

Mysteries in Muscovite Political Theology:
Rabbits, Snakes and Lions in the Kremlin Golden Palace Throne Room Frescos

The glory of God is to dress a deed in mystery,
and the glory of the kings is to carry out the deed ¹

The interrelated frescoes of the Golden Throne Room and its vestibule are the Metropolitan Makarii's most extensive statement of Muscovite rulership ideology, marking Ivan IV's elevation from Grand Prince to Tsar.² Its iconography is among the most innovative and mysterious among the new programs Makarii sponsored after Ivan IV's coronation in 1547. Most mysterious of all is our subject in the Throne Room's dome, comprising a set of animal symbols. It has been ignored by scholarship even though it is in a marked area, -- along the dome's central axis, at the center of an open door leading to Christ Emmanuel in glory [Figure 1].

At the bottom of this door is a fleeing rabbit. It is escaping from the devil that is being shot at by an angel from behind and engulfed in flames sent by a fiery angel flying in front of and above. Above is a sun. Its rays consist of the bodies of a snake. These bodies have different heads: of snake on the left; of a lion and eagle on the right; and of a human and lion on the central axis. In between these serpentine figures are wings.

Although inscriptions abound that clarify the meaning of most of the dome images, there is no inscription directly related to the serpentine sun, or the bounding rabbit. They appear to be deliberately left in mystery, as a hermeneutic challenge distinguishing the initiated from the uninitiated viewer. Our goal is to

offer a probable interpretation within their context in the dome and the entire program by making use of the interpretative strategies embedded in the iconography. We conclude that they are a prism for reading the lower zones in the vestibule and throne room, which are dedicated to historical narrative. This prism endows the program with a hidden level of theological depth and an inner integrity that make it a parable about Ivan IV's sacred kingship.³



Figure 1: Reconstruction of Frescos of the Gold Throne Room Dome by K.K. Lopialo

We know the imagery in the throne room and vestibule principally from a 17th century verbal account provided for Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich by S. Ushakov and N. Klement'ev prior to the murals being painted over.⁴ Their detailed description inspired K. K. Lopialo to create a convincing visual reconstruction that O. Podobedova published in her pioneering study, *Moskovskaia shkola zhivopisi pri Ivane IV*, and that scholars consider still consider authoritative with some caveats.⁵ There also exists what appears to be a second, much briefer summary of the dome iconography.⁶ Apparently written in 1553, it is presented as part of the church "Investigation" (*Rozysk*) of Ivan Viskovatyi and his critiques of Makarii's new iconographic programs. The *Rozysk* is known to us in a "fragile" water damaged manuscript from the Volokolamsk monastery, undated by the editor, O. Bodianskii, so further research is needed to establish its reliability as a contemporary source.⁷

The *Rozysk* account has marked differences from the 17th century description despite its brevity, and the serpentine sun is not mentioned; the rabbit is placed in or near hell; the devil, mentioned separately, has seven heads and Life stands on him holding a candelabra in one hand and a sword in the other. Until the question of the differences between the two accounts is resolved, I am assuming, like O. Podobedova and others, that the 17th century version is accurate for the age of Ivan IV. O. Podobedova sees marked similarities between this version and other contemporary works under Makarii's sponsorship.⁸

The hermeneutic strategies in the dome program that Ushakov and Klement'iev described, are, as we will show, indicative of the Novgorod based Wisdom culture espoused by Makarii. I will be basing my analysis primarily on the 17th century verbal description while sending the reader to Lopialo's reconstruction as relevant. The iconography's complex symbolism suggests that Makarii may have been assisted by members of his intellectual circle, formed when he was Archbishop of Novgorod. They include Sil'vestr, now serving as priest of the royal family's Kremlin Annunciation cathedral who was responsible for implementing the iconographic program, and possibly Ermolai Erazm, who served as archpriest in the court Cathedral of the Savior. He is the author of a mystical parable about sacred kingship, "The Tale of Peter and Fevroniia" that evinces motifs also symbolically embedded in the dome's serpentine sun.⁹

The esoteric nature of these animal symbols reflects the symbolic nature of the entire iconographic program in the dome. It is descended from Novgorod Wisdom iconography, and uncovers the hidden meaning of several verses from the Book of Proverbs, chapter 9:1-5.¹⁰ They begin: "Wisdom has built her house," and describe personified Wisdom inviting all who "want understanding" to a "feast" that signifies redemptive knowledge of God. The Church considered these verses to be mystical writings by King Solomon, and referred to them and their iconographic representation as a "parable" (*pritcha*) about Christ and the Church.

The parable by definition requires interpretation, and the dome's animal symbolism is itself a parable within a parable that takes this hermeneutic orientation to an extreme. The door that frames it becomes a symbolic ladder that

narrows access to visionaries capable of ascending to “Wisdom’s feast” at top. These adepts include the sponsor of the iconography, the Metropolitan Makarii, and the erudites of his circle. However, the parable itself is principally directed at the Tsar.¹¹ Offering keys to the mystery of his kingship, it is meant to inform his policies, according to a maxim from Proverbs: “The glory of God is to dress a deed in mystery, and the glory of the kings is to carry out the deed (25:2).”¹² Whoever set up this parable within a parable, --Makarii, Sil’vestr or a larger team, proved himself (themselves) to be like the wise man of Ecclesiasticus who “...penetrate[s] the subtleties of parables; ... seek[s] out the hidden meanings of proverbs and [is] at home with the obscurities of parables ...and who [therefore] serve[s] among great men (Ecclesiasticus. 39:1-4).“

The iconographic program takes the wise beyond the surface level of meaning by structure, visual symmetries, prophetic oracular visionary discourse from the Psalms, Proverbs, and Book of Revelation, allegorical-like symbols, personifications and subtextual scriptural clues. All these poetic devices are known in Byzantine and Novgorod tradition, especially to initiates in Wisdom tradition and hermeneutics.¹³ The decoding of the animal symbols relies on many of these devices. We will also find analogous symbolism in contemporary Muscovite texts produced under Makarii, both iconographic and literary. Finally, we will be bringing in artifacts of earlier Christian iconography that have similarities to our esoteric subjects, and throw light on their meaning. Our assumption is that they exemplify traditions that were likely still extant in the Orthodox church and could have been

known in Muscovy; and that, at the very least, they are the product of ways of thinking that could have given rise to the dome's animal symbols.

First of all we will approach the symbols from the outside in. The dome iconography is organized in two halves, one behind and one in front of Christ-Wisdom. We will refer to them as the upper and lower halves respectively. The upper half follows closely the traditional interpretations of Wisdom building a house and offering a feast. There is however, a significant variation in the visual interpretation of Wisdom's house as the universal church, and a renewal of Solomon's Jerusalem temple.¹⁴ This variation is semantically loaded, and sets up the context of interpretation for the entire program. The "house" is represented not by one church with seven columns as was traditional, but by the seven churches of Asia Minor to whom Christ sends messages in Revelation 2-3. They abide as an integral unit immediately above Ivan IV's throne. Immediately above them, to show that they renew the Jerusalem temple, is King Solomon holding a scroll with "his" verses about Wisdom's house and Wisdom's feast.

An angel stands in front of each church, each presenting a scroll with inscriptions on it. They carry the beginning of Christ's message, where He identifies himself as Lord of the universe, Creator, Redeemer and Judge. These epithets reveal the sovereignty of Christ Wisdom at the dome's center. Implicitly, they also reveal the mystical knowledge of God's divine kingship that is being offered as Wisdom's feast. To signify this offering of knowledge of his sovereignty, Christ Wisdom holds a large chalice (*potir*) in one hand, and a rod (*palitsa*) in another.¹⁵ Implicitly, Solomon above the seven churches presided over the first "house of Wisdom," the Jerusalem

temple where God made Himself known to him in the Holy of Holies. Now, implicitly, Christ calls on Ivan IV, seated below the seven churches, to renew this temple, by making the universal church a copy of the heavenly temple where Christ reigns victorious. Hidden in the subtext of one of the messages is Christ's promise that "I will write on you . . . the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven (3:12)."

The inscriptions on the scrolls also point to an implied message about the moral preparation necessary to receive this feast of Wisdom and become the image of Christ's sovereignty on earth: "Therefore be earnest and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me. To the one who is victorious, I will grant the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne....(Rev. 3:19-21)."

