

Nebojša Stanković

University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica

Kosovska Mitrovica (Serbia)

nebojsa.stankovic@pr.ac.rs

**LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS:
THE ICONOGRAPHY, THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND,
AND ARCHITECTURAL SETTING OF THE BANQUET
OF THE WISDOM OF GOD IN MARKOV MANASTIR***

To Aleksandra,

My beloved and loving, engaged and engaging companion in joyous visits to Markov Manastir and exciting explorations of its beautiful and theologically sophisticated frescoes, as well as in writing about them

Abstract: *The narthex of the church of Markov Manastir, with only three diminutive windows and a blind dome, is a rather dark room. The dome is decorated with the rarely represented Banquet of the Wisdom of God. Its complex iconography, rooted in biblical, theological, and liturgical texts, offers likewise complex messages. Moreover, this composition – dominated by the youthful Christ within a white-colored, star-dotted medallion and likely illumined by a hanging lamp – may have been envisaged as a source of light, artificial and symbolic, representing Divine Light. Besides examining this spatial, iconographic, and theological setting, the study explores how these elements reflect Hesychast and Neoplatonic notions on light.*

Keywords: *Markov Manastir, narthex, blind dome, Wisdom of God, Divine Light, Hesychasm*

Extant Byzantine wall and icon paintings, particularly those from the 14th and 15th centuries, exhibit complex iconographic programs and reflect a sophisticated and systematic theological knowledge of the artists and creators of these visual ensembles. Art historians frequently encounter challenges in identifying specific textual sources that may have been illustrated or, at the very least, inspired certain iconographic compositions. The absence of direct textual parallels has often led to the assumption that the original texts underpinning these visual representations have been lost. However, it is equally plausible that such texts never existed in a written form. Instead, artists may have drawn upon a range of sources, synthesizing elements from various written materials and incorporating theological concepts and beliefs that circulated only orally, perhaps within particular professional or religious communities.¹ Such a case is

* This study was written under the research project “Assessing Neoplatonism in the Religious Traditions of the 14th- and 15th-Century Balkans (ANEB),” financed by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia within the Identities Program, grant no. 1554. In addition to this generous funding, the research was also supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (Contract No. 451-03-136/2025-03/200184). I thank Radoje Šoškić for editing the English in this article.

exemplified by the fresco of the Banquet of the Wisdom of God in the narthex of Markov Manastir's main church, a visually rich composition, layered with multiple meanings. Analyzed here within its potential Neoplatonist and Hesychast intellectual backgrounds, with a special focus on the aspects of light included in it, this painting provides a testimony to both complex use of theological sources, whether written or oral, and great erudition of the artists of the time.

*

The construction of the main church of Markov Manastir (Fig. 1) was started by King Vukašin, a powerful Serbian magnate and designated heir to Emperor Stephen Uroš, probably between 1365 and 1371, and was completed by his son, King Marko, in 1376/7, when the church interior was painted.² Like most ecclesiastical monuments of the same period, the church is of a cross-in-square plan (Fig. 2). It belongs to the simple or compact variant, with no extra bays added to the east to accommodate the sanctuary, which is instead set in the three eastern bays of the cross-in-square unit. The single dome in the central bay is supported by four columns. To the west, there are three additional bays serving as the narthex. Between the narthex and the naos, as an uncommon architectural solution, there is no wall and the former opens to the latter by means of a pair of columns (Figs. 2, 3). These are placed at the same distance as the other four, contributing to the impression of a basilican interior. However, they are shorter than those in the naos and carry a wall above, which appears to be a remnant of the naos's never built western wall. The upper parts of the narthex are designed more conventionally, preserving a degree of architectural independence from the naos, manifested in a lower height and a vaulting system not following the one used in the rest of the church. There are three bays, the central of which is covered by a blind dome (Fig. 4). The dome consists of the junction of two shallow calottes, with the smaller rising from the center of the larger one and increasing its depth (and height).³ From the outside, the dome is only discreetly emphasized by an unusual structure, which completely masks the shape of the vaulting inside. This structure has a square base and a cruciform roof, created by the intersection of two gabled roofs that extend in the east-west and north-south directions, with simple gables showing on the south, west, and north sides (see Fig. 1).

Going back inside, one finds fine fresco paintings still gracing the surfaces of the blind dome (Fig. 5). Within a medallion, which exactly matches the smaller calotte, is an image of a youthful, beardless Christ, with both his arms risen in benediction (Fig. 7A). He is signed as *ἡ ἐνυπόστατος τοῦ Θε[ε]οῦ* above His right arm, which likely continued above the left with now indiscernible *Λόγου Σοφία*,⁴ translating as "The Wisdom, enhypostatic to [which is of the same hypostasis as] God the Word". Christ is seated on a red-colored rainbow, with his feet resting on two similarly colored cherubim. The traces of a blue paint within his halo witness to it being combined with a cruciform hypocycloid, a sort of star-shaped nimbus (Fig. 7B), which is often included in representations of prophetic visions of Christ and occasionally termed as the 'sign of Wisdom'.⁵ The circular medallion that surrounds Christ resembles and most likely represents the celestial firmament, as it is covered with golden stars. However, as it is unusually painted in

¹ There is a number of publications offered in the recent scholarship that deal with the relationship between text and image in Byzantium, illustrating it as complex and not unidirectional. E. g. Maguire 2017.

² For the dating, see Томић Ђурић 2019, 29-32 (with older bibliography).

³ For more detailed discussion of this dome's particular form, see Stanković 2024, 333, n. 99.

⁴ See Томић Ђурић 2019, 373.

⁵ Fiene 1989, 454 (and n. 19), 473-475, and *passim*; and Hunt 2009. See also the article by Danijela Tešić Radovanović in this volume.

white color, it also depicts light emanating from Christ in glory.⁶ Occupying the surface of the larger calotte, which forms a ring around the smaller one, there are the personifications of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-3), inscribed in Greek: Spirit of Knowledge, Spirit of Counsel, Spirit of Power, Spirit of Godliness, Spirit of Wisdom, Spirit of Intellect, and Spirit of Fear of God – all visualized as angels holding together the medallion around Christ (Fig. 5). The personifications are arranged along the main and diagonal axes, except towards the north, where a portrait of an eighth figure is located. This is King Solomon and he holds a scroll written with the passage from Proverbs 9:1: “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars.” (NRSV) His right hand is raised in gesture toward Christ, pointing to him as the Wisdom, while the text on the scroll refers to the Seven Gifts as these seven pillars.⁷ The eight, radially set standing figures are alternated with eight red-winged seraphim. Each of them is depicted as stepping out and raising hands in prayer to the personification of a Gift of the Holy Spirit it is paired with, all together seemingly forming a circular dance around Christ. In the next, outer ring, which takes up the transition zone from a circular base to a square of the narthex’s central bay, choirs of saints are painted, arranged in nine groups and all facing the Table of Wisdom, which is located on the east side and set with bread and wine,⁸ and to which two angels – with gestures of their hands – invite them (Fig. 5). These elements clearly illustrate Proverbs 9:1-5:

