

FROM CREATION TO SALVATION IN THE GIRONA EMBROIDERY

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The Creation embroidery of the Cathedral of Girona was probably made in Catalonia around the year 1100. Even in its fragmentary state, the monumental embroidery (3.65 x 4.7m) presents one of the most remarkable images of the medieval cosmos (fig. 1). The remaining part centers on Christ and the creation cycle in two concentric circles framed in a square panel, which is surrounded by a time cycle and biblical figures arranged along its top and side borders, and a partially preserved strip with the story of the Invention of the Cross below. The four cardinal winds appear in the corners between the two circles and the enclosing frame.

Much has been written about the iconography of the creation and the time cycles, debating whether the story of the Invention of the Cross was part of the original embroidery, and what, in addition, formed the missing parts.¹ In his comprehensive study, P. de Palol pointed to cosmic images in its iconography, comparing it to Roman works such as the second century floor mosaic in Merida and the mid-third century one in Philippopolis,² even though these mosaics vary significantly from the Girona embroidery in their iconography and layout. The compositional scheme and its role in the iconographic program were not thoroughly

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1. *Revista de Girona*, 92, 1980, dedicated to the embroidery; P. de Palol, *El Tapís de la Creació de la Catedral de Girona*, Barcelona, 1986 (Artestudi, suppl. 2) with extensive bibliography; L. Arad, *The Vision of Heaven in the Embroidery of the Creation in the Cathedral of Girona*, M.A. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1992 (Hebrew); E.M. Morales, «Creation Tapestry,» in: *The Art of Medieval Spain a.d. 500-1200*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1993 (catalogue), p. 309f. and B. Baert, «New Observations on the Genesis of Girona (1050-1100). The Iconography of the Legend of the True Cross,» *Gesta*, 38:2, 1999, pp. 115-125.
2. Palol, pp. 141-150, figs. 111-112 and 113-115 respectively.

discussed, and this important question is at the core of the present paper.³

The embroidery's compositional scheme, while unusual in representations of the creation cycle, is very frequent in both cosmological representations in Late Antique and Medieval art, and in cosmological and computistical diagrams. The Girona embroidery is one of the earliest known works, if not the earliest, to place Christ at the center of Creation in such a scheme.

Why did the centered image of Christ appear at a relatively late phase in the development of the classical cosmic scheme in Christian art, namely around the year 1100? How did it become possible for Christ to appear in this context, and what were the phases in this development?

First, I will examine the main elements of the iconographic program of the embroidery: the Creation and the time cycles and the Story of the Invention of the Cross, in relation to the central figure of Christ and to the program as a whole. The second part of my study will discuss the compositional scheme, where I will demonstrate how the depiction of the creation in such a scheme indicates a turning point in the fusion of computistical and cosmological compositions with biblical themes. Moreover, I will argue that this scheme was chosen to enhance the eschatological message of the embroidery. I will then present Christian exegetical sources supporting my interpretation of the role of the embroidery's composition in conveying the theological message and examine the embroidery's possible function.

1. THE GIRONA EMBROIDERY

At the center of the remaining part of the Girona embroidery reigns Christ Pantocrator. Christ blesses with his right hand and holds an open book in his left, in which he is called *SCS DS* (sanctus Deus). The inscription on his halo describes him as *Rex fortis*. The surrounding circle, divided into radial compartments, presents Creation in an axial arrangement that does not follow the narrative sequence of Genesis. In the compartment above Christ is a dove with a cross halo, inscribed in a clipeus with the verse «Sp(iritu)s D(omin)i ferebatvr svp(ra) aqvas» (Gen. 1:2). The angel of Darkness (*tenebre*) and the angel of Light (*lvx*) both appear in the compartments flanking the image of the Holy Ghost, and following on both sides are two compartments, one with the creation of the firmament in the midst of the waters (Gen. 1:6), and another with the division of the waters (Gen. 1:6) and the creation of the lights of heaven (Gen. 1:14-19). Three additional compartments appear in the lower half of the creation circle. In the same axis with Christ and the Holy Ghost

3. This is an approach which I first proposed in *The Vision*, op.cit.

appear the creatures populating the waters and heaven (Gen. 1:20-21). Adam naming the animals (Gen. 2:20), and the creation of Eve (Gen. 2:21), follow on both sides. The creation at the third day was not depicted, but may be implied by the plentiful flora that springs up in the scenes of Adam and of Eve. The inscription on the band surrounding the Pantocrator reads «Dixit quoque D(eu)s fiat lux. Et facta e(st) lux» (Gen. 1:3), and the inscription on the band surrounding the Creation cycle – «In principio creavit D(eu)s celv(m) et terram mare et om(n)ia qva in eis svnt. Et vidit D(eu)s cvncta qve fecerat et erant valde bona,» noting the beginning of creation and God's satisfaction when seeing the results.

The axial, non-narrative arrangement, and the skipping of the third day allowed the artist to place the image of the Holy Ghost above Christ, as well as to present heaven in the upper half of the circle and earth in the lower one. The vertical symmetry, and the horizontal division into heavenly and earthly zones, emphasize Christ's rule over both. While the embroidery demonstrates creation, it illustrates neither the process nor the action of creation. Instead, it shows an allegory of the timeless Creation. In a similar way, the inscription around the double circle of the Christ-Logos and Creation does not refer to the whole process, but synthesizes it by quoting only the first and last verses of Genesis 1.

The imagery on the rectangular frame and in the corners between the frame and the concentric circles, is similarly organized - axially, integrating all the elements into a balanced symmetrical composition. In the corners between the circles and the frame are personifications of the four cardinal winds in the shape of winged angels astride air bags and blowing on horns. The frame itself is divided into compartments with medallions symmetrically placed on the sides and corners. In the middle of the upper border is a medallion – lined on the same axis with the Dove and Christ – enclosing the personification of the year, *Annus*, in the form of a long haired, bearded old man, holding the time wheel and a rod. Two medallions appear on the sides of the frame, near the lower border of the creation panel, also enclosing time personifications: *Dies solis* in a quadriga on the right border, and *Dies [lunae]* in a biga on the left. Two additional medallions, in the upper corners of the frame, portray personifications of two of the four Paradise rivers. It is likely that two similar medallions appeared in the lost lower corners of the embroidery, depicting the other two rivers (Gen. 2:11-14). The remainder of the fragmentary frame is divided into square compartments; on the upper border appear the four seasons, represented by the labors characteristic of each. The Seasons' pictures are flanked by Samson and perhaps Cain.⁴ The lateral borders present a cycle of the months, also depicted by typical labors, which was undoubtedly continued in the lost part.⁵

4. idem, pp. 28-29.

5. February (on the left) disappeared partially, and January (left), November and December (right) disappeared completely.

Below the creation panel is a strip with the Legend of the Finding of the Cross, which possibly formed part of the original embroidery. In its midst appear the top of a big, green, tilted cross, and a royal crown, indicating that a royal figure carrying the Holy Wood appeared in the lost part below.⁶

The Creation embroidery at the Cathedral of Girona combines biblical, cosmological, and possibly legendary elements. Even in its fragmentary state, we can read the iconographic program as a cycle, comprising the biblical creation and the fulfillment of the promise of salvation at the End of Days. The orderly cycles of the months and seasons convey the certainty of the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation,⁷ and the four winds, depicted as angels blowing horns, further verify it by alluding to Christ's second coming, when «he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other» (Matth. 24:31).⁸ Also John «... saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree... till [the angels] have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads» (Rev. 7:1-3). Also in Ezekiel 37:9-10 the four winds are instrumental in the resurrection of the dead at the Judgment.⁹

Perhaps most importantly, the central figure is that of Christ Pantocrator. He is «the firstborn of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible... all things were created by him and for him...» (Col. 1:15-17). Christ is presented as «Rex fortis» in an image of *Maiestas Domini* which expresses the promise of his return, because «having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him... whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven» (Col. 1:20). Indeed, the Story of the Invention of the Cross, if it did belong to the original embroidery, would further enhance this promise: the cross that

6. The identification of this figure is problematic. After Palol (pp. 132-133), research has usually identified it as Constantine the Great. More recently Baert, pp. 115-125, identified the figure as Heraclius.
7. The twelfth century attitude to agriculture and manual work as penitence and a means of redemption may also be relevant. On this attitude, see M.A. Castiñeiras González, «Cycles de la Genèse et calendriers dans l'art roman hispanique. À propos du portail de l'église de Beleña del Sorbe (Guadalajara)», *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 38, 1995, pp. 309-317, and C. Frugoni, *Chiesa e lavoro agricolo nei testi e nelle immagini dall'età tardoantica all'età romanica*, Bologna, 1980.
8. Also Mark 13:27, who does not mention trumpets.
9. «Then he said unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.» In addition, the winds as carriers of God's glory are a common metaphor in Psalms, as in 104:3-4.

was the instrument of Christ's sacrifice is also the vivifying Cross of the legend,¹⁰ and will announce Christ's Second Coming.¹¹

The strict geometric and symmetric composition of the embroidery's surviving parts suggests that the missing parts conformed to the same principles. Accordingly, Palol proposed that the embroidery may have included a mirror composition at the bottom, with the Apocalyptic Christ reigning in majesty, possibly in the image of the Lamb. A cycle of the zodiac would complement the cycle of the months on the side borders, and the four elements and biblical figures would have mirrored the figures that appear on the upper border.¹²

In any case, even in its fragmentary state, the iconography of the embroidery illustrates the Creation and an anticipation of what time will bring.