The message to "be earnest and repent" motivates the sets of scenes immediately below the dome that offer moral teachings for kings about humility, ascetic self-restraint, repentance and the inner preparation necessary to receive God.¹⁶ Christ's invitation to "dine" is structurally marked since it develops the theme of the invitation of "Wisdom's feast" and associates it with a door to enthronement with Christ. The mystery of passing through the door to dine with Christ and sit with Him on his throne motivates the image of a large door that dominates the dome's lower half as well as the animal images within it [Figure 2].



Figure 2: Detail: “Lower Half” of the Dome Fresco Program

These animal images carry a heavy semantic load that expands the meaning of passage and enthronement. 1) They associate it with the struggles of the cross, building on Christ’s implied message to “be earnest and repent.” 2) They invoke a path through the door that extends backward into sacred history to time’s beginning to complement the perspective forward to time’s end in the dome’s upper half; 3) They associate the door not only with the interior life of the person, but also with political entities, the empire and the “nation” to complement the upper half’s focus on the world church; 4) They imply that divinely chosen leaders open passage through this door through personal and military struggles that manifest the victory of the cross; 5) On the deepest mythological level, they also endow the leader with the power to make on-going, open ended, present time the medium for this passage.

Thus, hidden within the animal symbols is the meaning of Ivan IV's and his successors' kingship.

The serpentine sun is best understood within a hierarchy of larger analogical structures, all organized with a right and left side around a center. There are two clusters of imagery of the natural order on the right and left side of the central door respectively. The door by itself has left and right panels opening up to the center. The serpentine sun in this center is itself divided on an axis of left, right and center. The escaping rabbit below is part of the meaning of this larger structure.

The message offered by a teaching figure located just above the serpentine sun makes clear the symbolic dimensions of this spatial symmetry. Inscriptions to his left and right side are from Christ's parable about the wide gate to destruction that many pass through and the narrow gate to life that only a few can find (Matthew 7:13-14).¹⁷ In the right panel of the door, associated with the narrow gate, are personifications of the virtues. In the left panel, associated with the wide gate, the vices are personified. The left side implies moral progress down towards the wide end of the gate towards an implied Death, where we see envy, and injustice. The right side implies ascent upwards through the narrow part of the gate to knowledge of Christ and life.

The symmetrical clusters of imagery to the door's left and right clarify the implications of this choice. Using the device of personification, they depict the natural order, after the Fall into sin and death on the left and the pre-fallen pristine order on the right. The left side depicts the turning of the four seasons and, implicitly, of the year even as Death blows his trumpet into the circle of time from

the left side (reversed in Lopialo's drawing) and Envy shoots an arrow into the door on the right.¹⁸ A battle is going on to restore the original creation, as an angel shoots an arrow on one side and a man wields a sword on the other. This battle reflects the constant inward battle of those seeking to pass through the narrow gates out of death-dealing time, a battle, implicitly, that continues indefinitely over months and years.

The pristine natural order on the right side invokes a different kind of time, associated with creativity and continual renewal. The iconography is based on Psalm 104, praising the way the creation manifests the Wisdom and majesty of the Creator. The representations of earth and sea, and animals and the depiction of the setting and risen sun associate this scene with the six days of creation according to Genesis, i.e. when the turning of day and night brought a world into being.¹⁹

Sun imagery joins left, right and center in the dome's lower half. The sun images on right and left relate to natural time while alluding to God's ultimate purpose of renewal, triumph and enlightenment. The serpentine sun at the door's center on the other hand, is purely metaphorical. In a coded fashion, it illuminates how passage through the narrow gate overcomes the opposition between the fallen and redeemed natural order. It also widens the perspective on continual struggle depicted on the left perspective beyond the personal to the world historical.

The serpentine sun's spatial language offers us keys for decoding its meaning [Figure 3]. On the left side, the sun's rays are made of serpents' bodies with serpent's heads, comprising full-fledged serpents, a demonic force for sin and fall.

On its right side, the sun's rays consist of serpents' bodies with the head of the eagle and the lion respectively, symbols of Christ's sovereignty.

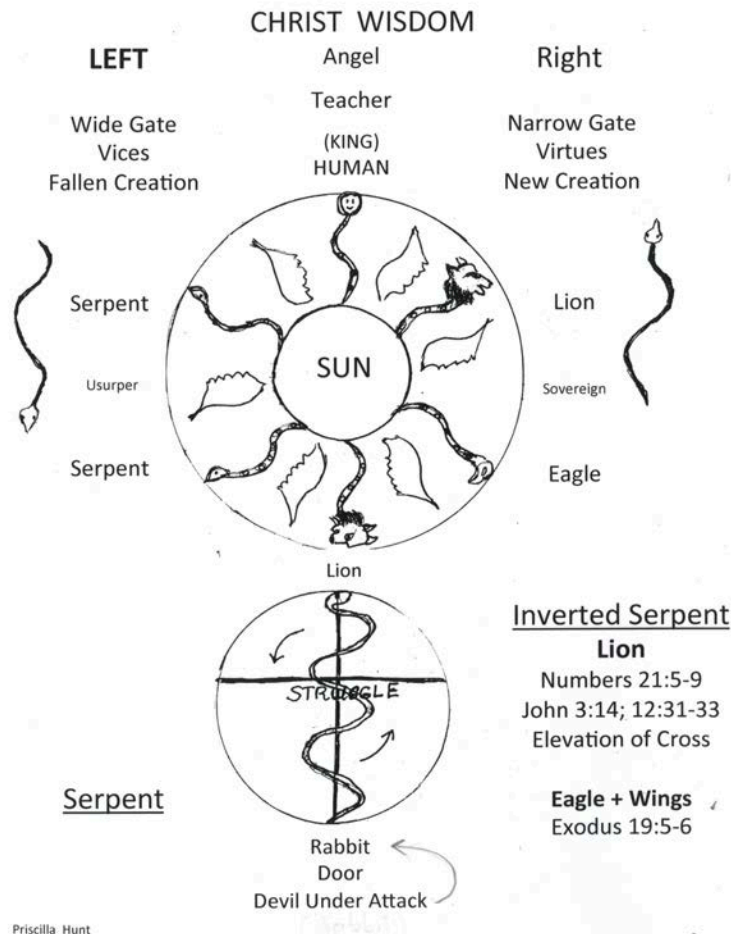


Figure 3: Hermeneutic Keys to the Animal Symbolism in the Dome

The place of these serpentine bodies on the right explains why they have these different heads. Given that the right side is the symbolic domain of rising, these serpentine bodies have a precedent in Novgorod Wisdom culture. A rising serpent is at the center of an unusual Novgorod Wisdom's House icon based on Last Judgment iconography century [Figure 4].²⁰



Figure 4: The Rising Serpent in the Novgorod Wisdom Icon of the Last Judgment

As I have established elsewhere, this rising serpent symbolizes the path of the cross out of hell to Christ.²¹ It inverts the serpent's traditional association with sin and symbolically undoes the Fall.

Similarly, the analogs to this rising serpent, now serving as sun's rays, invert the meaning of the full-fledged serpents on the left. They undo the latter's negative impact through an implied victorious struggle. I have shown that the icon's rising serpent alludes to a sequence of subtexts from Numbers, John and the liturgy of the Elevation of the Cross. So also does the dome's serpentine body with a lion's head.

Thus this serpentine lion's structural position on the right offered a key to an earlier precedent from Novgorod Wisdom iconography. Another artifact offers insight into why this "rising" serpentine body has a lion's head. An enamel plaque from 12th century Prum Germany, it is not associated with Novgorod or the Kremlin Golden Hall murals either in time or space, but it does reflect a Byzantine tradition that informed both the Eastern and Western church. One side depicts "Moses" lifting up the Brazen Serpent before the sons of Israel. [Figure 5].²²

