." The Prepared Throne is not raised up because it refers first of all to the historical liturgy that initiates souls into an interior vision, a vision transcending temporal categories and testifying to the Godhead within the Church – Wisdom in its house.

The peoples of register two are the souls who are entering into eternity because they believed while they were alive. By their movement, they participate in a liturgy that occurs simultaneously in and beyond time, and knows no end. By implication, the theophanic Christ above, and the saints and apostles around Him embody the next highest, heavenly level of the transcendental liturgy with its full revelation of the divine. The iconographer locates the serpent's head exactly between registers two and three to embody a communal beholding of Christ "lifted up" as a single liturgical vision, joining earthly and heavenly Church.<sup>88</sup> Its gaze implies that the peoples before the Prepared Throne and before the enthroned Lamb are mystically beholding the same divine Person at the same time.

The Golgotha composition in register-four-left both complements and extends the narrative associated with the descending Christ. It too serves as a higher model of the Prepared Throne below. In the economic sequence summarized by the descending Christ, Golgotha occupies an intermediate position. It symbolizes Christ's death and Resurrection (which occur after the Incarnation and prior to the Spirit's descent.) In the liturgical sequence, it alludes to the *proskomidia*, or preparation of the elements, the bread and wine.<sup>89</sup> Occurring after the Small Entrance, it

<sup>88</sup>The simultaneity of a celestial and earthly liturgy was expressed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century Novgorod fresco tradition which informed this icon, acquiring conventional status by the 14<sup>th</sup> century. See for example the discussion of the Church of the Savior on Nereditsa in VI. SARAB'IANOV, *Programmnye osnovy...*, 284. The *Epistle to the Iconographer* advocates praying in the Church rather than at home because it makes one part of a simultaneous heavenly and earthly liturgy described there. See the late fifteenth century Russian *Poslanie ikonopistsu i "slova" o pochitanii ikon* in N. A. KAZAKOVA and Ia. S. LUR'E, *Antifeodal'nye ereticheskie dvizheniia na Rusi XIV nachala XVI veka*, Moscow 1955, Source # 17, 353.

<sup>89</sup> The Golgotha image in the icon symbolizes St. Germanus' interpretation of the mystical meaning of the *proskomidia* as "... the place of Calvary where Jesus was crucified. There it is said lies the skull of our forefather Adam... Thus the God and the Father who is without beginning and ancient of days was pleased for His eternal Son to be incarnate.... For Christ... offered His own blameless

involves a ritual slaying of the Lamb prior to His symbolic "royal" entrance and enthronement on the eucharistic table in the form of bread and wine.<sup>90</sup> In this meaning, the Golgotha composition implies that the peoples' vision of the cross on the Prepared Throne below is a theophany of the Lamb slain during the *proskomidia*. Thus the central complex above the Prepared Throne summarizes the theophanic knowledge offered as the liturgy progresses.<sup>91</sup> As the Lamb enthroned on the Cross-Serpent, it alludes to the preparation of the elements and the Great Entrance with the gifts; As the Son of God and Wisdom, it refers to the Small Entrance with the Gospel.

The Golgotha composition contains keys to the peoples' interior ascent as they progress through these stages of the liturgy and relive Christ's economy.<sup>92</sup> The open door out of hell has corollaries in register two – the black angular form emerging behind the peoples on the left and the dark space under the Prepared Throne with the vial and the scales. In light of this correspondence, the black form is a symbolic door out of the tomb. It indicates that the peoples are following Adam out of hell to heaven by analogy to Christ's resurrection from the cave. The dark space under the Prepared Throne indicates that passage out of the tomb is a function of Christ's expiatory death, as reenacted during the *proskomidia* and eucharistic self-offering.

The scales in the dark space under the Prepared Throne indicate that the peoples' interior passage involves a judgment. They reflect the tradition interpreting the altar as a symbolic "tomb" and judgment seat, by direct analogy to the tomb of Christ in the Church of the Holy

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body...as a lamb pierced in the side with a spear...." See *St. Germanus On the Divine Liturgy*, 85. The icon's Golgotha reproduces the place of Calvary together with the Ancient of Days to its right, and the symbolism of the Incarnation on the left.

<sup>90</sup> On the *proskomidia* and Great Entrance, see C. KUCHAREK, *The Byzantine-Slav Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Combermere, Ontario 1971, 495-503. The "hymn of offering" accompanying the movement of the prosphora to the altar expresses the royal significance of the Slain Lamb, and symbolizes a triumphal royal entrance into the eternal kingdom. See A. SCHMEMMANN, *The Eucharist*, 119-120.

<sup>91</sup> On the poetics of summary see L. F. ZHEGIN, *Iazyk...*, and E. SENDLER, *The Icon*, 136.

<sup>92</sup> On this mystical ascent see for example *On the Divine Names*, Chapt. 4, section 9 in *Pseudo-Dionysios: The Complete Works*, 78. See also the description of mental prayer as a way of defeating the devil and confronting the Last Judgment from the *Poslanie ikonopistsu...*, 352: "...Tako i ty, khotia streliati lukavago diavola glavu...popetsemsia...o blagostoianii vnutrenim pomyslom...sirech molitvu chistu...iz glubiny pomysl v'skhodiashchu....Sego radi oskr'bim nashiu dushiu...pametiiu strashnago suda...nichts zhe bo tako otgoniaet razlenenie i prenemoganie, iako zhe sia vseгда pomyslhati, pache zhe v vremia molitvy....I sitse otvsidu s'biraiushche mysl' i k sebe obrashchaiushe, ...k nebesi vsekh sebe prelozhim, iako bliz prestola slavy predstaia...i s kheruvimy pred'stoe i s serafimy letaia mysl'iu, i plotiiu s'prichetan s bezplotnymi silami."

Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and to Golgotha, this tomb's archetype.<sup>93</sup> Eusebius called the "tomb" in the Holy Sepulchre a "martyrion" because, like Christ "lifted up" on the cross, it "witnessed" to the Resurrection, and thereby judged the devil and death. In the ancient composition, the "Prepared Throne," the book and cross on the table symbolize the altar's analogous function of witnessing, while the scales underneath the table symbolize the associated judgment.

The scales under the Prepared Throne function as a door out of the tomb because the judgment they imply involves the very vision of Christ that is the opening onto heaven. The scales tilt to the right in the direction of Paradise because the blood in the vial above remits the divine wrath, giving sinners time to repent and become witnesses to Christ's divinity as they participate in the liturgy. In their repentance, they approach the altar in the spirit of self-judgment described by Paul:

Whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ...For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged (I Corinthians 11:27).

Small devils attempt to undo the effect of their repentance and of Christ's sacrifice by rebalancing the scales. However an archangel spears them to embody the power of the combined expiatory action of Christ and his followers.<sup>94</sup>

Having "judged" the Devil within themselves, the people become able to witness the theophany offered by Moses as he points upward to Christ and heaven. Above in register four, three archangels in the Golgotha composition are *indirect* witnesses to the resurrection. They gaze through the tomb into the hell that Christ emptied out while archangels with spears enact the associated judgment on the devil. Below, Moses on both sides of the Prepared Throne and the serpent are *direct* witnesses to the vision of the resurrected Christ available to the soul released from hell; they point the peoples to the end of the path already attained by Adam and Eve – through the tomb and out of hell. The rhetorical gestures of Moses, the Serpent and the angels express the

<sup>93</sup> See *St. Germanus On the Divine Liturgy*, 59, 61. It supplanted "the 'place of judgment' of Old Testament prophecy" and implied a kind of court proceeding involving evidence and proof. See R. OUSTERHOUT, *The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior*, in: *Gesta XXIX/1* (1990) especially 47 and 51.