2. THE ICONOLOGY OF THE GIRONA EMBROIDERY'S COMPOSITION

The embroidery's composition has its roots in schemes representing the heaven, earth and sea gods' dominions in Roman dome and floor decoration. It was adopted and adapted to Jewish context in synagogue mosaic pavements in early Byzantine Palestine, representing the power of the God of Israel as the source of life and all phenomena of nature and time. Later the composition was used in Christian representations and diagrams of the cosmos, mostly in Medieval computistical and bibli-

10. On the story see S. Borgehammar, *How the Holy Cross was Found. From Event to Medieval Legend*, Ph.D., Uppsala University, 1991, pp. 154-161, 201-271, and J.W. Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: the Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of her Finding of the True Cross*, Leiden, 1992, esp. pp. 165-171. Moreover, as I noticed elsewhere, the Roman liturgy for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross linked the Finding of the Cross, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. In the Sacramentary of Vic (Mus. Episc., Ms. 66, XLVIII, fol. 20-20v and 30, dated 1038, two prayers for the feast of the Inventio Crucis draw a parallel between the resurrection of the saints at the Crucifixion (Matth. 27:52-53), and the miracle of the resurrection of a dead man that verified the Cross. See LIX, v Nonas. «Inventio Sanctae Crucis. Alexandri, Eventii, Teodoli,» in A. Olivar, *Sacramentario de Vich*, Barcelona, 1953, p. 46. «CLXXXVI, feria vi. Missa Sanctae Crucis,» in Borgehammar, pp. 189-190, 122. For this association in other medieval Catalan liturgical texts: A. Olivar, ed., *Sacramentarium Rivipullense*, Madrid, Barcelona, 1964, p. 144; *M. Gros i Pujol*, El collectari-capitulari de la Catedral de Vic - Vic, Mus. Episc., ms. 99 (LXIV), *Miscel.lania liturgica catalana* 5, 1994, esp. pp. 110, 137, 141, 147, 156. For a concise account: L. Arad, *The Church of Santa Maria de Barberà del Vallès: iconography and iconology of the mural paintings*, Ph.D. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 145 ff. (Hebrew), and also id., «L'invention de la Vraie Croix à Santa Maria de Barberà del Vallès: une Exaltation de la Reconquista, le Comte et l'Eglise,» *Etudes Roussillonaises*, 20, 2003, p. 43.
11. Matth. 24:30; Augustine, PL, 39/2051; John Chrysostom, PG, 46/403, 413; The Gospel of Peter, 10.36, in: E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, Towbridge, Wiltshire, 1973, pp. 185-186; Apocalypse of Peter (ethiopic text), 1, in: id., vol. 2, pp. 625-626.
12. Palol, pp. 74-77, fig. 62. According to this ambitious reconstruction, the original embroidery would have presented a most complex and sophisticated iconographic program, and would have reached thrice its present length.

cal manuscripts, as well as in ritual objects. Common to all the cosmic representations is the feeling of awe and admiration of man, pondering the nature of the universe and the supernatural beings ruling it, be them the Pagan gods or the One God creator and ruler of the cosmos. These feelings are often related to eschatological beliefs.

2.1 *Late Antique and early Christian cosmological representations*

The scheme of concentric circles inscribed in a square usually honors the main heaven, earth and sea gods, by placing them at the center, surrounded by other gods, stars and the zodiac; personifications of the seasons, cardinal winds or celestials beings, appear in the corners between the circles and the square frame.¹³

A floor mosaic from a Roman villa at Hinton St. Mary, Dorset, dated to the late fourth century,¹⁴ can exemplify the use of the pagan compositional scheme in a Christian context, already in the early Christian period. The mosaic, of the type called «peopled geometric carpet,» is divided into a rectangular and a square panel, with a smaller geometric panel in between. At the center of the square panel is a medallion, emphasized by a rich decorative border, enclosing the figure of a young man dressed in a tunic and a pallium. A Chi-Rho monogram appears behind his head, and a pomegranate on either side. It is generally agreed that the figure is Christ. Semi-circles at the sides of the square enclose hunting scenes and a tree, and quarter-circles in the four corners enclose four male busts, probably derived from personifications of Wind gods.¹⁵ The pomegranates are not merely fortuitous ornament, rather a Christian symbol of resurrection, and as we have seen, images of the cardinal winds would add a cosmic layer of meaning to the scene, as well as an eschatological message in Jewish or Christian contexts. The rectangular panel of the Hinton St. Mary floor mosaic presents Bellerophon killing the Chimaera, and hunting scenes.

The depiction of the sacred image of Christ where it might be trodden on, and its depiction together with a mythological subject, are most unusual. The Hinton St. Mary floor mosaic is one example of a symbiosis of pagan and Christian elements in the fourth century.¹⁶ In the con-

13. K. Lehmann, «The Dome of Heaven,» *Art Bulletin*, 27, 1945, pp. 1-27; K. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge, NY, 1999; id., *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa. Studies in Iconography and Patronage*, Oxford, 1978 (Monographs in Classical Archeology); S. Campbell, *The Mosaics of Antioch*, Toronto, Ontario, 1988; D. Parrish, *Season Mosaics of North Africa*, Rome, 1984; Arad, *The Vision*, esp. pp. 45-53.
14. Now in the British Museum. See Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek*, pp. 95-96.
15. Similar personifications appear in the related floor mosaics at Frampton, see id., p. 95; M. Stokstad, *Medieval Art*, p. 35, identifies the corner figures as the four evangelists.
16. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek*, p. 96.

text of this study, the compositional scheme exemplifies this symbiosis as well.¹⁷

2.2 Synagogue floor mosaics in early Byzantine Palestine

The intermediaries between the pagan Late Antique and Early Christian cosmic scheme, and the eleventh and twelfth centuries works having similar compositions centered on Christ, are mainly Carolingian manuscripts and ritual objects. The Late Antique scheme may have influenced Carolingian works directly, or there may have been additional intermediaries such as floor mosaics of synagogues in early Byzantine Palestine, presenting Helios or the sun and the zodiac in concentric circles framed in a square, with personifications of the four seasons in the corner spaces.¹⁸

These Palestinian synagogue mosaics are dated between the fourth and sixth centuries, and their special iconography was found only in that specific geographical area and period, thus pointing to its local relevance at the time.¹⁹ In all mosaics, the zodiac wheel does not appear by itself, but as part of an axial composition facing the Torah shrine, associating the zodiac with emblematic representations of an architectural façade and Jewish ritual implements in the panel closest to the *bema*.²⁰ The architectural façade is a synthesis of the Temple façade, the Tabernacle and the synagogue Torah shrine, as evidenced by the accompanying cult utensils used in them. Based on Psalms 19, 148:1-6, and 65:9-13, Helios or the sun at the center of the zodiac belt, with the Seasons in the

17. To the same iconographic tradition belongs a floor mosaic in Die, also from the early Christian period. The dome of heaven appears as concentric circles of stars surrounded by an additional circle with the names of the four rivers of Paradise, and by their personifications rendered as heads pouring water from the mouth into the corners of the square panel; in two of the corners appear personifications of the Winds, and in the others plants and small animals. The compositional scheme frequently appears in the decoration of Christian monuments. One example, similarly centered in the starry sky, is the Creation dome in the cathedral of San Marco, Venezia, dated to the 13th century; another example, centered on the cross surrounded by stars, is the dome of the so-called mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, dated to the fifth century. See Lehmann, *passim*, and Arad, *The Vision*, pp. 54 ff.
18. Arad, *The Vision*, esp. pp. 55 ff. More recently, B. Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things. Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art*, Regensburg, 2003, pp. 45 ff. We should notice that J. Calzada i Oliveras, in his «El mosaic de la sinagoga de Beth-Alpha i el Tapís de la Creació de la Catedral de Girona,» *Revista de Girona*, 92, 1980, esp. pp. 199-200, compares the Beth-Alpha mosaic and the embroidery in order to support his opinion that the original embroidery could have included the strip with the Story of the Invention of the Cross. Calzada does not deal with the cosmic symbolism of the compositional scheme shared by both works.
19. Weiss and E. Netzer, *passim*; B. Kühnel, «The Synagogue Floor Mosaic in Sepphoris: Between Paganism and Christianity,» in: L.I. Levine and Z. Weiss, eds., *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, Portsmouth, R. I., 2000 (*Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Suppl. Ser. no. 40), pp. 31-43.
20. In the Sepphoris' synagogue mosaic the time cycle includes both the zodiac and the months. See Z. Weiss and E. Netzer, *Promise and Redemption, a Synagogue mosaic from Sepphoris*, Jerusalem, 1996, fig. p. 27.

corners of the square frame, can be read as an image of the cosmos pointing out the divine, harmonious and stable order, dictated by the God of Israel. Also, a Midrash²¹ sees in the sun a symbol of the greatness and power of God, and of the light announcing the coming redemption.