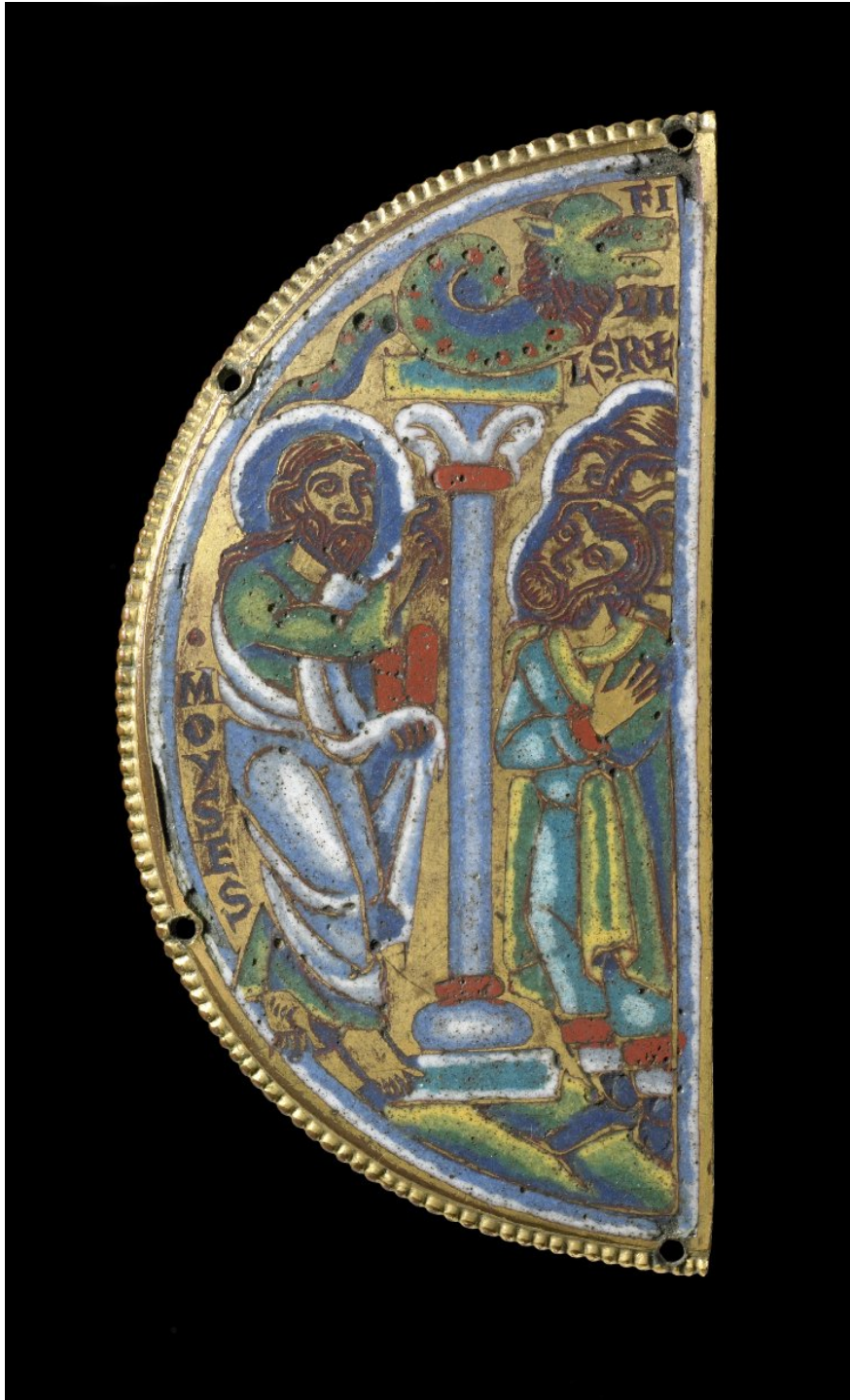


Figure 5: A Lion-Headed Serpent in a Byzantine Enamel

Moses is on the left, the Israelites to the right and between them a pole or column with a pedestal on top. The “Brazen Serpent” that rests high on this pedestal has a serpent’s body and a lion’s head [Figure 6].



Figure 6: Brazen Serpent

The subject illustrates an episode in the book of Numbers 21:5-7. When the Israelites are suffering from an attack of serpents sent to punish them for their sins, God directs Moses to raise a serpent on a pole so that the people who look at it will be healed.²³ The use of a lion-headed serpent to represent the “brazen serpent” draws on an ancient mythology. The lion-headed serpent emerged in Egypt and came into Christianity through Alexandria where it served as a talisman (*“Agathodæmon Chnuphis”*) for medical use. “The Good Genius to defend its wearer from all disease and mischance... is depicted as a huge serpent having the head of a lion that is surrounded by a crown of seven or twelve rays -- components conspicuously announcing that he is the embodiment of the idea of the Sun-god....”²⁴

It is a simple step to associate the talismanic serpentine lion with the Brazen Serpent in Numbers that heals snake bite, as did the first one who thought up the imagery of the enamel. The serpentine lion in the Golden Throne room is closer than the enamel to its mythological ancestor, since it is part of a serpentine sun, which, if you include the wings, has 12 rays like the crown of the “Good Genius.”

Nonetheless, despite this unconscious mythological resonance, the conscious context for the dome’s serpentine lion derives from the set of subtexts evoked both by the enamel and the rising serpent in the Novgorod icon mentioned above. The addition of the lion’s head to the serpent’s body was by conscious association to the Brazen Serpent that could undo death by snake-bite. Thus unusual image worked together with the structural symbolism of inversion and rising to create a powerful symbol of the healing counterforce to the evil serpents on the left.

In this context, the serpentine lion in the dome is also a symbol of Christ. The illustration of the episode from the Book of Numbers is a visual “parable” based in John’s Gospel. There Christ refers to the brazen serpent on a pole as a prototype of the cross and its redemptive power. He first prophesies: “...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up (John 3:14).” Later, referring to his impending crucifixion, he again speaks of his “lifting up:” “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself (12: 31-33).”

In the dome, as well as in the Novgorod icon and the enamel, the serpentine lion is a symbol of Christ’s lifting up on the cross, “draw[ing] all ... to [him]self” while

driving out the demonic usurper of the world. Implicitly the serpents on the left are defeated in a necessary struggle that is the door of the Cross. It opens onto Christ, illuminating his sovereignty over sin and death. This symbolism motivates the positioning of the entire serpentine sun within the large door leading to Christ.²⁵

The image's references to John's Gospel evoke yet another subtext that projects the cross symbolism onto sacred history. John 3 and 12 are Gospel readings for the liturgical feast of the Elevation of the Cross.²⁶ The hymnology for matins presents the cross defeating the serpent; The cross is also as an archetype for Moses miraculously leading the people out of Egypt across the Red Sea, for Joshua's destruction of enemies on the way to the Promised Land as well as for the battles of the pious Christian emperors, beginning with Constantine the Great.²⁷

The serpentine lion symbolizes this archetypal cross, thus presenting the sacred prism through which the narratives in the lower zones should be read as a coded manifestation of this mystery. There, Moses brings the people out of Egypt, Joshua annihilates the enemy in battles, and Moses lifts up the Brazen Serpent. As viewed through the symbolism of the dome's serpentine lion sunray, these narratives become a parable about the providence of the Cross in sacred history to bring about enthronement with Christ.

The throne room's narratives about Vladimir of Monomakhs' victories over Constantinople and over the Byzantine emperor Constantine Monomach continue this parable. The subtext from the Elevation liturgy places the Rus-ian Monomach in a sequence of pious Christian emperors who are wielding the universal power of the cross in a battle to "bring people to Christ." This parable implicitly becomes reality

in the victories of the newly crowned Tsar.

Thus the serpentine lion visually signifies a sun's ray because it is full of hidden meaning and interpretative power. It exists in a symbolic nexus that appears to be well known in Makarii's circles. Its symbolism of healing resonates with the lion-headed medical talisman reproduced in the enamel, and with three contemporary texts: the rising serpent in the Novgorod Wisdom icon of the Last Judgment we have already mentioned. The contemporary tale about Peter and Fevroniia by Ermolai Erazm addresses in parable form the personal dimension of the crosses healing power and relates it directly to the ruler. The prince destroys an evil serpent through the symbolic power of the Elevated Cross locked in a riddle. He then, after some struggle, is himself healed from the serpent's contamination by inward obedience to this cross, expressed as voluntary submission to marriage with the peasant Fevroniia.²⁸ Finally, the contemporary Four Part icon of the Kremlin Annunciation cathedral, also produced under Makarii and Sil'vestr, directly links symbolism of the defeat of the demonic serpent by the power of the Elevated Cross with the Muscovite ruler and his court.²⁹

When the serpentine lion in the dome harnesses this healing symbolism, its sun's ray throws light on both the interior moral, and the historical-providential dimensions of the sovereign's door to Christ, to his throne and his "feast." Through a complex intersection of poetic devices, this esoteric image becomes a hermeneutic key for reading the deeper parable about the cross in the moral-didactic scenes under the dome, and the historical narratives.³⁰ Thus, for those able to decipher it, the serpentine lion is a powerful Wisdom symbol, functionally and semantically

more effect than an obvious depiction of the cross would have been.

A serpent with the eagle's head is below the serpentine lion on the right side, and further develops the latter's meaning and function. Its serpentine body also signifies a rising serpent that stands for the power of the cross to draw all people (through the door) to Christ. It gains further historical-providential meaning in conjunction with the wings in between all the serpentine bodies. Together they point to a subtext in Exodus. It uses the metaphor of "eagles' wings" to describe God's words to Moses after the people reach Mt. Sinai: "'Ye know what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself' (Exodus 19:4)."