- 1 Wisdom built herself a house and supported it with seven pillars.
- 2 She slaughtered her own sacrificial victims; she mixed her own wine in a mixing bowl, and she prepared her own table.
- 3 She sent out her slaves, summoning with a stately proclamation to the drinking feast, saying,
- 4 “He who is a fool, let him turn aside to me,” and to those lacking sense she said:
- 5 “Come, eat of my bread, and drink wine, which I have mixed for you. [...]” (NETS)⁹

This is exactly the text which is inscribed above the depiction of the Table of Wisdom.¹⁰ The nine choirs consist of the following categories of the righteous: Apostles, holy hierarchs, holy monks, and holy deacons (on the south side), Old Testament Prophets, male martyrs, female martyrs, and holy nuns (on the north side), ending with Old Testament forbearers on the west side, directly across from the Table of Wisdom. Each group is depicted within a separate, light-colored compartment, representing its own common heavenly abode. In the next and last zone of the composition, painted farther below on the east and west walls, there are standing figures of martyrs, eight of them on each side (Fig. 5). Shown in aristocratic, courtly dresses and with their hands raised in prayer directed to Christ, they make the last segment of this celestial court of sorts.¹¹

This populous and layered ensemble has been interpreted as a very rare representation of the Banquet of the Holy Wisdom (or the Wisdom of the Word of God), a vision attributed to the prophecies of King Solomon, who is appropriately present here and duly points to the central image of Christ and the personifications of Seven Gifts with a gesture of his right hand.¹² This theme can be connected with the meaning of the form of the dome, as a celestial sphere within the narthex, which is self-evident, but it also carries some other important meanings and

⁶ Marka Tomić refers to this white-colored medallion as “the heavenly glory” (Томић Ђурић 2019, 363).

⁷ According to an interpretation by St. John Chrysostom (Wright (ed.) 2005, 72).

⁸ The chalice and the paten were better visible in the past (Томић Ђурић 2019, 365, n. 7).

⁹ Pietersma, Wright (eds.) 2007, 630.

¹⁰ Now, it is mostly faded (see Томић Ђурић 2019, 365).

¹¹ For a more detailed description of the entire composition, see *ibid.*, 363-369.

¹² *Ibid.*, 363-365; see also Ђорђевић 2006.

connotations. They have been discussed in detail by Marka Tomić,¹³ so I will first summarize them and then elaborate on those that may help us better understand the potential reasons for such an iconographic choice and its spatial setting in the narthex.

The particular iconography of Christ the Wisdom of God employs elements characteristic of the imagery of theophanies. Thus, as in compositions of the Ascension or the Second Coming, Christ is seated on a rainbow, his throne, within the light of heavenly glory, which is carried by celestial powers. An even closer parallel may be observed in depictions of Old Testament theophanies of the pre-incarnate, eternally young Logos surrounded by the uncreated light, such as the Visions of the Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, as well as the image of Christ the Angel of the Great Council. Most notably, his round, yellowish halo combined with a cross-shaped hypocycloid (or asteroid) painted in blue, is an unusual solution found only in the renderings of theophanic and prophetic images of Christ. The presence of choirs of the righteous may be traced to the iconography of the Last Judgement, the scene often located in the narthex. As a whole, the composition in Markov Manastir has its closest parallels in an earlier painting of the Holy Wisdom in Hrelja's Tower at the Rila Monastery (1334/5) and, in a later period, in those found in the *katholika* of the monasteries of Morača (after 1617) and Nikolje (1697).¹⁴

The Byzantine patristic tradition consistently identifies Holy Wisdom (Σοφία) with Christ, and interprets the house of the Wisdom built on seven pillars as a typological prefiguration of the future Church founded by the Son of God and resting upon the gifts (i.e. pillars) of the Holy Spirit. This dogmatically formulated interpretation emerged relatively early, most notably in a work attributed to St. Anastasios of Sinai (d. 700). The relevant text, part of a corpus composed in the question-and-answer format, offers a detailed exegesis of Proverbs 9, with section 42 devoted specifically to the Wisdom. This text and its exegetical approach reached the Slavic cultural sphere at an early stage, as attested by the *Izbornik of Prince Sviatoslav*, dated to 1073. The earliest manuscript transcriptions of the *Izbornik* include versions in the Serbian redaction, notably those from Hilandar Monastery (MS no. 24, 13th century), Bucharest (Romanian Academy of Sciences, late 13th – early 14th century), and Moscow (*Onfim's Izbornik*, 1403).¹⁵

Within the broader Athonite manuscript tradition, the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (late 5th – 6th century) were also transmitted and gained renewed theological significance during the 14th-century debate between St. Gregory Palamas and Barlaam of Calabria. Notably for Markov Manastir and the context within which it was created, the earliest Serbian translation of Pseudo-Dionysius – produced by Inok (Monk) Isaiah in 1370/71 (now preserved in the National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg) – includes commentaries on Proverbs 9 found within the so-called *Epistle to Titus*, Bishop of Crete. These commentaries, like those of Anastasios, are exegetical in character, emphasizing the Eucharistic interpretation of the Old Testament passage. This spiritual and intellectual environment also cradled Philotheos Kokkinos, an Athonite monk, a Hesychast (a disciple of St. Gregory Palamas), and twice Patriarch of Constantinople (1353–1354/55, 1364–1376), who made significant contributions to the liturgical reform of his time,¹⁶ as well as the interpretation of Proverbs 9:1. Three homilies (*logoi*) devoted to this verse, composed between 1350 and 1360, are preserved in a letter addressed to a certain Ignatios, whom Philotheos calls his fellow bishop in the prologue. In these homilies, which carried great weight in the theology of the second half of the 14th century, Philotheos articulated a

¹³ Томић Ђурић 2019, 369-377 (with references to prior scholarship on this and other comparable depictions of the Banquet of the Wisdom of God, cited in this article only when directly relevant for its subject).

¹⁴ See Ђорђевић 2006.

¹⁵ Томић Ђурић 2019, 371-372.

¹⁶ For brief information on Philotheos, see Talbot 1991.

lengthier and more substantial Christological exegesis of the text. Here, Holy Wisdom is set as the central dogmatic issue and identified with the Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity, while the ‘house on seven pillars’ is interpreted both as the Body of Christ (in which God dwells) and as an allegory of the Virgin Mary, which is the temple of Holy Wisdom.¹⁷

According to Tomić, the significance attributed to the illustrations of Proverbs 9:1-16 in the Palaiologan painting is best understood through their liturgical function. The *Canon for Holy Thursday* composed by Kosmas of Maiuma – still chanted in the liturgy for this day of the Holy Week – includes explicit references to Proverbs 9, employing its imagery to articulate – both visually and theologically – the meaning of the Last Supper. Within this context and as implied by the cited sources, the Old Testament allegory of the banquet of Holy Wisdom, as depicted in the narthex dome at Markov Manastir, primarily conveys Eucharistic themes. A key feature of this iconographic and theological motif is the emphasis on the institution of the Holy Eucharist, understood as the central sacrament of the earthly Church.¹⁸ Thus, the exegesis of Proverbs 9 in both textual and visual traditions of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine worlds underscores the integral link between Wisdom-Christology, liturgical theology, and the sacramental life of the Church. Conversely or, rather, simultaneously, in medieval Serbia, the conceptualization of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Solomon’s account on wisdom acquired a distinct ideological dimension, particularly in relation to the construction of the image of an ideal Christian ruler. This notion was articulated through both literary and visual languages. The placement of the *ktētor* portraits in Markov Manastir – specifically in the first register of the north wall of the narthex, where they appear as part of a gallery of saints representing the Heavenly Court – invites interpretation within the framework of the theologically grounded relationship between the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the virtues.¹⁹ These very interesting insights by Tomić on the royal aspects of the narthex dome’s painted program have been expanded through my ongoing exploration of the inclusion of a dome in the entrance zones of some 14th-century churches in Serbia.²⁰