<sup>94</sup> This action conforms to the hesychast spirituality of St. Simeon the New Theologian who wrote: "In the present life, when by repentance we enter freely and voluntarily into the divine light, we find ourselves accused and judged; however, by divine charity and mercy this accusation and judgment is made in secret, in the depth of our soul, for our purification and pardon of sins. ...Those who undergo such a judgment in this life need no longer fear another trial." Quoted by VI. LOSSKY in *Vision of God*, 122, from Sermon 57.

icon's primary concern – to demonstrate that faith and inner vision are themselves forms of judgment that guarantee escape from the final Judgment.

The peoples' witnessing symbolizes a spiritual liberation to increasing knowledge of God that makes their participation in the Eucharist a feast of Wisdom. The serpent's body spirals from hell upward towards heaven through a series of circular doors marking important stages of their soul's progress – from hell, through earth and sea and the toll-houses, and paradise. The serpent moves from left to right as it rises from low to high to objectify the meaning of the eucharistic door under the Prepared Throne: It is a threshold to Wisdom's feast – a sacred center of vision that makes all one in Christ's mystical body of the transcendental Church.

The serpent embodies the liturgy's power to continually empty out the devil's dominion, as Christ emptied it mystically by His cross. Satan's archetype in register four-left reinforces this interpretation. It is the black circle immediately above him on a vertical axis spanning registers one and four. The archangels spear it into oblivion, implicitly opening the door on Golgotha and liberating Adam and his descendents.<sup>95</sup> In a paradoxical analogy to the three angels peering into the empty tomb, the defeated "ruler of this world" below helplessly witnesses the sinners' passage outward through the tollhouses along the serpent.

After the sinners emerge through the tollhouses, the saints take over the representation of the soul's liturgical journey in the afterlife. The focus of reading shifts from the left to the right side, as do the archetypal correlatives in register four. The saints' procession to Paradise's door in register one models this left to right movement. Finally, through the intercession of the Mother of God, they occupy their own thrones, portrayed to her lower right.

### **Transisting to register four-right**

The enthroned Mother of God serves as the saints' higher model even as she acquires meaning relative to archetypes on both sides of register four – the architectural structure above her and the descending Christ on a diagonal with her. As we will see, the architectural structure stands for the universal Church with the elevated cross at its center – a place realizing the fullness of the Godhead and of eternal life and functioning as "Wisdom's house." We have already shown that the descending Christ is an archetype of divine self-manifestation in this "house," first through the Incarnation and then through the liturgy and the contemplation of the cross. By inverted analogy, the Mother of God symbolizes the Church's reception of Christ's Spirit; she is the place of indwelling Wisdom; she personifies the "house" itself. Her front-faced

attitude makes her symmetrical with Christ-Wisdom, her implied "other," and the spouse with whom she is mystically united even during historical time, i.e. in the afterlife, after her Dormition.<sup>96</sup>

The garden of Paradise surrounding her is typical of Last Judgment compositions where, in her role as intercessor, she symbolizes a door to a future Paradise. The composition shows that she has already attained what she is helping others to achieve at the Second Coming. The Last Judgment cycle of the Nereditse Church is a possible source for this image.<sup>97</sup> However, in LJI, her contiguity with the serpent brings into play meanings from the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross that celebrates a present resurrection of the soul through the redemptive power of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. This feast fetes her as a "mystical Paradise," because her arrival in Paradise before time's end reversed the expulsion of Adam and Eve; It extols her by analogy to Christ whose suffering on the Cross liberated righteous souls from hell in the afterlife; her intercessory love also defeats "the spiritual power of wickedness" and assists the soul's progress. Her open palms on the one hand may allude to her reception of the Spirit at the Annunciation.<sup>98</sup> On the other, they actively bless those departed souls who participated in the Spirit during their historical lifetimes through the liturgy of the Church and now are passing through Paradise's door in a kind of Second Coming in advance, (where the soul lives in an eternity with no boundary between time and its end.)

The good thief who holds a cross to her left is typically present with her in the Last Judgment composition even though, when he was crucified with Christ, Christ speaks to him of the present: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). In the Last Judgment composition, he occurs together with the Mother of God because both have already entered Paradise before the end of time and therefore serve as prototypes of humankind's ultimate destiny. Here, however the cross that the thief holds almost touches the rising serpent and the angels warring around it that symbolize the power of the elevated cross. The Feast of the Elevation of the Cross states that the thief's

<sup>95</sup> The spears symbolize the renewing power of the cross, inverting the significance of the instrument of Christ's torture on either side, each of which touches a green circle, the Creator's on one side and the Archangel's on the other.

<sup>96</sup> The poetics of correspondence makes the Mother of God in LJI analogous to her counterpart in the Malo-Kirillov icon, despite the absence of the child in her lap. She too is Christ's vis à vis or Bride in a relationship also presented on a diagonal. They both sit front-faced, enthroned, hosting Wisdom's feast. Like her counterpart, she intercedes for those approaching Wisdom's feast table.

<sup>97</sup> See PIVOVAROVA, *Freski Tserkvi Spasa na Nereditse...*, ill. 67, 182.

<sup>98</sup> Her open hands recall her posture in the fresco of the Annunciation in the Pskov Mirozh monastery. See V. SARAB'IANOV, *Programmnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii*, 277.

confession of faith as he hung on his own cross opened the path to the Tree of Life in Paradise.<sup>99</sup> His cross thus shares in the Mother of God's aspect as a door that is open in the afterlife. It also shares in the serpent's significance as a path to heaven and to participation in the Tree of Life, archetypically represented above him on the central axis. Thus the composition in which the aureole appears brings to the forefront its inherent message about the possibility of dwelling in Paradise before the End. This aureole's proximity with the serpent, associating the Mother of God and the thief with the power of the elevated cross, activates an otherwise latent meaning about attaining Paradise in the transcendental present.

The architectural structure above her models her association with the Church and Empire as Wisdom's house.<sup>100</sup> On the one hand, it is an archetype of the latter as a heavenly New Jerusalem. On the other hand, a cross and dome at the center allude to the structural foundation of the historical Byzantine church that is the "image" of this archetype. The dome together with the two towers with cherubim on either side recalls the ciborium that covers the eucharistic altar.<sup>101</sup> In Byzantine tradition, the ciborium is a symbol of the renewed Jerusalem temple of the Holy Sepulchre, the archetype for the universal Church. Thus the architectural structure makes more concrete the symbolism of the Church as Wisdom's house conveyed below by the Mother of God in Paradise. Its meaning calls on the imperial cult of the True Cross and Golgotha introduced into the icon's symbolic system on register four-left. As we will note later, the almost front-faced cross under the elevated dome with stalks of grain within imply the contemplation of (and communion in) the Raised of Cross at the center of the eternal Kingdom that wreaks judgment on the Devil and death. Opening the gates of hell and liberating the redeemed elders, apostles, saints and peoples to ascend up the serpent's spiral path, it is an archetype of the way of redemption. Its "images" below include the "doors" of the thief with his cross and of the Mother of God who crushes "the spiritual power of wickedness."

<sup>99</sup> "...the tree of precious life was kept under guard, until the confession of the good thief (Luke 23:42) opened the path of access to it once again...." See *Festal Menaion*, 149, 151.

<sup>100</sup> On Annunciation symbolism in Byzantine imperial ideology, and Constantinople's special relationship to the angel Gabriel, see GRABAR, *L'iconoclasm*, 252-257.