In Exodus, the ascent on "eagles' wings" alludes to the destruction of the Pharaoh's army, and to Moses "elevation" onto the mountain of the divine Presence (on Mt. Sinai). As invoked by the serpentine eagle and wings, Moses' ascent prefigures Christ's "draw[ing] all peoples to himself." Thus both the serpentine eagle and serpentine lion share cross symbolism that includes military motifs of defeating the enemy. This shared function makes both a prism for interpreting the lower zones' depictions of Old Testament battles as a parable about the victories of the cross opening out onto the present and future.³¹

The next line in the subtext from Exodus 19 adds a meaning to the serpentine eagle that is not already present in the serpentine lion: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6)" Implicitly the serpentine eagle symbolizes the rising of the

“nation” as a carrier of holiness to God. It thus shifts the program’s paradigm of Wisdom’s house from the ecclesiastical sphere of the world church into the political sphere. It interprets the Muscovite state as God’s “treasured possession,” first among the nations, an agent of universal deliverance like the cross itself.

Illuminated by this ray of meaning, the lower zones in vestibule and throne room symbolize the providence of the Muscovite state as a vehicle of passage to enthronement with Christ, under the auspices of a divinely chosen leader. In the vestibule, depictions of these leaders, David, Solomon and their successor rulers evoke Israel as a holy nation. In a parallel place in the throne room, depictions of sainted Russian rulers and martyrs, beginning with Vladimir I, evoke Rus’ as a holy nation fulfilling the providence of Israel. This implied nation becomes a world empire in the scenes where a divinely chosen Vladimir Monomach defeats Constantinople and receives the imperial regalia, including the True Cross.³²

Implicitly the crowning and enthronement of Ivan IV as Tsar fulfills Monomach’s mission to make Christ’s dominion universal. According to the symbolism of the serpentine eagle, the Tsar’s divinely inspired present and future victories will be fulfilling the promise of this holy nation-empire. Through taking on the struggles of the cross, both moral as well as military, he will redeem the nations and bring them to God. He will answer Christ’s promise to bring all peoples to himself. The “universal” dominion he strives to achieve will make the world an image of the cosmic heavenly Jerusalem, and show that Christ has indeed written on him “the name of the city of my God.”

The iconography implies that Ivan IV is called to be a new Solomon, -- not just as a priest-like leader of the world church as implied in the dome's upper half, but as an emperor and monarch over a messianic state fulfilling Israel's promise. Ivan IV's throne in this chamber for ruling the state is placed in the same southeast corner as his royal pew in the church to symbolize Muscovite sovereignty over the nations and the world church.³³

Both serpentine eagle and lion on the right fill out the meaning of the rabbit fleeing the captivity of a Devil below. The image of the fleeing rabbit can be found in allegorical hunting scenes where it typically stands for the vulnerable Christian soul hounded or persecuted by evil.³⁴ Here however, evil is persecuted and burned, and the rabbit, already delivered, flees towards the center of the door leading upward to Christ.

An eleventh century Byzantine ornamental marble panel offers an associational context for interpreting the fleeing rabbit that places it in a relationship with the serpentine sun image above [Figure 7].³⁵



Figure 7: Rescued Rabbits in a Byzantine Ornamental Marble

Instead of the hunt, this relief portrays three eagles surrounded by flowering vines, taking a rabbit away from a serpent. A probable interpretation is that the eagles symbolize Christ in Trinity, the vines symbolize the cross, the hare stands for the Christian soul, and the serpent, the Devil. Similarly, the rabbit in the dome, freed by an angelic assault on the Devil, is implicitly being lifted up by the power of the cross, symbolized above by the serpentine eagle. The fleeing rabbit is a parable about the Crosses' power to drive out the "prince of this world," and liberate the soul through the door to Christ.

The rabbit also gains meaning from its larger context. Its movement towards the lower part of the central axis (intelligently portrayed by Lopialo) places it in counterpoint to the sovereign Christ at the top of the door. This counterpoint highlights the rabbit's association with human vulnerability and weakness and Christ's generosity in drawing it to Himself; the rabbit's symmetrical relationship with the large image of the Mother of God and child on the other side of the central axis suggests that the intercessory powers of the Christ-child and His Mother make its escape possible. Implicitly, through divine intercession and repentance, the vulnerable sinner will be redeemed from captivity to the Devil and be able to "run" through the door.³⁶

The rays on the upper and lower polarities of the serpentine sun's central axis embody yet another version of the human soul. Instead of vulnerable, it is sovereign. Thus, ray in the upper polarity has a serpent's body with the head of a man, while on its lower polarity the same body has the head of a lion. Comprising one vertical axis, serpentine man and lion mirror rather than oppose one another.

They are directly under the teacher, an Angel, and Christ Wisdom at the dome's center.

Implicitly the human head topping this axis shows that man is in the image and likeness of the figures above to the degree he moves through the door and takes others with him. He shares in the teacher's wisdom, the angel's power, and in Christ's sovereignty. The lion's head on the lower axis symbolizes this sovereignty over the devil (since it points to the lower axis of evil) while the serpentine bodies of both imply that this sovereignty results from them knowing God by taking on the cross. The leonine-human together with the intercessors above resolve the oppositions evil and good, downward and upward, devil and Christ, death-dealing vs. creative time on left and right respectively. Signifying the sovereign power of human choice to complete history's progress to personal and universal redemption, it transforms the serpentine sun into a parable about the ruler's responsibility and mission.³⁷

The serpentine sun has one more important symbolic function: It contributes to the modeling of present sacred time, a unique aspect of the iconography of the dome's lower half. A focus on on-going present time is characteristic of the Wisdom's house paradigm and of the specific texts that set the stage for this iconography. Thus, the Novgorod Wisdom icon of the Last Judgment symbolizes the round of months in its upper register by astrological signs. One reads its four hierarchical registers in a circle that models on-going liturgical time. This time is continuous with the believers' life and afterlife, as the medium for ascent to God through the Cross. A circular reading of the contemporary Four Part Icon of the

Annunciation cathedral in turn models the rounds of the liturgical years as the medium for the ruler's continual contemplation and empowerment with the Wisdom of the Cross. The dome iconography also models present on-going time, now as the medium for passage through the door to enthronement with Christ. As viewed through the animal symbolism of the Cross, this Muscovite time recapitulates the past while mirroring the renewing power of beginning and end.³⁸

There are many indications of the special emphasis on time in the dome iconography. An Inscription surrounding Christ presents him as a creator not just of space but also of time, who has "established the ages."³⁹ Inscriptions in the two larger concentric circles are taken directly from the Office of the New Year.⁴⁰ The first is a short passage from Psalm 64 (65):11: "Bless *the crown of the year (venets letu)* of your goodness [my italics, P.H.]" the second puts this phrase in its larger context in the service: "O Preeternal Word of the Father, *who by his authority has set the seasons and the years, bless the turning of the year (venets letu) with Thy goodness, give peace....victories to the faithful Tsar, fruitfulness to the earth and for us great mercy* [my translation and my italics, P.H.]"⁴¹

The phrase, the "crown of the year" refers to the turning of the year.⁴² Circular sun imagery emphasizes the "turning year" below on either side of the door. The sun on the left is surrounded by the seasons turning over time which is personified by the figure of the Year ("*god*") above the circle of the seasons, all blasted by Death's trumpet. On the right side, the sun itself is in motion, first setting, and then risen and moving triumphally over a chariot crossing the sky above the moon to signify renewal rather than death.

The sun with serpentine rays valorizes turning time as the necessary medium for overcoming time. Its “rays” altogether overcome the opposition between left and right by inverting time-as-a-function-of death into time-as-a-function-of-life. The Cross symbolized by the serpentine bodies on the right, defeats Death symbolized on those on the left by death itself. The implied struggle of the cross changes time and death from negative to positive since they are the necessary conditions for overcoming themselves. Through this dynamic, turning time on the left is implicitly simultaneous with turning time on the right. The wings in between the sun’s metaphorical rays imply the souls’ resulting (spiral) ascent as Christ brings “all people” to Himself.

