

The Wisdom Iconography of Light

The Genesis, Meaning and Iconographic Realization of a Symbol

Introduction

A star of eight points appeared in Byzantinoslavic iconography in the fourteenth century (Plate 12). Comprised of two overlapping rhombi at quarter angles within a circle or circles of light, it typically occurred around the head or body of Christ.¹ At the end of the thirteenth century, a single rhombus in the same circle(s) of light had appeared in analogous iconographic contexts (Plate 5).² The circles of light around Christ, usually transected by rays had occurred from the beginning of Christian iconography in the fifth and sixth centuries (Plate 3). Although scholars have identified the star as a symbol of Wisdom, theophany and divinity, no one has adequately explained its meaning, where it came from or why it emerged into the tradition in the early fourteenth century.³ This study will show that the star and the single rhombus (proto-star) are interrelated expressions of the hidden symbolic meanings of the circles of light in which they appear.

¹See T. VEL'MAN, *Le rôle de l'hésychasm dans la peinture mural Byzantine du XIVe et XVe siècles*, in *Ritual and Art: Byzantine Essays for Christopher Walter*, London: Pindar Press, 2006, 218-219. These circles could also be stylized as oval, or egg shaped. A. ANDREOPOULOS in *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 2005, esp. 228-242 analyzes the various forms this circle can take, and explains them in a cross-cultural Jungian perspective.

²This rhombus also could be stylized in various ways with curvatures on the sides and emphasis on the two interior triangles. L. F. ZHEGIN, *Iazyk zhivopisnogo proizvedeniia*, Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1970, 59, 66 relates these deformations to the non-Euclidean, "elliptical" or "spherical" organization of space relative to an internal central viewpoint.

³See S. DER NERSESSIAN, *Notes sur quelques images se rattachant au theme du Christ-Ange*, in *Etudes Byzantines et Armeniennes*, Louvain, 1973, Imp. Orientaliste, 43-47, and D. FIENE, *What is the Appearance of Divine Sophia*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 48, no. 3 (Fall, 1989), 449-477, esp. 473-475, figures 3,4,6,10,11 and 12.

All three iconographic motifs, the circle of light, the proto-star and the eight-pointed star are consecutive stages of realization of the esoteric meaning of a numerical-geometrical symbol in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite—a circle with expanding radii. Dionysius kept this esoteric meaning hidden and he urged others to do so as well: “And you, my child,...Keep these holy truths a secret in your hidden mind...⁴” He offered clues, however, to an unwritten tradition based in Neo-Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic thought that reveals this meaning. The reader-initiate finds beneath the surface of Dionysius’ symbol a model of the action of light by which God manifests His Oneness in the creation. Iconographers implied this hidden meaning when they turned Dionysius’ circle and its radii into increasingly more complex images of the Light around Christ; they further realized this meaning by the semantic contexts and poetic structures in which their Light imagery was placed.

This study will uncover the genesis and meaning of this Wisdom star by establishing the link between Dionysius’s symbol and its progressive iconographic realizations. Iconographers embraced Dionysius’ code of silence and did not offer written evidence about their symbolism and its source. However an investigation of the Neo-Platonic and Neo-Pythagorean basis of Dionysius’ symbol enables us to reconstruct the process that gave rise to each stage of the iconography of light. This reconstruction elucidates the meanings modeled by each stage and its significance as the underlying intellectual form (Logos) of the compositions in which it appeared.

André Grabar was the first to note the importance for Christian iconography of Neo-Platonic thought and the writings of Dionysius. From as early as the third century,

⁴See *The Celestial Hierarchy* 2: 145C and also 2: 140B, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, [hereafter, *The Complete Works*], Paulist Press, New York, 1987 [hereafter CH], p. 153, and, p. 149.

Neo-Platonic concepts of contemplative union with the Intellectual Form/Light/Logos of the world provided the new Christian iconography with a symbolic mystical language that set it apart from the pagan visual arts.⁵ Grabar mentioned a set of conventional stylistic traits that expressed this mysticism, including mandorlas, circles and geometric figures. At the same time, he recognized that Dionysius the Areopagite's sixth century synthesis of Neo-Platonic thought into a framework of Christian theology played a key role in the development of iconographic symbols.⁶

I will show how iconographers modelled a Christian understanding of the Wisdom of God by calling on the pagan philosophical traditions that underlay Dionysius' metaphor of the circle and its radii: Neo-Platonic conceptions of the action of Light and Neo-Pythagorean number mysticism. Iconographers established their iconography of Wisdom-Light in the mid-fifth and especially the sixth century at a time when the esoteric traditions that informed Dionysius' work and Dionysius himself were alive.⁷ They developed it further from the late thirteenth century as part of the Church's defense

⁵GRABAR, *Plotin et les origines de l'esthétique médiévale*, and *La représentation de l'intelligible dans l'art Byzantine du Moyen-Age*, in *L'Art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, Paris: College de France, 1968, vol. 1, 15-31, 51-63. See also, GERVASE MATHEW, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, 13-14, 19. He suggested that "the turning-point in Mediterranean religious experience was the 3rd century victory of transcendent monotheism rather than the 4th century conversion to Christianity which was its sequel."

⁶GRABAR, *L'Art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, I, 23-24, 52. Dionysius' debt to Neo-Platonic and neo-Pythagorean thought is generally recognized. See V. LOSSKY, *The Vision of God*, Clayton, Wisconsin, The Faith Press, 1963, 99-100; A. LOUTH, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: from Plato to Denys*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981, 161-162. EGON SENDLER *The Icon: Image of the Invisible*, Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, , 1988 also notes Dionysius' key influence on diverse aspects of the icon. On the importance of Dionysius for the western esthetic system, see UMBERTO ECO, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986, 18-27.

⁷In *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 161 LOUTH places Dionysius in the late-fifth to sixth century. Dionysius' hidden meanings drew on earlier tradition. St. Augustine in the fourth century made reference to the traditions. See ECO, *Art and Beauty*, 43. When Abba Dorotheus, in the sixth century appealed to the same model of the circle, he claimed to be using "an example from the fathers about the power of the word" ("ὑπόδειγμα ἐκ τῶν Πατέρων, ἵνα νοήσητε τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ λόγου"). See *Didaskalia VI:78*, in *Dorothee de Gaza, Oeuvres Spirituelles*, Sources Chrétiennes, 92, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1963, pp. 285-6.

of its mystical theology against the inroads of humanism.⁸ These innovations contributed to the widespread tendency of the time to make theological premises more explicit and to find new ways to symbolize the hidden depth of Wisdom.

To reconstruct a possible way that iconographers read Dionysius' symbol in order to progressively realize their iconographies of Light, I will follow the clues that Dionysius himself provided: His language of the "Good" leads his reader back to his sources in Proclus (412-485) and Plotinus (205-270), both interpreters of Plato. Plotinus' thought reveals that Dionysius' metaphor of the circle and its radii implies a hidden sphere of Light that models all-in-all, and identifies part and whole, multiplicity and unity, creation and creator.⁹

At the same time, Dionysius' analogies between number and form drew from the Neo-Pythagorean thought of Iamblichus (245-325) and in particular the Pythagorean conception of the tetraktys. The tetraktys offers a key to three stages of the generation of a sphere in a movement from point to line, to plane, and ultimately to volume. My hypothesis is that iconographers saw that Dionysius' circle with its radii combined the first stage, the movement from the point to the line. They then understood that the later stages pertaining to the plane and volume were implicit in his circle as well.

To derive this sphere (Table 1) iconographers interpreted the plane as a single rhombus (ADBC) and volume as a second vertical rhombus on a perpendicular axis to the

⁸ See also J. MEYENDORFF, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, London: the Faith Press, 1964, 42-62.

⁹ Western tradition openly articulated the definition of God as a sphere with this significance in the 12th century pseudohermetic manuscript, *The Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers*. See G. POULET, *The Metamorphosis of the Circle*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins press, 1966, xi. On the all in all in the thought of Proclus, see L. SIORVANES, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1996, 51-56.

first (E^1DE^2C).¹⁰ They realized that the cone (E^1ADBC) within the semi-sphere models the integration of the two, horizontal and vertical rhombi; it also represents the integration of the surface and center of concentric spheres. This modelling of integration was an abstract language for the identity of the whole and part, the One and the many.

These perceptions provided iconographers with the intellectual basis for producing an imagery of Light. The first, generic stage—the concentric circles of Light around Christ—alludes directly to Dionysius' circle and its radii to the implied expansion of the sphere and widening of the cone that multiplies and manifests the One. They evolved this symbol to its second stage by superimposing the vertical rhombus on top of the circles of Light. This configuration accented the dimension of depth, the exteriorization of the center and the opening of the cone. They further evolved the symbol to its third stage by adding the horizontal rhombus. This change placed emphasis on the identity of exterior and interior, surface and center, part and whole at their outer limits (Figure 1.)

The larger corpus of Dionysius' writings provided iconographers with inspiration for producing their three-staged iconography of Light. The hidden sphere of Light was the intellectual form of Wisdom and Hierarchy in Dionysius' conception. The iconography of Light signified Christ as Wisdom, and its modeling of the sphere and the cone provided a framework for creative and theologically profound symbolism of this mystery.

An analysis of the iconographic contexts in which the three stages first occurred illuminates this creativity, the relevance of each stage to its time, and the reasons for each

¹⁰Throughout this article, I use the term rhombus to signify the dimensions of a square since iconographers realized this square as a rhombus.

stage's emergence. We first examine four mid-fifth and sixth century compositions that exhibit stage 1, concentric circles of Light with rays. We then turn to four related iconographic subjects in the iconography of the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries that exhibit an evolution from stage 2 to stage 3, from the protostar to the star. The constants associated with each stage across the spectrum of four different subjects suggest that 1) iconographers had a common perception of the meaning of each stage, and 2) that they were inspired by a common agenda. Finally, we will show that an understanding of all three stages in iconographic context elucidates the concept of theophany that informs Byzantinoslavic iconography.

2. The Geometric-Numerical Symbol and its Intellectual Form: The Sphere

Dionysius never wrote openly about the sphere, but he used the metaphor of the circle to model cosmogony, the coming into existence of the world. He saw the circle as a spatial expression of a mystery that he understood in numerical-geometrical terms, the generosity of the “Absolute and Transcendent Goodness.”¹¹

Thus the first gift which the Absolute and Transcendent Goodness bestows is that of mere Existence...This attribute belongs to It in an incomprehensible and concentrated oneness. For all number preexists indivisible in the number One, and this number contains all things in itself under the form of unity. All number exists

¹¹On the relationship between number and form (space) in Neo-Platonic thought and school curriculum, see SIORVANES, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science*, 118-229; A. CHARLES-SAGET, *L'Architecture du Divin: Mathématique et Philosophie chez Plotin et Proclus*, Paris: “Les Belles Lettres,” 1982. See also *Plotinus: The Enneads*, [hereafter, *The Enneads*] Faber and Faber Limited, London, 3rd edition, 1962, VI.6.10, p. 548.

as unity in number One, and only when it goes forth from this number is it differenced and multiplied.¹²

The spatial equivalent to this multiplication of the One is the circle and its radii.

All the radii of a circle are concentrated into a single unity in the center, and this point contains all the straight lines brought together within itself and unified to one another, and to the one starting point from which they began. Even so are they a perfect unity in the centre itself, and the nearer they are to the centre, so much the more are they united to it and to one another, and the more they are separated from it the more they are separated from one another.¹³

Increasing distances of radii from the center and also from one another models the emergence of Existence. The expansion of the radii (Figure 2) also models the multiplication of number (1-6). This expansion also entails increasing separation of the radii so that the concentric circles that unite the radii become wider too. The lengthening radii and expanding circumferences signify how Existence individuates and multiplies. At the same time, the broadening circumferences themselves unify what is separate, and thus mirror the center's a-priori Oneness. Each stage of broadening transforms distance

¹²DN V:6, 820D. I have used C. E. Rolt's translation in *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, London: SPCK, 1972, 137. For the Greek, see *Dionisii Areopagit*, transl. G.M. Prokhorov, S.-Peterburg, "Glagol", 1995, 202,204.

¹³DN V:6, 820D, 821A in Rolt, *Ibid*, 137 and *Dionisii Areopagit*, 204: XXX Here he is providing a metaphor for the return movement from multiplicity to unity, i.e. to the first principle, since "the Good returns all things to itself and gathers together whatever may be scattered...All things are returned to it as their own goal...". On number and the infinite line in Plotinus, see *The Enneads*, VI. 6.17, p. 557. For an analogous formulation to Dionysius' description of the circle (but without reference to the circle) in Proclus see, SIORVANES, *Proclus*, 71.

into an integral unity that mirrors the center in increasing degrees of duration and individuation in space. Thus each stage recapitulates the *form of unity* (the *preexistent Oneness*) of the point. As the circles widen, the form of unity becomes less concentrated, less of a simultaneous wholeness. Conversely, as they narrow, the form of unity becomes more concentrated and thus more simultaneous. But wherever this *form* is present, transcendent Goodness dwells in Existence. Thus the expanding circumferences reveal that the gift from transcendent Goodness is Existence's capacity to reflect and participate in its origins.

On the explicit level, Dionysius' spatial model of the multiplication of number alludes to the mystery of cosmogony, the emergence of Existence. However, on an implicit level, this model also refers to the action of Light that transforms Existence into a manifestation of the Good. Dionysius' use of the term Good leads the initiate to the action of Light. This term derives from a rich Neo-Platonic tradition that Dionysius and his readers would have approached through Proclus and Plotinus. Proclus interpreted the Good as a source of Light and a transcendent oneness (monad) that is the center of existence and its multitudes. Proclus' idea reflects Plotinus' model of the action of a sphere of Light that derived from his reading of Plato's *Timaeus*. Plotinus' sphere embodies Plato's concept of the inherent analogies and symmetries in the world that testify to integral wholeness, wisdom and ultimately the presence of the Good.¹⁴

Plotinus imagined the sphere as a dynamically expanding source of Light in decreasing degrees of intensity: "There is...something that is centre; about it, a circle of

¹⁴See *Plato: The Timaeus and the Critias or Atlantis*, Washington: Pantheon Books 1952, 221. R. Catesby Taliaferro in his introduction to this volume (p. 13), describes Plato's idea of arithmetic as "the science of the indefinitely multipliable ones," and "form-numbers" that embody inherent symmetries. These form-numbers as passed down in later tradition and surface in Dionysius model of the circle and radii.

light shed from it; round center and first circle alike is another circle, light from light; ...The last we may figure to ourselves as ...a sphere of a nature to receive light from that third realm, its next higher in proportion to the light that itself receives.¹⁵” This opening sphere with its “proportions” of light models the same process of concentration as Dionysius’ expanding circle. In the eyes of the initiate, it was the hidden Intellectual Form of Dionysius’ circle.

Plotinus’ understanding of the Intellectual Principle gives a clue to the inner operation of this sphere of Light and to its particular relevance to Christian iconographers. He likened it to a “living sphere teeming with variety.”¹⁶ It is “the archetype that has the form of Good.” It “include[es] within itself...all the outlines, all the patterns” and comprises a “multiple unity.” It is a continuum that unifies subject and object as part and whole (Figure 3); it is thus a model of contemplation and union with the One.

The Intellectual Principle is not the same as the Good, Plotinus asserts, but it manifests the Good as an object of vision. The Intellectual Principle relates to the Good as subject to object, Knower to Known, Seer to Seen.¹⁷ If the Good is an object of vision, Light is the means of sight, and knowledge. As viewed from within the Intellectual Principle, the Good is like a center of light that penetrates the “outer surface” of a sphere so that “the light is simultaneously present at each and every point in the sphere, making all-in-all.” As the knowing “subject,” The Intellectual Principle participates in the Source of Light at the interior of the sphere.¹⁸ The Knower “sees” because he is already “filled”

¹⁵*The Enneads*: IV.3.17, p. 274.

¹⁶*The Enneads*: VI.7.15, p. 573 and VI.4.7, p.524.

¹⁷On beauty, wisdom and the Intellectual Principle, see *The Enneads*:VI.6.17, p. 558.

¹⁸*The Enneads*: VI.7.16, p. 574.

with the object of sight.¹⁹ He is thus one of the multiple “points” on the sphere in which the light is simultaneously present. He is a part that contains the whole.²⁰ Plotinus urged all to “become Intellectual Principle,” so that we then will “be ourselves, what we are to see.” “In this way,” Plotinus writes, “the Supreme may be understood to be the cause at once of essential reality and the knowing of reality.”²¹

Iconographers from the mid-fifth and sixth century read Dionysius’ circle and its radii as a model of the theophanic action of Light that gives knowledge of the Creator. They surrounded Christ with concentric circles of Light, often with rays (radii), and placed Seers on the edges of the outer circles. They placed their compositions in architectural settings such as the semisphere of the dome or the quarter-sphere of the apse that allude to inner relationships within the sphere.

This iconography of Light embodied what we call stage one of an evolving Light symbolism. We will show that it symbolizes the inner dynamism of the sphere -- specifically, the action of the cone that identifies part and whole, Seer and Seen. Iconographers used it to reveal the Creator to be the Logos-Wisdom, the manifestation of the Father’s Oneness in the creation. Stages two and three of the symbol, the protostar and star represented the mirroring rhombi integrated by the cone. The protostar’s appearance in contexts that accentuated the Trinity’s action implied that the Light was the Holy Spirit itself, the manifestation of Christ’s power as the Logos.

¹⁹“Thus, “the Intellectual Principle is filled so as to hold within itself the object of its vision, seeing all by the light from the giver and bearing that light with it.” See *The Enneads*: VI.7.16&17, p. 574.

²⁰On the logic of whole and part in Plato, Plotinus and Proclus see CHARLES-SAGET, *L’Architecture Divin*, 71-89. See also SIORVANES, *Proclus*, 70.

²¹*The Enneads*: VI.7.16.&17, p. 574. In its dual cosmogonic and epistemological aspect as the action of the Supreme, we will refer to light with a capital L.

3. The Emergence of Dimension: The Neo-Pythagorean Paradigm

Iconographers learned how to model the inner dynamics of the sphere from Neo-Pythagorean tradition. Its paradigm of the generation of the dimensions of space, the tetraktys, was the key to Dionysius' analogy between spatial form (the circle and its radii) and number. The tetraktys was an object of study in the classical Neo-Platonic curriculum oriented around the thought of Iamblichus and Proclus.²² In the fifth and sixth centuries, Dionysius and educated iconographers had direct access to this esoteric knowledge and passed it down to their disciples through the centuries.

The tetraktys consists of a triangle comprised of four layers of ten equidistant points (Figure 4).²³ These points represent a hierarchy of numbers that signify the multiplication of the One. At the apex is the monad, layer one is the dyad, layer two is the triad and the base is the quaternion. They add up to ten ($1+2+3+4=10$, the decade), which was a mystical number and a symbol of totality.

These layers model cosmogenesis as a four-staged progression from a dimensionless point to a three-dimensional volume. (Table 1) Each succeeding stage manifests in greater multiplicity the oneness of the prior stage: the monad was equivalent to the point, the dyad to the line and length, the triad to the plane and width, and the quaternion to volume and depth. Dionysius' expanding "straight lines" from the "point" realize the first two layers of the tetraktys, the movement from point to line. The other

²²SIORVANES, *Proclus*, 114-121, describes the Neo-Platonic curriculum, its synthetic nature and the key influence of the Neo-Pythagoreans, Nicomachus and Iamblichus. Its goal was a "retracing of how things came into being, and a 'reversion' or return to origins and causes." See also G. MATHEW, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, 1-4, 20—28, 31. On Nicomachus and Proclus see A. CHARLES-SAGET, *L'Architecture du divin*, 201.

²³See K.S. GUTHRIE *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, Grand Rapids, MI, Phanes Press, 1987, 28-29, figure 8.

layers are implicit-- the progression through the plane to the volume of the hidden sphere.²⁴

Iconographers derived the geometrical forms of the proto-star and star from the spatial realizations of the triad and the quaternion -- the plane and volume.²⁵ This realization involved the multiplication of the triad; the triad was the form of integral unity and a symbol of the cosmogonic emergence of Two from One that manifests the One. The descending layers entail a progressive doubling around a center that “multiplies” the integral unity of the Three. The progression from plane to volume involves the doubling of the triad and the multiplication of the doubled triad to produce rhombi and cones. They in turn model the inner relationships within the sphere. The process of their derivation is the intellectual form of the action of the Source. Since every spatial layer of dimension recapitulates and thus manifests its own ontology, the generation of these layers models at once “the cause of essential reality and the knowing of reality” to use Plotinus’ formulation. Iconographers read Plotinus’ sphere of Light through the prism of the tetraktys, and understood that it modeled its own becoming and thus the power of the Source to give knowledge of itself.

3. 1 Length: The Line

The monad at the apex of the tetraktys is equivalent to the *point at the center of a sphere* without duration or dimension (Table 1) and also to Dionysius’ central “point” that contains “all the straight lines....”. It is analogous to the a-priori Oneness, the “gift of

²⁴CHARLES-SAGET, *L'Architecture divin*, 175 discusses the relationship of the tetraktys to Plotinus’ sphere of Light. On p.280, she also notes Proclus’ idea of the relationship of the sphere to the straight line and the circle.

²⁵ According to G. MATHEW, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, 31 the Byzantine “surface esthetic” expressed a “Euclidean” sense of space with depth, height and width, but depth was most important.

Goodness” that underlies Existence. The dyad in the second layer of the tetraktys represents the generation of the line (AGB) and of the dimension of length. The line measures the distance between a dyad of opposite points (AB) that are lengthening way from one another in relation to the center (G). This line is equivalent to Dionysius’ “straight lines.” To imagine their genesis from Dionysius’ point, we must place his expanding radii in a dyadic relationship, symmetrical around a center (G) (Figure 7). The points A and B emerge from the point (G) as two from one, and expand away from each other in equidistant (dyadic, opposite) segments to generate the dimension of length. This original dyad is a multiplication of the one (point) to make three in all.