In the Sepphoris and Beth-Alpha mosaics (fig. 2), the Sacrifice of Isaac appears at the panels farthest from the *bema*, clearly associating Mount Moriah and God's promise to Abraham to the Temple, as well as the Tabernacle and the synagogue. This association expresses the belief that God's promises in the past shall be fulfilled.²² In the Naaran and the Susiya synagogues appears another scene of salvation through faith - Daniel in the Lions' Den. The cycles of nature and time are thus connected to the salvation message in biblical scenes, in order to assert the certainty of future redemption.²³

We should notice that the Christian representation closest in time to that of Helios at the center of the zodiac wheel in the Palestine synagogues, appears in the same geographical area: a floor mosaic in the Monastery of the Lady Mary at Beth-She'an, dated to the sixth century. However, in this mosaic, it is not Helios at the center, but busts personifying Sol and Luna, and they are not surrounded by the zodiac, but by a cycle of the months, the concentric circles drawn on the background of a geometric inhabited pattern.²⁴

The first extant representations of the zodiac wheel in a Christian context are dated to the ninth century. The absence of the zodiac in earlier works is somewhat puzzling, considering the popularity of belief in astrology, that in spite of protests by some of the Fathers of the Church, was adopted already by early mainstream theologians like St. Clement of Alexandria in the early third century, and St Basil the Great and St. Zeno in the fourth century.²⁵ It may be that the Jewish association of the zodi-

21. Talmud Babli, Sanhedrin, 99, 71; also E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 8: *Pagan Symbols in Judaism*, New York, 1953, pp. 185-186. As the Sepphoris synagogue floor mosaic has shown, this panel is not a depiction of the pagan God, and must be considered only in conjunction with the emblematic panel of Jewish cult in the Tabernacle, the Temple and the synagogue. See Weiss and Netzer, pp. 36-37.
22. Bereshit Rabba 56:10. Also Pesikta de Rabbi Kahana 23:9. After Weiss and Netzer, p. 34. Redemption would mean the rebuilding of the Temple and the return to Jerusalem, confirming the truth and validity of the Jewish faith and traditions at a time that Jerusalem was becoming a Christian city. Also Kühnel, *The Synagogue*, esp. p. 41.
23. For a summary of earlier interpretations see G. Foerster, «Representations of the Zodiac in Ancient Synagogues and their iconographic sources,» *Eretz Israel*, 18, 1985, pp. 380-391, and of the same author, «The Zodiac in Ancient Synagogues and its Place in Jewish Thought and Literature,» *Eretz Israel*, 19, 1987, pp. 225-234 (both Hebrew).
24. G.M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beth-Shean (Scythopolis)*, Philadelphia, 1939, and P. Figueras, «Motivos paganos en mosaicos cristianos y judíos de Oriente: problemática e interpretación,» (III), *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, serie II, Historia Antigua, 14, 2001, pp. 162-163.
25. St. Clement of Alexandria, *Strommata* V, V (PG 9/58-62), and St. Basil the Great, *Hexameron*, both quoted by Figueras, pp. 158, 160. For St. Zeno see his *Ad neophytos post baptisma*, IV, *De duodecim Signis*, II, 43 (PL, 11/492-496).

ac in early Byzantine Palestine is the reason for its absence in early Christian art, but the adoption and adaptation of the pagan motif in Jewish art could also have paved the way for the Christian depictions,²⁶ and then to the replacement of the pagan image with that of Christ. The ninth century examples are based on ancient astronomical and astrological manuscripts, which were copied and compiled in Carolingian court scriptoria. There is similarity in form and content between the Byzantine synagogues floor mosaics, and the Christian representations of nature and cyclical time – organized in concentric circles framed in a square and centered on Sol, Annus, or Christ – produced from Carolingian times onwards. Some of the earliest Christian schemes of the zodiac in Carolingian manuscripts seem to be confluences of the synagogues' and the Lady Mary monastery mosaics.²⁷ Whether the synagogues' mosaics paved the way for the Christian representations or not, we cannot ignore the similarity between these and the Girona embroidery's composition.

2.3 *The development of Medieval cosmological schemes depicting the creation and cyclical time*

The Medieval cosmological scheme, presenting Christ at the center of the creation and cyclical time, probably developed from computistical and astronomical diagrams, which in the early Middle Ages were dominated by the circle repeated in a variety of symmetrical combinations, or associated with other geometrical shapes, mostly with the square. The scientific illuminations often included personifications of the cosmos and nature, and since Medieval theologians and artists did not address the scientific and the religious as distinct genres, they often became an instrument of Christian exegesis.²⁸

The illustrations of Isidore of Seville's treatise *Liber de natura rerum*, also known as *Liber rotarum* because of its circular diagrams,²⁹ are paradigmatic. The treatise – written between 612 and 613 for king Sisebutus who was interested in an explanation of eclipses – linked the natural sciences with the interpretation of scripture.³⁰ Following classical treatises, Isidore compared the year to circles,³¹ and since the circle was the sym-

26. Arad, *The Vision*, pp. 55 ff; Kühnel, *The synagogue*, p. 43.

27. For instance, St. Gall, *Stiftsbibliothek*, Nr. 250, p. 515. See id., fig. 18.

28. Kühnel, *The End of Time*, esp. pp. 160 ff.

29. The *rotae* illustrate the cycle of the months, the cycle of the seasons, the circles of the cosmos, the elements, the planets, the winds, and the inhabited world in T-O schemes. The diagrams were included by Isidore himself.

30. J. Fontaine, ed. and tr., *Isidore de Séville. Traité de la nature*, Bordeaux, 1960, esp. pp. 1-18; also B. Obrist, «Le diagramme isidorien des saisons, son contenu physique et les représentations figuratives,» *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Moyen Age*, 108, 1996, pp. 95-164, stressing the scientific approach (pp. 111 ff.).

31. *De natura rerum*, VI. 2. 10-12: «Annum autem quasi anum dici quidam putant, id est circulum. Unde et anuli dicti sunt diminutive,» and *Etymologiae* V. 36. 1: «Annus

bol of all recurrent phenomena, its symbolical meaning was extended to the cycle of the months. The idea was visually expressed in Isidore's circular diagrams. The theological dimension is reflected not only textually, but also visually, already in the earliest extant manuscripts of Isidore's *De natura rerum*;³² for instance, in a manuscript from Fleury, dated c.700,³³ the first *rota* shows the cycle of the months centered on a frontal Orant figure, who has been identified as Christ, in a gesture which implies salvation following sacrifice. In a manuscript from St. Gall, dated to 760-770,³⁴ a figure with his hand on his breast, flanked by two birds in a heraldic composition at the center of the wheel of months, has also been identified as Christ. Thus, the Fleury and the St. Gall miniatures presenting the cycle of the months allude to salvation at the End of Days.

The second *rota* in Isidore's treatise, illuminating the chapter on the seasons, is also derived from the chapter on the years. This illumination also exemplifies a cosmic scheme imbued with Christian symbolism, because the text typically associates nature and the Christian doctrine, and gives a dual definition of the year as the circular motion of the sun during twelve months, as well as earthly time which will come to an end with the Last Judgment.³⁵ At the center of the wheel is *Annus*, and inscriptions carrying the names of the seasons, their qualities and the corresponding cardinal directions, are placed opposite each other in a symmetric diagram intertwining half circles that draw a cross with flaring arms. The cross shape adds a cosmic and eschatological dimension to the diagram.³⁶ The fifth Isidorean wheel, illuminating the relation between the macro and the microcosm, is very similar to the second, however at its center is written «*mundus-annus-homo*».³⁷

These examples demonstrate that for some illuminators the Isidorean diagrams were a means of exegesis, not only an illustration of the scientific text. The same purpose motivated illuminators of other medieval scientific works.³⁸ As a result, imagery that until then did not appear in Christian context, found its way into Christian scientific and theological

autem dictus quia mensibus in se recurrentibus volvitur. Unde et anulus [dicitur], quasi annuus, id est circulus, quod in se redeat.» After Obrist, p. 132.

32. These are dated to the second half of the seventh century. Obrist (pp. 98-99), noting that illustrators usually copied the diagrams with no substantial alterations.
33. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 6400G, known as the palimpsest of Fleury, fol. 117v. See Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 126 ff., fig. 40.
34. Ms. no. 238, p. 325. Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 128 ff., fig. 41.
35. Fontaine, pp. 191-197; Obrist, pp. 100 ff.; Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 131-132.
36. For instance, Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 423, fol. 8v, and Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm, 16128, fol. 11. See Obrist, figs. 1 and 2 respectively, and Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 131-132, figs. 50 and 51 respectively.
37. For example, in the Laon Ms. 423, fol. 12 (Obrist, fig. 3, and Kühnel, *The End of Time*, fig. 53), or Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm, 16128, fol. 16 (Kühnel, *The End of Time*, fig. 55), or, in the same library, Clm 14300, fol. 8 (Obrist, fig. 4).
38. Obrist, *passim*; Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 131 and *passim*.

works. For instance, about a century later, Isidore's work inspired Bede the Venerable to write a treatise also titled *De natura rerum*, that was illuminated by Isidorean *rotae* and became very popular in Carolingian schools. Bober proposed that there was another early-illustrated schoolbook on the same general subject, compiled of chapters mostly from Bede but also from Isidore, which was written for the Carolingian schools of the tenth century. These schoolbooks were illustrated with geometric shapes and sub-texts largely taken from Isidore, and similarly invested with a theological meaning.³⁹ Both Isidore and Bede, writing about the orderly scheme of the world, referred to the cosmos as *ornamentum*, suggesting there is nothing more beautiful to human eyes than the created world.⁴⁰

Carolingian centers of learning, dedicated to the study, translation and copying of classical texts, provided the conditions for the combination of Christian exegesis with classical cosmic diagrams organized in concentric circles, with the zodiac or the months centered on Sol or Anus. The earliest extant depiction of Sol at the center of the zodiac, in a Christian milieu, is a miniature in a scientific miscellany from Regensburg, dated to c.820.⁴¹ Between the bust of Sol and the zodiac belt, other concentric circles present the Latin names of the zodiac signs and of the twelve months, and the names of the Hebrew (*heb*) months transcribed to Latin. Around the wheel appear the names of the Greek (*gr*) and Egyptian (*aeg*) months also transcribed to Latin. Similar miniatures were the roots of later renderings of the zodiac and creation cycles centered on Christ.