<sup>101</sup> See *St. Germanus on the Divine Liturgy*, 59: "The ciborium...corresponds to the ark of the covenant of the Lord...Next to it God commanded that two wrought Cherubim be placed on either side...." See also A. LIDOV, *Obraz nebesnogo Ierusalima*, 20 who describes the representation of a ciborium in the fourteenth century fresco composition, "the Communion of the Apostles." The cherubim on either side relate this structure to the door of Paradise which is its counterpart in register one.

The peoples who are processing into Paradise in register one have their inverted archetype in the white robed elders in front of the Church in register four. The apostle Paul stands in front of both groups to signify that they are in a continuum even as they share a relationship of archetype to "image". According to the poetics of the icon, the elders' place in front of the Church implies their location within the Church, just as the saints are in Paradise. The elders allude to the saints' process of purification and transitional function. According to the Book of Revelation, they are washed in the blood of the Lamb, standing before God's throne in the New Jerusalem.<sup>102</sup> Their robes symbolize purification by the blood mystically contained in the vial under the Prepared Throne that redeems the sinners who implicitly are approaching Paradise behind them.

The elders are pre-eternal archetypes of the saints receiving Wisdom's feast. As they regard the Ancient, they are seeing the Wisdom of the Father – the Trinity's simultaneous Oneness in pre-eternity, eternity and time, symbolized by the name "Ancient." On the other hand, the saints enthroned in Paradise see the Wisdom of the Son. Facing the Mother of God in register one, they behold what she beholds in register three where she stands in an analogous three-quarters view. After they have passed through Paradise's door to be enthroned in register one, the saints are implicitly behind the enthroned apostles in the eternal New Jerusalem of register three. Thus the apostles like the elders above are also their models. (Accordingly, the apostles also reflect the elders above. They are twelve by analogy to the most visible elders). Elders and saints face in the same direction and, like the apostles before the throne, are seeing the same shared Wisdom of the Trinity.

The saints are represented again in a place that signifies their presence to historical time – on the right side of register two, the register that signifies the historical church. The icon thus indicates their presence in the renewed Jerusalem as well as the transcendental New Jerusalem.<sup>103</sup> They are in four groups with three in front, again by analogy to the elders above. Thus in the domain of the icon's right side, the three lower registers differentiate the dimensions of reality summarized on register four-right. This hierarchical differentiation shows that the souls of the

<sup>102</sup> See *Revelation* 6:11 and 7:9-17. They are archetypes of "all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and the Lamb," according to *Revelation* 7:9.

<sup>103</sup> For precedents in which church hierarchs portrayed in frescoes or mosaics are presumed to be participating in the on-going, earthly, historical liturgy, see V. D. SARAB'IANOV, *Programmnye osnovy...*, 270-271. The eucharistic prosphora standing for the departed signify the mystical presence of the departed in the historical liturgy as does the portrayal of the hierarchs, martyrs, saints, kings and patriarchs on the Church walls. See M. M. SOLOVEY, *The Byzantine Divine Liturgy*, Washington, D.C. 1970, 125.



saints dwell simultaneously in eternity and time as "images" of the archetypal elders in pre-eternity. This simultaneity makes them revelations of the divine self-identity of the Trinity, houses of Wisdom and temples of indwelling Spirit-Light.

The saints' analogy to the elders suggests that they are priests officiating at the liturgy's climax.<sup>104</sup> The elders' position outside the architectural structure and before the Godhead implies that they are inside the structure and before the altar. Their position corresponds to St. Germanus' description of the priest during the anaphora:

.... standing between the two Cherubim in the sanctuary and bowing on account of the...glory and brightness of the Godhead, and contemplating the heavenly liturgy, [the priest] is initiated even into the splendor of the life-giving Trinity.<sup>105</sup>

Implicitly, Paul in front of the elders is an archetypal High Priest seeing the Trinity face to face. Just as the elders' historical corollary are the peoples on the right, so Paul's historical corollary is the Moses of register-two-right who stands in front of the saints with his highpriestly brother Aaron.<sup>106</sup> Together, Paul and the elders indicate that the peoples' journey from left to right initiates them into the vision of the Trinity that marks the priesthood of the Church.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Moses and the saints stand in gestures of intercession like Mary and John the Baptist above, keeping the door open for the peoples on the left.

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<sup>104</sup> The elders' white robes allude to the priest's white robe as described by A. SCHMEMANN in *The Eucharist*, 25. The robes' association with Christ's blood also reflects their priesthood according to 1:6: "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father..." The elders face the Ancient to convey their role as "priests to His God and Father."

<sup>105</sup> St. Germanus *On the Divine Liturgy*, 93.

<sup>106</sup> Moses' implicit highpriesthood alludes to Christ's own highpriesthood as celebrated by St. Germanus. See St. Germanus *On the Divine Liturgy*, 61 and 85. This motif was an integral component of the Novgorod fresco tradition informing this icon, for instance in the Church of the Savior at Nereditsa. See SARAB'ANOV, *Programmye osnovy...*, 283.

<sup>107</sup> Philotheos' *Tri rechi*, 36 describes how Wisdom glorified Moses' face, and presents him as a "leader of the people" and a highpriest of God. Moses embodies for Philotheos the promise of bodily transfiguration by light, of God's presence "resting" within which makes humankind's body "Wisdom's house" in the age of Christ. After describing Moses, Philotheos refers the reader to *John* 12:41 where Christ reveals that he is the Light which the prophets saw. When Moses in our icon leads the people, serves as highpriest, and points to the glorified Christ, he signifies that now all the people have become like him a visionary of Christ and a place of the indwelling Spirit. Moses in register two personifies the priest who in the words of St. Germanus "lead[s] everyone into the heavenly Jerusalem...exclaim[ing]: 'Behold, let us lift up our hearts!'...with uncovered face [he] sees the glory of the Lord...now revealed to us through the manifestation of the Son of God...". His "eye of the soul seek[s] the habitation of the heavenly Jerusalem." See St. Germanus *on the Divine Liturgy*, 91-93.

Thus the archetypes of register four-right set up a three-layered grid of correspondences that signifies the inner unity of Wisdom's house and participation in Wisdom's feast. These archetypes function symmetrically with their counterparts on register four-left to express the divine self-identity implicit in the Chalice, the dominant symbol of Wisdom's feast. The two sides embody a continuum that on the one hand models divine manifestation and human deification, and on the other hand, their continuous liturgical enactment. The left symbolizes the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and descent of the Spirit through the Cross, and also the Small Entrance and the *Prskomidia* leading to the Great Entrance; the right symbolizes the spiritual resurrection of the soul in a movement from the renewed to the New Jerusalem. Priest – like, the soul officiates at the transcendental Eucharist occurring simultaneously in heaven and on earth, a Eucharist that offers Wisdom's feast of vision of God. Souls (modeled by progressing human bodies) move from left to right and follow the resurrected Christ lifted on the Cross. Passing through the doors of Eucharistic communion and the intercession of the Mother of God, they enter into a spiral expiatory journey into the eternal Kingdom modeled by the serpent. Thus the Light-Wisdom (of the Elevated Cross) that they see and experience during the Eucharist enables them to participate continuously in the Son of Man's return to the Ancient.