3.2 Width: The Plane

The triad in the third layer of the tetraktys models the surface or horizontal plane. The plane emerges through a doubling of the original dyad AB on the perpendicular relative to G to create a perpendicular axis CGD. C and D are in an analogous dyadic relationship as A and B and equidistant from G. The result is the reproduction of the original relationship of two and one as three in a plane consisting of paired or doubled triangles ADB and ACB. Together they form the rhombus ADBC (Table 1).²⁶ If we project this model onto Dionysius’ image of expanding radii (Figure 2), the perpendicular axes in the rhombus (ADBC) embody sets of radii expanding away from each other. These sets model the multiplication of the One that generates the circumferences of expanding circles. The inner relationships of the One and the Two (in the doubled triangles forming the rhombus) embody cosmogonic power that also manifests the *form*

²⁶In the Pythagorean model the plane (width) was initially interpreted as the initial triangle (ACB) created by the axis that bisects the line AGB. See *Pythagorean Sourcebook*, 29.

of unity. The interrelationship of the four points of the rhombus, A,D,B,C (multiplied indefinitely to encompass all possible radii) defines the integral unity of the entire circle.

Dionysius did not mention the interior rhombus that realizes the plane when he described his expanding and contracting circle. As we will see, the contexts in which iconographers placed their iconography of Wisdom-Light in the fifth and sixth centuries implied their knowledge of this rhombus and its symbolism. However, they viewed this rhombus in relationship to the dimension of depth that was symbolized by the quaternion in the tetraktys. In this context, the rhombus functioned as a horizontal plane. It demarcated the four outer points on the base of the implied cone uniting Christ with His Seers, typically seraphim and zodia (Figure 5). This horizontal rhombus (ADBC) served to model the place of the Seers, and signified the transparency of created being in all its multiplicity to the One, its Source.

3.3 Depth: Spherical Volume and the Cone in the Semi-sphere

The quaternion in the fourth layer of the tetraktys models the dimension of depth or the vertical plane. Its implied meaning is consonant with Plotinus' Intellectual Principle, a "living sphere teeming with variety," signifying the unification of subject and object, Seer and Seen as part to whole. For iconographers it provided an abstract language for the Light emanating from Christ that enabled Him to be seen. The dimension of depth arises organically in the progression signified by the layers of the tetraktys. It emerges through the doubling of the initial rhombus on a third perpendicular vertical axis relative to G (E^1GE^2) (Table 1). The resulting interrelationship of the prior horizontal rhombus (plane ADBC) and the succeeding vertical rhombus (E^1DE^2C) gives rise to a spherical volume modeled by the doubled cones (E^1ADCB) and E^2ADCB).

The cone originates from multiplication of doubled triads (doubled triangles) signified by the progression through layers three and four of the tetraktys: Layer 1: The monad, point (G); Layer 2: The dyad, the straight line emerging symmetrically from G in opposite directions as A and B; Layer 3: The triad, the doubling of the line AGB *on a perpendicular axis* gives rise to axis CGD. Mirroring (doubled) horizontal triangles embody the resulting dimension of width in the plane. Together they comprise the rhombus ACBD; Layer 4: the quaternion, the doubling of the line CGD *on the perpendicular vertical axis* gives rise to axis E^1GE^2 in a perpendicular plane. Mirroring (doubled) triangles comprise the rhombus E^1DE^2C .

The mirroring vertical triangles in the perpendicular rhombus express the dimension of depth or height relative to their shared base in the horizontal rhombus. The total interrelationship of the vertical and horizontal rhombi signifies the mystery of the quaternion. It delineates an integral unity of width, depth, and height as a spherical volume comprised of the mirroring cones E^1ADBC and E^2ABCD . Each cone within the semi-sphere consists of one point at the apex and four points at the shared base, demarcated by the rhombus ACBD, five points in all. The sum of these points, ten, delineates the volume of the sphere and also realizes the mystical decade in the tetraktys.

By modeling the mystery of the tetraktys, the sphere refers to its own becoming. Like Plotinus' Intellectual Principle, it includes within itself "all the outlines, all the patterns" that give rise to multiple unity. It is a symbol of cosmogonic ontological power. Its volume exteriorizes the inherent self-identity of the interior originating point (G) (layer one), by analogy to the filling of the subject with Light in the Intellectual Principle. This cosmogonic self-reflecting action implies the expansion of the perpendicular axes

from G to model the increasing volume of concentric spheres in a progress towards the outer limits of integral unity. Points on the surface in their functional interrelationship as participants on either the vertical and horizontal axes model the integration of part and whole, Being's transparency to its Source, Seers filled with the Light of the Seen.

At every successive stage of expansion of theses axes and the generation of concentric spheres, the relationship between Two and the One is recapitulated in an inversely symmetrical process. A dyadic expansion of opposite points away from the shared center G models degrees of differentiation (extension, duration) of space or width; A functionally interdependent expansion away from G of a vertical apex (relative to this dyad) models degrees of integration (concentration of volume) on an axis of height or depth. Therefore, expansion of the vertical apices E^2 and E^1 away from G posits the inverse expansion of the horizontal base A-B and D-B, away from G. Increasing duration and differentiation posits increasing concentration of time/space. Vertical expansion models degrees of wholeness (Figure 6); horizontal expansion models degrees of partiality. The higher the apex (E), the wider is the base (A-B and D-B) as inverted expressions of G. This inverse dynamic can also be conceived as the interrelationship between dyads of differentiation (A-B multiplied) and triangles of synthesis or integration on a perpendicular axis.

Thus arrival at the stage of depth or spherical volume signified the generation of the quaternion, the outer limits of the integral unity potentially contained in the central point (G).²⁷ The functional interdependence of the horizontal and vertical rhomboids

²⁷ The prior stage three, the plane, on the other hand reiterates this dynamic at less concentration and less differentiation of space. Now C and D are the apices of the mirroring triangles that comprise the plane. The extension of each axis G-D, G-C marks degrees of the dyadic extension away from G of A-B at their shared base. Only E^1 -G measures degrees of the extension of the total rhomboid at its base. Thus only the apex E^1

epitomized the inverted relationship of the One and many, whole and part; the former was modelled by the apices of the triangles and the latter was modelled by their bases as dyadic multiplications of the Two. As expressions of G, this inverted relationship also signified the self-identity of part and whole, image and archetype, Existence and its Source. This mechanism of self-identity was analogous to the “outlines” and “patterns” of Plotinus’ Intellectual Principle.²⁸

The vertical apices E^1 E^2 marking the final stage of the multiplication of dyads of differentiation and triangles of synthesis, signify integral unity of part and whole, Existence and its Source modeled by the tetraktys. As such, E^1 and E^2 are “summarizing” the “forms” and “outlines” of Existence preexistent in the Intellectual Principle (Logos).²⁹ They model the wholeness and simultaneity of this inverted dynamic. They are the Source of the base, functionally analogous to the “archetype” that manifests and exteriorizes the “form” of the Good. In this function apices are equivalent to the interior central point (G) that exteriorizes itself in concentric spheres of increasing diameter. The higher these apices, the more they model the depth of interior point (G) relative to the proportionately larger width (diameter) of concentric spheres. Their extension thus has the capacity to symbolize the movement into ontological, archetypal reality, into the Light that is the Source of the all-in-all.

and its mirror E^2 in relation to their shared base realizes the full potential for the multiplication of the central point (layer one of the tetraktys) to signify the self-identity of the One and the many, the simultaneous intercommunion of whole and part, interior and exterior.

²⁸L. SIORVANES, *Proclus*, 70 describes Proclus’ idea of the “whole along with the parts.” It consists either of “the sum of parts, or a part that itself can be considered as a whole.” E^1 functions in both capacities where “summation” signifies condensation or contraction.

²⁹This concept of summarizing both space and time is implied in the representation of objects and persons and in the act of reading the icon. See L. F. ZHEGIN, *Iazyk zhivopisnogo proizvedeniia*, 22-28, 72-5 and B.A. USPENSKY *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*, Lisse: The Peter de Rider Press, 1976, 49-57.

The capacity of volume to signify Plotinus' Intellectual Principle presupposed a spiral movement. Spiral descent from the apex to the base of the cone realizes the expansion of the center into a multiplicity of parts (seeing subjects). This spiral communicates the Oneness of G (E^1) in increasing spatial duration and multiplicity. Arrival at the periphery of the base in its fullest exteriority, on the circumference of the widest concentric sphere represented the fullest realization of the center, G (E^1) as its inverse, the individuum, the mere dot, one of many (A, D, B, C, multiplied). The capacity of the spiral to realize the inverse integration of the center (volume) of widening concentric spheres enables it to model the Light interrelating the Seen and the Seers.; the spiral down the cone in the semi-sphere could model this Light as the exteriorizing *form of unity* "simultaneously present at each and every point in the sphere, making all-in-all."

Thus the modeling of integral unity by the quaternion in the tetraktys worked together with the Neo-Platonic conception of the Intellectual Principle to illuminate the symbolic meaning of Dionysius' circle with its radii. The emergence of the dimension of depth within the paradigm of the tetraktys was the key to understanding this spatial representation of the *form of unity* and its relation to number. The paradigm of the tetraktys modeled an inversely symmetrical four staged multiplication of dyads (signifying differentiation and multiplication) and of triads (signifying concentration and integral unity). The fully realized integrity of this inversely functional process is both symbolized by the number 10 and represented by the volume of the sphere. This dynamic reveals Dionysius' circle with radii to be a two dimensional representation of a three dimensional continuum. It elucidates a model of the concentration and multiplication of the One.

The implied cone hidden underneath Dionysius circle models this inverse process as the spiral expansion and contraction of the radii. It thus offers an abstract language for the “gift” of the Absolute and Transcendent Goodness. Its apex signifies the outer limits of Dionysius’s ontological reality, the “Absolute and Transcendent Goodness” itself by “summarizing” all the preceding stages in the emergence of volume, and by concentrating the duration and multiplicity symbolized by its base. This apex, as a Source of the outflowing spiral, symbolizes Goodness’s gift and implies that it contains the “outlines” and “patterns” that communicate the *form of unity* to Existence so that Existence can participate in its origins and reflect the self-identity of its Source. Finally, if also seen from the Neo-Platonic perspective of the Intellectual Principle, Dionysius’s gift of the *form of unity* models the action of Light. A reading of Dionysius’s circle and its radii through the prism of Neo-Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic tradition offered iconographers a path to using Light symbolism to signify Christian mystery.

3.4 Spherical Volume as a Christian Modelling System

The Wisdom iconographies of Christ’s Light used action of the cone $E^1 ADBC$ in the semi-sphere as a modeling system for the Divine-humanity of Christ-Word. It could express Light’s inherent nature as the intellectual form (Logos) of both the union of Christ’s two natures and of the Creator’s indwelling in the creation. The spiral down the cone could express the indwelling of interior Divinity within exterior humanity and Being. This model enabled them to imply that outflowing Light is both the manifestation and Source of divine self-identity; that it expresses the Love realized in the archetypal

divine Divine-humanity; and the Spirit whereby Christ exteriorizes the essential Oneness of the Trinity and the Father.³⁰

The triadic progress of Light spiraling “down” the cone as an expression of the Neo-Platonic Intellectual Principle offered an abstract language for the manifestation of the Trinity by the Divine-humanity. This abstract language interpreted this theophany as the filling by Light of concentric spheres of Being opening hierarchically from interior Oneness (G) to a dyadically multiplied exteriority (See Figures 7 and 8).³¹ Christian Seers participate in manifesting the form of Christ’s inner unity by functioning as multiple points on the cone’s base in dyadic relationships to one another, and as inverted reflections of the central (triadic) point (E^{1’}). Iconographers used this modeling system to represent the glorified Christ-Word in prophetic visions and in compositions dedicated to the historical actualization of His ontological reality: the Incarnation, the Baptism, the Transfiguration, the Ascension, the Descent of the Spirit on the Church filling Her with the Light of the risen Christ and the Second Coming.

When rays issuing from the glorified Christ at the center of circles of Light functioned as spirals down the cone, they acquired ontological, archetypal significance; they became the power exteriorizing the uncreated interior Divinity into the multiplicity/duration of created Being that reflects the unity/simultaneity of its origins.³² The receptors/Seers of the rays functioned as the image of the archetype, the human manifestations of the divine likeness. As Plotinus first explained, they are filled with

³⁰ Abba Dorotheus used the symbol of the circle and its radii to signify the reflection of God’s love (ἀγάπη) in brotherly love (where self and other function as a dyad of differentiation resolved by love into a triad of integral oneness by analogy to the Trinity. See footnote 7.

³¹The numbering of stages is arbitrary. On the cone and spiral in Proclus’ understanding of number as space, see CHARLES-SAGET, *L’Architecture Divine*, 280.

³²Proclus’ thought throws light on the modeling of simultaneity and duration and linear time, a subject that cannot be examined here. See L. SORVANES, *Proclus*, 135.

Light and have become what they see. In Christian terms, they are deified, in a state of inner communion with (vision of) God. The abstract language for Christ's relation to his Seers thus represented the Intellectual Form (Logos) of the Divine-humanity encompassing the deified creation, the union of transcendental and existential reality, of archetype and image, God and humankind in a theophany of the divine Three-in-One.

Iconographers modeled the hierarchical nature of this theophany by implying that Seers occupy places on a succession of increasingly larger concentric spheres signifying decreasing degrees of condensation of the whole (Figure 7 and 8). As we have seen, the expansion of G into a hierarchy of wider concentric spheres, each with lesser intensity of Light is equal to the inverse, a progress through increasingly smaller cones down the axis E^{1-6} and inward from $A^{6-1}, B^{6-1}, C^{6-1}, D^{6-1}$. Thus the highest level of Seers is one level down the vertical axis of the cone than Christ and thus at the first level of exteriority to $(G=E^2)$ with proportionately lessened powers to integrate whole and part. Their intensity of Light is signified by their place on the circumference of the first, narrowest concentric sphere devolving from the point, and at the base of the next largest cone $E^2 A^5 D^5 B^5 C^5$ to cone $E^1 A^6 D^6 B^6 C^6$. They themselves however, function as centers $(G^2 A^2 B^2 C^2 D^2)$ in relationship to the next widest concentric sphere of Seers, and inversely as apices (E^2) in relationship to the next narrower cone $E^2 A^4 D^4 B^4 C^4$. The smaller cone is equal to the wider circle in its decreased capacity to integrate part and whole relative to the next smallest concentric sphere and the next widest cone.

Thus the decreasing degrees of integration modeled by the inverse relationship of widening concentric spheres and narrower cones signifies a hierarchy of Seers descending away from Divinity and towards non-existence (from wholeness/Light to

partiality, darkness). Descent down the vertical axis of apices of narrowing cones $E^{1-6} A^{6-1} B^{6-1} C^{6-1} D^{6-1}$ contracts the bases from the widest cone $E^1 A^6 B^6 C^6 D^6$ until they devolve into a dot that is the inverse opposite of the original apex E^1 . This dot is inversely analogous to any one of the dyadic points, A,D,B,C on the widest circumference that reflect G in the least possible degree of integration. When Seers model this functionality of A,D,B,C they are reflecting a situation where the apex of the cone has descended into its base $E^6 A^1, C^1, B^1, C^1$. E^6 has ceased to have powers of integration and the base A^1, C^1, B^1, C^1 has ceased to have extension. Accordingly, the Seers have almost ceased to reflect the center that endowed them with ontological reality and a place in Existence. They are blind and in a state of Fall. Occupying at vacuum at Existence's extreme outer limit, they are virtually nothing in their functions as a dot. However Christ in his loving Divine-humanity as modelled by the largest cone and the point G, encompasses even these outer limits (the "lost sheep.") His expiatory death connects them to himself and models a path of redemption and return.

On the other hand, a spiral progress "up" or "into" narrowing concentric spheres and widening cones signifies this return, a hierarchical ascent to participation in the Divine-humanity in increasing degrees of fullness. Seekers who may function as dots physically (in their subjection to sin and death) may use their free will to inwardly spiral "backwards" towards Christ to integrate the apex and base of the widest cone ($E^1 A^6, D^6, B^6, C^6$) according to their ability ($E^{6-2} A^{2-6} D^{2-6}, B^{2-6}, C^{2-6}$).

When iconographers surrounded Christ with geometries of Light and symmetries of Seers in various compositions, they were alluding to a hidden system of meaning and its abstract language. Their representations of Light symbolized the idea of volume in

two-dimensional, flat, mediums, often with the help of three dimensional architectural settings that reflected sections of a sphere. The three staged iconography of Light surrounding Christ that evolved from the fifth through the fourteenth century correlated directly with this implicit volume. Stage one ---concentric circles of light that surround Christ Wisdom (Plates 1-4)-- derives from a cross section of the implied concentric spheres (Figure 9); it models the hierarchical realization of the Trinity's Oneness encompassed by the glorified Christ . Stage two--the protostar (Plates 5,7,9)--is the interior vertical rhombus $E^1D E^2 C$ modeling Christ's outpouring Divinity (Figure 1). Stage three--the star and its variants (Plates 6, 8, 10-12)--is a two dimensional representation of the horizontal and vertical rhombi $ADBC$ and $E^1D E^2 C$ that together comprise the mirroring cones defining a spherical volume (Figure 1) The star's eight points reflect the eight outer points that define the sum of these two rhombi; thus the star models the fully present Divine-humanity.

4. The Intellectual Form of Wisdom: Jesus the Light of the Father

Iconographers' used the sphere as a modeling system for Light to signify Wisdom in Dionysius' definition.³³ The Wisdom of Solomon 7:25-26 described Wisdom as "radiance from eternal light and an unspotted mirror of the working of God" Accordingly, Dionysius interpreted Wisdom as the mirroring process between God and his creation whereby God has knowledge of Himself:

³³Dionysius' conception of Wisdom overlapped with his conceptions of Light, and Beauty and the action of the Good. See DN, IV:3-10, 697A-708D, pp. 73-80.

So too the divine Wisdom knows all things by knowing itself. Uniquely it knows and produces all things by its oneness: material things immaterially, divisible things indivisibly, plurality in a single act. If with one casual gesture god bestows being on everything...he will know everything through derivation from him and through their preexistence in him.³⁴

If we read Dionysius' circle through the Neo-Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic tradition described above, it models the way Existence reflects its origins. The integration of the vertical and horizontal rhombi as modeled by the opening cone offer an abstract language for the reflection of the immaterial, indivisible, simultaneous forms of unity in the material, the divisible and the plural. At the same time the opening cone could signify the epistemological dimension inherent to this mutual reflection. It could model the way divine Wisdom "knows all things by knowing itself" and inversely, the way that Wisdom offers knowledge of Itself in everything. Iconographers thus were alluding to an epistemology of divine self-identity in the Wisdom of the Word by their representations of Light.

Dionysius gave iconographers a reason to symbolize concentric spheres in the generic Wisdom iconography of Light. These spheres expressed his conception of Hierarchy as medium for the action of Wisdom-Light. Alluding to The Wisdom of Solomon 7:25-26, he called members of the Hierarchy "clear and spotless mirrors, receptive to the ray of the primordial and thearchic light...these in their turn ...become

³⁴DN, VII:3, 869B, p. 108.

sources of illumination for others.³⁵” Thus each level contributes to Wisdom’s process of self-knowledge by both receiving Light and functioning as a Source of Light.

Elsewhere Dionysius alluded to the underlying intellectual form of the hierarchical levels:

...the entire wholeness is participated in by each of those who participate in it; none participates in only a part. It is rather like the case of a circle. The center point of the circle is shared by the surrounding radii. Or take the example of a seal. There are numerous impressions of the seal and these all have a share in the original prototype.³⁶

Each level of the Hierarchy “receives his [God’s] stamp..and makes its own members divine images.³⁷”

The analogies between his metaphors of the seal and of the circle illuminate the underlying intellectual form of the Hierarchy. Any given impression (stamp, imprint) shares in the seal because it mirrors as a single unit all of the potential impressions that the seal can produce. It mirrors the seal in the latter’s role as a Source of all impressions (the whole); Its inherent identity with all other impressions that derive from the seal, its potential multiplication as many, means that it also participates in the form of the originating unity that summarizes the many.³⁸ As such any given impression functions by analogy to a point on the base A^6, D^6, B^6, C^6 that reflects E^1 at the apex of an implied three-

³⁵CH III.2, p. 154, and LOUTH, *The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition*; 169-170. I have used Louth’s translation.

³⁶DN,II:4.644A, p.62.

³⁷See CH III.2, p. 154, in the translation of LOUTH, *The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition* 169-170.

³⁸Elsewhere Dionysius wrote:”..the transcendently wise Cause is...the subsistence of absolute wisdom and of the *sum total* and individual manifestations of wisdom. See D.N. VII: 1, 868A, 106 [my italics, P.H.].

dimensional cone (Figure 7) i.e. the individual impression is analogous to a point on the surface of the sphere that mirrors the density and concentration of the center (G).

Each level of the Hierarchy is thus a part equal to the whole by analogy to $E^1 A^6, D^6, B^6, C^6$.³⁹ Dionysius described each level as a triad.⁴⁰ If we project this idea onto his abstract modeling system, we find that his triads are analogous to the widening cones or triangles $E^{6-1} D^{1-6} C^{1-6}$. Each level of increasing likeness to the prototype can be modeled as a wider spiral around a larger cone (Figure 6) and, inversely, as a movement through contracting concentric spheres (Figure 7). The intellectual form of Dionysius' Hierarchy is thus concentric spheres signifying inversely concentric cones that model degrees of participation of the image in its prototype, of the divisible in the indivisible, and degrees of theophanic manifestation of the divine self-identity.