In this context, the inscriptions around Christ from the New Year office are announcing that on-going, self-renewing time, embodied by the turning new year, is the medium of passage through the door. These prayers are asking, in essence, for the unlimited extension of this time that offers opportunities for overcoming time. The Office’s prayers for the sovereign’s and his subjects long life are implicit in the inscription’s request that the turning year(s) be blessed. This implied request motivates an innovation in the dome’s upper half. There John of Damascus holds a scroll with an inscription from Proverbs 9:10 that is previously unknown in the exegesis of Proverbs 9: 1-5: “The Beginning of Wisdom is fear of the Lord... For through wisdom *your days will be many, and years will be added to your life* [my italics].”⁴³ A scenario below shows God granting the King Hezekiah a long life because of his pious behavior.⁴⁴

The inscription from Ps. 64:11, ““Bless the turning of the year (*venets letu*) of your goodness provides the temporal framework for the symbolism of the serpentine sun and the door. Verse eleven is the culmination of a series of earlier phrases (Ps. 64:3-4, 8) that associate the turning year(s) of goodness with entrance into God’s house. Extolling time’s wondrous movement from morning to evening, they celebrate God’s forgiveness of our overwhelming sins to bring us “near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple. This imagery “fits” with the dome’s paradigm of Wisdom’s house. It implies that the struggles that overcome fallen time in favor of Edenic, self-renewing time door keep open the door to enthronement with Christ and the New Jerusalem.

These implied meanings are further developed in the New Year service for September 1. The service is based on a sermon on Isaiah that Christ gave to announce that he is the anointed Messiah who is bringing about the “year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus reads (Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:9: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18-19).”⁴⁵ Christ then announces: “*Today* this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:21) [my italics].”

Christ’s reading associates the turning year(s) of “God’s goodness” with release from captivity, both by actual enemies, and by sin and the devil.⁴⁶ As we have seen, the fleeing rabbit, and the serpentine eagle and wings in the metaphorical sun embody this theme and translate it down into the lower zones. By symbolizing

the cross as an archetype for Old Testament historical narratives of divine intercession and redemption from captivity, the animal symbols transform them into a parable about the present Wisdom of Muscovy under its Christ-like sovereign.

The prayer for blessing of the New Year looks to the Christ-like ruler to establish the just kingdom. He will redeem his subjects and make them new like the year at its turning. For the prayer to be answered, the ruler must, implicitly, offer liberty to those oppressed by sin and unbelief at home and abroad. Thus the prayer includes a request that the Tsar be victorious. The serpentine sun shows that he accomplishes this by exercising the “sovereignty” modeled on the central axis, and by the victories of his armies and the resulting expanse of the Church, alluded to by the serpentine eagle and lion.⁴⁷

The reference to Isaiah 58:9 in Christ’s sermon integrates the sun imagery to left, right and center of the dome’s lower half into the symbolism of redemption. In Isaiah 58:8,10 a metaphor for the release from captivity is the movement of the sun from the “break of day,” until “your night” becomes “noonday.” This metaphor is visually expressed on the right of the door, next to the setting sun. The “noonday” sun is directly over the moon to exemplify the triumph of “noonday” over “night” as a metaphor for release. On the left, the battle for this implied “release” is going on through the cycles of months and years. The metaphorical sun in the central door offers the means and way of this release. All three suns symbolically embody God’s answer to the prayers for the mercy marking the “good year” of the Lord.⁴⁸

The serpentine lion-man on the metaphorical sun’s central axis plays a key role in this symbolism. On a deep mythological level, it is analogous to a God of the

Roman Mithraic mystery cult -- the lion-headed body of a man encircled by a serpent. The latter symbolizes time and cosmic power: The lion refers to the zodiac sign of Leo, the Sun; and the seven fold windings of the snake refer to the sun's course through the zodiac.⁴⁹ Similarly, the two polarities of one axis comprising the serpentine lion-man are rays of the sun that move through night and day on the right, and through months and years on the left. As such they imply that the sovereign person (the ruler) mirrors the light from the God above who "establishes the ages" and founds the cosmos. God-like himself, like his Mithraic mythological ancestor, he shares God's power to make the turning of days, months and years an instrument of cosmic renewal.

Thus, the imagery in the dome's lower half, centered on the door with the serpentine sun, develops the idea of time encoded in the inscriptions around Christ from the New Year office. This entire symbolic nexus shows that the door to enthronement with Christ and the New Jerusalem is Muscovy's passage through time.

The throne room iconography adds new potentials to the Wisdom's house paradigm that build on the Novgorod Wisdom icon of the Last Judgment. The latter subsumes imagery of the future Last Judgment and Second Coming under symbolism of the on-going judgment of the Cross on the Prince of this world. Its rising serpent evokes the cross as an inner spiritual path to Christ that remains open through present time and the afterlife.⁵⁰ By making redemption an on-going spiritual process in the Church's interior life, it shifts emphasis from time's end to the present.⁵¹

The throne room's program appears also to be following a similar strategy. From the age of Ivan III, Muscovite ideologists were seeking ways to adapt to the fact that the end of time, that was expected in the year 7000 (1492), did not in fact arrive.⁵² The Wisdom's house paradigm in the Golden Throne Room's dome resolved this problem by showing that time is an open door to Wisdom's house. It, and its metaphorical sun imagery in particular, promised a continuing royal apotheosis of the "year of the Lord's goodness." By realizing the cosmic import of the Messiah's coming into history, this royal apotheosis translated the glory of time's end to the present.⁵³

The metaphorical sun in the door is in effect a controlling image for the whole program transforming the Wisdom's house parable so that it addresses the dynamics of the Tsar's enthronement. Makarii and his team proved themselves to be teachers of Wisdom by the way they created esoteric symbols that "dressed" kingship in mystery and worked on many levels simultaneously. The result was deliberately inaccessible to most Muscovites, but spoke directly to the Tsar, an initiate into Wisdom by virtue of his coronation.

These teachers must have given Ivan IV the hidden keys to this parable.⁵⁴ He would have learned that his leadership of both state and church brings sacred history to a culmination in a present fraught with the power of beginnings and endings; that he is called to mirror Christ's redemptive sovereignty through the way of the Cross; that he is to engage in struggles against the Devil's dominion in both the personal and world-historical dimensions, like Moses, Solomon, Vladimir I and Vladimir Monomach before him.⁵⁵ Unaware of this hidden mystery, other Muscovite

in the room could read at a more surface level, appropriate to their spiritual preparation and responsibility, and still find inspirational reflections of their beliefs, obligations and of the ruler's grandeur.⁵⁶

To us it is clear that the door imagery in the dome's lower half makes the traditional symbolism of Wisdom's house a vehicle of political theology, expressing a mystical concept of Ivan IV's rulership. Although innovative, it was Orthodox in inspiration and the logical, though extreme, outcome of Wisdom hermeneutics.⁵⁷ It lays a basis for Makarii's whole ideological program by marrying 1) a universalist imperial theology derived from the Novgorod Byzantinizing Wisdom cult in which the present manifests the Wisdom of past and future,⁵⁸ with 2) an understanding of "national" providential history based in Muscovite traditions about the "New Israel." Orienting this mix around the theme of sovereignty, it adds into the blend moral parables and teachings that elucidate the way of the Cross. A brilliant synthesis, this iconographic program buries the mystery of kingship deep beneath the surface to keep it holy. All the while it charges the newly sanctified ruler to demonstrate his sovereignty by translating this mystery into action.

¹ See Proverbs 25:2.

² For instance, Lopialo has reversed right and left (which should be arranged according to the internal perspective of Christ at the center). See I. Zabelin, "Opis' stenopisnykh izobrazhenii (pritchei) v Zolotoi Polate Gosudareva Dvortsa sostavlennoi v 1672 godu," Chapter 3, *Materialy dlia istorii, arkheologii i statistiki goroda Moskvy*, (Moscow: Moskovskaia gorodskaiia дума, 1884), prt. 1, [hereafter, *Opis'*], columns 1238-1255; S.P. Bartenev, "Opis' stenopisnykh izobrazhenii (pritchei) v Zolotoi Palate Gosudareva Dvortsa, sostavlennoi v 1672 godu," *Moskovskii Kreml' v starinu i teper'*. Vol 2: *Gosudarev dvor'. Dom riurikovichei*. (Moskva, Izd. Ministerstva Imperatorskago Dvora, 1916), 183-194; O.I. Podobedova, *Moskovskaia shkola zhivopisi pri Ivane IV: Raboty v Moskovskom Kreml'e 40-70-x godov XVI v.*, (Moskva: Nauka, 1972), 59-68.

³ The author would like to thank Daniel Rowland for comments on a shorter version of this article presented at the ASEES National Convention in Washington, D.C. on November 18, 2016.