The interpretation of the sun as an allegorical image of Christ was common in Christian theology, based mainly on Psalms, especially 19 and 65, and Malachi 4. For instance, in his *De natura rerum*, Isidore describes the natural properties of the sun and then gives it a spiritual interpretation as Christ, based on Malachi: for those who believe, the sun of justice will rise and bring salvation on its wings. In another metaphor, Isidore says that «the sun illuminates and warms, strenghtening those who are in good health, but burning those who are feverish by raising their temperature. The same goes with Christ: He illuminates the way of

39. H. Bober, «*In Principio. Creation before Time,*» in: M. Meiss, ed., *De artibus opuscula XL. Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, vol. 1, New York, 1961, p. 19 ff.; id., «An Illustrated Medieval School-Book of Bede's *De Natura Rerum*,» *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 19-20, 1956/1957, pp. 65-97.

40. Isidoro, *Etimologías*, XIII, 2, J. Oroz Reta and M.A. Marcos Casquero, eds., vol. 2, Madrid, 1994, pp. 124-125; Bede, *De natura rerum*, III, in: *Bedae Venerabilis Opera*, I, *Didascalica*, in *Corpus Christianorum. Series latina*, CXXIII A, Turnholt, 1975, p. 192. After M.A. Castiñeiras González, «From Chaos to Cosmos: The Creation Iconography in the Catalan Romanesque Bibles,» *Arte Medievale*, nuova serie, anno I, 2002:1, p. 44.

41. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14456, fol. 73. See Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 166-167, fig. 105, noting that the miniature could point to the presence of an Oriental manuscript in a Carolingian scriptorium.

believers animated by the spirit of faith, but will burn in eternal fire those who resist faith.»⁴² Also in the seventh century, Athanasius Sinaites emphasized the function of the sun and the moon in the creation as an allegory of the spiritual function of Christ and his church: «On heaven, Helios reigns and presides... Similarly, Christ, the spiritual sun, reigns on heaven above all dominions and powers, because he is the gate and the master that guides [believers] to the Father... Selene throws her light on men in earth, because she [Selene] is the Church...»⁴³ In fact, Clement of Alexandria had already pointed out the supremacy of the sun over planets and stars and its central position, that likens it to God in his central role in the creation. Clement compared the relation between the sun and the planets to the seven branched *menorah*, which is an enigmatic symbol of the cross of Christ that enlightens believers.⁴⁴ The sun was not the only allegorical image of Christ – the zodiac has become a christological allegory as well. The Irish scholar John Scottus Eriugena, who came to the court of Charles the Bald in the mid-ninth century, drew a parallel between the zodiac signs and key events in the life of Christ. This and similar parallels may have paved the way for the depiction of the sun at the center of the zodiac belt in Carolingian monuments.⁴⁵ It seems, however, that only in the second millennium did the figure of Sol at the center of the zodiac or the months cycle become openly identified with that of Christ.⁴⁶ In that period, the pagan identity was assimilated into the Christian one, and cosmological subjects were assimilated into biblical ones.

The conflation of astrological and cosmological diagrams centered on Sol, and the image of the cosmos centered on Christ, are exemplified by a miniature in a medical miscellany, most likely originating in Italy, dated to the second half of the eleventh century (fig. 3).⁴⁷ Sol invictus appears in the inner circle surrounded by a zodiac wheel,⁴⁸ but the frontal, hieratic figure strongly recalls Christ raising his right hand in the typical Sol invictus blessing that he inherited long before;⁴⁹ in his left hand, re-

42. Isidore, *De natura rerum*, 15, 3. After Fontaine, pp. 227-228, and Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 94.

43. *Hexameron*, V (PG 89/113 c-d and 1076 c-d). See Figueras, pp. 161-162.

44. *Strommata*, V, V (PG 9/59-62). After Figueras, pp. 159-160.

45. In his poem *Aulae sidereae*, Eriugena described the decoration of a vault with the figures of the sun, the seasons and the zodiac, which probably refers to the dome in Charles' royal chapel at St. Mary of Compiègne. See M. Vieillard Troïekourov, «La chapelle du palais de Charles le Chauve à Compiègne,» *Cahiers archéologiques*, 21, 1971, pp. 89-108.

46. Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 167.

47. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 7028, *Medicina antiqua*, fol. 154. F. Avril and Y. Zaluska, *Manuscrits enluminés d'origine italienne*, vol. 1: *VI-XII siècles*, Paris, 1980 (Catalogue de la Bibliothèque nationale), no. 49, pp. 27 ff., pl. XV. Also Arad, *The Vision*, pp. 60-61, fig. 111, and Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 162 ff., fig. 99.

48. Reflecting Medieval medical practices, on the frame of the concentric circles are inscribed the names of the zodiac signs paired with a human organ. See id.

49. Arad, *The Vision*, pp. 60-61.

placing the book, Sol-Christ holds a disc with an eight-ray star representing the sun, which too had long before become an attribute of Christ.⁵⁰ A pair of similar stars flank his figure. At the corners, bust personifications of the Seasons are enclosed in medallions. The miniature's five-circle composition is found in astronomical as well as in biblical Carolingian manuscripts.⁵¹ Significantly, the composition also recalls depictions of Helios riding in a quadriga, at the center of a zodiac wheel framed in a square, with four seasons in the corners, which was popular in Roman mosaics and in synagogue floor mosaics in early Byzantine Palestine.

The process of the replacement of Sol at the center of the zodiac wheel by Christ at the center of creation and a time cycle, in cosmological representations such as the Girona embroidery, may have included an intermediary group of works centered on *Annus* between them and the earlier, mostly non-figural Carolingian diagrams of the cosmos. Two of these presumed intermediaries are dated to the last quarter of the tenth century: the embroidery of St. Cunibert in Cologne, and a miniature in a Sacramentary from Fulda.

The St. Cunibert embroidery has three parts. The outer, square sections depict complementary themes, while the central section is ornamental.⁵² The most relevant of the sections shows *Annus* at the center of three concentric circles. *Annus* is sitting on an arch, holding in his raised hands the heads of *Dies* and *Nox*. Two wheels on each side of *Annus* recall Sol's quadriga, as well as the wheels of fire in the apocalyptic visions of Ezekiel (1, 10:6-10) and Daniel (7:9). In the middle circle are medallions with bust figures of the four elements and the four seasons, in cross and diagonal arrangements respectively, and in the exterior circle are the signs of the zodiac, in medallions as well. In the bottom corners, between the concentric circles and the frame, are personifications of *Terra* and *Oceanus*, and in the upper corners the letters *Alpha* and *Omega*. The two apocalyptic letters (Rev. 1:8, 22:13), as well as the fire wheels and the personifications of *Terra* and *Oceanus*, present *Annus* as Christ.⁵³ At the opposite end of the embroidery, personifications of *Sol* and *Luna* in the inner circle are surrounded by the zodiac signs in medallions, distributed in four radial sections. Thus the embroidery presents the elements of nature and time united in Christ at the Beginning and at the End of Days.

50. For example in a cosmological miniature in a manuscript in St.Gall, no.250, p.640. See Kühnel, *The End of Time*, fig. 102.

51. Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 76 ff.

52. Arad, *The Vision*, 58-59; Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 198-199.

53. Examples of this scheme of *Terra* and *Oceanus* are the miniature of the Pantocrator in the Sacramentary of Metz, of the school of Charles the Bald, dated to the second half of the ninth century (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1141, fol. 6) (Arad, *The Vision*, pp. 58-59, fig. 77), and an ivory bookcover in St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek Cod. 53, dated c.900 (A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der Karolingischen und Sächsischen Kaiser, VIII.-XI. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, Berlin, 1969, pl. LXXV, fig. 163a).

A very similar image, carrying a similar message, appears in the Sacramentary from Fulda.⁵⁴ The concentric circles are placed within an architectural frame. In the inner circle *Annus* holds bust personifications of *Sol* and *Luna*, and at his sides are the four wheels of a quadriga, which relate the Time god with *Sol* and with the enthroned Christ in heaven.⁵⁵ In the middle circle are medallions with personifications of the four elements arranged as a cross in an axis with *Annus*-Christ. The outer circle shows the Labours of the Months, with medallions of the four Seasons in the diagonal axes between them.