Dionysius associated the Light of Christ with this self-identity when described the Light of the Father manifest through Jesus: "Even though it [the Light] works itself outward to multiplicity and proceeds outside of itself...to lift upward and unify those beings for which it has a providential responsibility, nevertheless it remains inherently stable and it is forever one with its own unchanging identity."⁴¹ This outward movement was the spiral that was implicit in his deeper modeling system:: "The spiral movement attributed to him (God) must refer to the continuous procession from him together with the fecundity of his stillness. And the circular movement has to do with his sameness...so

³⁹CHARLES-SAGET, *L'Architecture Divin*, 291, describes an analogous model of hierarchy identifying part and whole in the works of Proclus.

⁴⁰On the triadic nature of these hierarchies, see LOUTH, *The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition*, 170-171. J. MEYENDORFF, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, Crestwood, N.Y., St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987, 102-103. Father Meyendorff gave a negative appraisal of Dionysius' Christology and of its impact on the East.

⁴¹CH I:2, 121A-121C, pp. 146-7.

that all things are one and all things that have gone forth from him may return to him once again.⁴²,

The formulation, “Jesus, the Light of the Father,” alludes to Christ’s triadic power to manifest One through the interrelationship of Two. The term, Jesus, refers to His differentiated human existence; the term, Light, refers to the integral Oneness inherent to His Divinity that indwell in this human existence; the term, Father, refers to this Oneness’ transcendental nature as a Source and concentration of the mutual indwelling of the three divine Persons.⁴³ Dionysius indicated the triadic nature of Christ as a Word of the Trinity by associating Jesus Light of the Father with spirals and circles that realize the divine self-identity, moving from unity to multiplicity and back, and encompassing the Hierarchy and the volume of a sphere.

In functional terms, the Light of Jesus assimilates the unity of His two natures to the Hierarchy’s the self-identity. In mediating between the apex and base of the largest cone, it encompasses all interior cones, and analogously, all spheres exterior to the point. Implicitly, the Light that manifests the monad revolves in a dyadic action as an opening spiral around the triangle $E^1 D^6 C^6$. The Light spiraling down the cone $E^1 A^6 D^6 B^6 C^6$ fills the inversely proportional cones $E^{5-2} A^{2-5} D^{2-5} B^6 C^{2-5}$; it unifies the concentric spheres widening in inverse proportionality to the deepening point (Figure 7).

This inversely proportional dynamic is inherent to the Light of Christ’s mystical body as the Word. It has epistemological and ontological significance. The inverse reflection of exterior multiplicities and indwelling simultaneous unity models the process

⁴²DN, IX:9, 916D, p. 119

⁴³Speaking of the “processions of God,” he describes the supreme deity as “monad or henad” because of its unity” and also as a Trinity. See DN I:4, 589D, 592A, p. 51. On the dyad and the monad, see DN, II:7, 645B, p. 64.

whereby God knows all things by knowing itself. This model could be used to signify the dimensions of Christ's mystical body as understood by the Church. The Light signifies the divinity (E^1) indwelling in Jesus at the Incarnation, a human body in one moment of time, equivalent to the point A^6, D^6, B^6 , or C^5 , one of the multiplicity comprising the surface of the sphere; The Light also equates his indwelling divinity with the multiplications of the dyad as the mystical body of the historical Church-world, equivalent to the total rhombus $A^6 D^6 B^6 C^6$, the whole surface of the sphere; finally, the Light of His indwelling divinity participates in the mystical body of the transcendental Church, i. e. in the Seers who occupy the more interior rhombi that demarcate the surfaces of contracting concentric spheres.

As Wisdom, the spiral descent of Light into Christ's human nature (Incarnation) is an archetype for its presence in Christ's mystical body in all levels of exterior theophanic manifestation. The Wisdom portrayal of this Light of the Incarnation would thus signify its ontological potential as an expression of the Trinity's love for the creation. The outflowing Light of Christ's Wisdom presumes an on-going spiral of inner human that is archetypal in its own right and expresses the ontological potential for the redemption of fallen nature. This potential, implicit in Jesus' on-going mental ascent, is realized in history by the Resurrection of His flesh, His Ascension and Second Coming. Seers, considered as discrete units, (A,D,B, or C on a given level of the hierarchy, stages 2-6) fulfill this ontological potential and attain to Christ's Divinity (E^1) through an analogous process of mental ascent that enters each into the "power" of Christ's Resurrection and allows each to serve as a sacred model for the next lowest level.

Iconographers used the Wisdom iconography of Light to represent key moments in the life of the historical Christ to raise the historical moment to the level of ontological truth. Their symbolism made these key moments analogous to the imprint of the seal that mirrors as a single unity all the seal's actual and potential imprints. The presence of the Wisdom iconography of Light endowed these compositions with prophetic significance as theophanies of the Trinity's concentrated Ideas for the whole creation.

Iconographers made this meaning self-conscious when they portrayed the Christ of prophetic visions (Ezekial, Isaiah). They placed his glorified body at the center of circles of Light to present Him as the Prototype for every level of the Hierarchy, including the temporal human level. Their image of Christ-Wisdom signified a prophetic theophany of humankind's ontological potential for deification by analogy to the stamp and its impressions and to the self-identity of center and circumferences of widening concentric spheres.

Iconographers followed Dionysius in interpreting with the hierarchy of Seers and Knowers as the nine angelic triads, illuminated humankind (hierarchs), and the sacrament of the Eucharist. The first angelic triad at the peak of the Hierarchy was the seraphim, cherubim and thrones. They functioned as prototypes of Wisdom in their own right. The angels' names "signif[y] the mode in which they take on the imprint of God."⁴⁴ The name, seraphim, refers to "a perennial circling around the divine things." The name, thrones, refers to an "upward-bearing" movement and transcendence, a separation from the inferior, which places one unchangingly in the divine presence.⁴⁵ Both seraphim and

⁴⁴CH,VII:1,205 B, p. 161.

⁴⁵CH, VII:1, 205B, 205C, pp.161-2. It occurs on the same "straight line" as the angels' descending providential action in the world. See DN, IV:8, 704D, p.78.

thrones refer to the ascending spiral action of knowledge-vision that unifies dyads with the monad.

Dionysius implied that these angels dwell in the first concentric sphere (stage 2, Figures 7 and 8) when he wrote that the angelic minds “think...immaterially in a single act” in the same way as the Divine Wisdom “produces ...plurality in a single act.” Here he also had in mind the cherubim whose name means ““fullness of knowledge” or “outpouring of wisdom”” “the power to know and to see God.” Accordingly, iconographers placed images of the first angelic triad just outside or in the circles emanating from Christ-Light. They also associated these angels with the base of the cone that signifies the initial exteriorization of Oneness in stage 2 of concentric spheres (Figure 7), (Plate 1).

Dionysius implied that the ranks of human “hierarchs” at the low end of the Hierarchy are on a broader concentric sphere than the angels (say, stage 5). They “circle in discourse around the truth of things. ...on account of the manner in which they are capable of concentrating the many into the one.”⁴⁶ When Dionysius wrote that this circling involves ascent along a “straight line”, he was again evoking the spiral of ascent up the central vertical axis of the widening cone and in from surface to center of concentric spheres. (Figure 8)⁴⁷ This ascent refers to a process of contemplation (*theoria*)

⁴⁶DN, VII:868 B,C, pp.106-107. In D.N.IV:9, 705A,B, p. 78. This movement of concentration is described as a movement away from “externals.” Roth translates it as “introversion.” See *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, 98. It shows that ascent is the same as movement within.

⁴⁷D.N.IV:9, 705A,B, p. 78. Dionysius is here following a tradition about “revolutions in our head” in the *Timaeus*: “...through ...considering the harmonies and circulations of the universe [whereby] ...the intellectual power may become assimilated to the object of intelligence. See *Plato: The Timaeus and the Critias*..., 221.

that echoes the cherubim's "power to know and see God." Dionysius wrote about ascent to silence in similar terms:⁴⁸

...the higher we ascend the more our words are straitened altogether in a unifying and simplifying way; ..the more it [our reason] ascends the more it is contracted, and when it has completely ascended it will become completely speechless and be totally united with the Inexpressible.⁴⁹

The link between ascent and straitening or contraction in the movement to silence reflects Dionysius' debt to his modeling system. The spiral that rises between the base and the apex of a cone, and that analogously moves interiorally through "contracting" concentric spheres to the point models the functional identity between ascent and straitening.⁵⁰ This modeling of silence throws light on his and later tradition's understanding of hesychast prayer. According to his deeper model, the movement into silence was the same as vision, conformity to the Prototype, and likeness to the angelic triads in knowledge of God.⁵¹ Dionysius' assimilation of silence to his modeling system for Wisdom explained the key importance of hesychast prayer and *theoria* in the Orthodox understanding of knowledge of God.

⁴⁸CHARLES-SAGET, *L'Architecture Divin*, 101 discusses Plotinus' understanding of silence as a center to which one ascends.

⁴⁹See LOUTH's translation of "The Mystical Theology" III:1032D-1033C in *The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition*, 165. In the same passage Dionysius described the opposite, "the lower it descended, proportionately the more our understanding was broadened to encompass a multitude of notions...."

⁵⁰See also LOUTH in *The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition*, 177.

⁵¹On mental prayer and silence, see Vasily Krivocheine, "The Ascetic and Theological Teaching," 29 and David BALFOUR, *Saint Gregory the Sinaite: Discourse on the Transfiguration*, San Bernadino, CA: Borgo Press, 1996, 95-103, 139-155.

Iconographers interpreted the next level of Seers after the angels as human hierarchs, specifically, the four evangelists. They placed the symbols of the evangelists (the “living creatures” or zodia from the vision of the prophet Ezekiel 1:16) in an implied or realized rhombus that alludes to the horizontal rhombus ADBC (Plates 2,3). When iconographers placed the zodia around Christ in this manner they were implying that the evangelists, through mental ascent, participate in Jesus’ return spiral and in His mystical body.⁵² They “ascend” from A,D,B’ or C to E¹ to become mirrors of G, and Sources of descending Light in their own right. Their rhombus signifies an outer limit of Christ’s circles of Light, an outer surface of a wider sphere reflecting the Father’s Oneness. In this the iconographers made the evangelists participants in the double (descending and ascending) spiral that embodies the Divine-humanity of Christ whereby “Wisdom knows all things by knowing Himself.”⁵³

Similarly, iconographers included references to the Eucharistic altar in the generic Wisdom iconography of Light.⁵⁴ This altar could be present either by its actual spatial location beneath a dome or apse composition portraying Christ-Wisdom-Light or by symbolic means in the composition itself. The symbolic type of presence typically

⁵² In the thought of Maximus the Confessor, “those who follow Christ in action and contemplation will be changed from glory to glory... to unite themselves to the ‘created and uncreated nature’” i.e. to the “hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ.” This is “perichoresis”, the dynamic co-penetration of what is created and uncreated in Christ” wherein the deified human person “attains a stage above the combination of form and matter.” In this way, the body of the elect will be a “visible theophany” that manifests their participation in “the intelligible theophany ‘in the most perfect way.’” I am quoting V. LOSSKY, *The Vision of God*, 109-110. According to our model, the visionary participates in point E¹ (as the manifestation of G).

⁵³V. LOSSKY notes that “Dionysius’ hierarchy definitely does not limit the plenitude of the union; at every step of this ladder the union with God is realized fully, but the plenitude is not uniform, it is personal. In the analogy of each created nature there is an encounter, a synergy of two wills. These is a double movement which runs through this hierarchical universe.” See *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*; London: James Clarke & Co., 1957, 102.

⁵⁴See *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* III:1 424 C, D, p. 209 in The Complete Works. On Maximus the Confessor’s own exegesis of Dionysius’ conception, see A. LOUTH, *Maximus the Confessor*, London: Routledge, 1996, 75-77.

emphasized the archetypal reality of this altar, its role as a theophany (image and likeness) of the transcendent Trinitarian Oneness. For instance iconographies of the Enthroned Christ in Glory (Plates 3, 9, 10,11) could include quotations from the seraphic hymn that interpreted the heavenly, angelic throne by analogy to the earthly altar. These quotations alluded to the liturgical rite of anaphora invoking the descent of the Spirit on the Eucharistic gifts on the altar. Symbolic representations could also include depictions of the Eucharistic chalice as “Wisdom’s cup” of Proverbs 9, interpreted by Dionysius as a source of outflowing Goodness that returns the world to God (Plates 5, 6,8).⁵⁵

Dionysius’ writings showed iconographers how to interpret Jesus Light of the Father as the Wisdom of the Word. His deep modeling system informed his understanding of Wisdom, and their knowledge of this system enabled them to symbolize the mystery of Christ’s manifestation of the Trinity through and beyond the Hierarchy. The surface level of their compositions expressed this abstract modeling in the relationship between the geometry of Light-Wisdom and the symmetrical representation of Christian hierarchs/Seers. These structural symmetries worked together with the semantic significance that the images derived from scripture and tradition. The consonance between the semantic and structural levels of meaning enabled the viewer to place the images on an imagined three dimensional continuum. The presence of this continuum to the viewer’s inner spiritual eye endowed the composition with hidden mystery and theological depth. The constants and variations in the iconographers’

⁵⁵For Dionysius’ interpretation of this chalice as an image of divine self-identity, see Letter Nine, *To Titus the Hierarch*, 1109C in *The Complete Works*, 286.

resolution of this problem reflected their response to the religious concerns of their time.⁵⁶

6.0 The Generic Wisdom Iconography

As early as the mid-fifth and sixth centuries iconographers created an iconography of Light around Christ-Wisdom based on Dionysius' metaphor of circles and radii. As the following four examples will show, it consists of concentric circles of Light around Christ that are typically transected by rays issuing from His body. These rays reach out to the Seers who signify levels of the Hierarchy in an implied or actual rhombus.

Our first example offers the most literal realization of Dionysius' symbol. The sixth century dome (532-537) of the imperial church of St. Sophia contained a central image of Christ-Pantocrator-Wisdom that was expunged by the Turks (Plate 1).⁵⁷ Christ was surrounded by concentric circles that signify Light. Numerous radii still extend from the center to the base of the semisphere that rests on a square (rhombus). The rays end in a series of small windows that underscore their meaning as outflowing Light. The seraphim are the first rank of Seers in the four corners of the square consisting of the pendentives. This configuration in its architectural setting brings to the surface meanings of Dionysius' circle with expanding radii.

The interrelationship between Christ (E^1) and the four seraphim (on rhombus ADBC) implies the opening cone (Figure 5). A widening circumference of Light opens out from the concentric circles around Christ and implicitly spirals down the cone to the

⁵⁶Iconographers located Dionysius' understanding of Wisdom and Hierarchy within the broader spectrum of Eastern Orthodox Logos theology. Dionysius was read through the prism of his commentator, Maximus the Confessor. On the latter's theology, see A. LOUTH, *Maximus the Confessor*, 48-62.

⁵⁷See J. LASSUS, *The Early Christian & Byzantine World*, London: Paul Hamlyn, 1966, plates 47 and 50. On the image of the Pantocrator in the dome see also *Sofia Premudrost' Bozhiia: Vystavka russkoi ikonopisi XII-XIX vekov iz sobranii muzeev Rossii*, Moskva: Radunitsa, 2000, 23-25.

Seers. In Byzantine optics the cone described the action of sight.⁵⁸ Christ's place at the top of the cone implies that He is seeing the Seers (including the viewer) who see Him. This mutual seeing models the action of the cone in realizing the mystical body (Divine-humanity) of Christ as the identity of the whole and the part, apex and base, center and surface of the sphere.⁵⁹

Our second example is the mid-fifth century mosaic in the dome of the Mausoleum of Galla Placida in Ravenna (Plate 2). A triumphal luminous cross is at the center of the semi-spherical dome.⁶⁰ Rays are absent, but the cross is surrounded in concentric circles of Light in the form of golden stars. As a replacement for the figure of Christ, the imagery signifies the Wisdom of the cross and the manifestation of the "Lord of Glory" according to St. Paul (1Cor. 1:23-24, 30-31; 2:8). The Light is implicitly the Spirit-Light of the resurrected Christ acting as the Good that "returns all things to itself." The symbols of the four Seers (zodia) are on the corners of a clearly delineated rhombus at the base.⁶¹ The cross itself alludes to vision.⁶²

The combination of concentric circles of Light with the zodia represents a successful marriage of the hidden intellectual form and surface, semantic level of meaning. In Ezekiel's vision (1:16) of "the likeness of the glory of the Lord," the four

⁵⁸See G. MATHEW, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, 30. On the cone of vision and its effect on the icon's system of perspective, see L. F. ZHEGIN, *Iazyk zhivopisnogo proizvedeniia*, 80-86.

⁵⁹F. MATHEWS, *The Art of Byzantium*, Calmann and King Ltd., 1998, 118 describes the Pantocrator as the "all-Holder" and "the full perfect self that the beholder becomes in communion." He notes that the "defining theme of the narrative Christological subjects in the vaults below the dome is the Body of Christ."

⁶⁰See M. GOUGH, *The Origins of Christian Art*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1973, figure 80. See L. BOUYER, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, New York: Seabury Press, 1963, 183-186 on the gnostic aspect of the cult of the cross and the vision of the Cross in the light of glory.

⁶¹ On the Good, see footnote 13. On the zodia, see GEORGE GALAVARIS, *The Illustrations of the Prefaces in Byzantine Gospels*, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979, 33-50.

⁶² A. ANDREOPOULOS, *Metamorphosis*, 120, notes that a similar contemporary depiction of the cross may allude to Constantine's vision of a cross in the sky with the inscription "By this, you shall conquer", in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*.

zodia emerge from the midst of “a fire infolding itself” “...like the appearance of lamps” and “their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.” As members of the Hierarchy, the zodia in this composition are on an implicit wheel that reveals an inner wheel, i.e. they are on a concentric sphere that reveals the Light of the more interior concentric sphere that is emanating from the most interior central Cross (Figures 5 and 8).

The zodia also act as lamps. Their gospels (not depicted in the composition) are an implied source of Light that illuminates the Church below. They, like glorified Cross, are the Seen: They are an object of vision for the sacred figures portrayed on the walls below and for the faithful in the Church. The composition implies that by spreading the Light/Wisdom of the cross, the evangelists are the path by which the multiplicity of the Church returns to the Oneness (transcendent Goodness) of God.⁶³ As manifestations of the Light/Wisdom of the prototypal Cross, they participate in the spirals of outflowing and return according to their place in the Hierarchy.⁶⁴

Thus the subtext from Ezekiel’s vision is the key to the way that the iconography of Light and Seers models the action of the sphere and the Wisdom of the Hierarchy. This inner action of the Seers corresponds with the role of the viewer in the Church. The central image of Wisdom opens towards him into the real space in front where he is “bodily enclosed in the grand icon of the church.” He in turn participates in the return spiral: His gaze moves in circles, summarizing his visual impressions as he ascends to a

⁶³This idea of indwelling Goodness may explain why portrayals of Paradise (that allude to the Eden of *Genesis*) accompany analogous cross imagery in early Christian works such the apse composition of St. Clement of Rome, and St. Apollinaris in Classe. Even where this Paradise is associated with the heavenly Jerusalem as in St. Clement’s, the accent is still on theophany of the transcendent more than on eschatology. The presence of the Lamb refers to the redemptive sacrifice; the portrayal of the apostles as lambs alludes to their participation in Christ’s martyrdom. See *St. Clemente*, Roma: Collegio S. Clemente, 1992, figure 6.

⁶⁴ANDREOPOULOS, *Metamorphosis*, gives an eschatological interpretation to a similar sixth century composition, the apse mosaic of St. Apollinaris in Classe even though he himself acknowledges that the imagery of stars of light contradicts this reading. See his figure 7, and pp. 117-125.

vision of interior unity. His viewing is thus the act of contemplation conceived by Dionysius.⁶⁵

The third example is in the apse mosaic of St. David in Thessalonika (Plate 3). There, circles of Light surround the now enthroned glorified Christ and rays emanate from His body.⁶⁶ From behind His outer circle appear seraphim between the four zodia who now *exhibit* their closed gospels. The zodia occupy the four corners of an implicit rhombus that alludes to the world.⁶⁷ Christ seems to be emerging from its midst in a theophany of hidden interior Light, the “wheel within the wheel.” The intermingling of the zodia and the seraphim implies that the evangelists have ascended to the hierarchical level of the first angelic triad through a “perennial circling around the divine things.” Together they abide on a concentric sphere close to the center of Light. They are functioning as a heavenly outer wheel and a prototype for the viewer.

On either side is another level of Seer, the prophet-visionaries Ezekiel and Habbakuk who foresaw what the Gospels revealed-- the hidden interior Light of Christ that contains the whole, including the future of the Church. The iconographer chooses to emphasize the symbolism of Ezekiel’s vision by including Ezekiel himself as one of the Seers, and by actualizing various features of his vision that offer a surface expression of Wisdom’s intellectual form.

⁶⁵See MATHEWS quoting Otto Demus in *The Art of Byzantium*, 114. On the viewer’s movement, see USPENSKII, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*, 41, footnote, 4.

⁶⁶See GOUGH, *The Origins...*, figure 78. This composition also contains symbolism of Paradise-Eden, three outflowing rivers at the base of the composition.

⁶⁷I. A. KOCHETKOV, in *‘Spas v silakh’: razvitie ikonografii i smysl*, Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. M., 1995, 50-51 describes the early commentaries on Elijah’s vision that corroborate my interpretation.

Some scholars see the seraphim in this composition as a reference to the seraphic hymn (Isaiah 6:10), the angels' praise, "heaven and earth are full of thy glory."⁶⁸ This hymn, sung during the eucharistic rite of the anaphora, enters the Eucharist into the Hierarchy through which the Glory of Christ fills the earthly universal Church. This liturgical reference enhances the deeper symbolism of Wisdom and Hierarchy implied by the generic iconography of Light.