⁴ A ot kruga vnutr' v krug shest' kryl a sredi kruga solntse. A mezhu tekhn kryl sverkh litse cheloveche, obvito zmeinym khobotom, konets khobota k solntsu. Na pravuiu storonu litse lvovo, mezh kryl zhe, obvito takzhe khobotom, konets khobotu k tomu zhe solntsu. Na levuiu storonu glava zmiina, okruzhena khobotom k tomu zhe solntsu. S pravuiu zhe storonu mezh kryl zhe glava orlia obvita khobotom, a konets khobota k tomu zhe solntsu. Po levuiu zhe storonu glava zmiina zhe okruzhena khobotom, konets khobota k tomu zhe solntsu. Vnizu glava lvova okruzhena khobotom, konets khobota k tomu zhe solntsu, mezhdu tekhn zhe kryl. See "Opis'", col. 1239.

⁵ For the 17th century description, see, 1238-55. See also K. K. Lopialo, "K primernoi rekonstruktsii Zolotoi Palaty kremlevskogo dvortsa i ee monumental'noie zhivopisi," in O.I. Podobedova, *Moskovskaia shkhola zhivopisi*, 193-8 plus plates.

⁶ See O. Bodianskii, "Rozysk, ili spisok o bogokhul'nykh strokakh i sumnenii sviatykh chestnykh ikon, d'iaka Ivana mikhailovicha, syna Viskovatogo v leto [7]062 (1553), *Chteniia v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh pri Moskovsom universitete*, M. 1851, kn. 2, 27-28 [hereafter *Rozysk*].

⁷ O. Bodianskii, *Rozysk*, p. IV. C. Pouncy observes that there is historical proof of the existence of notes by Makarii on the Viskovatyi proceedings. See "The Blessed Sil'vestr' and the Politics of Inventions in Muscovy: 1445-1700," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 19: 1-4, (1995), 555.

⁸ Even in the unlikely event that it can be demonstrated that the 17th century description describes a later version of the dome iconography (done after the reign of Ivan IV), an understanding of the program described by Ushakov and Klement'ev is still relevant for Muscovite political theology. It evolved on the basis established in the reign of Ivan IV until cut short by the modernization accomplished under Aleksei Mikhailovich, that included the painting of a new mural program for the Golden Throne Room.

⁹ See E. Gordienko, *Novgorod v XVI veke i ego dukhovnaia zhizn'*, (Sankt-Peterburg: RAN, Institut rossiiskoi istorii: 2001), 129,136-8 on Makarii's Novgorod circle. On Sil'vestr's role, see C. Pouncy, "The Blessed Sil'vestr' and the Politics of Inventions in Muscovy: 1445-1700," 556. Pouncy, p. 558, notes that he was known for his erudition, and even owned books in Greek. Ermolai Erazm moved from Pskov to

Moscow in the late 1540's. See *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi*, Vtoraia polovina XIV-XVI v. ch.1, (Leningrad: Nauka, 1988), 220-225. The extant manuscripts of this "Tale," including an "autograph" by the author are from the mid-16th century. See R.P. Dmitrieva, "Povest' o Petre i Fevroniia (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), 50-79, and P. Hunt, "The Tale of Peter and Fevronia: "The Text and the Icon," *Elementa* 3 (1997) 291-308.

¹⁰ On the exegesis of the parable in Novgorod iconography, see G. Prokhorov, "Poslanie Titu-ierarckhu Dionisiia Areopagita v slavianskom perevode i ikonografiia 'Premudrost' sozda sebe dom,'" *Trudy otdela drevne-russkoi literatury Akademii nauk (TODRL)* 38 (1985): 7-40; G.I. Vzdornov, *Freski Tserkvi Uspeniia na Volotovom pole bliz Novgoroda*, (Moscow, 1989): 57-58, ill. 181; T.A. Sidorova, "Volotovskaia freska 'Premudrost' sozda sebe dom' i ee otnoshenie k Novgorodskoi eresi strigol'nikova v XIV v.," *TODRL* 26(1971) 212-231; P. Hunt, "Confronting the End: The Interpretation of the Last Judgment in a Novgorod Wisdom Icon," *Byzantinoslavica*, LXV (2007): 275-325.

¹¹ On the uses of symbolic discourse, including parables, to interpret Wisdom in Proverbs 9:1-5, and on the ladder of symbols, climbed by the initiate, see *Filofeiia patriarkha Konstantinopol'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 Arenii (Novgorod 1898) [hereafter *Tri rechi*], 18-19. R. Romanchuk posits that in the *Book of Royal Degrees* which Makarii initiated presents Vasiliu III, Ivan IV's father, as a spiritual adept. Moreover the dynastic "ladder" of spiritual ascent that Romanchuk finds there is informed by the same

tradition of symbolic hierarchy, derived from Dionysius the Areopagite, as underlies the hermeneutics of the “Wisdom’s house” parable in the dome of the Golden Throne Room. See Romanchuk’s “Reading History in the Book of Degrees of the Royal Genealogy: Pauline and Platonizing Strategies,” ed. G. Lenhoff and A. Kleimola, *“The Book of Royal Degrees” and the Genesis of Russian Historical Consciousness* (Bloomington: Slavica, 2010, 305-14, esp. pp. 310-13. On the role of Dionysius the Areopagite and symbolic hierarchy in the ideology of kingship under Ivan IV, see also P. Hunt, “Ivan IV’s Personal Mythology of Kingship,” *Slavic Review* (1993) 52:4, 769-809, esp. 773, footnote 15.

¹² As a technique of guarding mystery, key scriptural verses are typically hidden beneath the “narrative” surface, where they act as subtexts. This maxim is not quoted in the iconographical program although other verses from Proverbs relating to kingship and morality are on John of Damascus’ scroll in the dome, and in seven scenes in the vestibule ceiling. See *Opis’*, 1241, 1250-1. O. Podobedova, *Moskovskaia Shkola...*, 61-62 argues that the whole program was meant for the Tsar.

¹³ See F. Buslaev, “Vizantiiskaia i drevne-ruskaia simvolika po rukopisiam ot XV do kontsa XVI v.” in *Drevne-ruskaia narodnaia literature i iskusstvo: Istoricheskie ocherki russkoi narodnoi slovesnosti i iskusstva*, Vol 2, part VI (Sanktpeterburg: Izd. D. E. Kozhanchikova, 1861), 199-226 for a discussion of the Byzantine and Russian uses of “allegories” and personifications, especially in miniatures to the “Interpretative” (Tolkovaia) Psalter.

¹⁴ O. Podobedova, *Moskovskaia skhola zhivopisi*, 63 compares it with the icon of Wisdom’s house of the Novgorod Novo-Kirillov monastery, which she dates mid-

16th century from Makarii's circle. See *Novgorod Icons 12th-17th century*, plate 206. On a mid-15th century dating, and for an analysis of its imagery see P. Hunt, "Confronting the End...", 281-292 and plate 2. This icon summarizes the main themes of the traditional exegesis, with the important, possibly later (16th century) addition of the ecumenical councils arrayed in front of the world church with the Byzantine emperors singled out along its seven columns. This addition places the "Wisdom's house" paradigm in an imperial byzantinizing context. It makes this icon an important bridge to the Golden Throne Room iconography that illuminates the meaning of Ivan's kingship as tsar or emperor, the successor to the Byzantines.

¹⁵ Lopialo does not depict this chalice. It was probably modeled on the eucharistic chalice as was traditional in the iconographic exegesis of Proverbs 9. On its traditional symbolism as exemplified by two Novgorod Wisdom's house paradigms, see P. Hunt, "Confronting the End," 282-4, 291, 297.

¹⁶ They depict scenes from the parables of Christ, the "Tale of Lazarus and the Rich Man," from the "Tale of Varlaam and Josephat" with its mystical didactic parables about kingship, and also from stories about the prophet Ezekial concerning God's extension of the life of the pious ruler Hezekiah and his cutting short the life of the evil ruler Anastasii. The parables come from Matt. 18: 12-13, or Luke 15:4-7; Luke 15:8-9; Matt. 13:3-9, or Mark 4:3-9, or Luke 8:4-8; and Matt. 22: 2-14. See *Opis'*, 1244-45.

¹⁷ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it...."