Alongside these profound meanings underlying this spatial and pictorial arrangement in the narthex of Markov Manastir, some others can also be discerned, revealing an even more complex conceptual endeavor: namely, to render visually a theological understanding that appears to have been well established within the intellectually engaged monastic circles associated with King Marko, circles that apparently were attuned to contemporary theological developments. According to this understanding, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are perceived as nourishment from the table of Holy Wisdom, emanating from Christ the Logos and the Divine Sophia. In the Hesychast circles, the *enhypostatic* Word and Wisdom were joined by Light, a third divine aspect of Christ that played a role in bringing the faithful to God, as discussed in the following sections of this paper. The overarching message communicated by the monumental fresco that dominates the narthex of the church is thus soteriological in nature, emphasizing the saving power of divine wisdom as mediated through the Gifts of the Spirit.

*

The major textual source for the composition of the Banquet of the Wisdom of God, Proverbs 9:1-5, occupies a distinct place in the liturgical calendar, prescribed for a day that is of particular relevance to this study: the Feast of Mid-Pentecost, which is also the celebration of the

¹⁷ Томић Ђурић 2019, 372-373; see also Meyendorff 1957, 262, Meyendorff 1987, 392-393, and Wilson 2020, esp. 24-32. For an edition of Philotheos’s three homilies, see Ψευτόγκας (ed.) 1981, 69-151.

¹⁸ Томић Ђурић 2019, 373-375.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 375-377.

²⁰ Some preliminary results were published in Stanković 2024; for Markov Manastir, see *ibid.*, 333-336.

Wisdom of God.²¹ All three Old Testament readings appointed for Vespers of the feast – Micah (4:2-3, 4:5, 5:2-5, 5:8), Isaiah (55:1-3, 55:6-13), and Proverbs (9:1-11)²² – have some reference to either the Word of God or the Wisdom of God, both designations given to Christ in our painting. The selection from Micah starts with verses 4:2-3: “Because out of Sion shall go forth a law, and a word of the Lord from Ierousalem. And he shall judge between many peoples and shall reprove strong nations far away [...]” (NETS).²³ Both law and word point to Christ, who hails from Zion, the City of David, i.e. to him as the son of David. The readings from Isaiah contains verses 55:10-11: “For as rain or snow comes down from heaven and will not return until it has soaked the earth and brought forth and blossomed and given seed to the sower and bread for food, so shall my word be, whatever goes out from my mouth; it shall not return until whatever I have willed is fulfilled, and I will prosper your ways and my commandments.” (NETS)²⁴ Finally, the passage from Proverbs begins with verses 1 and 2: “Wisdom built herself a house and supported it with seven pillars. She slaughtered her own sacrificial victims; she mixed her own wine in a mixing bowl, and she prepared her own table.” (NETS)²⁵ Aside from having the Word and Wisdom as their focus, these scriptures indicate that this hypostasis of God is sent down to humankind, as the incarnate Jesus Christ (the house of Wisdom serving as a metaphor for His body²⁶), to judge it and save it.²⁷ And salvation is achieved through accepting the Word and eating from the Table of Wisdom, i.e. by believing in the Son of God and communing of His flesh and blood. And this pairing of the Logos and Sophia was established very early in the Christian exegesis and recurs in the writings of generations of exegetes.²⁸ It also figures prominently in the interpretations penned by Philotheos Kokkinos, a contemporary of our frescoes, as mentioned earlier.²⁹ Indeed, his detailed exegesis of Proverbs 9:1-5, or, more precisely, the Hesychast and Pseudo-Dionysian tradition that informed it, is considered to have had a decisive role in the development of the iconographic theme of the Banquet of the Wisdom of God.³⁰ However, the Word-Wisdom fusion is but one aspect of the painted depiction of it. Another one is also offered through close examination of the Feast of the Wisdom, i.e. Mid-Pentecost, its other elements, meanings, and texts from the Bible associated with it.

As Christian Pascha (Easter) and Pentecost find correspondence in Jewish Pesach (Passover) and Shavuot respectively, Mid-Pentecost has been paralleled to Sukkot (Festival of Tabernacles), the third most important holiday in the Jewish calendar.³¹ The latter commemorates the Israelites’ wanderings in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt,³² and its

²¹ For this, one of the minor feasts of the Lord, see: Kaiser 2016, Крашенинникова, Маханько 2020, Garnier 2002, and Влахов 2011, 87-110.

²² Крашенинникова, Маханько 2020. Curiously, neither these nor other Old Testament readings are mentioned in the Typikon of the Great Church as part of services for the feast (*cf.* Mateos 1963, 120/121).

²³ Pietersma, Wright (eds.) 2007, 797; underlinings here and hereafter are mine.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 867.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 630; see also above, n. 10, for the subsequent verses.

²⁶ According to St. Hippolytus of Rome, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory of Nyssa (Wright (ed.) 2005, 72-73). For a discussion of Gregory’s Neoplatonism, see Dimitrov 2014. The patristic exegesis of Proverbs 9:1-5 and its reference to the Incarnation are tackled by Meyendorff 1957, 259-261.

²⁷ Interpretations of these Old Testament readings by various Church Fathers further confirm such a meaning (see Wright (ed.) 2005, 73-75; Elliott (ed.) 2007, 189; Ferreiro (ed.) 2003, 160).

²⁸ See Gleede 2012, *passim*.

²⁹ See *infra* and n. 17.

³⁰ Hunt 2003, 3. See also Wilson 2020, 24-32.

³¹ See Garnier 2002, 219; Крашенинникова, Маханько 2020, 155; and Влахов 2011, 88.

³² For the establishment of the holiday, see Leviticus 23:42-43.

ancient celebrations included making a pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem.³³ These aspects of the holiday, despite it not coinciding in the calendar with Mid-Pentecost – unlike the other two major feasts – likely influenced the Christian holiday, which commemorates two historic events: Jesus Christ’s teaching in the Temple of Jerusalem at the midpoint of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 7:10, 7:14-30)³⁴ and the young Jesus’s stay in the Temple following the Passover and his conversing with the elders, remaining behind Mary and Joseph, with whom he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52).³⁵ Although the latter appears to be a secondary and liturgically ungrounded association, both events revealed Jesus’s divinity, His divine knowledge and wisdom, as well as His salvific mission to humankind. This revelation was understood as the antitype, a New Testament image of another divine revelatory and salvific intervention commemorated in the Feast of Tabernacles: God’s guidance, protection, and nourishment that the Israelites enjoyed while wandering in the desert. This intervention was visibly made manifest in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21-22) and which the Church Fathers interpreted as the work of the not-yet-incarnate God the Word – that is, Christ.³⁶ Thus, Mid-Pentecost celebrates Christ as both the Divine Teacher and the Divine Savior,³⁷ but also allows for His manifestation (revelation) as the Divine Light.