The fourth example is in another sixth century composition, the Transfiguration mosaic in the apse of the Church of the Virgin in the Monastery of St. Catherine of Sinai (Plate 4).⁶⁹ Its very subject is the manifestation of Divinity as Light that fills the Seers, who include prophets and apostles with their faces turned to the Light. They serve as prototypes for the viewer who takes communion below at the altar. A mandorla of concentric "circles" of Light transected by eight white rays surrounds Christ. The deepening color of each circle as it nears the center alludes to the increasing condensation of the One as concentric spheres decrease in diameter (stages 6-1 in Figures 8 and 9).⁷⁰

The reverse progression from dark to light alludes to the exteriorization of Christ's inner Divinity. Accordingly, eight white rays shine through Christ's transfigured flesh, embodied by His brilliant white and gold garment.⁷¹ They touch the surrounding Seers, the prophets Elijah and Moses and the three apostles. Above, an image of the cross in

⁶⁸See George GALAVARIS, *The Illustrations*, 83-4, 102. This reference is realized by an actual citation in later related compositions, the miniatures accompanying the prologues to the Gospels.

⁶⁹See LASSUS, *The Early Christian & Byzantine World*, figure 46.

⁷⁰This implied movement expresses Dionysius' idea as paraphrased by V. LOSSKY that "Human beings united to God...are 'entirely' in God [by] an entry into darkness...concealed by the abundant light through which God makes Himself known in His Beings. See V. LOSSKY, *The Vision of God*, 100. A. ANDREOPOULOS in *The Mosaic of the Transfiguration in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai: a Discussion of its Origins*, Byzantion, 72/1 (June 2002), Louvain, Belgium, 9-41 speculates about the influence of Dionysius and Neo-Platonic tradition on this light symbolism.

⁷¹ ANDREOPOULOS, *The Mosaic of the Transfiguration* notes, p. 19, that for Philo, the number eight was a typos of the feast of the Transfiguration and a symbol of the transition from the material to the immaterial world. If the eight rays that transect the darkening circles of Light in this composition bear this latter mystical significance, they resonate with the meaning of the darkening itself.

analogous circles of Light places this scene in a transcendental framework by alluding to the Resurrection.

The glorified cross above the scene implies that Christ's Transfiguration manifests His future resurrected Body that emanates the Light of Spirit into the world. It makes the composition a prophetic manifestation of the transcendental and cosmic wholeness (Divine-humanity) of Christ's Personhood.⁷² On a providential level, this iconographic context makes the transfigured Christ analogous to the glorified Christ at St. David's and the glorified cross at Galla Placida. All three embody in a similar manner the intellectual form of the Divine-humanity as all-in-all that is implied by the concentric circles around Christ/the cross.

In the Transfiguration composition, the Seers are not obviously located on rhombi. Here they are arranged in implicit mirroring triangles (triads) that together imply the rhombus and the Seers' place in the Hierarchy. In the upper triangle, the two prophets function as a base in relation to Christ (apex); in the lower triangle, John and James are a base in relation to Peter (apex). Thus the mirroring triangles of the five Seers alludes to the geometry of the rhombus that is associated with four Seers in other Wisdom compositions. They are comparable to the implicit or realized rhomboid around Christ/the Cross that at Galla Placida and St. David's housed the four zodia and at St. Sophia housed the four seraphim.

⁷²Maximus the Confessor, a century later compares Jesus' white garments to the "garments of the Word," the "Scripture, and the manifestation of creatures which are radiant and glorious...and as we ascend ...we shall see and worship the Living One, who came to us from the dead through closed doors...the One who is the Word Himself and God who is all-in-all. All the intelligible thought that derives from his goodness we shall know as a body...". Difficulty 18, "Contemplation of the natural and the written law," 1132C, D, in A. LOUTH in *Maximus the Confessor*, 112. The reference to the garments as a symbol of the Light manifest through scripture makes the garments analogous to the zodia in the compositions described above.

The generic iconography of Light in these early Christian compositions implies the third dimension of depth. In the composition at St. David's, the projection of the zodia onto an implied rhombus alludes to their place on the expanding base of an interior cone and on the outer limit of a contracting concentric sphere (Figures 5 and 8). From this implied perspective, Christ at the center of Light is at the apex of this cone and at the center of these spheres. The circles of Light that surround Him model the opening of this cone that shows His Light through its base and onto the next level, the implied rhombus signifying the earthly Church. In the Transfiguration composition, the shining garments of the human Christ through which rays emerge, and the upper and lower human triads imply this same exteriorization of inner Light.

This intellectual form is clearest in St. Sophia where the cone opens out in three dimensions from the center of the semi-spherical dome onto the seraphim/Seers on the four corners of the square base. The composition at St. David's, however, highlights this same action by placing the interior Christ in front of the Hierarchy that reveals Him and in a direct relation to the viewer. Implicitly the apex of the cone is appearing through the base, the center is emerging through the surface, ontological Light is emerging through Existence.⁷³

The seventh century disciple of Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, implied his own knowledge of the internal dynamics symbolized at St. Sophia and St. David when he described the intellectual form of the Church. He saw this form as an "image of the entire visible and invisible universe" in which the visible and invisible parts are "each... whole [and] fixed in the whole of the other. As parts of the whole, both make up the world, and

⁷³B. USPENSKY, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon* 66-77 notes that action against a background is meant to be seen as occurring inside it. Here this action emerges through the background to the surface of vision.

as parts in the whole, both are completed and fulfilled in a single form....their end result ...is 'as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel,' says Ezekiel.⁷⁴

As we have seen, Maximus' "single form" is the identity of center and surface of the sphere as modeled by the action of the cone within the semi-sphere. The generic iconography of Light (including the Seers) embodies the intellectual form (Logos) of the church in which it appears. The theophanic function of this iconography as well as its location in the domes and apses of the church makes it a dominant symbol of the Church as "Wisdom's house."⁷⁵ The first, generic, stage of Light symbolism models the interior illumination of the Church as the glorified body of Christ, as an apotheosis of His Divine-humanity and thus of His Wisdom. It implies how this indwelling Wisdom transforms the church into place of Goodness, an Eden-like paradise, an ontological axis of Being through which the center's immaterial Light suffuses the multiplicity of the material world.⁷⁶ When iconographers evolved this generic iconography to stages two and three, this original meaning remained a constant.

⁷⁴ N. OZOLINE, *La symbolique cosmique du temple Chretien selon la mystagogie de saint Maxime le Confesseur*, in *Liturgiiia, arkhitektura i iskussto vizantiiskogo mira*, ed. K.K. Akent'iev, St. Petersburg, 1995 links the vertical dimension in St. Sophia of Constantinople with symbolism of stability, immutability. He does not link this symbolism to Dionysius' concept of Wisdom-Light as unchanging, "stable" and an expression of divine self-identity.

⁷⁵On the patristic and iconographic tradition of interpreting the Church as Wisdom's House, see J. MEYENDORFF, *Wisdom-Sophia: Contrasting Approaches to a Complex Theme*, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, (1987), 391-401. See also V.G. BRIUSOVA, *Sofiia Premudrost' Bozhiia v drevnerusskoi literature i isskustve*, Moskva: Belyi Gorod, 2006, 12-22. The consecration ritual of the Church cited Proverbs 9:1-5 in order to interpret every church by analogy to the mother church of Wisdom, St. Sophia. See V.G. Briusova, "Tolkovanie na IX pritchu Solomona v Izbornike 1073 in *Izbornik Sviatoslava 1073*, Moskva, 1977), 292-306 on the function of apse and dome programs in relation to the altar to symbolize Wisdom building her house and offering her feast.

⁷⁶See also P. A. MICHELIS, *Esthetique de l'art Byzantin*, Paris: Flammarion, 1959, 51-52, 61,126-130.

The cultural agenda of the late thirteenth century favored the evolution of the generic Light symbolism to its second stage, the protostar. A vertical rhombus superimposed on the expanding circles of Light around Christ evokes the intellectual form of Divinity: A doubled triangle (mirroring cones) that symbolizes the dyadic communication of the Father's Oneness (Figure 1). At that time, the ecumenical patriarch, Gregory of Cyprus, was emphasizing the dyadic relationship of Son and Spirit to repudiate the western filioque doctrine.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the hesychast mystical experience of the Divinity as Light was becoming a focus of Orthodox spirituality at least from the end of the thirteenth century.⁷⁸

The appearance of the vertical rhombus was a way to accent God's generous outpouring of Light into the hesychast contemplative and the Church. As we have seen, triangle $C E^1 D$ (and its mirror triangle CE^2D) defines the limits of the descending spiral of Light that manifests Christ as whole in part (Figure 5). Furthermore, iconographers accented the triangle in the upper half of the protostar to place emphasis on the dyad that manifests the monad. By thus demonstrating the equality of Son and Spirit, they exemplified Orthodoxy's answer to the filioque (Plate 5). The protostar leaves out the second exterior horizontal rhombus (ACBD) because theologians of the day were concerned primarily with the relationship between the monad and the dyad in the Trinity.

⁷⁷See J. MEYENDORFF, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 13-14. Gregory of Cyprus asserted the divinity of the Holy Spirit by emphasizing its mutuality with Christ as "Word" of the Father: "the very Paraklete shines and manifests Itself eternally by the intermediary of the Son as light shines from the sun by the intermediary of rays..."

⁷⁸See V. KORACH, *La lumière dans l'architecture Byzantine Tardive en tant qu'expression des conceptions hésychaste*, *L'Art de Thessalonique*, 125-133. See T. VEL'MAN, "Le rôle de l'hésychasm," 184.

It remained in use in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries even after the star appeared but by the sixteenth century the star had virtually displaced it.

By the mid-fourteenth century, the hesychasts were responding to a full-fledged attack on their mystical theology from within the Church.⁷⁹ Theologians of the written word such as Gregory of Sinai, Gregory Palamas, the Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos and iconographer-theologians self-consciously turned to the work of Dionysius to articulate the premises of their mystical approach. They drew from Dionysius to relate Light mysticism to Trinitarian doctrine and defend their understanding of transcendence and of the One; they used his ideas to articulate the ontological nature of Light and its divine indwelling through vision and direct personal experience.

Leading hesychasts explicated their theology through biblical exegesis of themes such as the Light of Thabor and Wisdom Builds Her House (Proverbs 9:1-5) [hereafter referred to as WBH].⁸⁰ Gregory Palamas refers to Dionysius' models of the circle, straight lines and spirals to speak about contemplation and deification.⁸¹ Gregory of Sinai's *Discourse on the Transfiguration* refers to the double triad in a context that suggests his knowledge of the esoteric traditions informing Dionysius.⁸² Dionysius' concept of Wisdom was central to the hesychast vision. This concept's fresh impact inspired the evolution of the iconography to its third stage, the Wisdom star. It also

⁷⁹See M.VASICH, *l'hésychasme dans l'église et l'art des Serbes du moyen age* in *L'Art Byzantine chez les Slaves*, recueil Theodore Uspenskij, I/1 Paris 1930, 110-123. See also J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 42-62.

⁸⁰ See DAVID BALFOUR, *Saint Gregory the Sinaite: Discourse on the Transfiguration*, 21-113. Balfour notes references to Maximus the Confessor, rather than to Dionysius by St. Gregory. However Gregory's treatise is suffused with awareness of Dionysius' conceptions. *Gregory Palamas: The Triads*, ed. J. Meyendorff, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1983 [hereafter, *The Triads*] explicates Thabor's Light in the explicit context of Dionysius' thought. See also *Filofeiia 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) [hereafter, *Tri rechi*].

⁸¹ See *The Triads*, 46, 99, 101 and DN IV:9, 705 A & B, p.78; VII:2, 868B, pp. 106-7.

⁸² See BALFOUR, *Saint Gregory the Sinaite*, 29-31.

informed the meaning and popularity of other iconographic motives such as the Wisdom-angel, Wisdom's chalice and the Ancient of Days that frequently occur together with the Wisdom star.⁸³

The new accents that the Wisdom star adds to the generic iconography of Light directly correlate to the theology of Light-Logos expressed by hesychast theologians in writing.⁸⁴ The Wisdom star includes the second horizontal rhombus (Figure 1) in order to deepen the modeling of the divine self-identity that is communicated exteriorly in Christ's glorified mystical body. It accents the defining parameters of the all-in-all at the fullest extension and interaction of the part and whole, interior and exterior. These parameters include time as well as space.⁸⁵ Its eight points allude to the Eighth or Lord's Day beyond time. Tradition interpreted this day as a transcendental wholeness of all-in-all that is immanent but hidden in the present and fully manifest at time's end.⁸⁶

By modeling divine self-identity, the star served the hesychast agenda of signifying how the creation and time participate in the divine transcendence and in the wholeness of Christ's Divine-humanity. The star also served as a symbol of the hesychast mental ascent through prayer since it implies the interaction of both rhombi at the outer

⁸³ On the influence of Dionysius' interpretation of the chalice on the iconography of WBH, see G. P. Prokhorov, *Poslanie Titu-ierarkhu Dionisiia Areopagita v slavianskom perevode i ikonografiia 'Premudrost' sozda sebe dom*, TODRL 38 (1985), 7-40. MEYENDORFF in *L'Iconographie de la sagesse divine*, note 64, p. 159, described how Dionysius' treatise *On the Celestial Hierarchy*, 4:4 may have inspired the image of Christ as Wisdom Angel. Dionysius' interpretation of the Ancient is in D.N. 10: 937B 120. On Dionysius' impact, see also the notes to G. M. PROKHOROV, *Sochineniia Davida Disipata v drevnerusskoi literature*, TODRL XXXIII, (1979), 32-54; *Tri rechi*, 57-58, 100-101, and 128. Dionysius' works were translated into Slavonic in the 14th century with the commentary of Maximus the Confessor. See G. M. PROKHOROV, *Pamiatniki perevodnoi literatury XIV-XV vekov*, L., 1987, 24-27.

⁸⁴See D. DRAGOJLOVICH, *La mystique lumineuse et l'hésychasme dans la littérature Byzantine et ancienne Serbe* in *L'art de Thessalonique*, 133-137. He mentions the key importance of Simeon the New Theologian's reading of Dionysius. See also S. RADOJCHICH, *Zlato u srpskoj umetnost XIII veka*, Zograf, 7, Beograd, , 28-35; O.S. POPOVA, *Svet v vizantijskom i ruskom iskusstve*, M., 1978, 75-99.

⁸⁵For a hesychast interpretation of time in an icon featuring the Wisdom star as a dominant metaphor see P. HUNT, *Confronting the End: The Interpretation of the Last Judgment in a Novgorod Wisdom Icon*, *Byzantinoslavica*, 65 (2007), 275-325.

⁸⁶See A. ANDREOPOULOS, *Metamorphosis*, 147.

limits of the ascending and descending spirals (stages 1 and 6), and thus the direct intercommunion (perichoresis) of Seer and Seen.⁸⁷ The Wisdom star was a dominant metaphor for the action of Light in key iconographies for the hesychast agenda such as the Transfiguration, Wisdom Builds her House, Christ in Glory and the Trinity.⁸⁸ Its presence and significance represented iconographers' contribution to the hesychasts' larger exegetical-theological work. By the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Wisdom star achieved conventional status and proliferated in a variety of contexts that cannot be explored here.⁸⁹

7.1 The Protostar and Star in Iconographic Context

Four iconographic subjects that span the late thirteenth to the late fifteenth century have been chosen to elucidate the meaning of the protostar and star in their iconographic contexts.⁹⁰ Each subject correlates thematically and structurally with one of the four

⁸⁷ Palamas invoked the action of the triad to describe mental prayer and in this way alluded to the ascending spiral around the triangle DE¹C: "When the mind becomes three while remaining one then [the mind] communes with the Triune Godhead.' This triune action consists in this: that the mind, which usually contemplates exterior objects (1st operation), returns into itself (2nd operation) and ascends to God through prayer (3rd operation)...". See VASILY KRIVOCHINE, *The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas*. The Eastern Churches Quarterly 3 (1968), 29. In his capacity as E⁶⁻¹, the Seer who has mentally ascended is a part who manifests the whole according to Gregory Palamas. He contains both Christ and the whole world. See *The Ascetic and Theological Teaching*, 79-80. St. Simeon the New Theologian described his vision of Light in a way that combines the idea of "ascent" with participation in an interior center: "Again, the One who is above the heavens is entirely within my wretched self, invisibly present. ...Though the light is in the center of everything, it takes me out of everything. I do not know if my body experiences the same, but I arrive on high being whole...." See Hymn 40.6-18 as quoted in ARCHBISHOP BASIL KRIVOCHINE, *In the Light of Christ: Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022)*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986, 229.

⁸⁸ Other such iconographies that are beyond the scope of this paper include: the Dormition (St. Clement's, Grachanitsa); the Six Days of Creation, the Second Coming (Dechani). On other tendencies in art that reflect hesychast spirituality, see T. VELMAN, *Le rôle de l'hésychasme dans la peinture murale, 187-190* and D. S. LIKHACHEV, *Nekotorye zadachi izucheniia vtorogo iuzhnoslavianskogo vliianiia v Rossii*, Issledovaniia po slavianskomu literaturovedeniiu i fol'kloristike, Moskva, 1960, 128-139.

⁸⁹ P. HUNT, *Confronting the End*, explored the relevance of the star's ontological symbolism after Byzantium's fall in the mid-fifteenth century, and also in the sixteenth century.

⁹⁰ See *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*. Catalogue, ed. Helen C. Evans, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 363 for two problematic representations of what seems to be the generic iconography of Light in a 1260 templon beam from St. Catherine's of Sinai that reflects Latin influence. In the Transfiguration composition, the portrayal of thin triangular rays hints at rhombi. The Resurrection

compositions of the mid-fifth and sixth centuries that serve as examples of the generic iconography of Light: The first subject, WBH, correlates with the dome and apse program in St. Sophia; The second subject, the Ascension with the Trinity, correlates with the theophanic cross at Galla Placidia; The third subject includes two closely related themes, Christ-in-Majesty and the Savior-in-Glory. They correlate with the apse mosaic at St. David's. The fourth one, the Transfiguration, correlates with the Transfiguration apse mosaic at St. Catherine's of Sinai. In each we briefly examine an evolution from protostar to star and its reflection on the semantic and structural levels of meaning.

Our first subject, Wisdom Builds her House (Plate 6) condenses the symbolism of Wisdom's house in apse and dome programs such as St. Sophia's.⁹¹ Instead of in the dome, Christ-Wisdom now sits behind a table-altar in the guise of the Wisdom Angel and directly offers His feast—the Eucharistic gifts.⁹² The Mother of God, who occupies the apse in St. Sophia, is present in the new iconography as Wisdom's vis-à-vis according to her role as Wisdom's house, the illuminated flesh and Church.⁹³

composition features a single rhombus against a perpendicular smaller rhombus with two extra triangular rays to confuse the picture. The representations of Light at Dechani in the mid-fourteenth century has something in common with these forms.

⁹¹ For variations on the dome and apse iconography signifying WBH, see Briusova, *Tolkovanie na IX pritchu Solomona*, 301-306. On other compositions of the fourteenth century symbolizing Proverbs 9:1-5, see L. EVSEEVA, *Dve simvolicheskie kompositsii v rospisi XIV v. monastyria Zarma*, *Vizantiiskii vremennik*, 43 (1947), 134-146; S. RADOJCHICH, *La table de la Sagesse dans la littérature et l'art serbes*, 216-224 (On p. 222 he writes of the influence of Dionysius' hierarchy and spheres); J. MEYENDORFF, *Wisdom-Sophia*, and "L'Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine, *Cahiers archéologiques*, 10 (1959), 259-277. On an iconographic interpretation of the Hospitality of Abraham under the aegis of Wisdom's house in Dionysius' interpretation, see P. HUNT, *Andrei Rublev's Old Testament Trinity Icon in Cultural Context*, *The Trinity-Sergius Lavra in Russian History and Culture*, ed. VI. Tsurikov, Jordanville, N.Y., Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2005, 99-121. See also P. HUNT, *Andrei Rublev's Old Testament Trinity Icon: Problems of Meaning, Intertextuality and Transmission*, Symposium, 7-12 (2002-2007), 19-31.

⁹² On the Wisdom angel, see J. MEYENDORFF, *L'Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine*, 259-277.

⁹³ On the patristic exegesis of Proverbs 9:1-5 and its symbolism of the Incarnation see MEYENDORFF, *L'Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine* 259-261. On the Mother of God in the apse, see also S.S. AVERINTSEV, *K uiasneniiu smysla nadpisi nad konkhoi tsentral'noi apsidi sofii kievskoi*, *Drevne-russkoe iskusstvo*, Moskva, Nauka, 1972, 25-49.

A protostar appears around the Wisdom angel's head in the late thirteenth century WBH fresco at St. Clement of Ochrid (Plate 5).⁹⁴ It places a new accent on the Trinity that was absent in the St. Sophia program and that appears to be a response to the theological agenda of its time. The top triangle of the protostar stands out and its sides are expanded to emphasize the dyadic action of Jesus-Light that reveals the Father (apex).⁹⁵ This triangle is echoed by the triangle that surrounds the torso of the Mother of God in the tympanum of an architectural form that signifies the Church. Wisdom's three servants also mirror this triangle. The middle servant is analogous to the triangle's apex as he points upward to the hidden interior point and the Father. Thus the protostar is associated with a system of mirror imagery that unifies Prototype and Image and signifies the Light that manifests the Trinity in the Church.

The star surrounds Wisdom's head in the mid-fourteenth century WBH fresco in the Novgorod Church at Volotovo Pol'e. (It is difficult to see in this drawing, Plate 6).⁹⁶ Changes in the composition reflect new accents of meaning symbolized by the Wisdom star. They are associated with the implied interaction between vertical and horizontal rhombi, as whole and part, unity and multiplicity.