The imagery of the triumph of the Good in this icon refers not primarily to the end of time and the resurrection of the body but to the ontological wholeness of Being as manifest in the life of the soul both in and beyond time. In this way the icon subverts the eschatological orientation of Last Judgment imagery into service to the ontological orientation of the Wisdom paradigm. Parallel to the shift of emphasis from the body to the soul is an orientation on vision as a means of communion and receiving Wisdom's feast. Vision represents an "end" or goal that can be achieved before the chronological end of time, and that pertains to communion and inner fullness. The Wisdom archetypes of register four determine the functions of the lower register to model simultaneous layers of Being that realize the self-sameness of God communicated as Light. Thus the icon embodies the meaning of the Chalice and the Light as Wisdom's feast.

The icon's orientation on vision reflects Philotheos' idea that Wisdom's feast is an inner illumination achieved through the contemplation of symbols. This contemplation, to his mind, is an "intelligent liturgy in the soul of each." It is a kind of non-natural "understanding" (*razumenie*), a "knowledge of God and divine things" "that does not cease with death."<sup>108</sup> This understanding creates "doors and entrances" initi-

312 <sup>108</sup> See *Tri rechi*, 75: "if now you live a life...which approaches the angelic life then in the future glory you will live this blessed life in reality which is not inter-

ating the believer along a continuous path of knowledge. In LJI, the figures on the left, contemplating the Book and the Cross, initiate the "liturgy" in the soul as it begins in life. Their movement signifies the "path that does not cease with death"—the soul's continuous journey in the afterlife through the mystical door of the Eucharist. The icon's living viewer experiences this journey as well, contemplating these symbols in the "altar of [his own] mind."<sup>109</sup>

### The Function and Meaning of the Serpent

LJI's integration of the paradigm of Wisdom's house with Last Judgment imagery is centered on the unprecedented image of the serpent rising along the central axis and beholding the risen Son of Man. The seeing serpent is second only to the illuminated Chalice as the icon's controlling metaphor. It derives significance from a unique use of symbolism related to the cult of the Elevation of the Cross. This symbolism provides a path for transforming Last Judgment imagery into an exegesis of Wisdom's feast. It offers ways to use the Last Judgment imagery to express traditional Wisdom themes found in the Malo-Kirillov icon, such as the interpretation of the universal Church/Empire as Wisdom's house. It allows for a reinterpretation of the great gathering of peoples at the Second Coming as a community of souls in the afterlife who "see" the risen Christ and therefore experience the Light within and themselves represent houses of Wisdom with eternal life.

The serpent's meaning emerges in relation to archetypes in register four that allude to the cult of the Elevation of the Cross. As noted previously, on the right side, the ciborium is a symbol of the renewed Jerusalem temple of the Holy Sepulchre; the cross underneath stands for the True Cross originally raised at its sacred center.<sup>110</sup> On the left side, Golgotha alludes to this same Sepulchre and this same raising of the cross.<sup>111</sup> This symbolism alerts us to two subtexts about Christ's "lifting

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rupted by death." The reward of *razumenie* is "to exist and live a blessed and painless life which is in essence true and unfading."

<sup>109</sup> See *Tri rechi*, 50 where he describes pure prayer: "liud'mi vnimatel'nyimi sviashchennodeistvuemyia kak by v nedostupnom sviatilishche v vysokom zhertvennike uma... s sokrushennym serdtsem...."

<sup>110</sup> Tradition held that Constantine built the Church of the Resurrection (also called Holy Sepulchre) over Solomon's temple and placed the True Cross which Helena discovered "opposite." See Eusebius in *Vita Constantini* in a passage translated and cited by C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1972, 11-13: "...at the very memorial (martyrion) of Salvation was the New Jerusalem built, over against the one so famous of old... Opposite the latter, the emperor...reared the Trophy of the Savior's victory over death....".

<sup>111</sup> In Byzantine tradition, the raising of the cross ritually enacted the raising of the actual Golgotha cross in a dedication ceremony of the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. See the *Festal Menaion*, 137.

up" on the cross. John 12 and 3 show that LJI's representation of the Son of Man under the Ancient of Days alludes not to Christ's prophecy of his Second Coming in Matthew 24 but to His prophecies of His lifting up on the cross and renewal of the Jerusalem temple (John 2:19).<sup>112</sup> Christ gives them on entering Jerusalem the first and last time so that they refer both to His renewal of Jerusalem and to the coming of the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus they integrate the icon's imagery of Daniel's heavenly kingdom with the Jerusalem imagery that relates to the transcendental, universal Church as Wisdom's house.

In John 12, Christ speaks about His impending crucifixion as a "lifting up" that judges the Devil. Implicitly, this judgment is His harrowing of hell, freeing the departed to follow Him to heaven:

'Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be caste out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself' (John 12:31-32).

At the same time, Christ's prophecy implies the judgment that occurs through the Spirit's descent on the Church. In another place Christ explains, "For if I did not go away the Helper will not come to you... And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin...and of judgment...because the ruler of this world is judged (John 6:7-11)." This judgment is an interior process of illumination. "For judgment I have come into this world," Christ says, "that those *who do not see may see*... (9:39) [my italics]." The judgment portrayed in the icon is precisely the one which Christ prophesies as he prepares the apostles for His crucifixion and its role of renewing the Church.

In John 3 Christ names Himself "lifted up" as Daniel's "Son of Man":

'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:14).

In comparing Himself to Moses, Christ is alluding to Numbers 21:9: "So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and *looked at* the bronze serpent he lived [my

<sup>112</sup> John 12 is the gospel reading for the feast of the Elevation of the Cross. See *Festal Menaion*, 143. John 3 is not mentioned explicitly in the feast. The iconographer would have found a precedent for the use of these passages in conjunction with Proverbs 9:1 in a fourth century patristic writing, – the *Pseudo-Ignatius' Epistle to the Smyrnians*. See *Ad Epistolas s. Ignatii, Interpolatae, Pros Smurnaios*, in: Migne, *Patrologiae Graeca* V, col. 841B. Referring to Christ's prophecy in John 2:19 to "raise up" the Jerusalem temple in three days, and alluding to John 1:14, the Epistle states: "The Word dwells in the flesh. 'Wisdom builds herself a house.' The Word is itself the temple which...is raised up on the third day." Then paraphrasing John 12 and 3, it continues: "The Word, in his flesh, lifted up in the likeness of the bronze serpent in the desert, drew all things to himself for eternal salvation."

italics].” Christ’s prophecy inspired the ritual elevation of the cross. It implies that by looking at the cross, the Church may heal itself of sin and death. The faithful who witness His symbolic “lifting up” are in fact witnessing to the Resurrection of the Son of Man, and also to the reality of their own inner resurrection through the Spirit. Their inner vision draws them after Him to inherit the Ancient’s kingdom.

These scriptural subtexts motivate the icon’s innovative imagery and its dominant metaphor for initiation into Wisdom’s feast – the rising serpent that signifies a healing contemplation of the True Cross. Moses’ appearance on both sides of the Serpent pointing to Christ as Daniel’s Son of Man is a clear allusion to John 3:14. As in this subtext, both Moses and the Serpent function as prophetic symbols of Christ, offering the healing vision of Himself. The peoples on the right and left are the recipients of this vision as it recurs in liturgical time. Following the path that vision opens up, they participate continuously in the Son of Man’s return to the Ancient.<sup>113</sup> Thus the crux of the icon’s integration is the serpent and the subtexts that elucidate its meaning. This unique image enabled a composition composed in large part from Last Judgment imagery to elaborate on the meaning of the Light around the Chalice in a new and profound interpretation of Wisdom’s feast.