Even before the patristic exegetical work, the very Gospel of John was apparently written with the concern to present Jesus Christ as the Wisdom, the Word, and the Light, all bringing humankind out of the darkness of ignorance to the knowledge of God and salvation. As shown by several scholars,³⁸ the fourth Gospel was composed in the Old Testament Wisdom tradition, both scriptural and oral, which informed the intellectual and spiritual milieu of the Apostle John and his contemporaries, and shaped their religious views. He particularly relied on the Book of Exodus, in an effort to prove that Jesus was the Son, Word, and Wisdom of God, sent by God to deliver His people from sin, as the new exile, and that the Law of Moses was replaced by the New Covenant, the new relationship with God set directly by His Son. Whether coincidentally or providentially—the entire Paschal season, not only the Feast of Mid-Pentecost, is marked by a continuous reading of the passages from the Gospel of John at Divine Liturgies and other church services day by day. It starts with the Liturgy of the Easter Sunday, when the famous “In the beginning was the Word...” (John 1:1-17) is read and the theological tone – Word, Life, and Light – is set; it ends with the Liturgy of Pentecost, at which John 7:37-53, 8:12

³³ Werblowsky, Wigoder 1997, 659-660 (s.v. Sukkot). The pilgrimage on Sukkot was one of three festival pilgrimages (Shalosh Regalim), the other two prescribed for Passover and Shavuot – see *ibid.*, 627 (s.v. Shalosh Regalim).

³⁴ This is evident from the Gospel reading appointed for the feast, set in the 10th century or earlier – John 7:14-30 (Typikon of the Great Church – Mateos 1963, 120/121; see also, Getcha 2012, 253-254). The precise endpoint of the reading (verse 29, 30, or 31) varied (see Kaiser 2016, 92 and n.19).

³⁵ As witnessed by later developments in the iconography of Mid-Pentecost (Крашенинникова, Маханько 2020). On the early Christian interpretations of this Gospel passage, see Just (ed.) 2003, 53-56. The youthful appearance of Christ in the iconography of the Wisdom may have led to such a scriptural connection. About the confusion of the two pilgrimages of Jesus, on the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, see Fiene 1989, 453.

³⁶ See Lienhard (ed.) 2001, 72, and Влахос 2011, 88.

³⁷ The linguistic and theological concept of ‘middle’ in the name of the holiday plays a certain role, leading to reflections on the ‘mediatorship’ of Jesus Christ, accurately characterized by the content of the Mid-Pentecost pericope (John 7:14ff.): the Law (νόμος) given through Moses (John 7:19, 22-23) is contrasted with Jesus as the teacher of divine doctrine (διδάχῃ, John 7:16-18), suggesting the replacement of Moses as mediator of the Law with Christ as the mediator of the new covenant (Kaiser 2016, 93-94). See also the following paragraph.

³⁸ See Ziener 1957, Ziener 1958, Moeller 1963, Garnier 2002, 217-218.

is read.³⁹ The pericope appointed for the Liturgy of Mid-Pentecost (John 7:14-30), however, falls out of mostly sequential daily reading that is observed, but was strategically chosen as both directly preceding and leading to the passage read at Pentecost, as well as to mark the midpoint of the season and recall the event from Christ's earthly life that revealed Him as the Word and Wisdom of God in the very Temple of Jerusalem. And this whole theological idea and image, in addition to others mentioned earlier, seem to have been captured in the painted composition in the narthex dome at Markov Manastir. I would further argue that the concept of Christ as the Light of God is conveyed not only through His painterly depiction as the Divine Word and Wisdom within a circle of light, but also through the architectural and illusionistic interplay between the dome and the chandelier that once hung beneath it.

*

Upon entering the narthex of the Church of St. Demetrius at Markov Manastir, one encounters an unusually dark interior (Figs. 3, 4). Apart from the natural light coming in via the naos, owing to the absence of a separating wall, it is only barely admitted directly into the narthex through three extremely small windows piercing the south, west, and north walls in their upper zones. Two elongated, finely executed bi-lobed windows, located below and still visible on the south and north façades (Fig. 1), which were part of the original design, were walled up soon after they were built. This decision has been ascribed to the need to unify the interior wall surfaces to form a continuous zone for the fresco painting of the Heavenly Court.⁴⁰ However, could the intention to leave this part of the church in darkness have been the true – or at least the principal – reason? The use of a blind dome instead of a dome completed with a drum pierced by windows, which can be observed in several earlier or contemporary churches,⁴¹ is a further evidence of such an intention. In the interior thus envisaged, the composition of the Banquet of the Wisdom of God, with Christ in glory in its center (Figs. 4, 5), would have remained largely indiscernible. Yet, exactly Christ and especially the uncommonly white-colored, star-dotted, round medallion within which he is depicted, may have played a special role: functioned as a source of light in the dark narthex. The medallion, supported by the personifications of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, aka seven pillars of the House of the Wisdom, appears at first as a canopy or the heavenly firmament, especially due to the presence of stars inside it. However, painted in brightly white color, it is rather an aureola, the radiance of a luminous cloud, the bright circular mandorla of Christ's glory (gloriole) representing a spherical stream of light flowing out from Him. At the same time, it recalls the cloud of light or 'fiery pillar' of the Exodus that led the Israelites by night, which is indicated by stars. Moreover, Christ's peculiar halo includes a hypocycloid star (Fig. 7B), which has been interpreted as a symbol of both Divine Wisdom and uncreated Light, rooted in the Neoplatonic thought of Pseudo-Dionysius.⁴² The hypocycloid star, a version of a rotated rhombus, is called the 'proto-star' (or 'Wisdom star') by Priscilla Hunt,⁴³ who regards it the predecessor of another version that combines two rhombi in the form of an eight-pointed star, which Donald M. Fiene has termed the Sign of Wisdom.⁴⁴ Both these

³⁹ Cf. Mateos 1963, 98/99-138/139.

⁴⁰ Томић Ђурић 2019, 491 (with older bibliography).

⁴¹ E.g. Hilandar, Treskavec, Lesnovo, and Psača (see Stanković 2024, 319-323, 326-329, 332).

⁴² Hunt 2003, p. 5. See Hunt 2009 for a more extensive presentation of the issue. Similar halos are also to be found in renderings of the Holy Wisdom in Hrelja's Tower of the Rila Monastery (1334/35) and the Morača Monastery (after 1617), to mention but a few – see Ђорђевић 2006, figs. 4 and 1 (respectively).

⁴³ Hunt 2009, 55 and *passim*.

⁴⁴ Fiene 1989, esp. 473-475.

symbolical forms, together with the circle of light (aureola), which Hunt believes was an earlier developmental version, she interprets as visual realizations of an esoteric symbol that has its source in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,⁴⁵ the popular Neoplatonist exegete who gained special attention with the Hesychasts.⁴⁶ Thus, Christ Emmanuel depicted at Markov Manastir radiates the light of Divine Wisdom from both His body and His head.