Annus was very popular in Medieval cosmological representations, perhaps because the astronomical context has blurred the pagan identity.⁵⁶ As demonstrated by the St. Cunibert embroidery and the Fulda Sacramentary, *Annus* often presented christological elements that turned him into an allegory of Christ Chronocrator-Cosmocrator.⁵⁷ In this context we should notice striking representations of Christ holding bust-personifications of Light and Darkness, similar to *Annus* holding *Dies* and *Nox* in the St. Cunibert embroidery, or *Sol* and *Luna* in the Fulda Sacramentary. One example is a miniature of the creation in a manuscript of Josephus Flavius' *Antiquitates Judaicae* from the Abbey of St. Trond, dated between 1170 and 1180.⁵⁸

2.3.1 *From Creation to Salvation: the creation and cyclical time in twelfth century cosmological schemes*

Scriptural references to Christ as Creator, Pantocrator and Chronocrator are common,⁵⁹ and the relation between Creation and Salvation has a rich theological basis. At first, as we have seen, these concepts were visually expressed in cosmological schemes that present *Sol* or *Annus* at the center of the cosmos surrounded by images of cyclical time. Around the year 1100, this cosmological composition, and emblems of the biblical creation and salvation centered on Christ, were

54. Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Theol. Lat. 231, fol. 250v. See P. Springer, «*Trinitas-Creator-Annus*, Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Trinitätsikonographie,» *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch*, 38, 1976, p. 38, fig. 26. Also Arad, *The Vision*, p. 59, fig. 110, and Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 199, fig. 129.
55. The association between *Sol*, *Annus* and Christ found various visual expressions. See Springer, pp. 17-45, esp. 35 ff., and Arad, *The Vision*, esp. 58-63. On the four wheels in the St. Cunibert tapestry and the Fulda Sacramentary, reflecting both Hieronymus and Hrabanus Maurus' exegesis to Ezekiel, see Castiñeiras González, *From Chaos to Cosmos*, p. 46.
56. Arad, *The Vision*, p. 59.
57. Springer, *passim*.
58. Chantilly, Musée Condé, ms. 1632, fol. 3. See D. Glass, «*In principio: The Creation in the Middle Ages*,» in: L.D. Roberts, ed., *Approaches to Nature in the Middle Ages, Papers of the Tenth Annual Conference of the Centre for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*, Binghamton, NY, 1982, pp. 76 f., fig. 4.
59. For example Acts 14:15-17 and 17:24 ff.

conflated and organized in concentric circles, interrelated with the surrounding elements by a cross and diagonal axes. At the same time other illustrations appeared, placing Christ at the center of a creation cycle organized in other orderly patterns. The fact that this image of the creation has been figured in books other than Bibles, attests to its symbolical meaning.⁶⁰ All images present Christ both as the Creator at the Beginning and as the Savior at the End of Days, thus relating the creation to the course of Christian history.

Similar to the Girona embroidery, another known example of a Creation and a time cycle organized in concentric circles and centered on Christ, is dated around 1100. It appears on the frontispiece of a Homilies' manuscript in Verdun (fig. 4).⁶¹ The Creation wheel is at the center, in the background of a light blue square band contrasting with the yellow bands above and below. The representation of the creation itself is unconventional and significantly different from that in the Girona embroidery. The six days are represented by personifications, each holding an attribute and referring to the creation in the respective day. The image in the central medallion is unique as well: the enthroned Christ protectively holds and blesses a small, half-kneeling figure, who has been identified as a personification of the seventh day, or Adam.⁶² In either case, the central circles present the first creation as the perfect creation through Christ.⁶³

Revealing further similarity to the Girona embroidery, the motifs in the spaces between the concentric circles and the rectangular frame of the Verdun miniature, as well as those in the frame itself, belong to the time cycle and the cosmic repertoire, and emphasize the eschatological message suggested by the biblical theme, shown in the central circles. In the same axis with Christ and the small human figure are two personifications in medallions: at the top a man holding a light as *Lux* or *Dies*, and on the bottom a woman with her head and hands covered by a dark mantle as *Tenebrae* or *Nox*. In the corner spaces are personifications of the four seasons. Winged heads of the four cardinal winds appear in the corners. Similarly to the related motifs of the four winged cardinal winds and the four rivers of Paradise in the Girona embroidery, the winged winds and the time elements in the Verdun miniature add a cosmic and simultaneously apocalyptic dimension, based on Matthew 24:31 and Revelation 7:1-3 – Christ gathering his elect from the four winds.

60. Glass, *passim*; C. Rudolph, «In the Beginning: Theories and images of creation in Northern Europe in the twelfth century,» *Art History*, 22:1, 1999, pp.3-55.

61. Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 1, fol. 1. See A. Heimann, «The Six Days of Creation in a Twelfth Century Manuscript,» *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1, 1937/1938, pp. 269-275, pl. 37a; Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 197, fig. 126.

62. Heimann, p. 270.

63. As Kühnel notes (*The End of Time*, p. 197), if the small figure could be identified as Adam, we might assume a more open reference to the recapitulation embodied by Christ as the new Adam.

The creation cycle centered on Christ appears in other twelfth century works which present the association between creation and salvation. One example is a miniature on folio 17 of a liturgical book, produced between 1138 and 1147 for the monastery of Zwiefalten (fig. 5).⁶⁴ Christ, enthroned and resting his feet on a globe, blesses with his right hand and points away with his left, drawing our attention to the event taking place on the margins of the Creation wheel: a combat between angels, who are placed to his right, and monsters figured on his left. The forces of right are led by Michael, standing on an axis with Christ, who defeats the Dragon and the forces of evil. The fleeing monsters are cast out into hell at the bottom right of the miniature, and to the left of the damned appear the Sin of Adam and Eve and their Expulsion from Paradise. Thus the miniature, perhaps alluding to Isaiah 66:1 and 40:22, also presents Christ as the Judge at the End of Days, linking Creation and Salvation, and visualizing the idea of man's fall leading to man's redemption. The miniature on the verso of folio 17 supports this message:⁶⁵ *Annus* sits on a globe at the center of the concentric circles like Christ Cosmocrator,⁶⁶ holding the heads of *Sol* and *Luna* and flanked by *Dies* and *Nox*; in the surrounding bands appear the zodiac signs and the Labors of the Months, with the heads of the twelve winds surrounding the wheel, all in a radial arrangement; the four Seasons are represented by their typical labours in the corners, and the four elements outside the rectangular frame. As with the Girona embroidery, the pair of miniatures of Zwiefalten present cyclical time, and the time when the promise of salvation will be fulfilled: the cyclical recurrence of natural phenomena and earthly time is a sign of the divine order of the cosmos, and thus of the certainty of redemption at the End of Days.

In a second example, the Creation miniature in the evangeliary of Henry the Lion (fig. 6), dated between 1173 and 1175,⁶⁷ the relation between Creation and Salvation is addressed mainly through the images of the first and the second Adam, who, as noticed above, may appear also in the central group of the Verdun miniature. In the evangeliary, the *Maestas Domini* is shown in a starry mandorla, blessing with his right hand and holding the book with his left. The inscription on the book reads

64. Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Hist 20415. See J. Zahlten, *Creatio mundi. Darstellungen der sechs Schöpfungstage und naturwissenschaftliches Weltbild im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, 1979, p. 51, fig. 59.
65. Zahlten, p. 51, fig. 60. As Kühnel points out (*The End of Time*, p. 200), the similarity suggests that the Genesis cycle and that of cyclical time are interrelated.
66. For instance, in the apse of San Vitale in Ravenna and San Lorenzo f.l.m. in Rome, in scenes of the creation cycle in the Monreale Cathedral, and in an eleventh century ivory from Amalfi now in the Staatlichen Museum of Berlin. Arad, *The Vision*, pp. 60-61.
67. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bib. Ms. Guelph 105 Noviss 20, fol. 172. H. Loebel, ed., *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen* (Herausgegeben von der Niedersächsischen Landeszentrale für politische Bildung), Hannover, 1984, pl. 11; Arad, *The Vision*, esp. p. 14, fig. 63; Rudolph, pp. 40-41, fig. 14.

«Ego dominus faciens omnia hec» (Is. 45:7). Six medallions with the six days of creation surround the theophany. This central motif is emphasized by a cruciform frame, further highlighted by four medallions with the symbols of the evangelists in the same axis. In the corners, four figures show scrolls with inscriptions referring to the Creator.⁶⁸ Not only does the cosmic composition share common elements with the Girona embroidery, moreover, the creation days are similarly shown in a non-narrative sequence. Significantly, the first day appears above Christ, with an angel extending his hands in a gesture of prayer in the foreground, and the sixth day appears in the same axis below Christ, with Adam echoing the angel's gesture and position.⁶⁹ The first creation is a type of the perfect creation through Christ, while the cross, framing both the Creator – in the apocalyptic image of the *Maiestas Domini* – and the Creation, refers to the Second Coming of the Savior at the End of Days.

The parallel depiction in Henry the Lion's of Adam and the angel in the same gesture of prayer, and in the same axis with the *Maiestas Domini* – Adam below and the angel above – can reflect John Scottus Eriugena's idea of the return or the elevation of man to angelic status at the End of Days. Throughout his *Periphyseon* or *De divisione naturae*, humans in their spiritual, incorporeal state achieve equality with the angels: «And that which he perfected in Himself particularly, He shall at the time of our Resurrection perfect generally in the whole of human nature – that is, not only shall He convert into spirit all things which humanity acquired from this material world after its transgression, but also shall bring it into an equal share of the heavenly glory of the angels.»⁷⁰

My final example is a miniature in a Missal from St. Michael in Hildesheim, dated c.1159,⁷¹ presenting a composition very close to the cosmic scheme we are studying, also conveying the relation between Creation and Salvation (fig. 7). Christ appears at the top of the miniature holding the wheel of Creation, centered on the creation of Eve, and flanked by two cherubs. At the bottom corner spaces appear the Expul-

68. Moses, David, Solomon, and the Christian philosopher Boethius. D. Kotszche, «Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen,» in H. Loebel, pp. 61-62; Rudolph, p. 41.