The icon’s dense symbolic structure derives from a multitude of interrelated subtexts and visual symmetries working together in a deeply organic paradigm of Wisdom’s house. The dominant symbols of the Chalice and the serpent serve to weave these interrelationships into a meaningful whole with an unprecedented agenda for a paradigm of Wisdom’s house – the subversion of the chronological end.

### **The Serpent and LJI’s Liturgical Function**

LJI’s liturgical function in the Church calendar provides other levels of motivation for the image of the serpent. The serpent in its larger context reflects the liturgies of in the pre-season of Lent that look forward to the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross and veneration of the Cross and the Resurrection at the climax of Holy Week. The definitive imagery from the earlier feast of the Elevation of the Cross fills out and deepens the icon’s capacity to reflect the spirit of Lent. Worship of Last Judgment icons on the pre-Lenten Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare Sunday) was typical and surely characteristic of LJI as well. The *Chinovnik* (Ritual Book) of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod notes that on Meatfare Sunday, “an icon of the prophet Daniel’s vision of the Last Judgment was

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<sup>113</sup> In this context, the prophet Daniel in register one models the viewer’s experience. Perched on a mountain guided by an angel, he represents *the process of viewing* the power of the resurrection and the Son of Man’s return to the Ancient.

brought out.”<sup>114</sup> This indicates that the icon in question was one of the unique tradition of Russian Last Judgment icons that makes Daniel’s eschatological vision its main theme, reflecting the liturgical imagery of Meatfare Sunday.<sup>115</sup> Icons in this tradition also contain a rising serpent with tollbooths.

LJI portrays a minimum of the features characterizing these icons – the prophet Daniel receiving his vision, Daniel’s four beasts, and the Son of Man’s return to the Ancient. It therefore appears to be at the beginning of a tradition that elaborated the vision around a central rising serpent with tollbooths. The sixteenth century Novgorod Last Judgment icon from the Church of Boris and Gleb at Plotniki has taken this composition to its outer limits and may represent the type referred to in the *Chinovnik*.<sup>116</sup> However, LJI also fits this description and could have been used at an earlier period before the composition of Daniel’s vision evolved further and eschatological motifs regained predominance.

LJI’s reflections of the Sunday of the Last Judgment do not represent an adequate motivation for its unique Wisdom symbolism and original use of the serpent. These new features separately and together relate to its function of modeling the liturgy itself as a transcendental phenomenon. This function in turn pertains to a sequence of days before Lent. LJI reflects the concern with the soul in the afterlife of the Saturday of the Dead and with how to approach the end of the Sunday of the Last Judgment. It also resonates with the themes of the following Sunday of Forgiveness: the prayer for salvation from Adam’s sin and for the soul’s return journey back to Paradise through “veneration of the cross and the holy resurrection.”<sup>117</sup>

The iconographer’s “reconstruction” of eschatological themes to model liturgical reality is in the spirit of a tradition of Pskov and Novgorod fresco painting that is especially remarkable in the twelfth

<sup>114</sup> See A. GOLUBISOV, *Chinovnik novgorodskogo Sofiiskogo sobora*, Moscow 1899, 150 and L. V. NERSESIAN, *Videnie proroka Daniila v russkom iskusstve XV-XVI vv.*, footnote 6. The published *Chinovnik* is based on an early seventeenth century manuscript with archaizing features that reflect earlier copies and practice.

<sup>115</sup> This liturgical imagery from Daniel’s vision is quoted directly in the description of the ritual in *Chinovnik*, 151-152.

<sup>116</sup> See *Novgorod Art Treasures and Architectural Monuments*, pl. 195, 136x114 cm. This icon from the Novgorod Historical Museum has an inscription over the peoples to the left of the Prepared Throne that alludes to the service of Meatfare Sunday. It identifies them as “zhidove, greka, armenove, idiane, turki, rous’, aravliane, tatarove, liakhove, nishchim.” The description “nishchim” reflects a passage from the Triodion quoted in the *Chinovnik*’s description of Meatfare Sunday, 152: “a aggeli obkhodiat, sobiraiushche vsia iazyki: priidet tsarie i kniazii, rabi i svobodni, greshnitsy i pravednitsy, bogatii i nishchi...” [my italics]. See also *Triod’ Postnaia*, Moscow 2000, 34.

<sup>117</sup> For these services, see *Triod Postnaia*, 16-35 and *The Lenten Triodion*, transl. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, London 1977, 124-168.

century frescoes of the Novgorod Church at Nereditsa. There compositions surround the Last Judgment scenario that show the path to escaping judgment outlined in the Lenten liturgies, beginning with the Pre-Lenten liturgy of Meatfare Sunday.<sup>118</sup> The Nereditsa Last Judgment fresco portrays a serpent drinking from a chalice as part of the scene of the earth delivering up its souls (and bodies) at the final resurrection. LJI's serpent personifies the soul's rising through the tollbooths of the after-life instead, as if in answer to the prayers of the Saturday of the Dead. It is contiguous with images of the addressees of these prayers for intercession: After touching the aureole of the earth delivering its souls, it then contacts the aureole of the Mother of God, places its head between different levels of saints, and finally contemplates the risen Christ in Trinity.

At the same time, the serpent in conjunction with Moses reflects the import of the Sunday of Forgiveness. The liturgy for that day states that Adam fell because of what he ate, and Moses was granted vision of God because he fasted. In LJI Moses points to a scroll with Christ's invitation into His Father's kingdom (Matt.25:31-46) that is also implicitly an invitation to Wisdom's Eucharistic feast. It is addressed to repentant sinners who have implicitly fasted during their lifetimes, undoing Adam's sin, and are now participating in the feast. The rising serpent next to Moses embodies this dynamic: it reverses the direction of the fall instigated by the "evil serpent" in Eden; the position of its head embodies the outcome of the purificatory fast, – the act of vision that Moses experienced. This vision is implicitly Wisdom's feast – knowledge of God through communion in Christ's death and resurrection, mystically available in Wisdom's Chalice (archetypally present at the icon's apex). The serpent embodies the answer to the prayers of the Sunday of Forgiveness for a return to Paradise and reveals it to be vision of God during the liturgy. Thus, it reincarnates the image of the rising serpent drinking from the cup in the Nereditsa Last Judgment frescoes in a complex structure symbolizing Wisdom's feast.

The liturgy of Forgiveness Sunday further deepens the context for understanding Moses and the serpent in LJI. It compares our "boldness to venerate [Christ's] Passion and holy Resurrection" to Moses' boldness to speak to the creator. In the icon, Moses now boldly speaks *for* the creator (by pointing to the scroll with the invitation.) The serpent with the tollbooths represents an archetype of the faithfuls' boldness. Angels waring around its body as it rises through the tollbooths to contemplate God are a metaphor for the Lenten journey – a battling with sin in an on-going crucifixion that climaxes in veneration of the passion and the

<sup>118</sup> See VI. SARAB'IANOV, *Programnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii vtoroi poloviny XII veka*, *Voprosy iskusstvoznania* 4 (1994) 268-312. On the liturgical symbolism of the Nereditsa Last Judgment cycle, see N. V. PIVOVAROVA, *Freski Tserkvi Spasa na Nereditse v Novgorode*, St.-Petersburg 2002, 86.

resurrection. The peoples on the left who look at the invitation move onward in the spirit of the Sunday of Forgiveness: "Let us all make haste .... [and] set out with joy upon the season of the Fast and prepare for spiritual combat."<sup>119</sup> LJI shows that the afterlife both continues and fulfills the Lenten journey. By praying before the icon in the pre-Lenten season, the Novgorod faithful mystically fall in line *behind* the repentant sinners from all time whose souls are ascending to knowledge of God in a liturgy in heaven and on earth.