Additionally, this entire composition and especially its central part, Christ in a gloriole, was lit from below by an oil lamp or chandelier suspended from a metal ring that still survives fastened to the smaller calotte, at its center (Fig. 7C). The lamp was most likely either a single-flamed *kandēla*⁴⁷ or fashioned in the more complex form of *polykandēlon*, such as a few examples that have survived (Figs. 8B, 8C). The latter type is also represented by a *choros* that originally embellished and lit the naos of our church, suspended below the dome, whose fragments have been preserved (Fig. 8A).⁴⁸ Undoubtedly, a similarly produced, but more simply designed equipment once graced and illumined the narthex area. It was either fixed at a certain distance from the inner surface of the dome or could have been flexibly moved up and down, with a potential to change the intensity of illumination of the dome. In such a setting, the concave shape of the smaller inner calotte, painted in bright white, would have served effectively as a reflector of the lamp's light, thus enhancing both the light level in the room and the illusionistic impression of three-dimensionality of the spherical form of the light emanating from Christ, the round gloriole that fully coincides with the calotte (Figs. 4, 5).⁴⁹ Moreover, the vertically suspended lamp formed a pillar-like source of light that culminated above in Christ's glowing gloriole and in the very image of Christ. In an otherwise dark space, both Christ and the gloriole symbolically rendered the spiritual, Divine Light, reminiscent of the 'pillar of light' that led the wandering Israelites in the wilderness, which – as already shown – was interpreted as Christ the Word and Wisdom of God.⁵⁰ A continuously burning lamp also could have recalled with the faithful the Light of Christ constantly flickering in them, with the potential to (re)kindle the fire of Wisdom and spiritual enlightenment.

In addition to these physical and painted sources of illumination – or perhaps through them – Christ Himself, Whose picture in the center of the dome is the symbolic source of both, can also be viewed as the indwelling theophanic Light. This is suggested both by the pictorial representation – closely associated with the iconography of the Transfiguration of Christ (Fig. 6) – and by the Hesychast theology of the Wisdom Light, likewise related to the Tabor light.⁵¹ The iconographic parallels between the Transfiguration and the Wisdom of God (or Mid-Pentecost as the Feast of Wisdom) form a vast subject deserving separate study. However, it goes beyond the scope of the present essay. Nonetheless, I would like to note some main points of resemblance, in both their meanings and artistic renderings. First of all, both holidays commemorate events when Jesus's divinity was revealed. Also, they represent moments in which the Old and New Testaments converge, i.e. when an Old Testament teaching gets

⁴⁵ Hunt 2009, 55-56, 70.

⁴⁶ Louth 2008 (2023), 194-196.

⁴⁷ Various examples of this oil-fueled lamp can be seen in Μότσιανος 2011, 557-580, figs. 373-514.

⁴⁸ For the Markov Manastir *choros*, see Тодоровић 1978 (where a full reconstruction is established), Тодоровић 1991, and Гергова 2000. For an extensive and detailed study of the artificial lighting in the Byzantine world, see Μότσιανος 2011.

⁴⁹ Such a synergy of architecture and art towards the latter's illusionistic effect was not uncommon in Byzantium (cf. Demus 1948, 13-14, Hunt 2009, 70, and Jevtić 2025, 92-97).

⁵⁰ See above, n. 36.

⁵¹ As Priscilla Hunt put it, "images' own inner illumination, expressed through the use of colors, symbols and sacred geometry" (Hunt 2003, 2 – calling upon John Meyendorff, "Introduction" in Gregory Palamas 1983, 1-5, and Ouspensky 1982, 48). I would also add: theological and other meanings the images possess and carry.

confirmed in Jesus's person and acts, and which is witnessed by both Old Testament prophet(s) and Christ's followers. The latter ones, whether disciples or saints, also spiritually partake in His divinity. The composition in pictorial depictions of both holidays revolves around the figure of Christ, Who is placed centrally and shown in glory, surrounded by and pouring out light from His entire body. However, the centrality of Christ the Wisdom is more accentuated by the circular form of the composition, i.e. the disposition of other participants, as well as thanks to its likewise architectural setting – the dome's spherical surface.

When it comes to the theology of Divine Light and its conjunction with Divine Word and Wisdom, although there are some earlier evidence of this, the main period witnessing the proliferation of such an interpretation is exactly the Late Byzantine period, which coincides with our monument. We have already seen above that the Banquet of the Wisdom of God and its interpretations attracted attention of the Hesychast movement of the 14th and 15th centuries, most notably of Philotheos Kokkinos. As it is known, the theology of light, particularly the uncreated light manifested at the Transfiguration (the Tabor Light), was central to intellectual and spiritual interests of Hesychasts.⁵² The Transfiguration was not perceived merely as an event when the emanated light revealed Christ's divinity, but as the point in which He unites the Light of God with His flesh and opens the road for humankind to partake in the Light through Him. Hesychast interpretations also incorporated some Neoplatonic conceptions of light via the Patristic literature, primarily works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.⁵³ Apart from discussing it as an energy, the Hesychast authors, St. Gregory Palamas most prominently among them, speak about the *enhyposstatic* Light, meaning that is of the same person as the Word and Wisdom. For the sake of brevity, I go here only through Palamas's writings to illustrate this understanding and notions surrounding it.

Grounded on earlier Patristic interpretations and not rejecting but building upon them, Palamas offers scattered theological insights as mosaic tesserae that, when combined, create a fuller and deeper understanding of Christ as the Son, the Word, the Wisdom, and the Light of God. On several occasions, Palamas underlines that Christ, the incarnate Son and Word of God, is also the Wisdom of God the Father, by using almost the same words: "The pre-eternal Word, who became flesh for our sake, the enhyposstatic Wisdom of the Father, also bears within Himself the word of the gospel proclamation."⁵⁴ "The enhyposstatic Wisdom of the most high Father, God's pre-eternal Word who is beyond all being, who was united with us in His love for mankind and lived among us (cf. John 1:14), has now revealed thorough His actions a cause for celebration even more distinctly superior than Easter's excellence."⁵⁵ And Jesus, who is "the enhyposstatic Wisdom of the unoriginate Father," speaks through Prophet Solomon in the latter's Proverbs and Wisdom.⁵⁶

St. Gregory Palamas expounds that Divine Light, in the form of the bright cloud that appeared at the Transfiguration and which was "the unapproachable light in which God dwells,"⁵⁷ was made manifest as the tabernacle appropriate for Christ.⁵⁸ Elsewhere, he adds that

⁵² An overview of the Hesychast movement, its theology, and debates with its opponents is provided by Papadakis, with Meyendorff 1994, 275-319 (with older bibliography).

⁵³ See Świtkiewicz-Blandzi 2022 for an in-depth exploration of Palamas's relation to the work of Pseudo-Dionysius.

⁵⁴ Gregory Palamas 2009, 276, #8 (within a homily on the Feast of Transfiguration). According to Christopher Veniamin, "the enhyposstatic Wisdom of the Father" can also be translated as "*the Wisdom of the Father in His very person*" (*ibid.*, 595, n. 537).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 170, #1 (a homily on the Ascension of Christ).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 512, #4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 277, #9 (with a reference to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in n. 539).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 277, #9.