¹⁸ This imagery may be an allusion to Ps. 74:16-17 in praise of divine sovereignty: “You are master of day and night, you instituted light and sun, you fixed the boundaries of the world, you created summer and winter..... “

¹⁹ As Dan Rowland pointed out, the liturgical context of Psalm 104 reinforces this interpretation. It is read during vespers and the great vigil in honor of the creation as described in Genesis 1. “It is often taken to be Adam’s song, sung outside the closed gates of Eden from which he has been expelled.” See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalm_104, accessed November 20, 2016. In the dome this imagery from Psalm 104 reflects the work of Christ at the center. According to inscriptions, He is the Creator who “in his Wisdom founded the earth and established the ages” (“*Bog Otets Premudrostiiu Svoeiu osnova zemliu i utverdi vekī*);” and the “Preeternal Word of the Father,bringing the creation from non-being into being (“*Prevechnoe Slovo Otcheee, ...sostavliaiai tvar’ ot nebytiia v bytie...*”).

²⁰ See *Novgorod Icons 12th-17th century*, eds. V. Laurina, V. Pushkarev et al., (Leningrad, 1980), plate 72 that reproduces invoice 12874 of the Tretyakovsky Gallery.

²¹ See P. Hunt, “Confronting the End...,” 313-319.

²² This is one of four semicircular champlévé enamel plaques from a pair of phylacteries (reliquary) depicting biblical scenes in the British Museum (1888,1110.3-6,1160-1170 (circa); It was made in the Prüm Abbey, Prüm, Rhineland Palatinate. K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels From the Fifth to the Thirteenth*

Century, (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 7-9 traces the paths of dissemination of this craft into Europe from Byzantium.

²³ "The LORD said to Moses, "'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.' 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 snake, they lived (Numbers 21:8-9)."

²⁴ See C. W. King, *The Gnostics and Their Remains*, (London: D. Nutt, 1887), 216-18.

²⁵ In John 12:34, Christ talks about the need to enter the "light," referring to himself.

²⁶ See Mother Mary and K. Ware, *The Festal Menaion* (South Canaan, PA. St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1998), 131-164. The Elevation of the Cross had been the patronal feast of the Novgorod Sophia until Ivan III changed it to the Dormition. On the Elevation of the Cross as a theophany of the ruler's Wisdom, see P. Hunt, "The Fool and the King: The Vita of Andrew of Constantinople and Russian Urban Holy Foolishness," ed. P. Hunt and Sv. Kobets, *Holy Foolishness in Russia: New Perspectives*, (Bloomington: Slavica, 2011), 158-160.

²⁷ See *The Festal Menaion*, 134, 139, 144.

²⁸ See P. Hunt, "The Tale of Peter and Fevronia: "The Text and the Icon," *Elementa* 3 (1997) 291-308, esp. 295.

²⁹ I. Ia Kachalova, N.A. Mayasova and L.A. Shchennikova, *Blagoveshchenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremlia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990), 61-64, plates 178-86. On this icon, see O. Podobedova, *Moskovskaia Shkola*, 40-58 and P. Hunt, "Ivan IV's Personal Mythology of Kingship," *Slavic Review* 52:4, (1993) 779-81. As I have shown in an unpublished paper, "The Charisma of Tsar Ivan IV: Explorations of Makarii's

Ideological-Mythological Program,” presented at the National Convention of the ASEES, Philadelphia, 2015, this icon, depicting the ruler and his court, integrates “Wisdom’s house” symbolism with a scenario of Christ elevated on the cross defeating the serpent. By associating these themes with the ruler, it stands as an intermediate link between the Golden Throne Room murals and the Novgorod Wisdom icon of the Last Judgment. On the popularization of Elevation of the Cross mysticism in Makarii’s cult of Andrew the Fool, see P. Hunt, “The Fool and the King,” 157-163, 203-222. S. Ivanov, in *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond* (Oxford U.P. 2006), 274-6, discusses the curious case of the 17th century fool, Arkadii of Viazma, who was revered by the people for healing snakebite and driving serpents away. Ivanov questions what this *podvig* has to do with holy foolery. It may well reflect that people received him as a Cross-bearing fool and thus a healer of serpents in the spirit of Numbers 21.

³⁰ The scenes near the tsar’s throne devoted to the parables of Christ and moral-didactic tales were used as “parables” of the cross in new Makarian icon, “the Crucifixion in parables,” created for the Kremlin Annunciation church. See O. Podobedova, *Moskovskaia Shkola zhivopisi*, 61.

³¹ The serpentine eagle and wings allude to a passage in Revelation which implicitly fulfills the redemptive providence symbolized in Exodus 19: “The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach (Rev. 12:14).”

³² Near Ivan's actual throne a Gideon narrative offers prototypes of Ivan's own preparatory role for realizing the providence of the "holy nation" as a messianic monarchy. It includes scenes about Gideon's "proto-kingship" as he engages in battles to cleanse the promised land of enemies that are holding it in thrall, as well as depictions of him, priest-like, building an altar to the Lord. See *Opis'*, col. 1242-1243.

³³ Another image of King Solomon with his scroll is adjacent to the Tsar's actual throne. The architecture and ornament of the tsar's pew in the Dormition Cathedral carries through on his identification with Solomon and Vladimir Monomakh in the Golden Throne Room frescos. See M. Flier, "The Throne of Monomakh: Ivan the Terrible and the Architectonics of Destiny," eds. J. Cracraft and D. Rowland, *Architectures of Russian Identity: 1500 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P. 2003) 20-31.

³⁴ For an early Byzantine example on a sarcophagus, see D.V. Ainalov, *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers U.P. 1961), 197.

³⁵ It is from the British Museum, # 1924, 1017.1.

³⁶ This activity is alluded to by a connotations of the eagle and the wings: "...but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31)."

³⁷ Ermolai Erazm's parable about sacred kingship, "The Tale of Peter and Fevroniia" also addresses the problem of human moral sovereignty and liberation from "slavery" and relates it to the symbolic elevation on the cross. See P. Hunt, "The Tale

of Peter and Fevronia: Icon and Text,” 293-5. The miniature traditions associated with this tale, and the icons of these saints emphasize the theme of royal kingship. See R.P. Dmitrieva and O. A. Belobrova, “Petr i Fevroniia Muromskie v literature i iskusstve Drevnei Rusi,” in *Trudy otдела drevnerusskoi literatury* 38, 138-178, illustrations 18 and 28, and *Murom*, ed. G.P. Perepelkina (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1971), pl. 57.

³⁸ Judaic Wisdom writings, such as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Ecclesiasticus* and *Proverbs* emphasize the manifestation of Wisdom’s redemptive force in the cosmos, nature, the city and the temple. See Wisdom 7:27, 11:23-24 and Eccles. 24:1. In Christian tradition, the Incarnation and the Descent of the Spirit during the liturgy makes Wisdom fully present, so that the liturgy became associated with Wisdom’s feast of Proverbs 9. On Patriarch Philotheos’ emphasis on Wisdom’s present manifestation in his extended exegesis of Proverbs 9, and on this emphasis in the Novo-Kirillov “Wisdom’s house,” and the Wisdom icon of the Last Judgment, see P. Hunt, “Confronting the End,” 276-77, 279-81, and 289-92. Hunt discusses this temporal aspect of the Four Part icon in her unpublished paper, “The Charisma of Tsar Ivan IV: Explorations of Makarii’s Ideological-Mythological Program.”

³⁹ “F. Kampfer found no direct source for this. See “Russland an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit’: Kunst, Ideologie und historisches Bewusstsein unter Ivan Groznyj,” *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, 23 (1975), 509. It together with the imagery of the natural temporal order may have been inspired by Wisdom of Solomon 7:17.

⁴⁰ V.G. Briusova, “Tolkovanie na IX pritcha Solomona v Izbornike 1073 g,” *Izbornik Sviatoslava 1073* (Moskva: Nauka, 1977) 302 notes that “Wisdom’s house”

symbolism occurs in the Office for the New Year and in other liturgical texts associated with times of transition and renewal including, the Renewal of the Temple, and the Mid-Pentecost.

⁴¹ See F. Kampfer, “Russland an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit,” 509 and M. Flier, “Golden Hall Iconography,” 69-75. “Prevechnoe Slovo Otchee, izhe ...sostavliaia tvar’ ot nebytia v bytie, izhe vremena i leta svoeiu oblastiu polozhei, blagoslovi venets letu blagostiiu svoeiu, darui mir..., pobedy vernomu Tsariu, blagoploдие zemli i nam veliiu milost’.”

⁴² This translation is based on Grigorii D’iachenko, *Polnyi Tserkovnoslavianskii slovar’* (1899: Tip. Vil’de) 114 as quoted by Ru.wikipedia.org. “Nachalo Indikta.”