The composition's representations of multiplicity, and the body reflect the addition of the horizontal rhombus. The chalice is still in the middle space as at St. Clement, but it is at the center of a dynamic interaction between Wisdom's three servants and a multiplicity of faithful. Wisdom and the Mother of God are still on either side, but

⁹⁴See V. R. PETKOVITCH, *La peinture serbe au moyen age*, I Belgrade, 1930, pl. 24a.

⁹⁵ In a 1355 WBH composition, Christ has three heads framed by the "top" triangle of the protostar, a double reference to the Trinity. See L.M. EVSEEVA, *Dve simvolicheskie kompzitsii*, 136 figure 5.

⁹⁶ See G.I. VZDORNOV, *Volotovo: Freski tserkvi uspeniia na Volotovom pole bliz Novgoroda*, Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1989, drawing on p. 181. See also T.A. SIDOROVA, *Volotovskaia freska 'Premudrost' sozda sebe dom' i ee otnoshenie k novgorodskoi eresi strigol'nikov v XIV v.*, TODRL XXVI (1971), 214-231.

she appears independently of architecture as a large front-faced image. Her physical integrity is further emphasized by the portrayal of her full body with the child in her lap.

The depiction of personal interactions between Wisdom's servants and the faithful and between Wisdom, the Mother of God and the viewer reflects the interrelationship between the two rhombi integrated by the cone. Wisdom sits in front of a type of the Church (Solomon's Jerusalem temple) and looks at the Theotokos. The presence near him of Cosma of Maiuma with a scroll alludes to the hymn for Holy Thursday: "For Christ our God, having assumed a fleshly temple [the Virgin Mother] was gloriously glorified."⁹⁷ Wisdom (from the implied vertical rhombus) is thus looking at His future self-manifestation in the world (on the implied horizontal rhombus). She, now integrated into this vertical rhombus, looks at the viewer(s) on the implied horizontal one who is looking at her face to face and merging with her Light. She completes the integration of the cone by filling them with the Wisdom's Providence/Light so that they too participate in Christ's glorified humanity when they partake of Wisdom's Eucharistic feast.

Wisdom sitting in front of the Jerusalem temple looks towards her across Old Testament time into the age of Christ. This scene places a new accent on the duration of divine Providence to model the multiplicity, the successive temporal-historical dimension, symbolized by the horizontal rhombus in the star around Wisdom's head.⁹⁸ In this way, the surface level of the composition embodies the import of the Wisdom star which thus serves as the Logos of the composition. The presence of this star in the Volotovo composition marks a shift of accent away from the Trinity (by comparison to

⁹⁷See J. MEYENDORFF, *Wisdom-Sophia*, 393.

⁹⁸ A later related mid-15th century WBH composition from Novgorod with a Wisdom star around Christ's head more fully elaborates the dimension of time. See P. HUNT, *Confronting the End*.

the St. Clement composition with the protostar) to a new accent on embodied, experienced Wisdom characteristic of the later hesychast agenda.

The protostar in an early fourteenth century Ascension fresco at Bielo Pol'e. (Plate 7) is part of a larger context that points forward to the emergence of the star.⁹⁹ In its own limited context, however, this protostar is appropriately associated with the Trinity. It surrounds the enthroned Ancient of Days (image of the Father) next to the Prepared throne (reference to the Son); The Spirit in the form of a descending dove is immediately below and between in its own miniscule rhombus. It embodies the dynamism associated with the single (vertical) rhombus, the Trinity's outflowing Light.

However, the Trinity appears above the Christ-Emmanuel who is ascending in His own circles of Light.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, He is returning to His Father in His body to occupy His own throne through the power of the Cross (It stands on the empty waiting throne). In this larger context, the Trinity is the Goal of the return spiral as well as the Source of the descending spiral. The single rhombus of the protostar only models the descending spiral; the Light symbolism that models both spirals is the doubled rhombi of the star.

The image of Christ derives its meaning from this larger context. Christ is ascending, but at the same time the dove descending above His head alludes to the Light that fills His mystical body of the Church through (after) the Ascension.¹⁰¹ Thus, His Ascension simultaneously signifies the manifestation of His glorified mystical body in the Church. His image should be imagined in front of the Trinity since He is manifesting

⁹⁹See DZURICH, *Vizantiiskie freski*, p. 483, 155, 390.

¹⁰⁰On the Ancient of Days and Christ Emmanuel, see GRABAR, *L'Intelligible dan L'Art*, 54-57; G. GALAVARIS, *Illustrations*, 93-98, 88-109, 160, 166.

¹⁰¹Gregory Palamas quotes the patristic idea that "'Our mixed human nature, which was assumed by the Lord, has taken its seat at the right hand of the divine majesty in the heavens, being full of glory...in the whole body.'" See *The Triads*, 77.

the Trinity's power and, as it were, exteriorizing the Light at the center of the sphere (G) to which He is simultaneously returning.

In sum, the Ascending-Glorified Christ embodies the self-identity of Wisdom that is modeled by the implied interaction of the two rhombi in the star. As such, He is the Image/Logos of the Ancient above who, in similar later compositions, does wear the Wisdom star as we will see. The term Ancient alludes to Daniel's vision (chapter 7:9) of the Son's return to the Father at the Second Coming. Dionysius, however, interprets the Ancient in an ontological sense that refers to divine self-identity. The Ancient is "someone who is the cause of eternity, of time and the days" and who contains all these. In "everlasting movement" he "remains nonetheless in Himself." The circular action of the Ascending-Glorified Christ occurs in relation to its center, the Ancient, and also in the middle of sacred time. Christ is thus a manifestation of the Ancient's self-identity of beginning, middle and end.¹⁰²

Christ as a manifestation of the center is also manifesting the implied power of the cross, another symbolic center. In this capacity, he lays bare the Christ hidden within the glorified Cross at Galla Placida (Plate 2). The composition uncovers the sacred narrative that underlies the imagery at Galla Placida (Plate 2).¹⁰³ This narrative and its evolved iconography of Light express the hesychast emphasis on the divine self-identity.

¹⁰²The composition at Bielo Pol'e also prefigured the so-called Fatherhood iconography. See L.S. RETKOVSKAIA *O poiavlenii i razvitii kompozitsii 'otechestvo' v russkom iskusstve XIV-XVI vekov*, *Drevnerusskoe Iskusstvo*, (1963), 235-262, esp. pp. 237 and 247. Here the Trinity shares one throne in a hierarchical order of theophany. The Christ-Son is in the bosom of the Ancient. The Spirit as a dove and/or Light proceeds "forward" and downward either in front of the Son or over His head. By the early 16th century, a wisdom star often surrounded the Ancient's head when this iconography appears in the dome. The star heightens the symbolism of divine self-identity and all-in-all: The three figures share a common "elevated" throne that expresses the essential unity and transcendence communicated by the descent of Jesus-Light into the world and linear time.

¹⁰³ In 1387 at Ravanica, the Ancient appears above the iconography of the Crucifixion wearing a very large Wisdom star with a dove. This apse composition relates the Crucifixion to the Ascension and the sending

The dome iconography of the Ascension-Trinity exhibits the star in the church of All Saints at Leshani (Plate 8).¹⁰⁴ It surrounds the head of the Ancient who is at the composition's center. The Ancient expresses the star's modeling of self-identity by summarizing the dynamic action that is depicted above and below Him. Above, the dove on the throne abides in a protostar. It evokes the Spirit's descent (even as the cross behind it alludes to ascent).¹⁰⁵ Below Him, Christ in concentric circles of Light with rays ascends to the Ancient to counterbalance the Spirit's descent on the opposite side. However, He, like the Ancient, wears a beard to show that He is also the manifestation of the Ancient. As at Bielo Pol'e, He signifies the Son's glorified body of the Church.

Thus the two sides (above and below) balance each other while respectively and together mirroring the Ancient's self-identity. In the process, the iconographer showcases all three stages of the Wisdom iconography of Light and signifies their self-identity as manifestations of the hidden sphere of Light. The Light symbolism of this composition has grown to fit its surface meaning by contrast to the underdeveloped Light symbolism of the Bielo Pol'e composition.

The enthroned Christ-in-Majesty and the related iconography, Christ-in-Glory also exhibit an evolution from protostar to star. Both subjects expand on the generic iconography of Light in the apse mosaic of St. David of Salonika (Plate 3). There, as we have seen, the glorified Christ surrounded by concentric circles of Light emerges into

out of the Paraclete-Spirit. It thus embodies the sacred narrative underlying the theophany of the Cross at Galla Placida. See LASSUS, *The Early Christian & Byzantine World*, Pl. 84.

¹⁰⁴See SUBOTIC, *Okhridska slikarska shkola*, figure 52, 1475-6 and p.13. On p. 13, Subotic notes that compositions of this period in Ochrid reflect the themes and styles of the late fourteenth century.

¹⁰⁵This image, like the representation of the dove in the Bielo Pol'e fresco derives from a tradition evident in the dome of the 11th c. church of Hosios Lukas. To signify Pentecost, the dove on the throne is at the center of circles of Light with rays outflowing onto the apostles. See T. MATHEWS, *The Art of Byzantium*, figure 96.

view from behind the seraphim, zodia and the gospels that reveal Him.¹⁰⁶ He manifests “the wheel within the wheel,” the apex hidden behind/within the base of the cone. This action is also present in the later compositions that we will now discuss.¹⁰⁷

In the gospel miniature from the Vatican (Plate 9), the enthroned glorified Christ in His circles of Light appears to be emerging directly into the viewers’ field of vision from the hidden interior center.¹⁰⁸ The presence of a vertical rhomboid (protostar) superimposed over His circles of Light enhances this effect by accenting the dynamism of His descent/ self-exteriorization. Moreover, the enlargement of the triangle in the protostar’s upper half and the presence of two notches at this triangle’s base create the now familiar symbol of the Trinity. This upper triangle frames the emerging Christ and places emphasis on what He is revealing, the Trinity’s inner action, and the dyad manifesting the monad.

As at St. David’s, the zodia in the miniature are implicitly on a horizontal rhombus that is not realized in the composition. The realized vertical rhombus draws attention to the opening out of Ezekiel’s interior middle wheel and the unfolding of Ezekiel’s “infolding” fire, now interpreted as a manifestation of the entire Trinity. Thus the representation and the function of the protostar here is similar to the WBH composition at St. Clement and the Ascension composition at Bielo Pol’e (Plate 5, 7) and

¹⁰⁶See GALAVARIS, *Illustrations*, 85, 154.

¹⁰⁷I. A. KOCHETKOV, ‘*Spas v silakh*’ 48-56 describes the impact of Elijah’s vision on this tradition.

¹⁰⁸See GALAVARIS, *Illustrations*, figure 82, 14th/15th century, Vat. 1210. Fol 324. See *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, 263, figure 9.7 for a 1297 gospel miniature that features the Ancient in a protostar with a dark blue center and a light rim surrounded by the zodia. The unlikely possibility of an earlier dating of this miniature is proposed in the accompanying article.

reflects the hesychast concern with the theophanic action of Light and its power to give knowledge of God.¹⁰⁹

This iconography evolved into a similar iconography called “The-Savior-in-Glory” represented here by an early fifteenth century gospel miniature from Pereiaslavl’-Zalessky (Plate 10).¹¹⁰ There the realization of the horizontal rhombus around the four zodia creates a unique variant of the Wisdom star. This variant consists of 1) the small fiery red vertical rhombus around Christ that is superimposed on His blue mandorla of Light; it realizes the opening of the cone and the expansion of the center of the sphere that exteriorizes the form of unity (Logos/Divine-humanity); 2) the larger fiery red rhombus that is perpendicular to the vertical one; it realizes the horizontal rhombus at the base of the cone that models exteriority, the multiplicity of the world and the surface of the sphere.

This specific realization of the hidden intellectual form of the Wisdom star signifies a shift of orientation away from the Trinity’s action, modeled by the vertical rhombus in the Vatican miniature. Yet the red color of the vertical rhombus enhances the

¹⁰⁹ GALAVARIS, *Illustrations*, figures 37 and 41 implies that this iconography is the source of the iconography of Wisdom looking over the shoulder of the evangelists and other inspired writers. In figure 41, he reproduces a thirteenth century miniature in which Wisdom appears *above* the evangelist’s head in a protostar surrounded by the four zodia. By the early fifteenth century, the star appears around Wisdom’s head to reflect contemporary trends. See RADOJCHICH, *Staro Srpsko Slikarstvo*, figure XXX and, E.S. SMIRNOVA, *Litsevyie rukopisi velikogo novgoroda XV vek*, Moskva, nauka, 1994, colored plate. 1. This iconography may also represent the relationship of the Pantocrator-Wisdom in the dome to one of the four evangelists with their gospels below in the pendentives. See B.N. LAZAREV, *Vizantiiskaia zhivopis’*, Moskva, Nauka, 1971, p. 101. It places a new accent on the *personal* relation between Wisdom and the writer, and on immediate inspiration characteristic of the hesychast understanding of communion with God.

¹¹⁰ See E. OSTASHENKO, *Andrei Rublev: Paleologovskie traditsii*, colored plate 52 (unnumbered). On its sources, dating and iconography, see I. A. KOCHETKOV, *Spas v silakh*, 45-68 and *Sofiia Premudrost’ Bozhia*, p. 46. On the relationship of this composition to the miniatures illustrating the prologues to the gospels, see EVSEEVA, *Eskhatologiia 7000 goda i vozniknovenie vysokogo ikonostasa*, in *Ikonostas*, ed. A. Lidov, Moskva: Progress-Traditsiia, 2000, 412. Both KOCHETKOV and EVSEEVA argue that this composition has an eschatological meaning. In my opinion, the Light symbolism endows it with a dominant *ontological* theophanic meaning that expresses the hesychast immediate experience of the divine Light making all-in-all.

symbolism of dynamically emerging Light; the presence of the second rhombus enhances symbolism of the all-in-all, of the identity and interaction of part and whole, surface and center of the sphere. This symbolism is further emphasized by 1) the saturation of the horizontal rhombus with the same red as the vertical rhombus and 2) the mutual transparency of the perpendicular rhombi and the intermediate blue mandorla.¹¹¹ The mosaic at St. David's conveyed an analogous message, but the new features in this miniature raise the symbolism of all-in-all to a rhetorical level that reflects a self-conscious hesychast agenda.¹¹²

The composition uses other means to communicate the agenda implicit in the geometry of Light. Christ holds open a gospel with an inscription that presents Himself as the embodiment of Light: "The Lord said to his disciples: I am the light...".¹¹³ The image of Christ emerging from the center of Ezekiel's "flame of fire" directly demonstrates the meaning of Christ's gospel words. It manifests the personal power implicitly communicated by the zodia-"lamps" in the four corners of the horizontal rhombus.¹¹⁴ In this way, the semantic level of meaning reinforces the symbolism of Light.

The generic iconography of Light, the blue mandorla, models the implied widening cone and the expansion of concentric spheres through which Christ-Light is emerging to make all-in-all. The recontextualization of this generic iconography in

¹¹¹ The interpretation of Ezekiel's vision by the sixth century Pope Gregory the Great emphasizes the fiery nature of the Light and explains this red color. See KOCHETKOV, *Spas v silakh*, 51-53. Kochetov's interpretation of these rhombi, based on early commentaries, is complementary to mine. He notes that the overlapping forms of light embody a sphere. See *Spas v silakh*, 52.

¹¹² In the mosaic at St. David's, the upper half of the zodia and an angel's wing reach out from behind Christ's circle of Light to show that the Light is emerging from within them. The surrounding scene mirrors the blue and white and red-gold colors of Christ and His light to imply its inner saturation with this Light. KOCHETKOV, *Spas v silakh*, 54-56 associates the creation of this later iconography with the hesychasts Feofan Grek and Metropolitan Kiprian.

¹¹³ KOCHETKOV, *Spas v silakh*, 46. This is a rephrasing of John 8:12. This inscription also occurred on the gospel held by the Pantocrator in the dome. See Sofiia Premudrost' Bozhiiia, 23.

¹¹⁴ KOCHETKOV, *Spas v silakh*, 52 notes that the presence of actual lamps around Christ's throne is common in this iconography, but not visible here.

relation to the two rhombi adds a new accent. On the one hand, the mandorla embodies the cone that integrates the rhombi. On the other hand, it is between the rhombi. Its blue color creates further distance between the rhombi. It thus emphasizes their opposition as symbols of the Logos and the world respectively. At the same time, their transparency and shared color emphasizes their implied integration in the blue mandorla and the outflowing cone. The representation of the mandorla in relation to the rhombi highlights the differences that comprise the all-in-all.

This composition's relation to the viewer enhances its rhetorical force. It places Christ in a direct personal relationship with the actual viewer who is reading a gospel analogous to the one that Christ holds. Seeing Christ, His book and the zodia behind Him, the viewer-reader is face to face with the prototype of the knowledge-Light He is about to receive. Internalizing this personal message and its actual power-light, he implicitly enters into Christ's Logos. He becomes a part that experiences the whole by analogy to a point on the surface of the sphere of Light that is one with the emerging center. This interaction of the viewer with Christ-Light reflects the Wisdom's star's modeling of the identity between part and whole at their outer limits. As a path of illumination by the star's Light, reading the gospel becomes an experience of perichoresis by analogy to mental prayer.

Rublev's version of *The Savior-in-Glory* is an icon for the iconostasis directed towards the worshipping church (Plate 11).¹¹⁵ Its evocation of the immediate and dynamic interrelationship of part and whole takes the miniature's embodiment of the Wisdom star a step further. By comparison to the miniature, the rhombi dominate the whole space as Christ seems to explode forward into the worshipper's consciousness. He

¹¹⁵ See E. OSTASHENKO, *Andrei Rublev*, colored plate 53 (unnumbered), 1425.

holds a bright open gospel that contains a personal invitation to “Come” to Him (Matthew 11:28-30).¹¹⁶ The zodia and their gospels are absent and no longer call attention to the illuminating power of the book itself; now the emphasis is on Christ’s personal relationship to the praying viewer who has taken on the function of the more abstract zodia as illuminated Seer/Illuminator.

The symbolism of Light implies that Christ’s invitation is purely rhetorical since it has already been answered. The Christ emerging into the viewer’s consciousness moves through (from within) the latter, as He saturates the horizontal rhombus with Light. Christ’s Light, spiraling out from the center along the implicit cone is the image of what the worshipper sees as he internally ascends during mental prayer. The composition is the exterior mirror image of the worshipper’s inner experience--his face to face encounter with the Savior who is receiving him into the Light. This evocation of divine love takes the star’s modeling of the all-in-all to a level of spiritual intimacy that exposes the depths of Rublev’s experience as a practicing hesychast.

Meaning in both Rublev’s composition and in the contemporary miniature from Pereiaslavl’-Zalessky derive from the abstract language of their geometry of Light modeling the outer limits of the all-in-all. Their representation of the Wisdom star marks a significant evolution from the Vatican miniature with its protostar and from the mosaic at St. David’s with its generic iconography of Light. This evolution shows how each respective iconography of Light represents an abstract modeling of Wisdom that is

¹¹⁶See OSTASHENKO, *Andrei Rublev*, 286. On pp. 250-251 she notes an earlier version of 1410, where the Gospel has an inscription from Matt. 25:31-32 beginning, “When the Son of God comes in glory....” Here, however, this coming is happening now, in the viewer’s liturgical present. On the symbolism of the First and Second Parousia in the liturgy, see GALAVARIS, *Illustrations*, 163-166.

embodied on the surface level of meaning in a way that reflects the ideological-spiritual agenda of its time.

The iconography of the Transfiguration in the fourteenth century exhibits the same evolution. It builds from the generic Light symbolism that first appeared in the apse mosaic at St. Catherine's of Sinai (Plate 4). The superimposition of the single rhombus over the generic iconography occurs in a mid-fourteenth century composition near Ivanovo, Bulgaria (Plate not shown).¹¹⁷ The protostar enhances the system of mirror imagery that was already evident in the mosaic, and ties this system directly to the action of Light. In the mosaic, two triangles of Seers formed an implied rhombus. In the fresco, the rhombus actually appears. The triangles of Seers are reflected by the two interior triangles in the rhombus of the protostar: The threesome of Christ and the two prophets, now on three mountains, mirror the upper triangle of Light while the three apostles mirror the lower one.

This mirroring activity emphasizes an immediacy of inner visionary experience that Gregory of Sinai associated with the Transfiguration:

All those of us who reflect as mirrors the vision of magnificent glory...and are transformed...from glory to glory of contemplation as from Christ to the Spirit of Godhead...using our mind's eye, let us gaze...with nothing intervening, upon Jesus as He flashes forth like lightning on Mt. Tabor.¹¹⁸

This description and the following passage articulate verbally the meaning conveyed by the iconographer when he accented the doubled triangles in the protostar:

¹¹⁷See the Transfiguration at the church of the Virgin near Ivanovo Bulgaria (1341-70), in L. MAVRODINOVA, *Stennata zhivopis v Bulgaria do kraia na XI vek*, Sofia 1996, ill. 95.

¹¹⁸See BALFOUR, *Saint Gregory the Sinaite*, 21.

And even the very perceptible form of the Feast [τὸ σχῆμα τῆς ἐορτῆς τὸ αἰσθητόν], it is permissible to say, was rather a mystery expressive of the double triad, hinting at the triune nature of the godhead, as already present above and below and believed to be everywhere, the super-infinite threefold thearchy [my italics].¹¹⁹

The protostar symbolizes the “perceptible” or intellectual form of the feast of the Transfiguration. It alludes to the mystery of the doubled triad as a model of the Trinity’s indwelling in the creation.