“[...] Basil the Great, after showing that the God Who is adored in three Persons is a unique light, speaks of the ‘God who dwells in light unapproachable,’⁵⁹ for the unapproachable is in every way true, and the true unapproachable. This is why the apostles fell to the ground, unable to rest their gaze on the glory of the light of the Son, because it was a ‘light unapproachable’.”⁶⁰ On the other hand, the light that Christ shone at the Transfiguration is considered a deifying light, which St. Gregory Palamas – calling upon Pseudo-Dionysius again – identifies with Christ Himself,⁶¹ because “He is the living Word, the true light, the enhypostatic Wisdom,⁶² cause and origin of all created things, for by Him all things were made.”⁶³ Palamas also asks his congregation: “Should we not cleanse the eye of our soul, abstaining ‘from all defilement of the flesh and spirit’ (2 Cor. 7:1), in order that we may see that light which preceded the sun, or rather, that we become children of that light (Eph. 5:8), and other lights ourselves, through sharing in His light, holding forth the word of life (cf. Phil. 2:15-16)?”⁶⁴

This last remark once again reminds us that partaking in Christ’s Light is salvific for the faithful, who by communing in the flesh and blood of Christ, offered at the Table of Wisdom, also partake in the Wisdom and Light of God.⁶⁵ In Markov Manastir, the groups of saints invited and already ‘seated’ at the Banquet of the Wisdom inhabit curved compartments, which are similarly white-colored and rounded, indicating that they have been illumined by Divine Light and dwell in it. Their images are painted on concave surfaces of the transitional zone between the circular base of the blind dome and the square plan of the narthex’s central bay. The actual architectural form of this zone, particularly the spherical triangles in the four corners, further enhance the impression of the saints gathered in groups occupying three-dimensional, spherical spaces. Such a shape, similar to that of the Wisdom’s gloriole, additionally contributes to the idea that the saints ‘share in His light’. St. Gregory Palamas says: “[...] this light [i.e. the illumination received by the Apostles on the Pentecost] is also the wisdom of God, present in the deified man, yet not separate from God.”⁶⁶ He further explains that the “[...] divine light is given by measure and is received to a greater or lesser extent, being distributed, undividedly divided, according to the worthiness of the recipients.”⁶⁷ This explains why different categories of saints are accommodated in separate light compartments. At the same time, it brings hope to those in the darkness (of the narthex), i.e. those who are still inhabiting this world are also invited, as Palamas assures: “And we too will become luminous if we lift ourselves up, abandoning earthly shadows, by drawing near to the true light of Christ. And if the true light which ‘shines in darkness’ (cf. Jn. 1:5) comes down to us, we will also be light, as the Lord told His disciples (cf. Mt. 5:14). Thus the deifying gift of the Spirit is a mysterious light, and transforms into light those who receive its richness; He does not only fill them with eternal light, but grants them a knowledge and a life appropriate to God.”⁶⁸ The knowledge of God and religious wisdom is bestowed on humans through the “uncreated light which is the glory

⁵⁹ Ps. Basil, c. *Eunom.* V, PG XXIX, 640AB, citing 1 Tim. 6:16.

⁶⁰ Gregory Palamas 1983, 74.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶² Ch. Veniamin translates the Greek *ενυπόστατος Σοφία* as “the Wisdom of God in His very person” (see Gregory Palamas 2009, 543, n. 94).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 56, #8.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 182, #14 (a homily on the Ascension). Veniamin notes on this that St. Clement of Alexandria identified the Divine Logos as the “pre-eternal light”, which was always with the Father and never ceased to shine in heaven. It became united with the created, human flesh of the Son at the point of the Transfiguration (see *ibid.*, 576, n. 345).

⁶⁵ Cf. Hunt 2003, 3, 16, for a similar conclusion.

⁶⁶ Gregory Palamas 1983, 91.

⁶⁷ Gregory Palamas 2009, 280, #16.

⁶⁸ Gregory Palamas 1983, 90.

of God” and of Christ “our God”: “This knowledge [i.e. the knowledge of God], which is beyond conception, is common to all who have believed in Christ. As to the goal of this true faith, which comes about by the fulfilling of the commandments, it does not bestow knowledge of God through beings alone, whether knowable or unknowable, for by ‘beings’ here we understand ‘created things’; but it does so through that uncreated light which is the glory of God, of Christ our God, and of those who attain the supreme goal of being conformed to Christ. For it is in the glory of the Father that Christ will come again, and it is in the glory of their father, Christ,⁶⁹ that ‘the just will shine like the sun’ (Mt. 13:43); they will be light, and will see the light, a sight delightful and all-holy, belonging only to the purified heart. This light at present shines in part, as a pledge, for those who through impassibility have passed beyond all that is condemned, and through pure and immaterial prayer have passed beyond all that is pure. But on the Last Day, it will deify in a *manifest* fashion ‘the sons of the Resurrection’ (cf. Lk. 20:36), who will rejoice in eternity and in glory in communion with Him Who has endowed our nature with a glory and splendour that is divine.”⁷⁰

*

The narthex of the Church of St. Demetrius of Markov Manastir, though architecturally marked by intentional darkness, emerges as a profoundly symbolic and theologically rich space where light – both physical and metaphysical – plays a central role likewise intentionally, as it appears. Far from being a passive background to the fresco program, the dimly lit interior frames a visual and spiritual drama in which Christ the Word and Divine Wisdom, depicted within a radiant gloriole, becomes Himself the source and embodiment of uncreated Divine Light. Through the careful orchestration of architecture, iconography, and liturgical lighting, the composition of the Banquet of the Wisdom of God transforms the narthex into a microcosm of Hesychast theology, where the faithful are invited to contemplate and partake in the deifying light of Christ.

In such a constellation of painted theological message, illuminated both from within (by the content and meaning) and from out (by the lamp), the dark space of the narthex signified the fallen, not-yet-illuminated world. In the painting of the Banquet of the Wisdom – which, along the depiction of the Transfiguration of Christ, proves to be “a centerpiece of hesychast theology and poetics”⁷¹ – the theme of Divine Light completes the Table of the Wisdom of God. Thus the table is set not only with His flesh and blood (the Eucharist), but also with the *enhyposstatic* Word and Wisdom (Holy Scriptures), as well as the Light (Divinity or deification), all in all with Himself. The reasons for the location of the composition in the narthex are twofold: 1) because of the narthex’s symbolic dimension as the realm of the outer, not-yet-initiated world, which lays in darkness, and 2) to remind the faithful that the Divine Word and Wisdom is the only nourishment for the salvation, in the form of Scriptures and Eucharist, and that faith in the Divine Light and following Him brings deliverance to the New Israel and directs it to the Heavenly Jerusalem. The whole composition – with its elements that can stand for both Christ’s pre-eternal existence and God’s plans for the salvation of humankind, on one hand, and his Second Coming to judge them, on the other – is appropriate for the entrance (and exit) zone of the church, which has witnessed the placement of iconographies of similar content, such as the Last Judgment. Instead of the latter – which is standard for the narthex area, but lacking in Markov Manastir – a more hopeful, positive message of salvation is offered.