⁴³ Typically, the figure present is the hymnographer, Cosmas of Maiuma. See for example, the Novo-Kirrilov Wisdom’s House icon in *Novgorod Icons 12th-17th century*, plate 206. The inscription reads: “Zachalo premudrosti strakh gospoden’...sim obrazom mnogo pozhiveshi let i prilozhat ti sia leta zhivotu.” See *Opis’*, col. 1241.

⁴⁴ See footnote 16.

⁴⁵ The final phrase in Isaiah 61:1 is literally translated, “the opening to those who are bound.” In Hebrew imagery, this can refer either to giving sight to the blind (removing the doors from their eyes), or setting free those who are bound and oppressed.

⁴⁶ As M. Flier points out, the psalms read during the Office of the New Year ask for redemption of the Chosen people (Ps. 73 [74]. See “Golden Hall Iconography...,” 70.

⁴⁷ Under Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, the New Year was celebrated by the Tsar, the boyars and people doing works of mercy that included giving gifts, visiting prisons, feeding and clothing the poor. See Dmitrii Britanov, "Chto takoe nachalo indikta?", Sept. 14, 2009 at "Pravoslavie i mir" at pravmir.ru

⁴⁸ C. Pouncey offers a personal basis for positing Sil'vestr's influence on this iconographic program, when she notes that Sil'vestr was known for his mercy to the poor, and freed his slaves. See, "The Blessed Sil'vestr' and the Politics of Invention in Muscovy," 557. V. Kivelson, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 2013), 169-173 documents the degree to which the population absorbed and stood up for this official ideology of the sovereign's obligation to be merciful to the oppressed in the 17th century. She cites a petition that uses language which seems to echo the Good Year mythology of the Tsar's mercy: "Greetings in Christ, the eternal, merciful lord, and may you enjoy all joy...And protect your health and wish you all good,...I beg your merciful intercession: let me...pray to God for your eternal health and for your entire righteous house....". See *Ibid.*, , 176-7.

⁴⁹ See D. Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*, 17-18.

⁵⁰ See P. Hunt, "Confronting the End, " 307.

⁵¹ The dating of the Novgorod Wisdom icon is unclear. It may have been produced before and in anticipation of time's end in the year 7000 (1492), or after because the anticipated end did not come. See P. Hunt, *Ibid.*, 321-325.

⁵² The elevation of the liturgical office of the New Year to a royal court ceremony occurred in the year 1492, (7000), when the expected end did not come. In so doing,

the state moved the New Year from the Roman civic one in March to the church New Year on September 1. See Dmitrii Britanov, "Chto takoe nachalo indikta?" The royal performance of the religious New Year ceremony of September 1 was thus a response to the unexpected continuance of time.

⁵³ M. Flier, "K Semioticheskomu analizu Zolotoi Palaty Moskovskogo Kremliia," 184-5 stresses the program's eschatological orientation, placing Muscovy on the threshold of new era, when the coming of the New Jerusalem is imminent. He refers to an image of the seven-horned beast of John's Apocalypse at the bottom of the door, which is absent in Ushakov's and Klementiev's description but is present in *Rozysk*, p. 27. Following O. Podobedova, *Moskovskaia Shkola*, 62, he interprets the figure of Christ Wisdom at the dome's center as an eschatological image. However, there is no evidence for this neither in *Opis'*, col. 1238 nor in *Rozysk*, 27. In the *Opis'*, Christ is depicted with the chalice with the characteristic wheels and the rainbow derived from Ezekiel's vision, chapter 1. Flier notes the division of the Golden Throne Room into eight parts, analogous to the eight pointed Wisdom star on the Emmanuel's head, where eight is an eschatological number that refers to the Eighth Day. However, in the "Wisdom's house" paradigm, the Wisdom star around the Emmanuel's head makes the glory of the Eighth Day present in the church liturgy, the offering of Wisdom's "feast." Finally, there is no direct evidence that the Emmanuel was portrayed as the Ancient of Days, as Flier suggests i.e. with a white robe and possibly a beard. But if he were, this did not make him an eschatological symbol. In the Wisdom paradigm, the depiction of Christ Emmanuel as "Ancient" referred to Dionysius the Areopagite's interpretation, whereby the name "Ancient"

signifies the Creator's pre-eternity that both transcends and encompasses eternity and time. See P. Hunt, *Confronting the End*, 298. In the more recent, "Golden Hall Iconography," 71, M. Flier finds the calendrical symbolism from the New Year Office, a "metaphor of selection and transformation, that is, choice, and the bestowing of special grace in the world to come."

⁵⁴ Under Makarii's patronage, the Annunciation cathedral icons acquainted Ivan IV with the language of Novgorod "Wisdom's house" iconography. There was a copy of the innovative Novgorod Sophia icon, the patronal icon of the Novgorod Sophia church. There was a now missing Last Judgment icon that, according to Vl. Sarab'ianov, may have been a copy of or similar to the Novgorod Wisdom icon of the Last Judgment. See Vl. Sarab'ianov, *Ikonograficheskoe sodержanie zakaznykh ikon Mitropolita Makarii, Voprosy iskusstvoznaniia* 4/93 (1994), 250-54. "The Four Part Icon" hanging there near his pew would have related the "Wisdom's house" paradigm to himself for the first time. He would have also read the Wisdom parable about kingship in the "Tale of Peter and Fevroniia" by deciphering a riddle referring to Christ's elevation on the cross.

⁵⁵ Dan Rowland, "Moscow—The Third Rome or the New Israel," *Russian Review* 55 (1996), 591-614, esp. 607-8, emphasizes Muscovy's self-image as a "New Israel," based on an orientation on Old Testament models that it inherited from Byzantium as early as Kievan times.

⁵⁶ Dan Rowland offers an analysis of what they would have understood in "Two Cultures, One Throne Room: Secular Courtiers and Orthodox Culture in the Golden Hall of the Moscow Kremlin," eds. V.A. Kivelson and R.H. Green, *Orthodox Russia:*

Belief and Practice under the Tsars (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003): 33-58. However, he underplays the importance and ubiquity of Wisdom iconography in Makarii's program. By the reign of Vasili III, the Muscovites had already been exposed to the unique iconography of the Novgorod Sophia composition in newly introduced frescoes of the Kremlin Dormition cathedral. See V.G. Briusova, "Kompozitsia 'Novozavetnoi Troitsy' v stenopisi Uspenskogo sobora," ed. E.S. Smirnova, *Uspenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremlia* (Moskva: Nauka, 1985) 87-99, esp. 97; On similar iconography in a rulership context produced after 1547 under Makarii in the Archangel'sk cathedral, see T.E. Samoilova, *Kniazheskie portrety v rospisi Arkhangel'skogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremlia* (Moskva: Progress-Traditsiia, 2004), 79-83.

⁵⁷ On the innovativeness of the dome iconography, and the question of western influences, see the summary in M. Flier, "Golden Hall Iconography and the Makarian Initiative," 66-7. Flier suggests that innovations were due to Makarii's pragmatism, and that he used "whatever tools were available traditional and novel....accepting or rejecting innovation on functional grounds." Up until now, scholarship has not addressed the program in terms of Orthodox Wisdom poetics. The type of innovation we see here has less to do with western influence or simple pragmatism than with the practice, well established in Novgorod Wisdom iconography, of signifying Wisdom's mystery by making structurally and semantically significant new combinations of Orthodox symbols. Vl. Sarab'ianov, "Programmnye osnovy drevnerusskoi khramovoi dekoratsii," in *Voprosy iskusstvoznaniia* 94/4, 208, 312 notes that the use of traditional elements in new combinations was evident in fresco

decoration of Pskov and Novgorod Churches from the 12th century. See also, P. Hunt, "The Novgorod Sophia Icon and the 'Problem of Old Russian Culture,' *Symposion: A Journal of Russian Thought* 4-5, Idylwild, CA (1999-2000, 1-41; and P. Hunt, "Confronting the End...." 275-325. V. Bychkov, *2000 let khristianskoi kul'tury sub specie aesthetica*, (Moskva, "Universitetskaia kniga," 1999), t.2, 99-116, esp. 108 affirms the Orthodoxy of the symbolic icons of the age of the Metropolitan Macarius.

⁵⁸ David Miller, "The Viskovatyi Affair of 1553-4: Official Art, The Emergence of Autocracy and the Disintegration of Medieval Russian Culture," *Russian History* 8:3 (1981) 293-332, esp. 298 follows O. Podobedova in *Moskovskaia Shkola*, 59-61, 185, in asserting that the innovativeness of the Golden Hall iconography marks a crisis in the old worldview, and a new appreciation of history and time. As we have shown, these innovations and the associated sacralization of time are the logical outgrowths of an Wisdom tradition.