As we can now see, the image of the serpent in LJI has complex and interwoven motivations that point to its function as a symbol for contemplation during Lent in the "intellectual liturgy of the soul." It serves as a pointer to the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross and to Paskha that both celebrate the soul's resurrection "now."<sup>120</sup> More explicit symbolism of the crucifixion and resurrection occurs in compositions portraying the Last Judgment but in a typological way, to stand for a "past" event that points to a future one.<sup>121</sup> The image of the serpent together with Moses in LJI reflects first, the iconographers desire to subordinate Daniel's eschatological vision to Christ's prophecy of His redemptive crucifixion and resurrection, and second, to show that this judgment and redemption are occurring continuously in the present of the transcendental Church, as remembered and reenacted in the season of Lent. To further emphasize that this purificatory process is continuous and occurs prior and up to the "end", the iconographer adds tollbooths along the serpent's body; he places symbols of Wisdom's feast in the highest, guiding register to show that the icon's subject is not primarily eschatological but ontological in nature, pertaining to the efficacy of the liturgy.

The symbolism of the serpent and the Chalice places LJI's Last Judgment imagery under the aegis of Lenten liturgical mysticism. The icon's expanded function is adequate to generate these entirely new images for a Last Judgment icon. Other icons based on Daniel's vision in

<sup>119</sup> See *The Lenten Triodion*, 181.

<sup>120</sup> See the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross: "This is the day of the Resurrection...O mighty Cross of the Lord, manifest thyself: show me the divine vision of thy beauty" in *The Lenten Triodion*, 337-338. The portrayal of the archangels spearing the *dark* circle next to Golgotha in register four directly embodies the words: "From the tomb hast Thou arisen...In Thy compassion Thou hast driven out the *dark* sorrow of death....[my italics]. Ibid., 341. As Satan sits immobile and watches the souls leave his domain up the body of the serpent, he could have been crying in the words of this service: "...I am constrained to cast out Adam and his posterity. ...the Tree of the Cross brings them back again to Paradise..." Ibid., 343. See also the reference to John 3:14 in *Triod Tsvetnaia*, Moscow 1975, 313 (at the end of the book).

<sup>121</sup> In the Last Judgment mosaic at Torcello, an image of Christ's resurrection occupies the highest register. The Last Judgment scene below unfolds its implications as a judgment according to Christ's prophecy of John 12. See plate 5 in GOLDFRANK, *Who Put the Snake on the Icon....*



Rus' and Ukraine exhibit the serpent with the tollbooths rising along the central axis but not the Chalice. In them, the serpent has a primarily typological function as a symbol of the minor judgment that prefigures the major one.<sup>122</sup> This reduced level of motivation seems inadequate to explain the genesis of the serpent image in the composition of Daniel's vision. LJI's complexity and debt to the Neredita Last Judgment frescoes are sufficient to explain this image's origin, while LJI's prestige may have been adequate to motivate the appearance of a serpent in icons representing Daniel's vision in a straightforward context.

### **LJI's Higher Agenda**

The icon's debt to the hesychast Patriarch Philotheos reveals that, despite its obvious innovations, its paradigm of Wisdom's house is in the mainstream of hesychast spirituality. The iconographer celebrates the hesychast vision of the life and transcendence of the soul by setting up a tension between the expected End and this End's continuous reenactment in liturgical time. LJI's similarities and differences from the Malo-Kirillov icon underscore its debt to its age and its unique higher agenda.

A shared Wisdom paradigm based in a Logos theology informed by the Christian neo-Platonic vision of Dionysius the Areopagite explains structural similarities in the icons; Both signify Wisdom's house by a poetics that reveals the interplay between the Divine Idea and its created manifestation and that symbolizes the resulting self-identity. For both Wisdom's feast represents a transcendental dimension of the liturgy that offers knowledge of God's self-identity; but one presents this knowledge as the completeness of divine Providence unfolding on a horizontal axis in chronological time; for the other this dimension is an experience of simultaneity of all time modeled on a vertical axis.

The whole of LJI could be seen as a vertical reinterpretation of Wisdom's feast as represented in the Malo-Kirillov icon – a foregrounded interchange between Wisdom's servants and Wisdom's guests that is occurring during the liturgy and is Providence's culmination and fulfillment. In the Malo-Kirillov icon, viewpoint serves as a poetic device to refer to the direction of the providential unfolding. However to signify a wholeness of all that came before and is to come, the interaction at the feast is immediate, unmarked in time, presumed to be occurring in the universal Church above. LJI associates this same liturgical interaction with the interior ascent that in the Malo-Kirillov icon is merely intimat-

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<sup>122</sup> See GOLDFRANK, *Who Put the snake on the Icon...*, 198-199. He suggests that the image reflects Iosif Volotsky's rationalization of the services for the dead. Goldfrank accepted my analysis of the serpent as a redemptive symbol in my oral comments on a paper redelivered in 1997. Goldfrank does not admit the serpent's role as a symbol of the cross. He may be right when it appears in compositions foregrounding Daniel's vision.

ed by the servants' raised cups. In LJI the poetics of vision place the accent on inner experience, on theophany occurring during the liturgy. The faithful (personified by the serpent) are witnessing the Godhead's archetypal realization of self-identity within the Trinity itself, – Christ's resurrection to the Father in its capacity to "draw all peoples" to himself. LJI's semicircular registers, overlaid by repeated circular aureoles and a spiraling serpent marking the peoples' continuous on-going ascent signify a simultaneous oneness of concurrent dimensions of the transcendental liturgy. This new interpretation renders the unmarked time of Wisdom's feast in the Malo-Kirillov icon as the transcend inner life of the Church *continuing beyond the grave* up to and including the end of time.

The peoples on the right in LJI correspond to Wisdom's "servants" in the Malo-Kirillov icon. LJI interprets them as the assembled souls of the *departed* saints and priesthood of the Church, aggregated over time in instantaneous liturgical reality – the prophets, kings, saints, martyrs together with the apostles and angels above. They offer Wisdom's feast to the "guests", interpreted as generations of repentant souls following their path. Both icons imply that the liturgy actualizes the mystical marriage of Christ and the Mother of God in the New Jerusalem and thus "realizes eschatology". However, while the Malo-Kirillov icon locates this realization in the liturgical present of the historical Church, LJI shows that it involves a continuous mystical resurrection of the soul that reenacts in advance the judgment and resurrection at time's end.

LJI's treatment of the Jerusalem theme is a key to its differences from the Malo-Kirillov icon. Both present the liturgy of the universal Church as a renewal of the Jerusalem temple, and a manifestation of the New Jerusalem. In this way they both are illuminating the archetypal nature of the actual Byzantine Church and of the Empire as the Church's "outer" face. Yet the symbolism of the True Cross that is a vehicle of the Jerusalem theme in LJI emphasizes the problematics of sin, death, judgment and triumph; at the same time, the icon's play with Last Judgment imagery frames this problematics against a future end. LJI and the Malo-Kirillov icon reflect a single tradition of exegesis, and a common hesychast understanding of the "end" as the manifestation of divine self-identity in the Church. However, the tension between the Wisdom paradigm and the Last Judgment imagery in LJI both presumes and challenges the viewer's conventional, chronological view of the end. The use of a paradigm of Wisdom's house to present a model of salvation framed against the end was new even in the broader tradition of Paleologian monumental art. This innovation challenges us to consider LJI's possible relation to its time.