⁶⁹ For the spiritual paternity of Christ, see *ibid.*, 62 and n. 38 there.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁷¹ Hunt 2003, 12.

The theological insights of St. Gregory Palamas, grounded in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and integrated with the iconographic program, elucidate the multilayered meaning of light as both an enhypostatic attribute of Christ and a salvific force that draws humanity into divine communion. Yet, written theology on light appears to have been but one segment of a broader oral and intellectual tradition, which also gave birth to the iconographic renderings of very complex and nuanced theological concepts implemented in the painting of the Banquet of the Wisdom. The convergence of artistic form and theological function – especially in the spherical rendering of light around Christ and the saints – visually articulates the mystical experience of divine illumination as understood in the Late Byzantine spiritual tradition.

In this sacred setting, light is not merely a metaphor but an experiential and eschatological reality. The symbolic transformation of architectural elements into bearers of theological meaning, in combination with the painted content, underscores the sophistication of the visual theology at Markov Manastir. Ultimately, the darkened narthex becomes a liminal space where the contrast between darkness and divine radiance reveals the mystery of Christ as the Wisdom and Light of God, inviting all who enter to ascend from the shadows of this world into the brilliance of divine knowledge and eternal life.

Literature (Bibliography)

Demus, Otto (1948). *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*. London: Routledge.

Dimitrov, Dimitar Y. (2014). “Neoplatonism and Christianity in the East: Philosophical and Theological Challenges for Bishops.” In: Pauliina Remes, Svetla Slaveva-Griffin (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*. London – New York: Routledge, 525-540.

Elliott, Mark W. (ed.) (2007). *Ancient Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament, Vol. 11: Isaiah 40-66*. Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press.

Ferreiro, Alberto (ed.) (2003). *Ancient Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament, Vol. 14: The Twelve Prophets*. Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press.

Fiene, Donald M. (1989). “What is the Appearance of Divine Sophia?” *Slavic Review* 48:3, 449-476.

Garnier, Sébastien (2002). “Les leçons scripturaires de la Mi-Pentecôte.” In: Achille Maria Triacca, A. Pistoia (eds.), *La Liturgie, interprète de l'Écriture, I: Les lectures bibliques pour les dimanches et fêtes – Conférences Saint-Serge XLVIII^e semaine d'études liturgiques, Paris, 25–28 Juin 2001*. Roma: Edizioni Liturgiche, 213–220.

Getcha, Job (2012). *The Typikon Decoded: An Explanation of Byzantine Liturgical Practice*, trans. Paul Meyendorff. Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press.

Gleede, Benjamin (2012). *The Development of the Term ἐνπρόστατος from Origen to John of Damascus*. Leiden – Boston: Brill.

Gregory Palamas (1983). *The Triads*, ed. John Meyendorff, trans. Nicholas Gendle. Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press.

----- (2009). *The Homilies*, ed. and trans. Christopher Veniamin. Waymart Pa: Mount Thabor Publishing.

Hunt, Priscilla (2003). “Hesychasm and the Iconography of Divine Wisdom in the Fresco at Hrelyo Tower,” a paper presented in November 2003 and revised on 28 February 2018; available online: https://www.academia.edu/36011489/Hesychasm_and_Hrelyo_Tower_Fresco_red_pdf (consulted on 6 November 2024).

----- (2009). “The Wisdom Iconography of Light: The Genesis, Meaning and Iconographic Realization of a Symbol.” *Byzantinoslavica* 67:1-2, 55–118.

Jevtić, Ivana (2025). "Art Technology: Bridging the Gap between Church Architecture and Wall Paintings in the Middle and Late Byzantine World." In: Ivana Jevtić, Nikos D. Kontogiannis, Nebojša Stanković (eds.), *Religious Buildings Made in Byzantium: Old Monuments, New Interpretations*. Cham: Palgrave-MacMillan, 67-99.

Just, Arthur J. Jr. (ed.) (2003). *Ancient Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, Vol. 3: Luke*. Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press.

Kaiser, Martin (2016). "Das Mesopentecoste-Fest: Bezeugung, Charakter, Entstehung." In: Richard W. Bishop, Johan Leemans, Hajnalka Tamas (eds.), *Preaching after Easter: Mid-Pentecost, Ascension, and Pentecost in Late Antiquity*. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 87-103.

Lienhard, Joseph T. (ed.) (2001). *Ancient Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament, Vol. 3: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press.

Louth, Andrew (2008). "The Reception of Dionysius in the Byzantine World: Maximus to Palamas." *Modern Theology* 24, 585–599 (republished in: Andrew Louth, *Selected Essays, Volume I: Studies in Patristics*, Lewis Ayres, John Behr (eds.). Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2023: 182-196, which is referenced here).

Maguire, Henry (2017). "The Asymmetry of Text and Image in Byzantium." *Perspectives médiévales* 38. Available online: <http://journals.openedition.org/peme/12218> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/peme.12218> (consulted on 4 August 2025).

Mateos, Juan (ed.) (1963). *Le Typicon de la Grande Église: Ms Saint-Croix no 40, X^e siècle, T. II: Le cycle des fêtes mobiles*. Roma: Pont. institutum orientalium studiorum.

Meyendorff, Jean (1957). "L'iconographie de la Sagesse Divine dans la tradition byzantine." *Cahiers Archéologiques* 10, 259–277.

Meyendorff, John (1987). "Wisdom-Sophia: Contrasting Approaches to a Complex Theme." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41, 391–401.

Moeller, Henry R. (1963). "Wisdom Motifs and John's Gospel." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 6:3, 92-100.

Ouspensky, Leonid (1982²). "The Meaning and Language of Icons." In: Leonid Ouspensky, Vladimir Lossky. *The Meaning of Icons*. Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 23-49.

Papadakis, Aristeides, with John Meyendorff (1994). *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.* Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

Pietersma, Albert; Wright, Benjamin G. (eds.) (2007). *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*. New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stanković, Nebojša (2024). "Royal Canopy over the Church Entrance: Forms, Spatial Contexts, Iconographic Programs, and Meaning of the Dome in Serbian Narthexes of the 14th Century." *Зборник радова Филозофског факултета у Приштини* 54/3, 299-337.

Świtkiewicz-Blandzi, Agnieszka (2022). *Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory Palamas: The Byzantine Synthesis of Eastern Patristics*. Berlin: Peter Lang.

Talbot, Alice-Mary (1991). "Philotheos Kokkinos." In: Alexander P. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1662.

Werblowsky, R. J. Zwi; Wigoder, Geoffrey (eds.) (1997). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*. New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, Justin L. (2020). "The Allegory of Wisdom in Chrelja's Tower Seen through Philotheos Kokkinos." In: Maria Alessia Rossi, Alice Isabella Sullivan (eds.), *Byzantium in Eastern European Visual Culture in the Late Middle Ages*. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 14-35.

Wright, J. Robert (ed.) (2005). *Ancient Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament, Vol. 9: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*. Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press.

Ziener, Georg (1957). "Weisheitsbuch und Johannesevangelium (I)." *Biblica* 38:4, 396-418.

----- (1958). "Weisheitsbuch und Johannesevangelium (II)." *Biblica* 39:1, 37-60.