69. The other four days are read from left to right.

70. Eriugena, *Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)*, trans. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, rev. J.J. O'Meara, Montreal and Washington, 1987, pp. 564-565. Eriugena, who greatly influenced Medieval theology, draw from Gregory of Nyssa, whom he translated into Latin. Gregory of Nyssa wrote that God's original intention was to join man to the angelical choirs, and turn him into a spiritual being. See J.J. O'Meara, *Eriugena*, Oxford, 1988, p. 92. Though in another context J.-M. Musto, «John Scottus Eriugena and the Upper Cover of the Lindau Gospels,» *Gesta*, 40:1, 2001, p. 11, and Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 179. Also below.

71. Now in the Fürstenberg collection in Haus Brabecke (Sauerland), fol. 10v. See H. Swarzenski, *Monuments of Romanesque Art: the Art of Church Treasures in North Western Europe*, Chicago and London, 1954, repr. 1967, p. 79, fig. 479; J. Baltrusaitis, «L'image du monde céleste du IX^e au XII^e siècle,» *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 20, 1938, fig. 17; Arad, *The Vision*, p. 64, fig. 119; Kühnel, *The End of Time*, pp. 197-198, fig. 127.

sion from Paradise and the Slaying of Abel. An Old Testament figure, possibly David, appears on the same axis with Christ between the two biblical scenes. The composition – Christ in heaven at the top, holding Creation, Adam and Eve at the center on the same axis and the sins of the first men below – emphasizes the recapitulation through the new Adam. We can recall the same arrangement of the Sin below the images of the Creator and the Creation, and the triumph of Christ above, as it appears in the Creation miniature in the *Zwiefalten* liturgical book (fig. 5). There, the Sin appears in the images of the Fall and the Expulsion from Paradise, and Christ's triumph in the image of Michael defeating the Dragon.

Common to all examples mentioned, the iconography is enhanced by a composition drawing from cosmological and computistic diagrams in concentric circles, defining each layer by its distance from the center and thus creating hierarchy.⁷² The clear and orderly geometric layout – based on symmetry and organized along vertical, horizontal and diagonal axes, linking concentric circles and often a square – represents the perfect harmony and stability of the Christian creation on the one hand, and the perfection of the Christian plan of salvation on the other.

To mention but one more corroboration to the relevance of scientific texts and diagrams in the exegesis of biblical scenes, I will quote from Nicomachus of Gerasa's treatise on Arithmetic, written c.100 A.D., a text dealing with «arithmetic theology» or arithmology. The arithmologists studied the 'properties, virtues, and powers of numbers and geometric forms for their bearings on the origins and nature of the universe, the idea of which, as Nicomachus said, «is fixed like a preliminary sketch by the number pre-existent in the mind of the world-creating God».⁷³ Nicomachus' work, meant to prepare the reader for the study of philosophy, greatly influenced Boethius' *De Arithmetica*, which was written in Latin in the early sixth century, and through him reached Medieval mathematics in the context of Christian theology.⁷⁴

3. THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE COSMOLOGICAL SCHEME AND THE THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE

The association between Creation and Salvation being so common in Christian thought, suggests that identifying a specific exegetical source for the iconography of the Girona embroidery would not be essential.

72. R. Arenheim, *The Power of the Center. A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts*, Berkeley – Los Angeles and London 1982, vii-x, esp. ix-x; Arad, *The Vision*, esp. pp. 43-44.

73. Bober, «*In Principio*,» p. 15. Quoted also by Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 187.

74. I already noted the opposite but related and relevant case of scientific treatises drawing from theological thinking, and exemplified it by Isidore of Seville's influential *De natura rerum*, which associates cosmos and nature with Christian theology both in his text and illustrative diagrams.

The equation between Creation and Salvation is based on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 1:10 – «that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.»⁷⁵ God is said to recapitulate, or sum up all things in Christ.

Paul's concept of recapitulation was elaborated by Irenaeus, who interpreted it both as the restoration of the fallen humanity to communion with God through the obedience of Christ, and as the summing-up of the previous revelations of God in past ages in the Incarnation.⁷⁶ The Latin fathers used the notion of «recapitulatio» as well, to develop a theory of redemption, viewed under the dual aspect of deliverance from sin and restoration of man and the world to communion with God. Both these aspects were treated in the New Testament, especially in the Pauline Epistles, where the «redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses» (Eph. 1:7), and the dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10), are set forth as the interrelated effects of the work of the Redeemer. Hieronymus, in his exegesis of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, said that all the dispensation of visible or invisible creatures, taking place before and after the creation of the world, promised the coming of the Son of God. Adam expelled from Paradise had to be returned by the Savior... That is why everything is summed up in the Cross and the Passion of our Lord, and that is the meaning of the word 'recapitulation'.⁷⁷ In Augustine's, and later in Scholastic writings, redemption was more directly connected with original sin, which it was held to remove by restoring man to the state of original righteousness, lost by Adam's fall. In the doctrine of redemption the mystery of salvation is associated with the first creation, and is conceived as the goal toward which creation was oriented from the very beginning.⁷⁸ These main ideas were transmitted to the Middle Ages through theologians working in the Carolingian *milieu*, like Alcuin, Hrabanus Maurus, and especially John Scottus Eriugena. Eriugena developed his interpretation of the theory of return using ideas known specifically from the writings of Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine.⁷⁹ He emphasized the central, and generally accepted concept, that the salvation of man was planned at the time of creation.

75. J.-M. Dufort, «La récapitulation paulinienne dans l'exégèse des Pères,» *Sciences ecclésiastiques*, 12, 1960, pp. 21-38. A similar idea is expressed in the Epistle to the Colossians 1:15-17 and 1:20, already mentioned.

76. Irenaeus developed a doctrine of the recapitulation, or summary of human evolution in the Incarnate Christ, and thereby gave a positive value of its own to the manhood of Christ. See «Irenaeus,» *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. A. di Bernardino, Istituto patristico Augustinianum, Rome and New York, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 413-416.

77. PL, 26:454 A-B. A. Luneau, *Histoire du salut chez les Pères de l'Église*, Paris, 1964 (Théologie Historique, 2), pp. 275-276.

78. Dufort, p. 27; Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 173.

79. O'Meara, pp. 14-15, 29-31, 52 ff., 56, 69 ff., 75 ff., and passim.

Most interesting in the context of this study is the correspondence between the theory of return in the writings of Medieval theologians such as Eriugena, and the composition of the representations of the Creation and cyclical time that we have seen.

In his *Periphyseon*, Eriugena supports the theory of return with powerful metaphors, for instance, the orderly course of nature, recalling «the heavenly sphere of the fixed stars, which is perpetually revolving and returns to its original position every twenty-four hours.»⁸⁰ He describes the circuits of the sun and the moon, and concludes that «the natural laws governing the revolutions of the two great luminaries provide sufficient evidence of the doctrine [of return] being affirmed.» Eriugena then draws a parallel between nature and the Christian plan of salvation, «for the End of it is also its Beginning.»⁸¹ Redemption means the return and the unification with God until creature and Creator cannot be separated one from another, «for when there is nothing but God alone, God will be all things in all things.»⁸² In another passage, Eriugena writes that «it is God from Whom and through Whom and towards Whom all things are moved... He does not admit any motion»⁸³ – an explanation which may apply to the non-narrative depiction of the Creation in the Girona embroidery.

We noticed that the creation cycle in the Girona embroidery does not include sin. In the light of the commonly accepted exegesis to Paul's doctrine of recapitulation and the theory of return, the creation and cyclical time, centered on the image of Christ in majesty, with the four cardinal winds and the four rivers of Paradise in the corners, present not only an image of the Creation but the certainty of Christ's Second Coming at the End of Days and the future reward of the justs.

The corresponding study of computistic-astronomical diagrams and biblical iconography strongly suggests that their combination was motivated by the common interest in eschatology, the belief in the End of Time, and the concept of the destiny of mankind. Eschatology is a fundamental principle of Christian doctrine, which was based from the beginning on the promise of life after death and the liberating second coming of Christ. The eschatological references in these diagrams were evident to their audiences, primarily because they were well rooted in Carolingian learning, which, in turn, was based on well-known classical treatises.⁸⁴

80. Book V, in: O'Meara, p. 136, and also Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 178.

81. Book V, in: O'Meara, p. 137.

82. Book V, in: O'Meara, pp. 138, 139-142; Kühnel, *The End of Time*, p. 179.

83. Book I, in: O'Meara, p. 83. In another context: Musto, p. 13, explaining the motionless Christ in the Lindau Gospel's cover.

84. Obrist (pp. 108 f.) points to the wide interest of Carolingian learned circles in Roman astronomical cosmology, especially in treatises aimed to readdress the soul from terrestrial to spiritual matters, and prepare it for ascending to the celestial spheres by studying the cosmic order revealed in the disposition of the spheres and the regular course of the stars.