## The Imperial-Eschatological Theme

LJI's inner tensions suggest that it was either responding to the expectation of the end in 1492 or to the failure of the end to come after this date. These possible functions correspond with the two datings that scholars have offered for this icon, mid-fifteenth century or early sixteenth. Eschatological anxiety was evident from the fourteenth century onward, confronting the Church with the problem of the end.<sup>123</sup> This anxiety was further exacerbated by the fall of Byzantium, the universal Empire housing the universal Church, in 1453. At the same time, after 1492, the Church needed to make sense of the failure of the end to come and find a solution to the fall of the Empire. As we have seen in the case of the Malo-Kirillov icon, the imperial theme was inherent to the Wisdom paradigm. LJI interwove it with the eschatological theme in order to be able to address both factors together in response to the crisis of its time and show that the charisma of the Empire continues in the Novgorod Church.

Like the Malo-Kirillov icon, LJI reflects Wisdom's role as the patron of the imperial Byzantine cathedral, Hagia Sophia. LJI also synthesizes two important contexts of Byzantine identity – the Golgotha-Jerusalem framework and Daniel's messianic vision.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, its allusion to the Elevated Cross has strong imperial connotations.<sup>125</sup> When yearly enacted in Hagia Sophia by the Patriarch and Emperor, this elevation symbolized the True Cross at the center of the universal Church/Empire. In the hymnology of this feast it was an archetype for the translation of imperial charisma throughout the Orthodox world.<sup>126</sup> The icon's symbolism of the cross alludes to the universal dissemination of the imperial charisma.

At the same time, the icon's treatment of Daniel's four beasts, standing for the universal kingdoms, organizes this imperial symbolism around the problem of the end. The icon presumes the viewer's knowl-

<sup>123</sup> On the heightening of this anxiety from the fourteenth century as revealed in the writings of the Moscow Metropolitans, see L. M. EVSEVA, *Eskhatologiya 7000 goda i vozniknovenie vysokogo ikonostasa*, in: *Ikonostas: Proiskhozhdenie – Razvitie – Simvolika*, ed. A. M. Lidov, Moscow 2000, 413-414.

<sup>124</sup> See G. DAGRON, *Empereur et prêtre*, 167-168 and G. PODSKALSKY, *Représentation du temps dans l'eschatologie impériale byzantine*, 439-450.

<sup>125</sup> By renewing Solomon's temple, the Holy Sepulchre was implicitly Wisdom's house and its dedicatory cult of the Elevated Cross thus naturally fit into the ritual life of Hagia Sophia, the Church of Holy Wisdom. This cult offered symbols of imperial charisma and military power. On the visual symbolism of the True Cross in later imperial ideology, see L. BRUBAKER, *To Legitimize an Emperor: Constantine and Visual Authority in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries*, in: Paul Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries*, Variorum 1994, 139-158.

<sup>126</sup> See *Festal Menaion*, 145.

edge of the beasts' Last Judgment context inspired by Hippolytus. In this context the fourth beast alludes to the Antichrist's kingdom and thus to the Roman empire's fall at time's end. The beasts' new context in LJI presents a consciously alternative interpretation of Rome's destiny. As part of the icon's grid of correspondences, the beast's higher models are the Jerusalem archetypes on the left and right of register four, standing for the universal Church.<sup>127</sup> By analogy to these models, the fourth beast's symbolic value derives from a Byzantine tradition about the universal Empire, established by Eusebius. There the beast is an emblem of Rome in its nature as the Christian empire of the Seventh Millennium, and as the living image of Daniel's eternal kingdom.<sup>128</sup> This empire would not end, Eusebius asserted, but would defeat the Antichrist and continue uninterrupted into the Eighth Millennium beyond time.

The fourth beast in LJI embodies Eusebius' "answer" to Hippolytus. The rest of the icon fleshes out this answer by showing that Satan's defeat is continually occurring in a liturgical present realizing Daniel's eternal kingdom in historical time. The tension between the two interpretations is a way of stressing that the Empire still offers a solution through its vehicle, the Church. The icon shows that the Church retains its universal mandate and fulfills the Empire's role wherever the liturgy is being performed. Its circular portrayal of the Church's inner life demonstrates an unbroken continuity from the imperial past to the Novgorod present. Indeed, the icon recreates the sacred center in the Russian viewer's liturgical experience; it alludes to the Russian Church's legitimacy as repository of universal charisma. The icon implies that the cathedral church of Novgorod, St. Sophia, is the place where this icon was worshipped. Its symbolism of the elevation of the Cross and the renewal of the temple reflects St. Sophia's consecration on the day of the Renewal of the Temple and on the eve of the Elevation of the Cross. The icon thus alludes to St. Sophia of Novgorod's power to assume the imperial mandate (after the empire's fall) and bring generations of living and dead to Wisdom's table to realize the fullness of the transcendental and universal Church.

### Conclusion

This analysis of LJI offers us new perspectives for considering the dating of this icon but it does not necessarily offer a definitive answer. Two factors point to a mid-fifteenth century origin during the reign of Archbishop Euthymius or his successor Iona: 1) the icon's allusion to

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<sup>127</sup> The contiguity of Daniel's four beasts with the circle surrounding the Mother of God indicates that the beasts share her higher archetypes.

<sup>128</sup> See PODSKALSKY, *Représentation du temps dans l'eschatologie impériale byzantine*, 440-41.

Novgorod Sophia and its patronal cult of the Elevation of the Cross and 2) its debt to hesychast spirituality and poetics.<sup>129</sup> The icon's rhetorical stance would have been a logical response to the vacuum at the sacred center created by Byzantium's union with the Catholic Church and fall in 1453.<sup>130</sup> This vacuum heightened eschatological anxiety and demanded resolution.

Euthymius II, Archbishop of Novgorod from 1429 to 1458 had the resources to offer a response. A participant in events surrounding the Council of Florence, he was also actively engaged in ideological work.<sup>131</sup> Even before the Union of Florence undercut the legitimacy of contemporary Byzantium, his cultural agenda was to boost Novgorod's prestige by emphasizing its relation to previous Byzantine tradition.<sup>132</sup> The Archbishop and his successor Iona revived awareness of the cult of the Raising of the Cross associated with St. Sophia's consecration.<sup>133</sup> Both the icon's use of this founding cult and its synthesis of the hesychast spirituality of a previous age are consonant with Euthymius' retrospective cultural agenda. At the same time, LJI's strong modeling of continuity could be a dialogic response to the break in Russia's life-sustaining connection with Byzantium. The icon presents the interior life of the Novgorod faithful as a vehicle of Byzantium's former messianic role of confronting and overcoming the chronological end.

<sup>129</sup> The cathedrals' patronal feast was changed to the Dormition under Archbishop Gennadius at the end of the fifteenth century.

<sup>130</sup> N. V. Sinitsyna has pointed out certain official Moscow-based documents which demonstrate Russia's faithfulness to ancient Byzantine tradition to assert Russia's spiritual and moral authority in face of the vacuum of legitimate authority in Byzantium. See N. V. SINITSYNA, *Tretii Rim*, 64-79, 108 where she discusses *Poslanie patriarkhu* (1441) and *Poslanie imperatoru* (1451) and *Khozhenie na forentiiskii sobor anonimnogo suzda'tsa* (1439-1440).

<sup>131</sup> V. A. NIKITIN, *Zhitie i trudy sviatitelia Evfimiia, arkhiepiskopa Novgorodskogo*, *Bogoslovskie trudy* 24 (1984) 279-280 describes Euthymius' reception of the Metropolitan Isidore on his way to the council, and his hosting of the Ieromonakh Simeon while the latter wrote *Isidorov sobor i khozhenie ego* mentioning the Metropolitan's flight from Russia. On this writing, see N. V. SINITSYNA, *Tretii Rim*, 79-81.