However, the more evolved iconography of the Wisdom star encompasses the full diapason of Gregory’s meaning. It quickly became the favored iconography of Light in the Transfiguration composition for its ability to model the all-in-all, mirroring (between the two rhombi) and the dual spiral of ascent-descent.¹²⁰ Groupings of three (apostles, prophets with Christ, mountains, rays of Light) endowed the composition with the necessary Trinitarian accent that, in any case, had always been inherent in the generic iconography of Light that symbolized Jesus as Light of the Father. A mid-to late fourteenth century Transfiguration miniature from the theological writings of the hesychast emperor John VI Cantacuzenus (Plate 12) is an example.¹²¹ The multiplicity

¹¹⁹ See BALFOUR, *Saint Gregory the Sinaite*, 29-31. Καὶ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ σχῆμα τῆς ἐορτῆς τὸ αἰσθητόν, θέμις εἰπεῖν, ἐκδηλότερον τῆς διπλῆς τριάδος μυστήριον ἦν, τὴν ἐνιαίαν καὶ τριττὴν ὑπεμφαῖνον θεότητα ὡς ἄνω καὶ κάτω παροῦσαν ἤδη καὶ πανταχοῦ πιστευομένην εἶναι, τὴν ὑπεράπειρον τριαδικὴν θεαρχίαν.

¹²⁰ This iconography of Light around Christ could also appear with six instead of eight points (where the two overlapping points of the intersecting perpendicular rhombi are not represented). The choice of variant depends on which of the gospels is serving as a source of representation. See ANDREOPOULOS, *The Mosaic of the Transfiguration*, 16 and *Besedy Sviatitelia Grigoriia Palamy*, ch.2, Moskva, Palomnik, 1993 [hereafter, *Besedy*], 84-86.

¹²¹ See SAMARDZHICH, *L’Art de Thessalonique*, Paris Gr. 1242, folio 92, pp. 90-91, before 1375. For a colored version, see *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, 286.

of rays in the generic Light embody the divine uncreated energies that integrate whole and part and proceed generously to each and every Seer, individually to each apostle.¹²²

This representation of the divine energies places the Wisdom star in a theologically marked context that emphasizes the power of Light to identify whole and part. The horizontal rhombus of the illuminated world and individual human body is in front; the larger vertical rhombus of outflowing divinity is behind it; the even larger circles of Light that embody the all-in-all are behind the vertical rhombus. The arrangement of the Light symbolism suggests Christ's progress from whole to part, from the illuminated volume of the sphere to a single point on the surface, from God to the historical Jesus. Christ seems to be stepping out into His humanity to relate directly to the apostles and the viewer. At the same time, the iconographer may be alluding to Christ's future risen glorified humanity by depicting Christ's human person on a markedly high mountain.¹²³ This depiction may be following the precedent first introduced in the Mt. Sinai mosaic by the placement of the glorified cross above the scene of the Transfiguration.

The Wisdom star is also associated with the return spiral of mental ascent. Moses and Elijah are within the circles of Jesus' Light and they touch the vertical rhombus of

¹²² "...the divine energy of God is called not only one but also many by the theologians... '*innumerable in their multitude*' ...and because theology speaks of them in the plural they are indivisibly distinct from the one ... indivisible substance of the Spirit [my italics, P.H.]" See GREGORY PALAMAS, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, transl. R.E. Sinkewicz, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988, 68:163.

¹²³ In discussing contemplation of the Light of Tabor, Palamas quotes Dionysius to assert that "the order of supercosmic powers.... do not only...participate in the glory of the Trinity...but also in the glorification of Jesus." See *The Triads*, 77. A mid-fourteenth century composition of WBH manifests the providence of the Transfiguration by depicting the resurrected glorified body of Christ in its interior unity with the Church. It occupies the dome of the east chamber of the paraclesion dedicated to the Transfiguration in the tower of the Rila monastery. A full bodied naked Christ with a protostar around His head is at the center of concentric circles of Light that illuminate the departed saints on the rim of the outer circle who approach the Eucharistic chalice (They are a prototype for the implied larger circle of the faithful below.) See L. PRASHKOV, *Khrel'ovata kula*. Sofia, 1973, 22-40.

accessible Divinity. This union with Light and their place on their own high mountains suggest mental ascent inward to the same wholeness that is exteriorized in Christ's glorified human person (They and the apostles are the image and reflection of this glorification and participants in His mystical body).¹²⁴

The star's symbolism of the Eighth Day also signifies the a-temporal simultaneous nature of the divine energies. The energies are "already present above and below and ... everywhere" to use the words of Gregory of Sinai and thus express the simultaneous Oneness of all-in-all.¹²⁵ Their realization of an a-temporal integral unity makes the Transfiguration a symbol of the future timeless wholeness of God and Church; the Light of Christ's transfigured body and of His risen glorified humanity manifest the same (unchanging) Oneness in history and eternity respectively.¹²⁶ In the Sinai mosaic, the generic symbolism of Light around both the glorified cross (signifying the risen glorified humanity) and the transfigured Christ modeled the divine self-identity in an analogous way. The Wisdom iconography of Light in the late fourteenth century miniature placed a new accent on meanings that were implicit in the Mt. Sinai mosaic. Its spectacular imagery was fraught with rhetorical force. It demonstrated visually a heightened dogmatic awareness that made hesychast theology more culturally self-conscious.

In sum, the hesychast interpretation of the Transfiguration through the protostar and the star placed a new accent on the Trinity, on the mirroring that makes all-in-all, on

¹²⁴ Dionysius and Gregory Palamas see the prophet Moses witnessing the Transfiguration on a mountain as a symbol of mental ascent and contemplation. See DN 1:592C and *Besedy*, 88-87, 97, 100, 101.

¹²⁵ See *Besedy*, 85 on the eight present at the scene, the six plus the Father and Holy Spirit. On p. 86, Palamas interprets eight as the symbol of vision of God's kingdom achieved through transcendence of death. See also *Triads*, 90, the "prophets contemplated the future as if it were the present." On the eternity, self-sameness and unchanging nature of the Light, see *Besedy*, 88, 90-93.

¹²⁶ "... neizrechenno sverkh-siiaiushchago slava...prisushchaia Ego prirode, iavilas' na Favore kak obshschaia i dlia Ego tela, vsledstvie edinstva Ipostasi." *Besedy*, 89 and *The Triads*, 76.

the identity of part and whole at their outer limits, and, implicitly on the double spirals of mental ascent and outpouring divine Light.¹²⁷

8. Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that the Wisdom iconography of Light in a variety of iconographic subjects exhibits a parallel evolution from the generic form to the protostar to the star. In each case this evolution corresponds with a rhetorical strategy of making more accessible implicit meanings that enjoy new cultural relevance. The evolved protostar and star accent meanings that were already inherent to the generic iconography of Light as a symbolic abstract language for Dionysius' concepts of Hierarchy in its relation to Christ's theophany of the Trinity as Wisdom. Our analysis of fifth and sixth century compositions shows that in these original contexts, the generic circles of Light around Christ allude to the power of His Divine-humanity to encompass the action of the whole Hierarchy. They identify His glorified mystical body with the cosmic, transcendental, historical-universal Church as expressed by the interrelationship between Christ and His Seers. These early compositions laid a groundwork for iconographic strategies of using the cone in the semi-sphere as a modeling system for Christ's mystical body.

The protostar emerged in its original contexts at the end of the thirteenth century to defend the Orthodox theology of the Trinity. The addition of the vertical rhombus to the circles of Light with rays placed a special accent on the relationship between the monad and dyad in the outflowing of the Trinity's Light as Christ's mystical body. The emergence of the wisdom star reflected the more self-conscious and developed hesychast

¹²⁷ Palamas explicates the mystery of the whole and part in relation to the Light of Tabor in *Besedy*, 100.

spirituality characteristic of the 14th and 15th centuries. The addition of the horizontal to the vertical rhombus accented the plenitude of the divine self-identity by emphasizing the interpenetration of Oneness and multiplicity at their outer limits. The presence of the Wisdom star indicated that the surface of a given composition was modelling the action of the cone in a way that shifted focus away from its intermediate space onto the intercommunion of actual (historical) and transcendent, the capacity for human participation in ontological reality. The emergence of the Wisdom star into cultural view reflected the renewed impact of the writings of Dionysius in the hesychast agenda of defending the Orthodox conception of knowledge of God.

A foray into the Neo-Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic sources of Dionysius's symbol of the circle and its radii has uncovered the abstract language of the Byzantinoslavic Wisdom iconography of Light. This understanding has enabled us to witness the evolution of this iconography through three stages. These stages model with increasing complexity and explicitness the inner dynamics of a hidden sphere. They evolve in similar way over time within a given composition or related compositions. The shared ideological accents of this iconography at each stage over a cross-section of themes reveals a common understanding of esoteric tradition among iconographer-theologians. At the same time, the differences between these iconographic realizations reveal a variety of creative solutions to the problem of realizing this hidden sphere of Light on the surface level of meaning. These varying solutions reflect the iconographer's personal penetration of the theological mysteries occupying the cultural consciousness of his time.

Our analysis indicates that the iconographers of Wisdom-Light were theologians in their own right. Their iconographies revealed them to be mystics and seers of the divine theophany. Their works were theophanic by analogy to the Christ they portrayed. They were words (logoi) that connected the Church with its ontological origins, and that empowered it with Wisdom. By making present and accessible the integrity of Christ's Personhood, they opened the door to the viewers's participation in the Trinity.

The iconography of Wisdom-Light offers insight into the relationship of Byzantine esthetics and theology. The Logos-Wisdom modeled by the sphere was the inner truth of Being; it was the form that gave Being life and thus Existence. It was thus the essence of Beauty. This Logos-Wisdom was thus the implied subject of every iconographic composition in which colors and forms manifest inner Light (the Prototype, Beauty). Every iconographic composition potentially manifested Wisdom--the Light of Christ's glorified risen body. The specific iconographic tradition that we have described actualized this potential and epitomized the aesthetic-theological orientation of the tradition as a whole. The intellectual form of its Wisdom iconography of Light was inherent in the poetics of all iconographic compositions and also potentially, in written genres concerned with modeling the image and likeness.¹²⁸

¹²⁸The icon's system of perspective embodied this same modeling system. On the spherical continuum implicit in the perspectival system of the icon, see ZHEGIN, *Iazyk zhivopisnogo proizvedeniia*, 66-75. On p. 71 he acknowledges the existence of intellectual form when he writes of the "incarnation of form" ("forma oploshchaetsia"). L. OUSPENSKY and N. LOSSKY, *The Meaning of Icons*, SVS Press: Crestwood, N.Y., 1989, 22 note that icons have "an intelligible element," a 'logical' structure, a dogmatic content which has determined their composition." On inverted perspective and the transparency of the periphery to the center, see P. FLORENSKII, *Obratnaia Perspektiva*, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh*, t. 3(1), Moskva: "Mysl'", 1999, 46-101. The Archpriest Avvakum in 17th century Russia cites from the Russian translation of Abba Dorotheus's evocation of the sphere (see footnotes 31 and 13) to provide an abstract model for the hagiographical portrayal of his sanctification by divine Wisdom. See *Pustozerskii sbornik*, ed. N.S. Demkova, N.F. Droblenkova, L.I. Sazonova, Leningrad: "Nauka," 1975, listy 1, 1ob., 2 and *Efrem Sirin. Avva Dorofei. Poucheniia*. M. 1652, ll. 67 ob.-68. For a discussion of Avvakum's literary embodiment of this abstract model, see P. HUNT, *Iurodstvo i premudrost' v zhitii protopopa Avvakuma i problema novatorstva*, *Provintsia v kul'ture: literatura, iskusstvo, byt: III Remezovskie chteniia*, ed. V. N.

The evolution of Light symbolism from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries testifies to a living but unwritten esoteric tradition about the sphere that was maintained throughout the ages. Contemplation alone gave access to this meaning. It was thus the key to the esthetics of the Word. Dionysius wrote: “The thoroughness of sacred discipleship indicates the immense contemplative capacity of the mind....[to receive] “gifts ...granted to us in a symbolic mode.¹²⁹” Our analysis has shown that iconographers of Wisdom were disciples as Dionysius understood this term. This tradition of discipleship must have been cultivated more broadly in order to create Seers of the mystery that iconographers depicted in a symbolic mode who were capable of penetrating the silence of the Word. This study suggests that we as modern readers must acknowledge this “immense contemplative capacity” if we are to see the underlying Light-Logos in iconographic compositions and recognize their nature as mystical theology.

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Alekseev, Novosibirsk, SO RAN, 2009, forthcoming; and less extensively, in P. HUNT, *The Holy Foolishness in the “Life” of the Archpriest Avvakum and the Problem of Innovation*, Russian History, ed. L. Langer, P. Brown, 35:3-4 (2008), 275-308

¹²⁹CH, I, 2.3. 121C, D, 124 A, p. 146.

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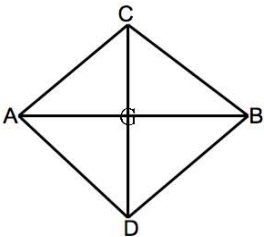
Monad = G = **Point**



Dyad = A+B = **Line** AGB



Triad = Axis AGB doubled on the perpendicular to generate Axis CGD = **Plane** that consists of mirroring (doubled) triangles ACB, ADB = square (rhombus) ACBD



Quaternion = Plane ADBC doubled on the perpendicular to generate Plane E¹CE²D = Volume consisting of mirroring (doubled) cones E¹ ADBC & E² ADBC. The **cone**'s opening from apex to base is modeled by mirroring triangles DE¹C, DE²C where points A,D,B,C mark points on the circular base.

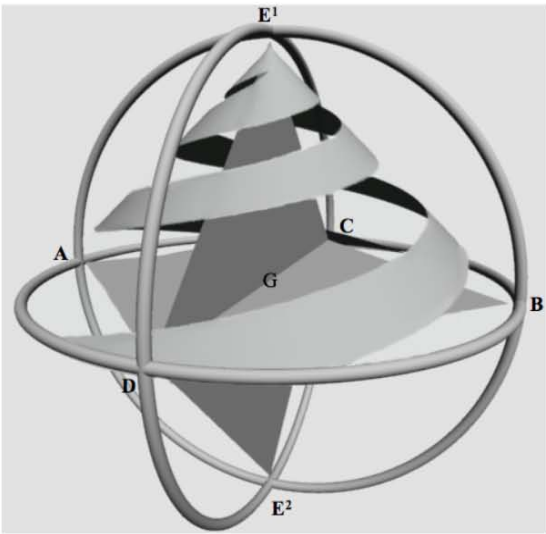
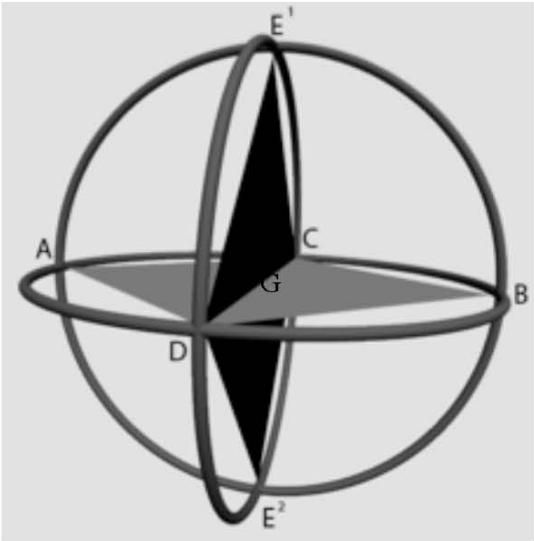


Table 1: The Tetraktys and the Doubled Triad Multiplied

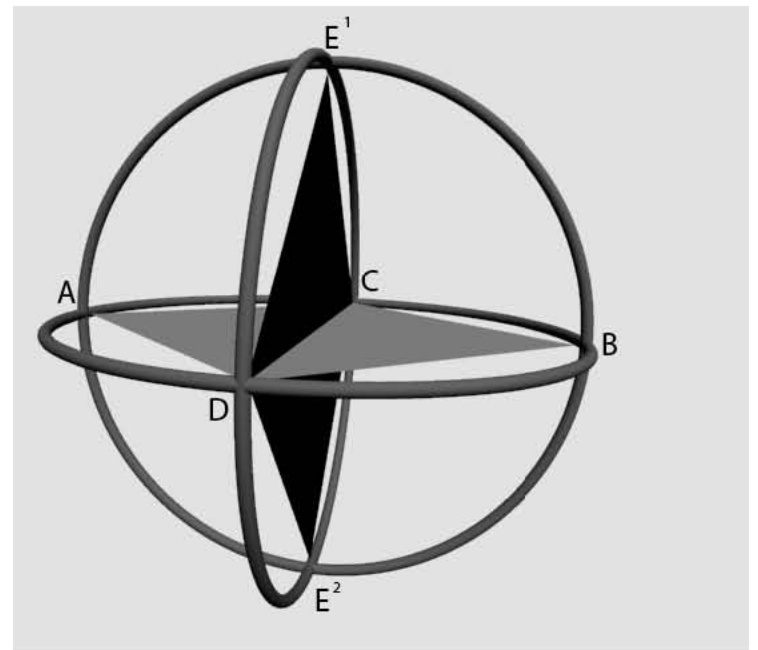
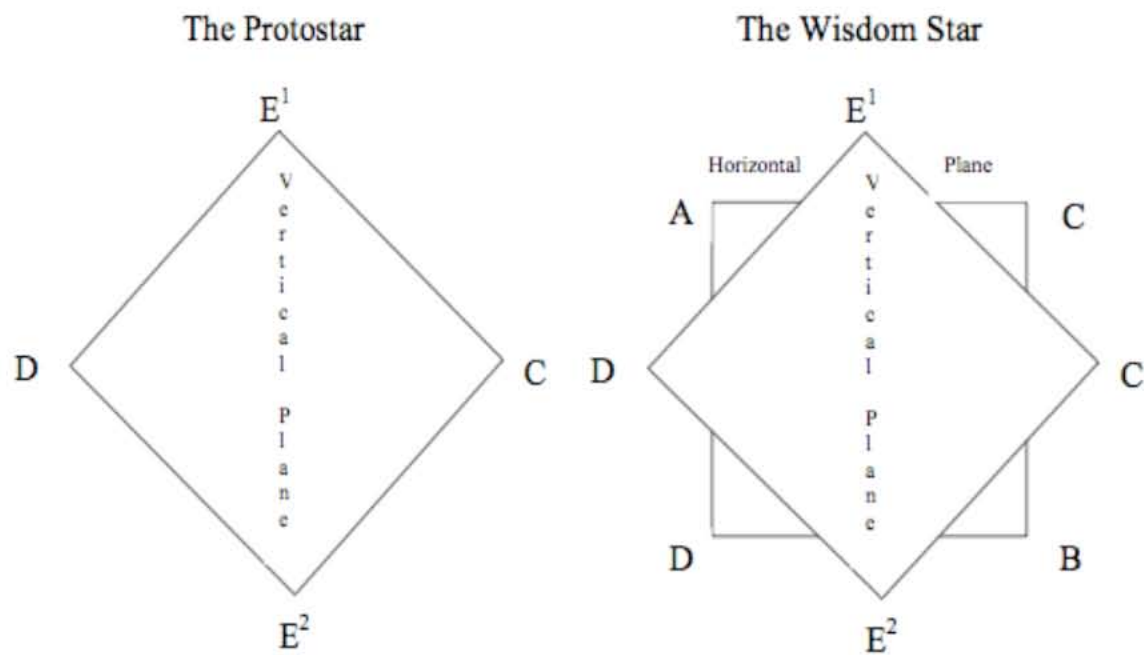


Figure 1: The Iconographic Realization of the Underlying Sphere of Light: From Three Dimensions to Two Dimensions.