Ravenna wrote in his «Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis» about a baldachin commissioned by Maximianus, bishop of Ravenna (546-556). This piece, «nothing like it was seen before, was made of the finest linen. It showed the history of the Savior, and was placed over the altar of the Ursiana church at the feast of the Epiphany.»⁹⁶ In the latter case – its function as an ornament of the façade or of the apse wall – we should notice that the Girona cathedral was abundantly decorated with tapestries that covered its walls, altars, furniture and floor. It seems that the heavy and severe aspect of the Romanesque church did not suit the refined taste of the secular and the ecclesiastical ruling class, and the richly colored tapestries may have provided a magnificent scenery for the cult at festive occasions.⁹⁷ It is commonly known that in the bishopric of Girona, the late eleventh and the early twelfth centuries were a golden period. The construction of the cathedral, which was dedicated in 1038, was completed around the year 1100 with a richly sculpted façade and portal.⁹⁸

Therefore, the Creation embroidery could have been one of the precious liturgical objects donated to the cathedral, as previously suggested, at the dedication of the chapel of the Holy Sepulcher, or at the time of completion of the church.

CONCLUSIONS

The Girona embroidery presents a particularly rich version of an iconographical formula: a diagrammatical combination of the biblical Creation and Salvation. The iconographic program is a visual counterpart of the exegetical theory of return. It represents the basic elements in the theory of return as formulated by the Fathers of the Church, transmitted to the Middle Ages by Carolingian theologians on the one hand, and by artists on the other: the cyclical return of natural phenomena and earthly time is a sign of the fulfilment of redemption at the End of Days.

The composition, derived from computistical and cosmological diagrams, is essential to convey the eschatologically oriented web of associations, and enhances the impact of this liturgical implement.

96. Agnellus' treatise, the «Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis», is an elaborate account of the see, modelled on the «Liber Pontificalis» of Rome. It traces the history of the Ravenna Church from St. Apollinaris (c.200) to his own age, and in spite of some historical errors, contains important information on the buildings and customs of the city, especially at Agnellus' time. See PL, 106/610 and critical edition by O. Holder-Egger, in *MGH, Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum Saec. VI-IX*, 1878, pp. 265-391; Also F. Brunhölzt (trad. H. Rochais), *Histoire de la Littérature latine du Moyen Âge*, vol. 1: *De Cassiodore à la fin de la renaissance Carolingienne*, vol. 2: *L'Époque Carolingienne*, Turnhalt, 1991, pp. 245-246, and G. Fasoli, «Rileggendo il 'Liber Pontificalis' di Agnello Ravennate», *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, 17, 1970, pp. 475-495. I am grateful to Dr. Miquel Gros i Pujol for calling my attention to this important precedent.

97. Arad, *The Vision*, esp. pp. 41-42.

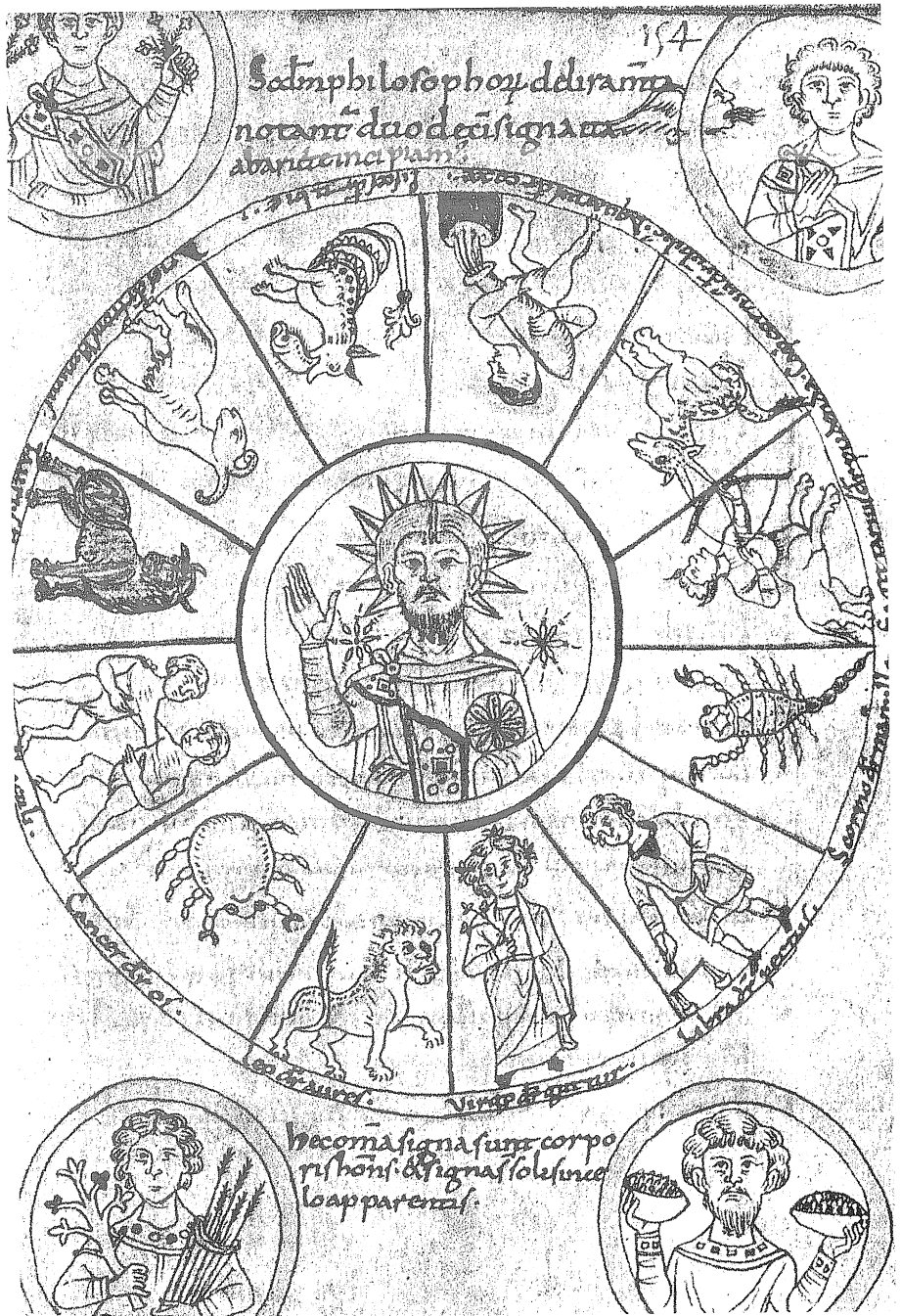
98. Marquès i Casanovas, pp. 217-219.