Μότσιανος, Ιωάννης Κ. (2011). *Φῶς ἱλαρὸν: Ο τεχνητός φωτισμός στο Βυζάντιο*, Διδακτορική διατριβή. Βόλος: Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας, Τμήμα Ιστορίας Αρχαιολογίας και Κοινωνικής Ανθρωπολογίας.

Ψευτόγκας, Βασίλειος Σ. (ed.) (1981). *Φιλοθέου Κοκκίνου λόγοι και ομιλίες*. Θεσσαλονίκη: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ερευνῶν.

Влахос, Митрополит Јеротеј (2011). *Господовите празници*. Скопје: Скопска православна епархија.

Гергова, Иванка (2000). „Два хороса в Националният исторически музей.“ *Проблеми на изкуството* 2, 25-31.

Ђорђевић, Иван М. (2006). „Дарови Светог Духа у проскомидији Богородичине цркве у Морачи.“ In: Бранислав Тодић, Даница Поповић (ур.). *Манастир Морача*. Београд: Балканолошки институт Српске академије наука и уметности. 195-212.

Крашенинникова, Н. Н.; Маханько, М. А. (2020). „Преполовление Пятидесятницы.“ In: *Православная энциклопедия*, Т. 58. Москва: Церковно-научный центр „Православная энциклопедия“, 155-160.

Тодоровић, Драгомир (1978). „Полијелеј у Марковом манастиру.“ *Зограф* 9, 28-36.

----- (1991). „Налази из старе солунске ливнице.“ *Хиландарски зборник* 8, 99-124.

Томић Ђурић, Марка (2019). *Фреске Марковог манастира*. Београд: Балканолошки институт Српске академије наука и уметности; Битољ: Архиепископија охридска и Митрополија скопска.



Fig. 1. Markov Manastir, Church of St. Demetrius, exterior from south (photograph by author)

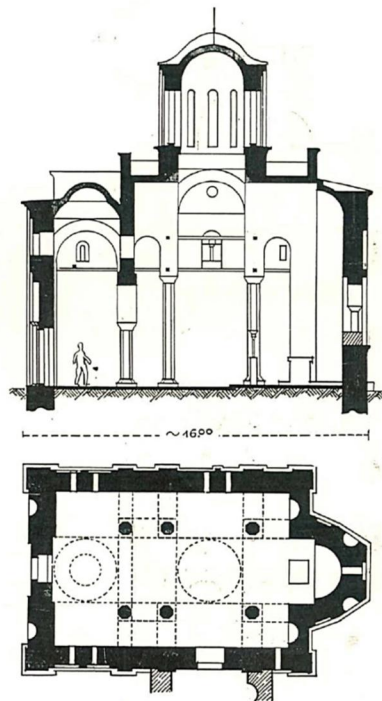


Fig. 2. Ground plan and longitudinal section (drawings by Aleksandar Deroko)

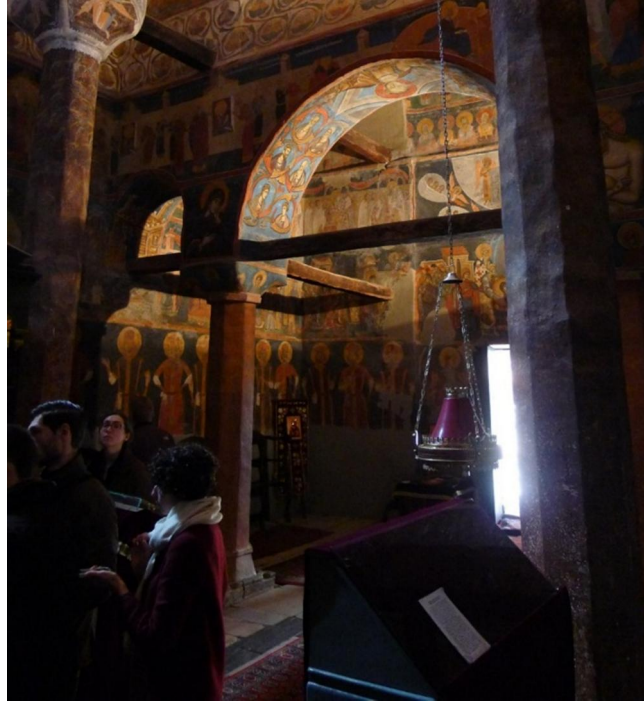


Fig. 3. Interior of the church looking southwest (photograph by author)



Fig. 4. Upper areas of the narthex (photograph by author)



Fig. 5. Narthex, vaulting of the central bay: *The Banquet of the Wisdom of God* (photograph by author)



Fig. 6. Naos, vaulting of the west arm of the inscribed cross, north half: *The Transfiguration of Christ* (photograph by Đorđe Đoković)



Fig. 7. *The Banquet of the Wisdom of God*, details A, B, C (photographs by author)

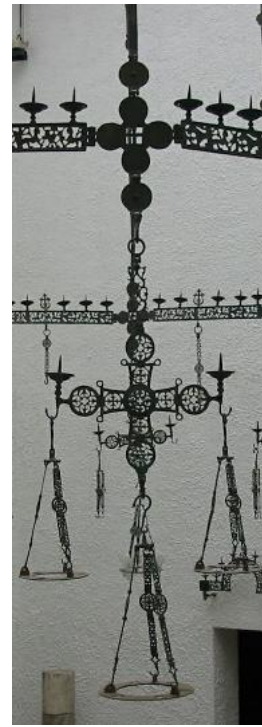




a



b



c

Fig. 8. Byzantine suspended lighting devices

- a) Markov Manastir, parts of a bronze *choros* (1365-1371; Belgrade, National Museum)
- b) *Polykandēlon* (d=24cm; 10th c.; Benaki Museum, Athens)
- c) Segment of a *choros* (d=350cm; 13th-14th c.; Archaeological State Collection, Munich)

Небојша Станковић

**СВЕТЛОСТ У ТАМИ: ИКОНОГРАФИЈА, ТЕОЛОШКА ПОЗАДИНА
И АРХИТЕКТОНСКИ КОНТЕКСТ ГОЗБЕ ПРЕМУДРОСТИ БОЖИЈЕ
У МАРКОВОМ МАНАСТИРУ**

Припрата цркве Светог Димитрија у Марковом манастиру, иако намерно затамњена, представља теолошки и симболички значајан простор у ком светлост, како физичка тако и метафизичка, има централну улогу. Свод је украшен Гозбом Премудрости Божије, где млади Христос у белом медаљону представља извор Божанске светлости. Композиција, осмишљена кроз архитектуру, иконографију и литургијско осветљење, претвара нартекс у микрокосмос исихастичке теологије, позивајући вернике да учествују у боготвореној светлости. Тамни простор симболизује пали свет, док Гозба Премудрости Божије приказује спасоносну функцију Христа као Речи и Премудрости. Локација ове сложене представе у припрати, која симболично означава домен земаљског, палог света који лежи у мраку, истовремено означава свет споља и подсећа вернике на значај вере и Божанског светла за спасење и уздизање ка Небеском Јерусалиму. Иконографија, инспирисана учењем Светог Григорија Паламе и Псеудо-Дионисија, визуелно артикулише мистично искуство божанског просветљења у оквиру позновизантијског балканског духовног контекста.