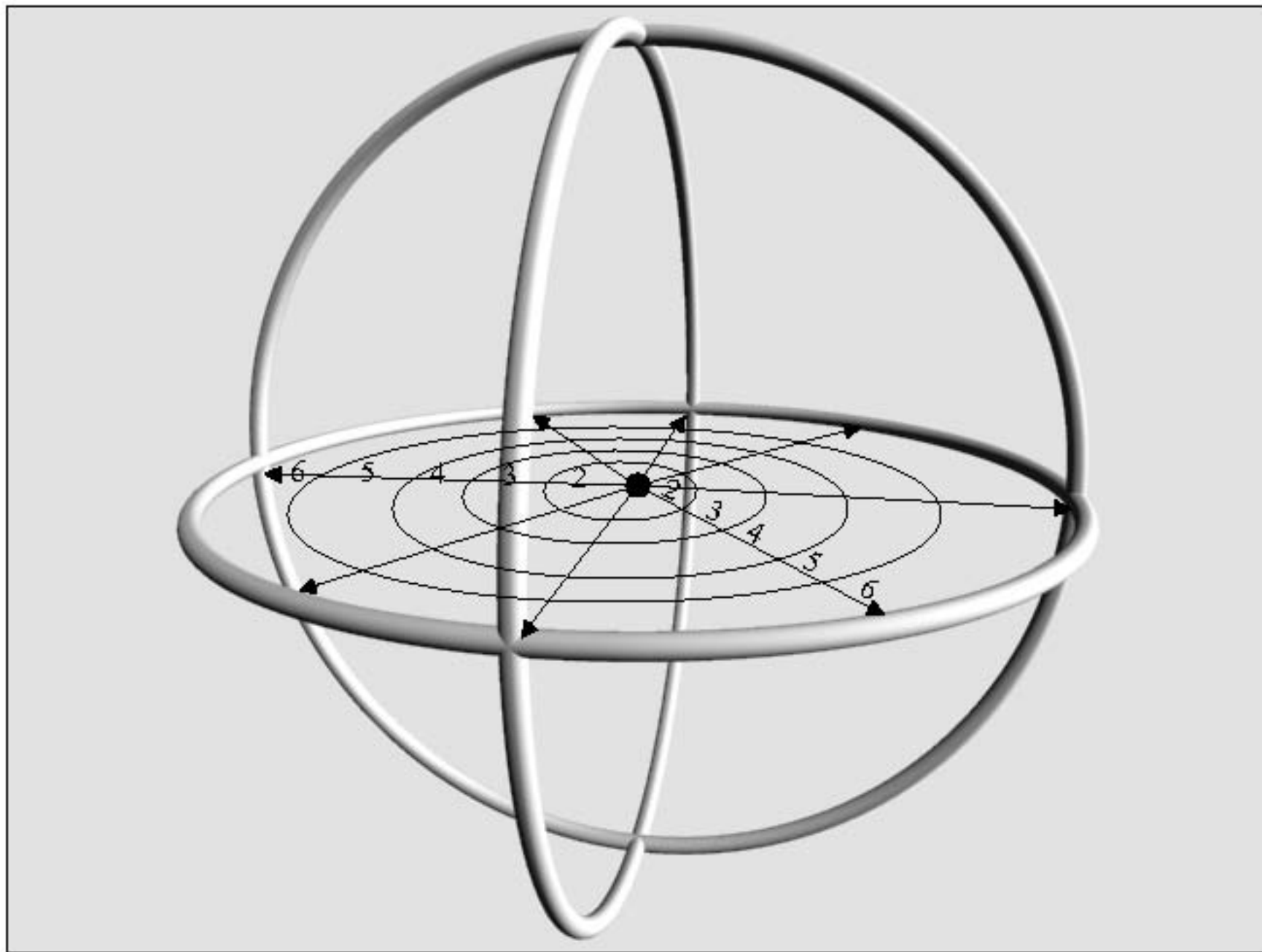


Figure 2: Dionysius' Circle

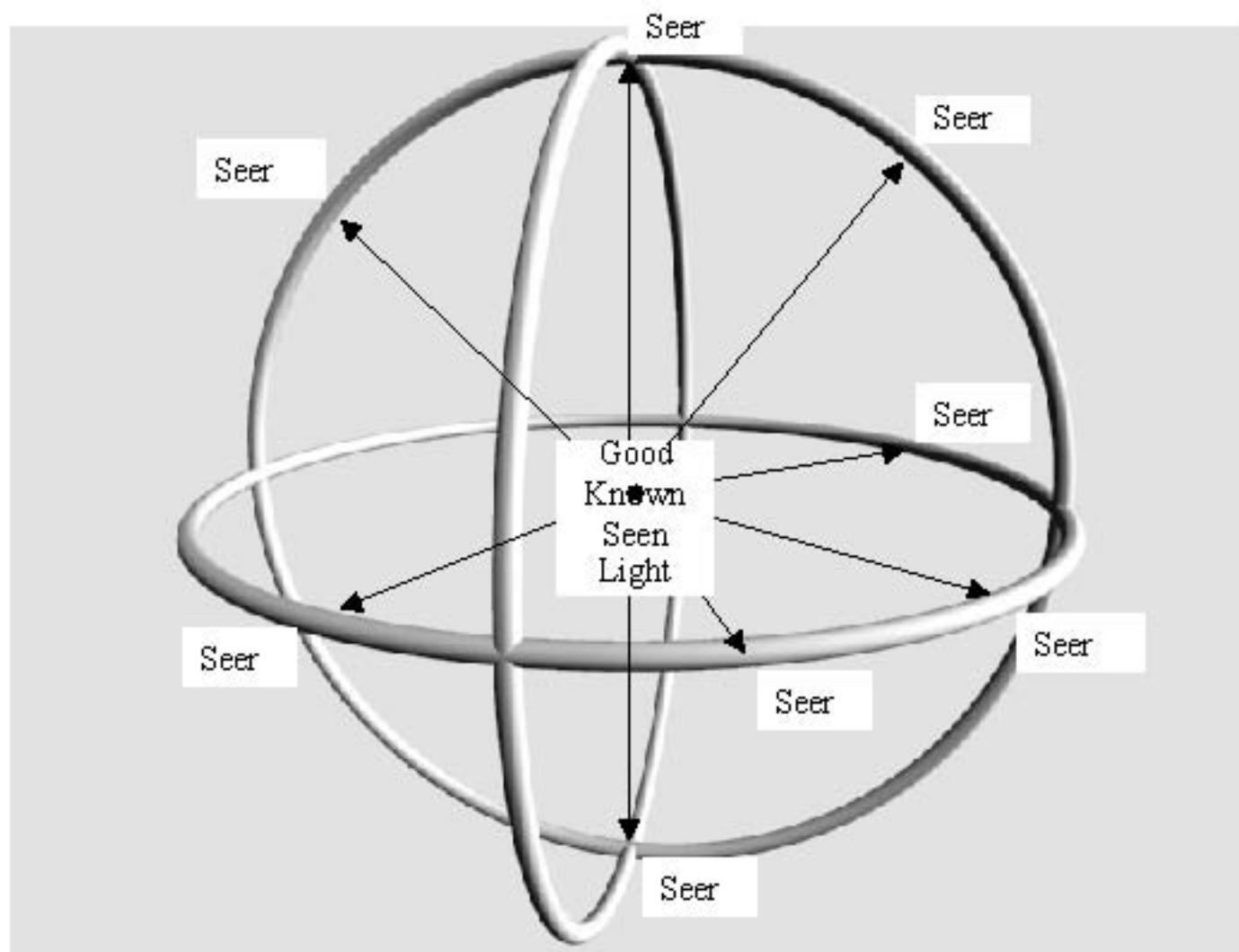


Figure 3: Plotinus' Sphere. Seers-knowers are filled with Light-Goodness.



Figure 4: The Tetraktys

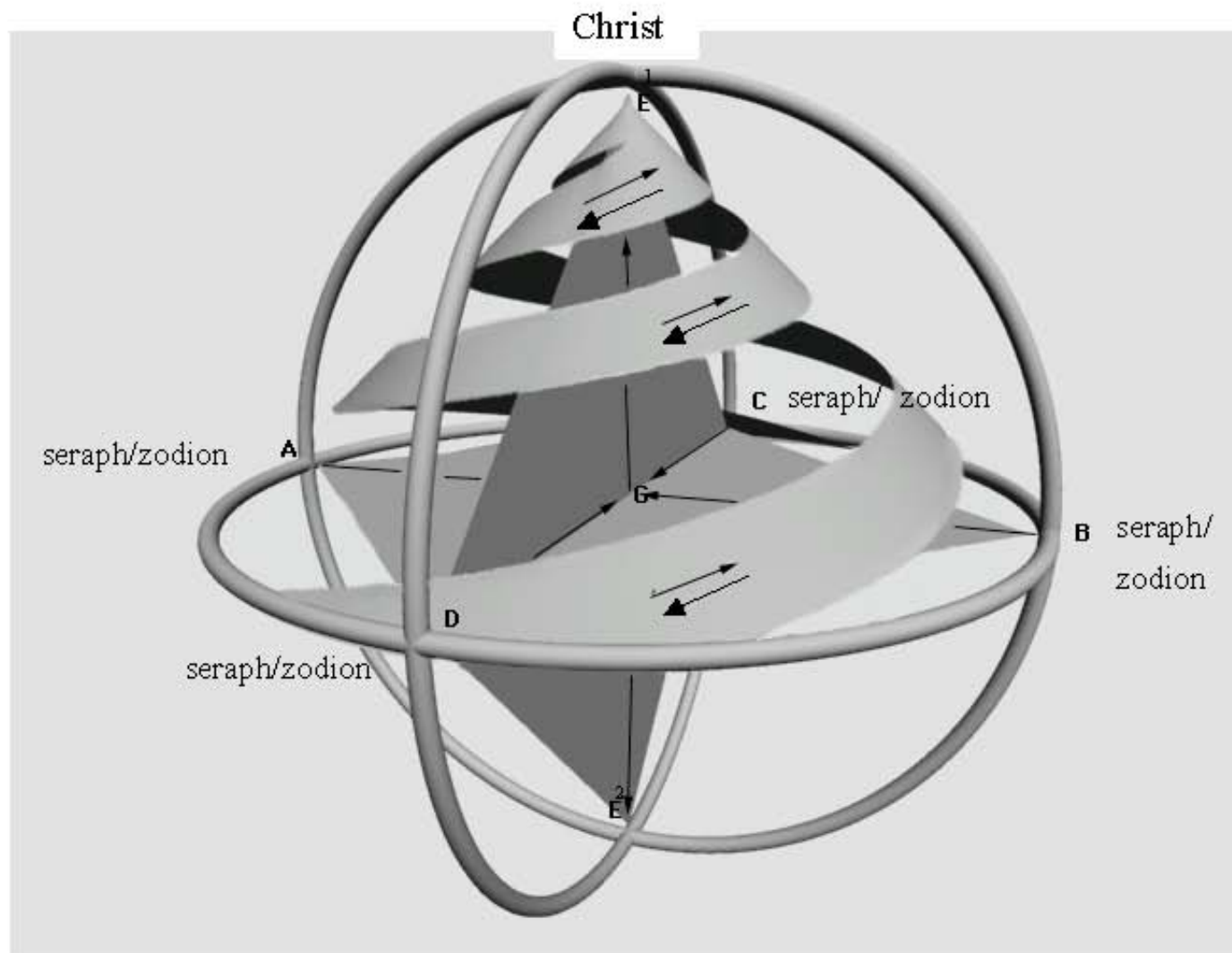


Figure 5: The Cone in the Semisphere. Inward movement of $A \rightarrow G \leftarrow B$ = Spiral ascent of up triangle DE^1C .

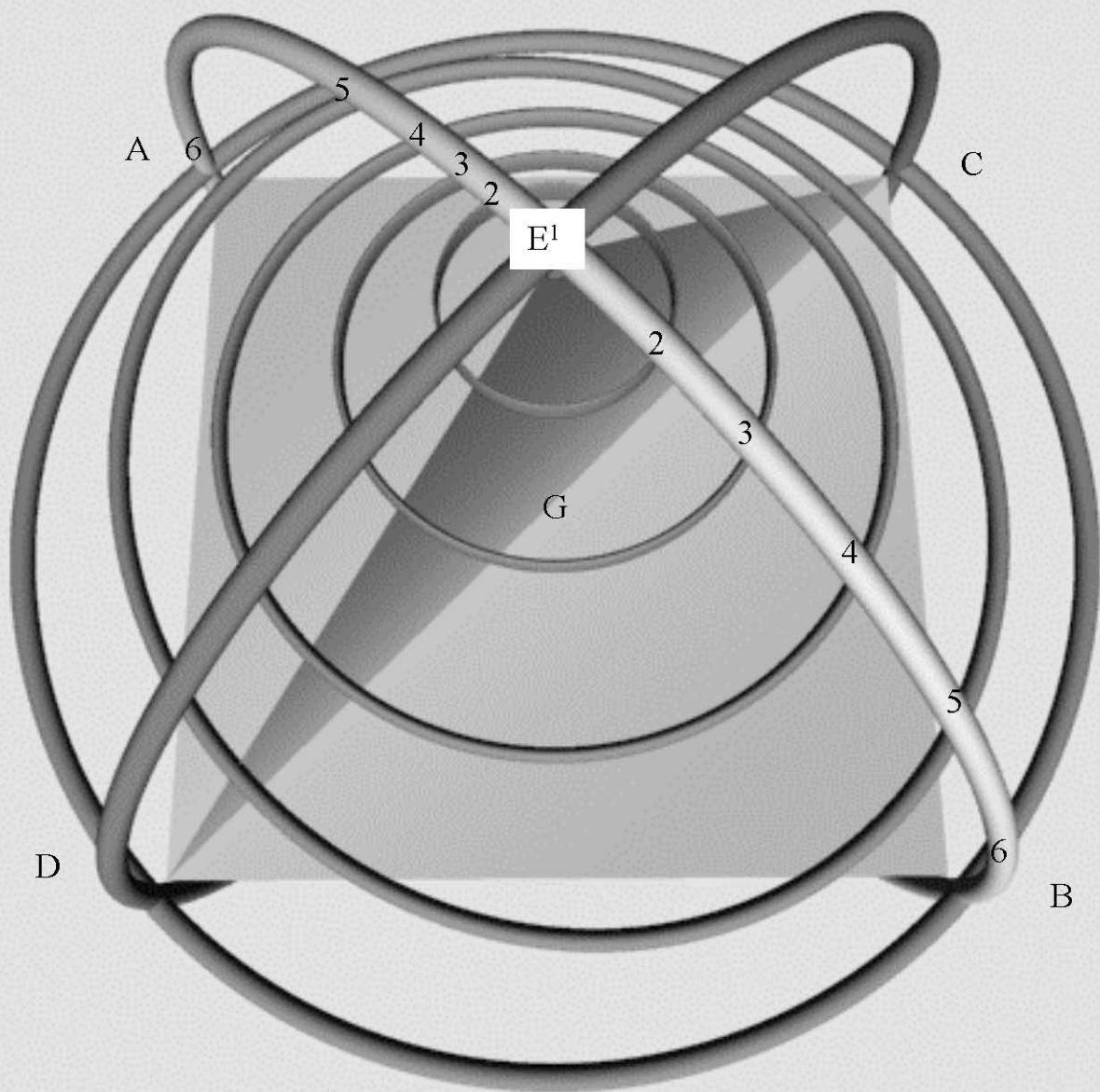


Figure 6: Summarizing the Base. Ascending degrees of concentration of the base as defined by triangle DE^1C ; the triangle DE^2C is hidden underneath.

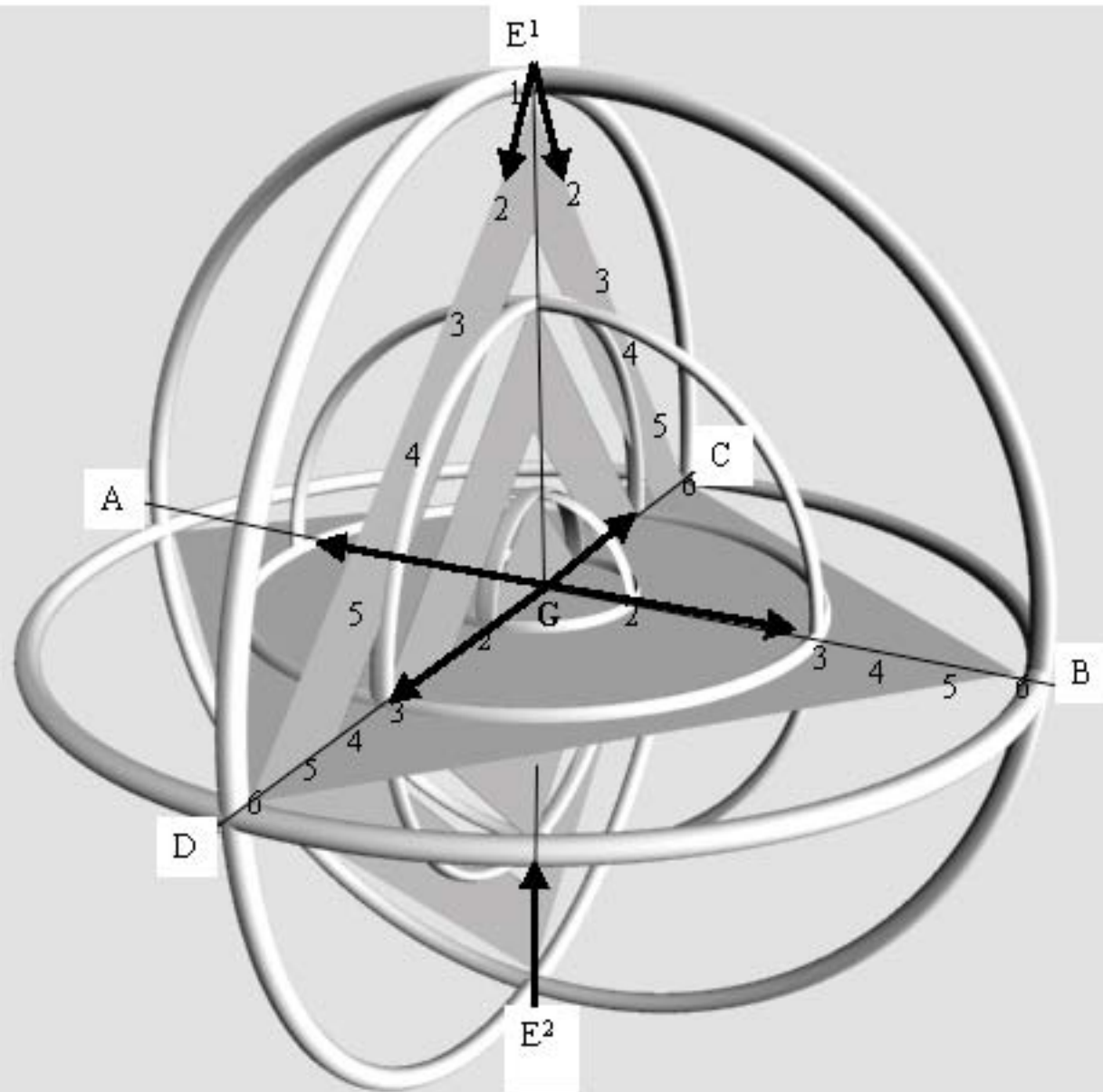


Figure 7: Descent Down the Cone Models Widening Concentric Spheres. The Light Outpouring into the Creation. Point E^1 at stage 1 = G . Triangle $D E^1 C$ at stage 6 = GD, GB, GA, GC at stage 6. The descending spiral from E^1 to its base through stages 2 - 6 = the expansion outward of G on radii on the plane $ACDB$.

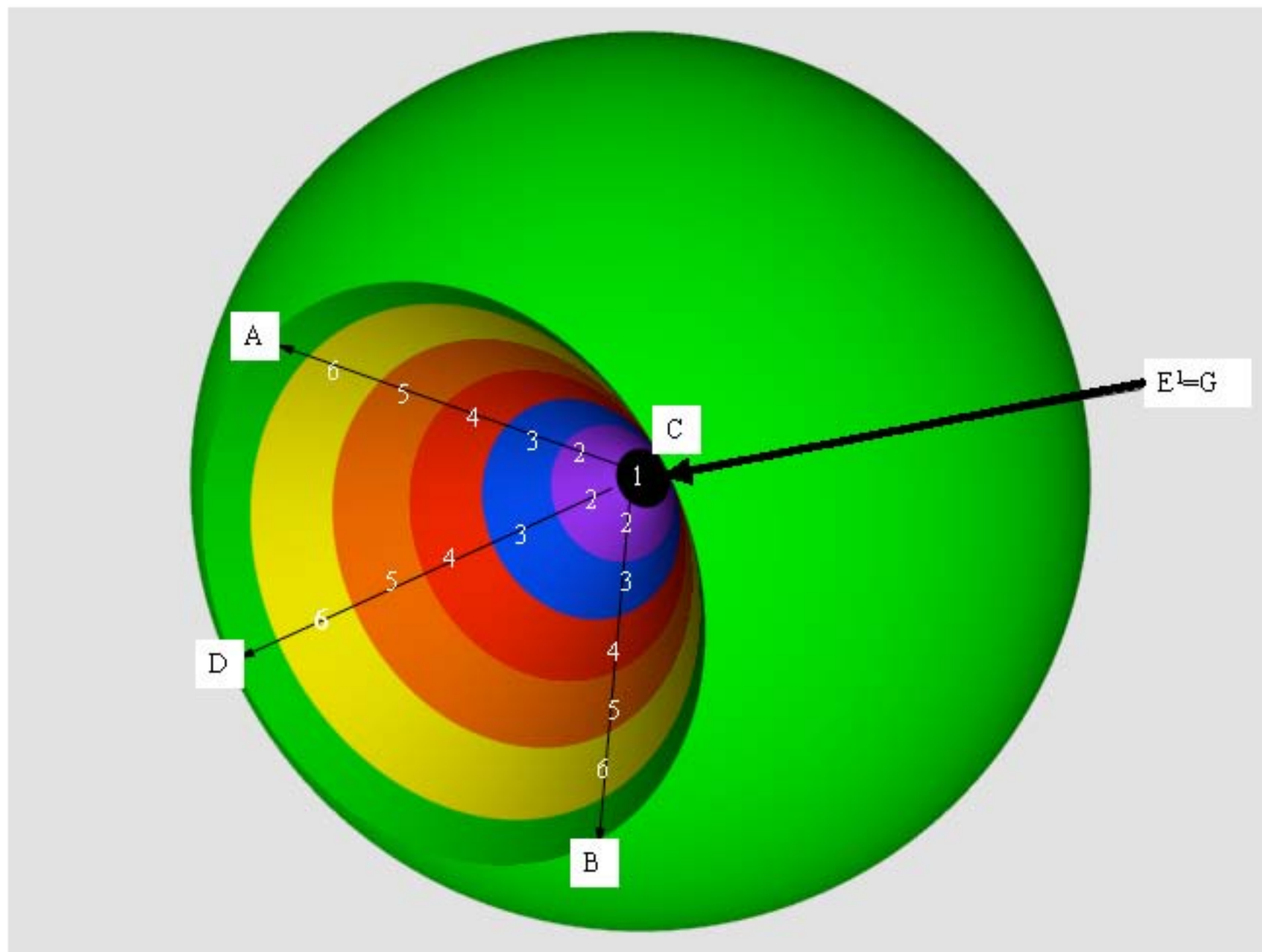


Figure 8: The Cone Widening from the Center of the Sphere ($E^1=G$). The Theophany of the Interior Light.