<sup>132</sup> See E. SMIRNOVA, *Litsevye rukopisi velikogo Novgoroda: XV vek*, Moscow 1994, 29-42.

<sup>133</sup> In personal conversation E. A. Gordienko pointed out Euthymius' 1439 renewal of the graves of the founders of St. Sophia, Vladimir and Anna, who were implicitly analogous to Constantine and Elena as apostles of the cross and of the the empire to Rus'. On the dating of the first known icon-tablet of the Exaltation of the Cross slightly later than Euthymius' tenure, from the circle of the Archbishop Iona, see E. A. GORDIENKO, *Sviatye na sofiiskikh sviatsakh XV v. v kontekste istorii novgorodskoi tserkvi*, in: *Tserkovnaia arkheologia: Material Vtoroi Vserossiiskoi tserkovno-arkheologicheskoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 150-letiu so dnia rozhdenia N. V. Pokrovskogo (1848-1917)*, Sankt-Peterburg, 1-3 noiabria 1998 goda. Vyp. 4, St.-Peterburg 1998, 82-85.

The icon's intellectual sources, its dogmatic and poetic sophistication, and byzantinizing nature suggest that the iconographer was a carrier of the elite spiritual traditions of Novgorod monastic life. Before he became archbishop, Euthymius had been abbot of the Lisitsky Monastery, steeped in the hesychast spiritual culture of Athos and Constantinople.<sup>134</sup> The "Last Judgment" icon could have been produced by a spiritual intimate of the Archbishop and directed towards his circle either before or after his death. To these initiates capable of intellectually envisioning the hidden symbolism of Wisdom, the icon evoked the higher meaning of their Church and set the stage for the Lenten season. Then, when they were confronting themselves with the end and petitioning for salvation they would also have been contemplating the solution and finding it at home.

LJI provides insight into Novgorod's resources for resolving the two-pronged crisis of Byzantium's decline and fall and expectation of the imminent end. If seen from the point of view of the mid-fifteenth century, LJI illuminates a hesychast-inspired response to this crisis. However, this icon also speaks to the problematic of the early sixteenth century when the eschatological crisis had passed, Novgorod had fallen under Muscovite dominion, Macarius was Archbishop and Moscow was gathering resources to articulate its own imperial ideology as Byzantium's successor.<sup>135</sup> If read from this Muscovite perspective, LJI could be seen in the context of other texts from the same period such as the prophetic "Third Rome" corpus; both represent the Russian Church/State as the true inheritor of Byzantium's imperial charisma, continuing the Empire's historical manifestation of Daniel's transcendental kingdom.<sup>136</sup> LJI states key ideas for the emerging theocratic ideology that

<sup>134</sup> See E. SMIRNOVA, *Litsevye rukopisi velikogo Novgoroda*, 29-42.

<sup>135</sup> On the Byzantinizing nature of Muscovite ideology through the mediation of Novgorod religious symbolism see, for example, B. A. USPENSKII, *Tsar' i patriarkh: kharizma vlasti v Rossii (Vizantiiskaia model' i ee russkoi pereosmyslenie)*, Moscow 1998. See also O. S. POPOVA, *Iskusstvo Novgoroda i Moskvy pervoi poloviny chetyrnadstatogo veka. Ego sviazi s Vizantie*, Moscow 1980. D. GOLDFRANK, *Who Put the Snake on the Icon and the Tollbooths on the Snake*, 198-199 links his dating of the icon to the 1520's-30's with Iosif of Volotsky's rationalization of the services for the dead and with polemics of Filofei of Pskov and Maksim Grek against astrology. See the interpretation of the twelve heads in footnote 68.

<sup>136</sup> This idea was applied to the State in the so-called "Third Rome" ideology articulated at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century. See footnote 32 of this article and D. STREMOUKHOFF, *Moscow the Third Rome, Sources of the Doctrine*, in: M. Cherniavsky (ed.), *The Structure of Russian History*, New York 1970, 108-125. See also Metropolitan Zosima's introduction to the new Pascal calendar after 1492 where he calls Moscow a new Constantinople, a New Rome and, in the original version, a new Jerusalem, in B. A. USPENSKII, *Vospriiatie istorii v drevnei Rusi i doktrina 'Moscow - tretii Rim'*, in: *Izbrannye trudy I*, Moscow 1996, 86-89. On the Jerusalem idea in Muscovite culture, see also A. LIDOV, *Nebesnyi Ierusalim v vostochnokhristsianskoi ikonografii*, 23.

Macarius crystallized in the mid-sixteenth century when he became Metropolitan of all Rus'. It inspires us to contextualize the well-attested "eschatological" orientation of Muscovite ideology within the Wisdom symbolism in the Metropolitan's corpus. Future studies will show that the Wisdom cult and its archetypes of the True Cross, the New and renewed Jerusalem played a central role in interpreting the state's legitimacy. LJI foreshadows Muscovy's self-celebration as a place of realized eschatology, fulfilling the universal mission of the transcendental Church.<sup>137</sup>

In conclusion, there are strong reasons to see in LJI a specifically Novgorod agenda of the mid-fifteenth century that took on new relevance and import in the changed conditions of the early sixteenth century; There are also less compelling reasons to interpret this agenda solely in light of the problematic facing Muscovy in the early sixteenth century.<sup>138</sup> In any case, LJI's dialogic tensions give evidence of Novgorod's creative interpretation of key Byzantine traditions to respond to contemporary issues of identity, legitimacy and spiritual survival. Its success in confronting the crises of its day made it an important testament to its time and a triumph of artistic synthesis and initiative.

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<sup>137</sup> There is ample evidence of the importance of the Elevation of the Cross in Muscovite ideology. On the inclusion of icons of the Raising of the Cross and the Renewal of the Temple among the new Annunciation cathedral icons sponsored by Macarius see V. SARAB'IANOV, *Ikongraficheskoe sodержanie...*, 248-250. In the Four Part Icon of the same cathedral, the upper internal right-hand panel, which announces the themes developed in the other three, features the Elevation of the Cross. Under the figure of Christ on the cross we see a warrior archangel holding a spear and a scroll reading: "I am God' general. I will raise up the weapon (vozdvizhu oruzhie)," a deliberate allusion to the Elevation of the Cross (Vozdvizhenie Kresta). A curious elaboration of this archetype appears in the directly opposite upper left-hand panel where an archangel spears Death next to the warrior Christ *literally elevated* on the cross and looking at His actual death on the cross which is empowering Him. See plate 1 in P. HUNT, *Ivan IV's Personal Mythology of Kingship*. These archangels elaborate on the archangels with spears next to Golgotha in our icon. P. HUNT in *The Tale of Peter and Fevroniia: Icon and Text*, Elementa 3 (1997) 291-308 discusses a text, likely written under Macarius, which uses esoteric symbolism from the feast of the Raising of the Cross to express an ideology kingship. Interestingly it, like our icon, foregrounds the symbol of the serpent in a Wisdom context personified by Fevroniia.

<sup>138</sup> As V. SARAB'IANOV has observed, the Metropolitan Macarius carried the "tradition" of innovation from Novgorod and Pskov to the Four Part icon and other works, eliciting the famous accusations of heresy by the d'iak Viskovaty. See *Ikongraficheskoe sodержanie zakaznykh ikon mitropolita Makariia*, 30.