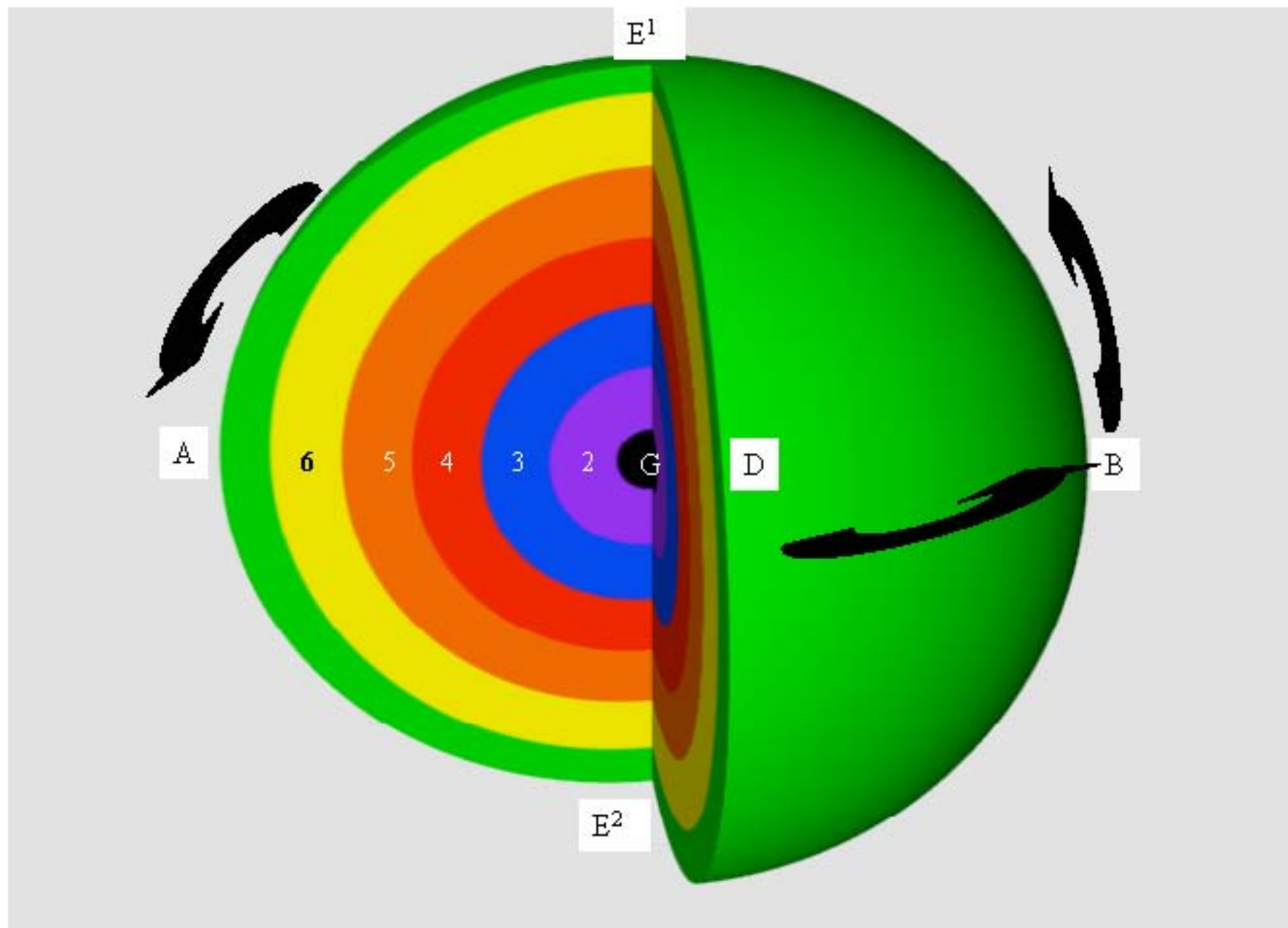


Figure 9: Cross Section of Concentric Spheres. Christ's Light (G) spirals outward through concentric spheres 2 - 6. Seers (A,B,C,D) ascend/move inwards as they spiral around and concentrate/summarize circumferences 5 - 2 along and narrowing cone. At each stage they approach E¹ and take Christ within.



Plate 1: Pantocrator in the Dome of St. Sophia

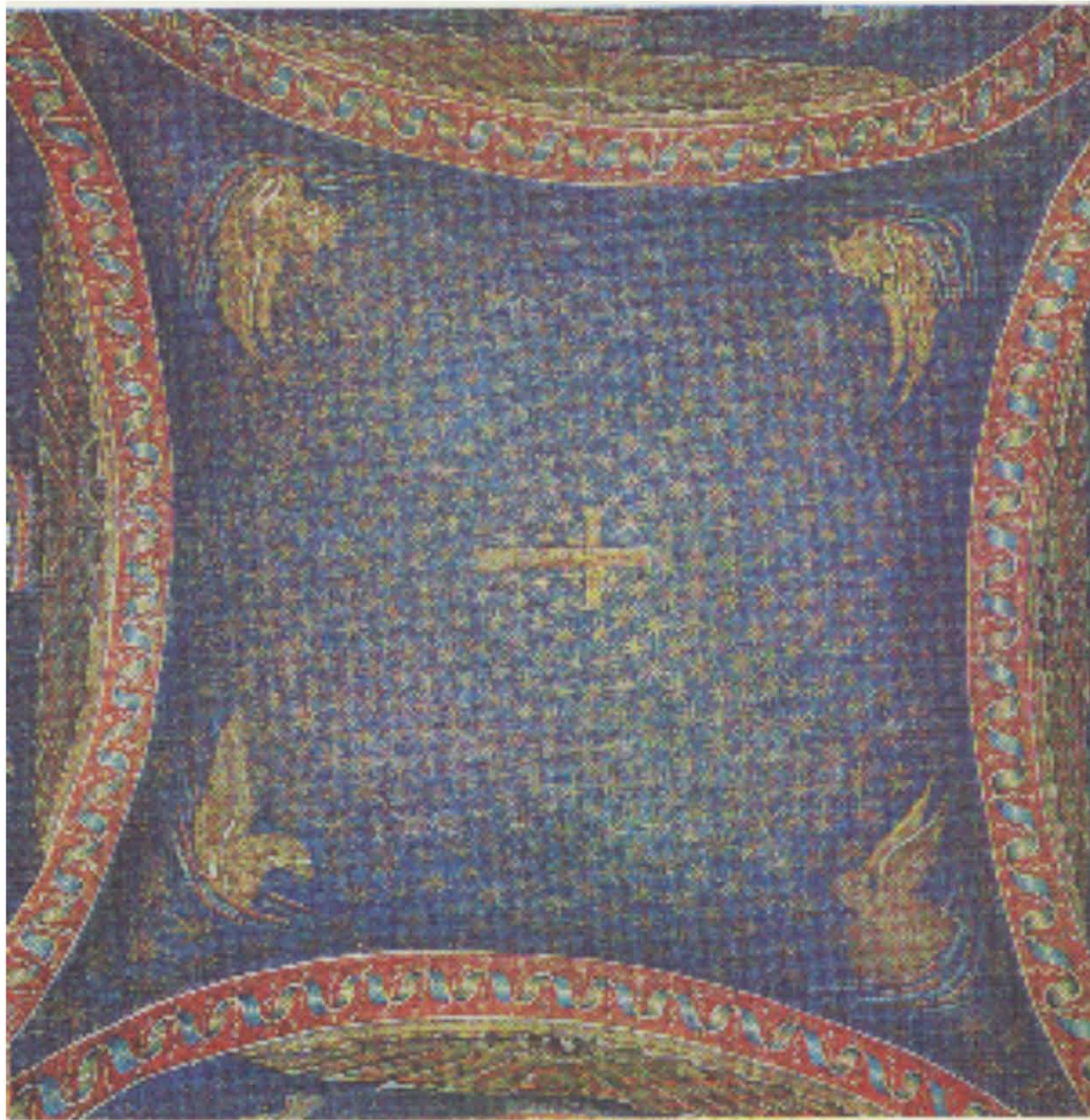


Plate 2: The Glorified Cross in the Dome of Mausoleum of Galla Placidia.



Plate 3: Theophanic Christ in the Apse of St. David's of Thessalonika



Plate 4: The Transfiguration in the Apse of Church of the Virgin at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai

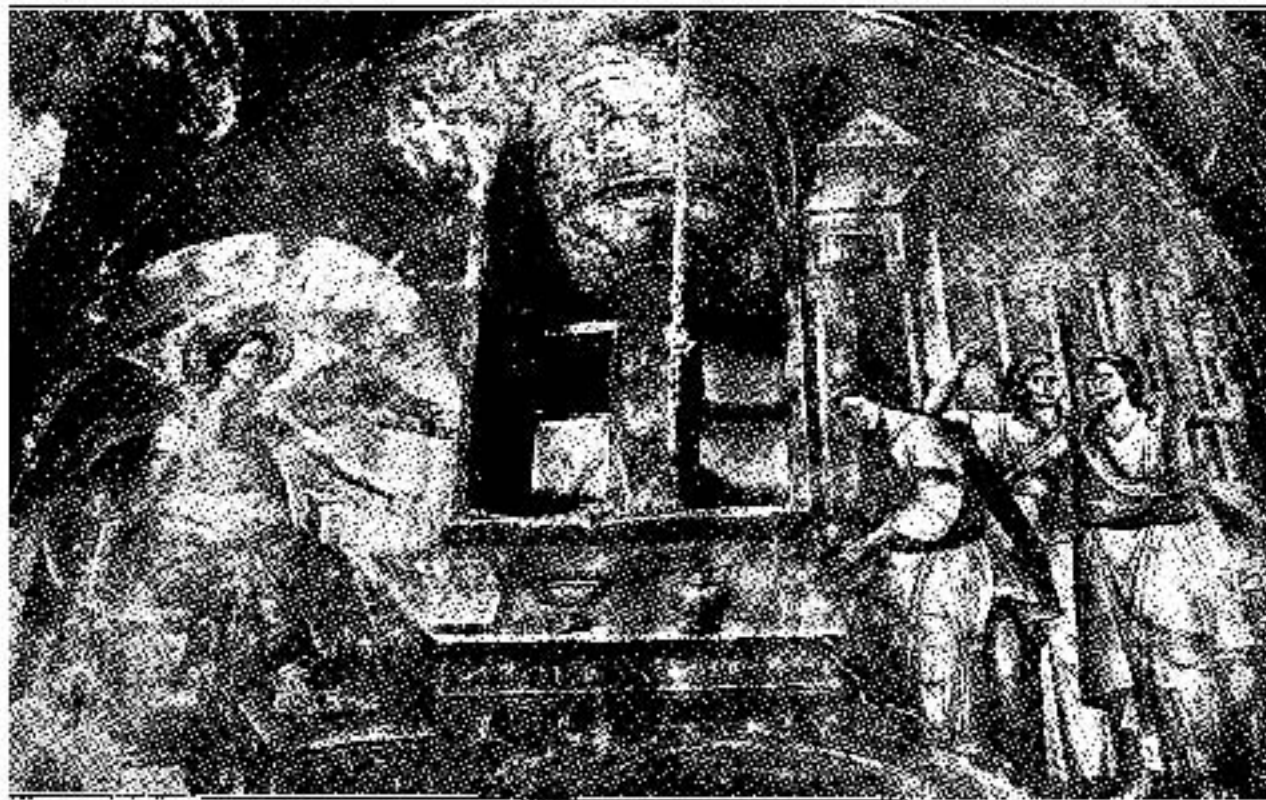


Plate 5: "Wisdom Builds her House" at St. Clement's in Ochrid

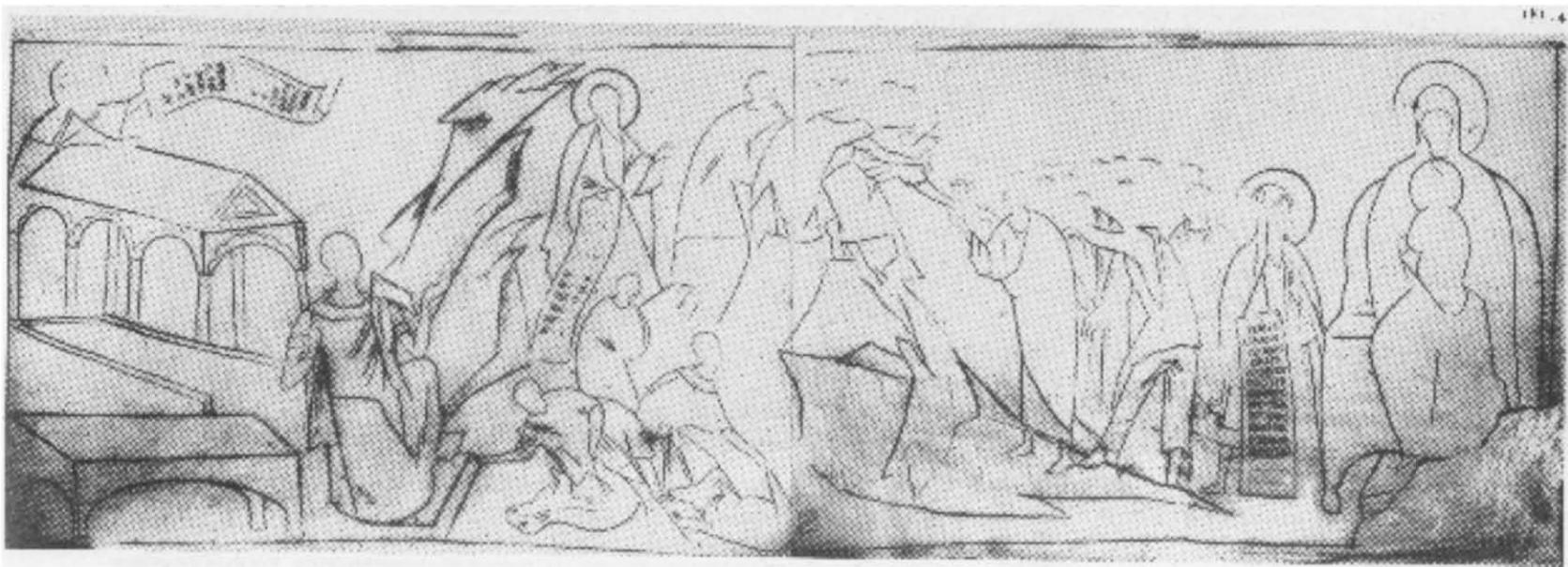


Plate 6: "Wisdom Builds her House" at Volotovo Pol'e near Novgorod

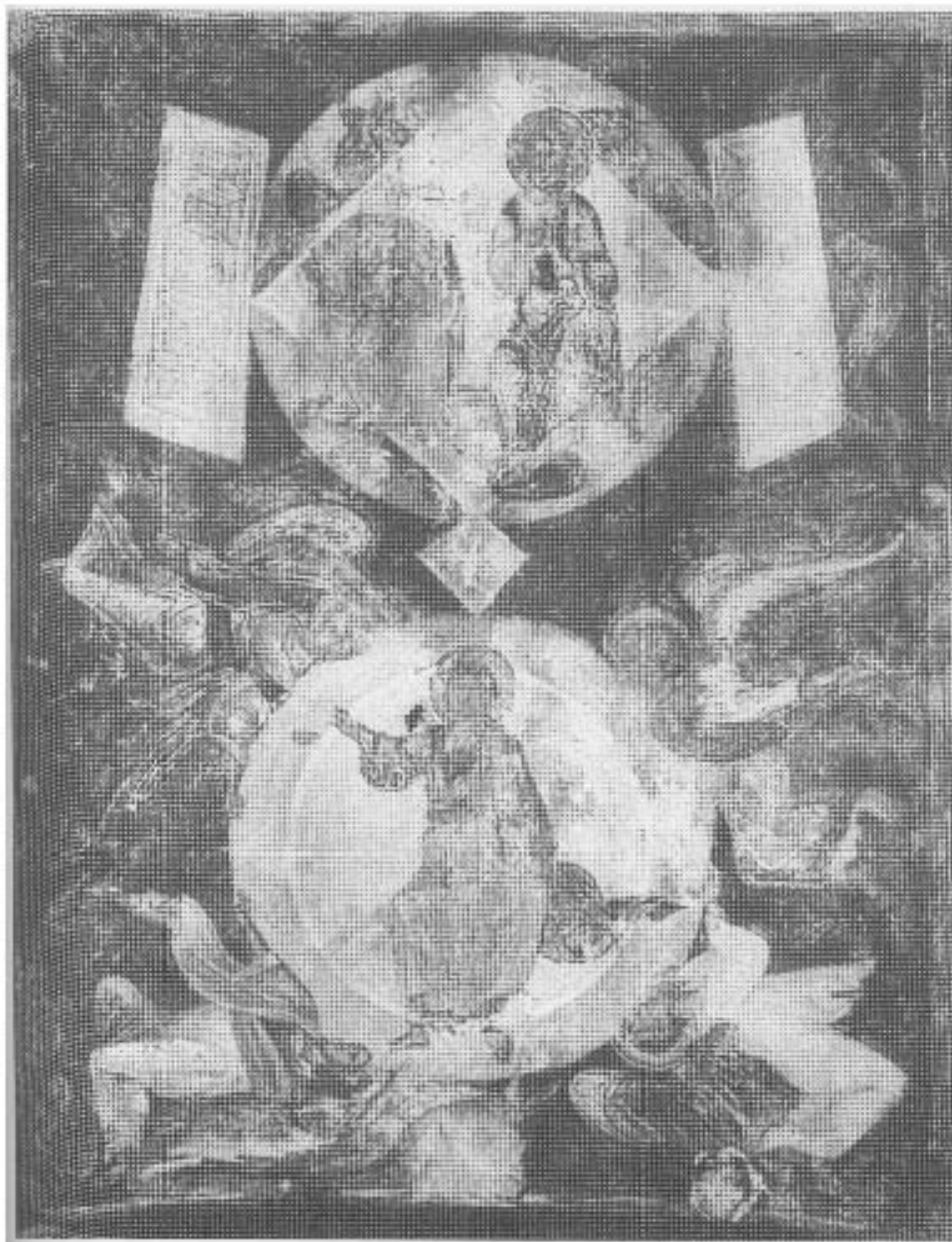


Plate 7: The Ascension at Bielo Pol'e na Leme (Serbia).



Plate 8: Trinity in the Cupola of the Church at
Leshani, Ochrid



Plate 9: Christ in Majesty. Gospel Miniature, Vatican 1210 fol. 324.

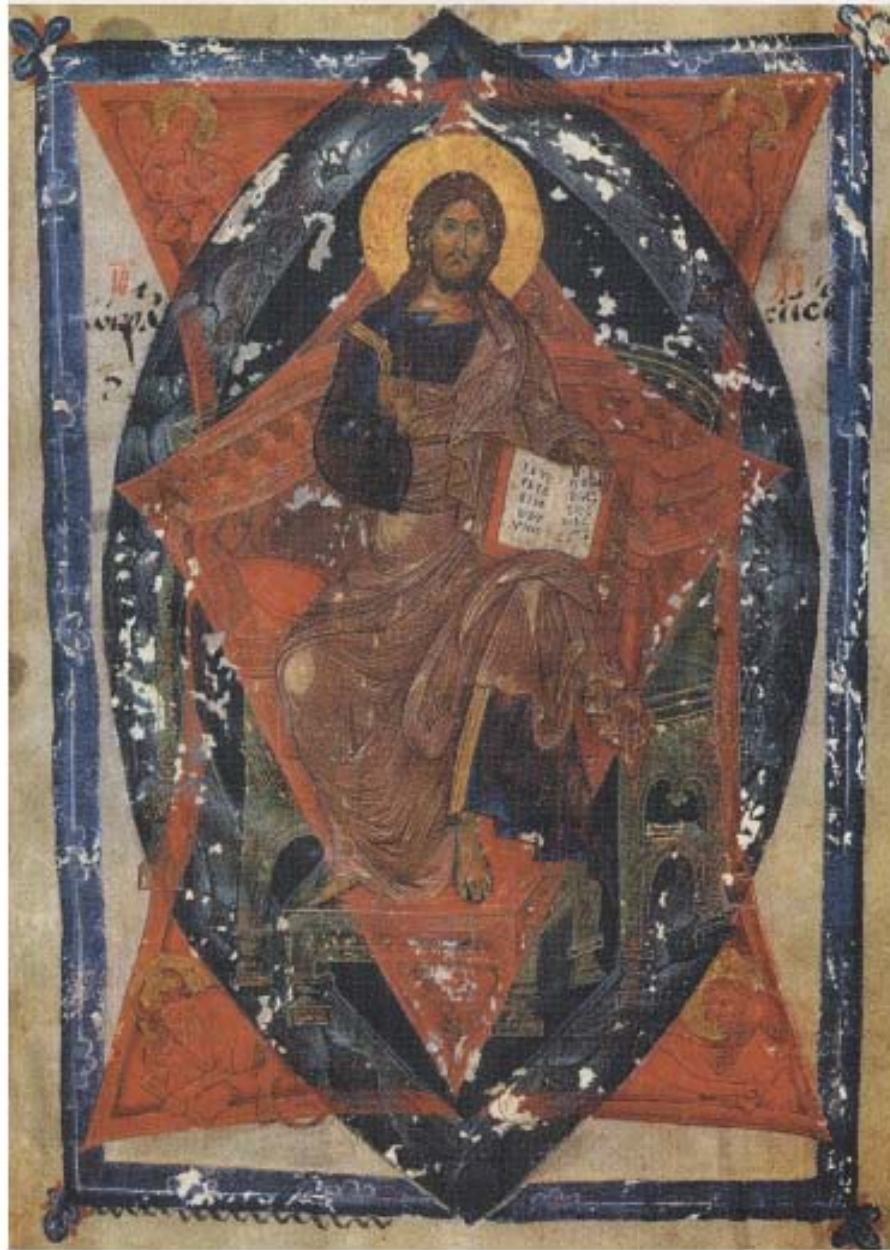


Plate 10: Savior in Glory, Miniature in the Gospel of Pereiaslavl'
Zalessky



Plate 11: Savior in Glory, Deisis icon of Andrei Rublev



Plate 12: Transfiguration, Miniature in the Theological writings of John VI Cantacuzenous.