1. The Girona Cathedral embroidery



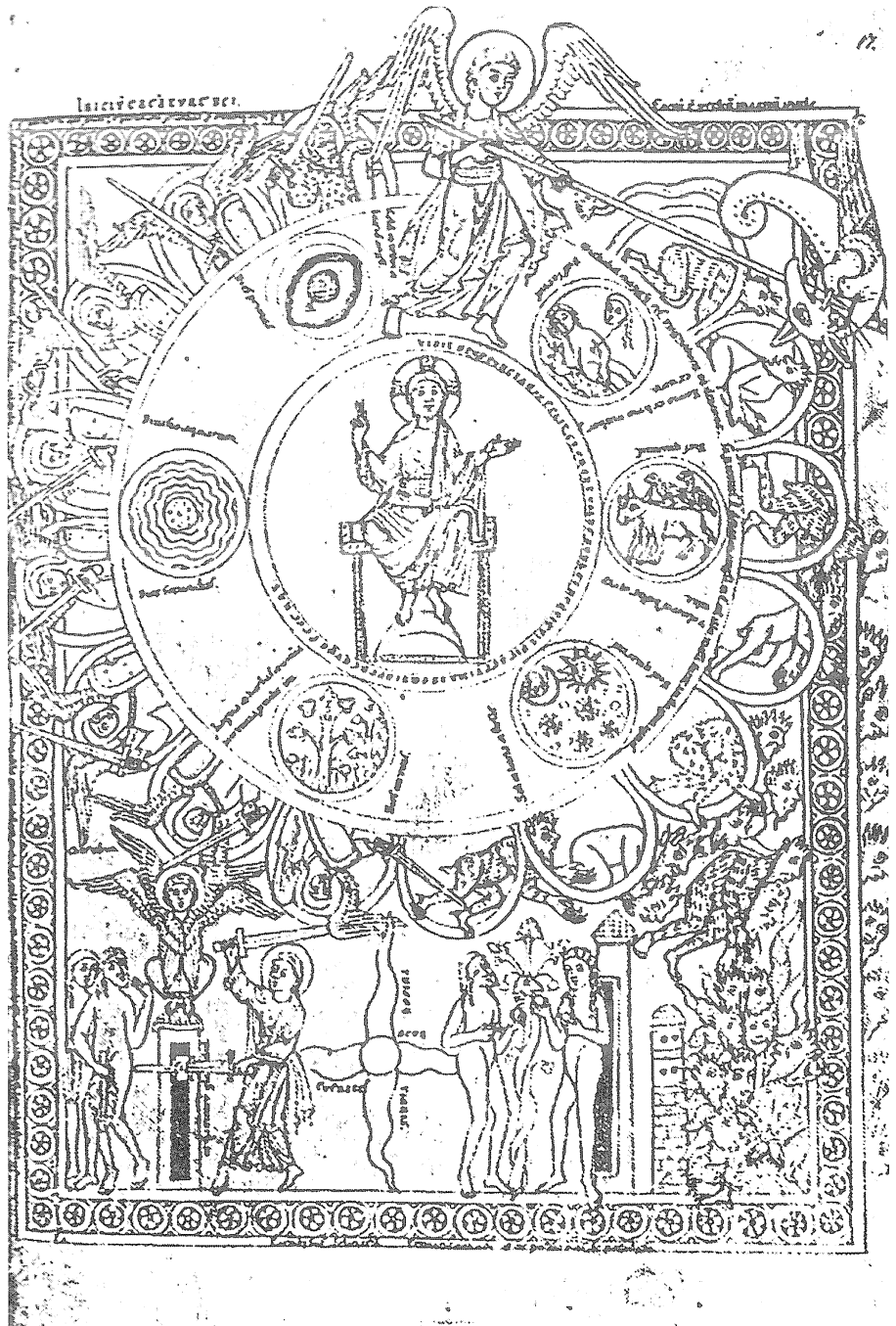
2. Beth-Alpha synagogue



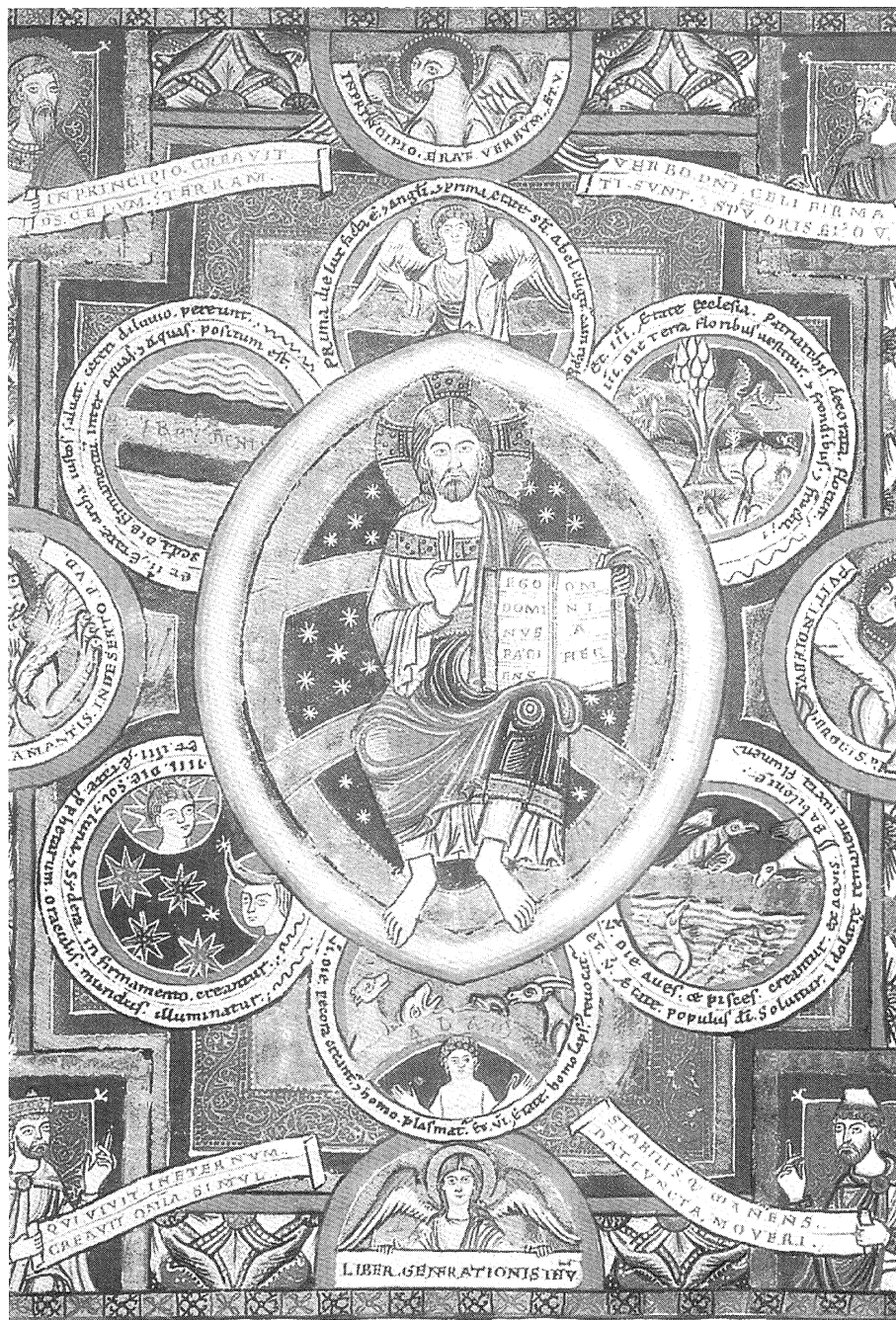
3. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 7028, Medicina antiqua, fol. 154 (Avril and Zaluska, pl. 15)



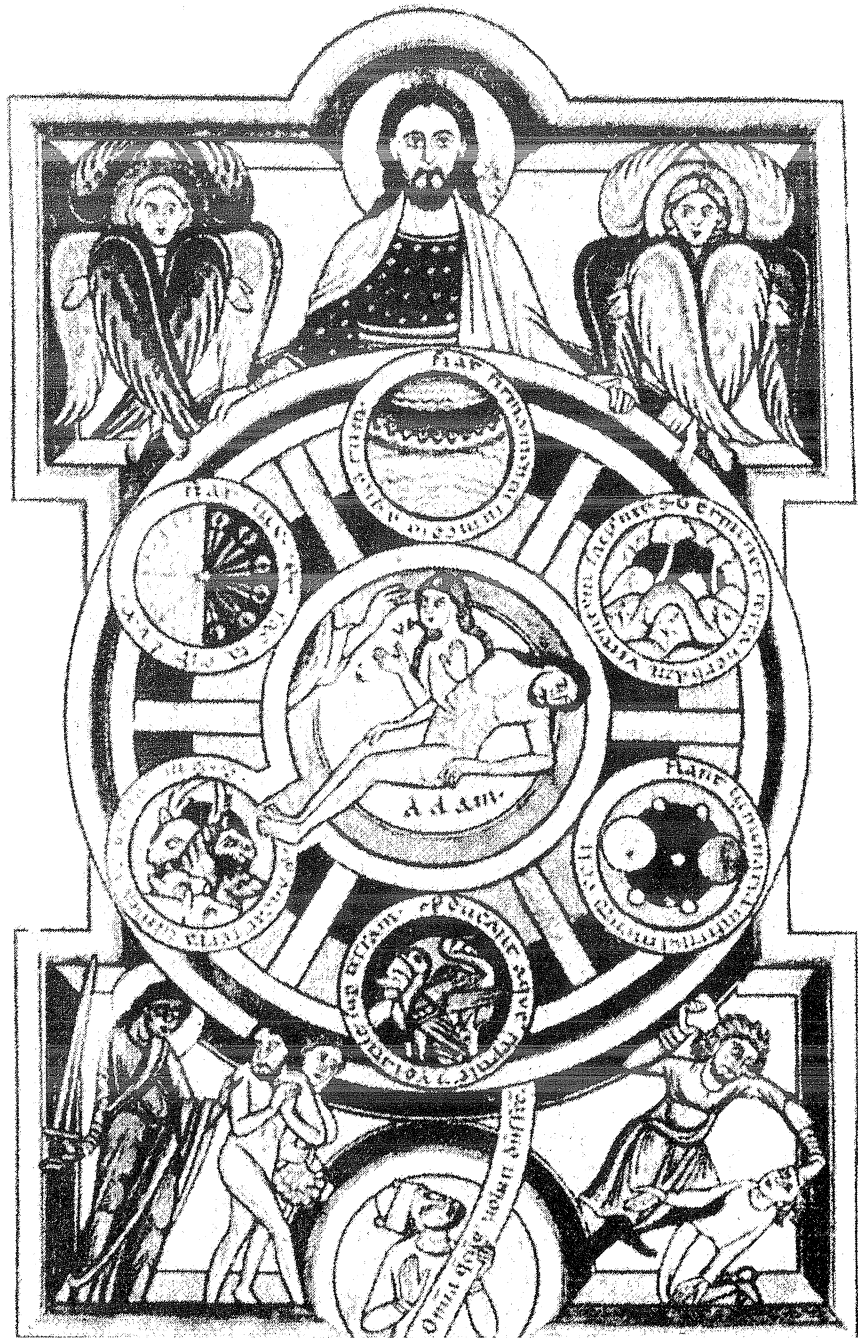
4. Verdun, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 1, fol. 1 (Heimann, pl. 37a)



5. Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Hist 2^o415 (Zahlten, fig. 59)



6. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bib. Ms. Guelph 105 Noviss 2°,
Evangelary of Henry the Lion, fol. 172 (Loebel, pl. 11)



7. Haus Brabecke (Sauerland), Fürstenberg Collection, Missal from St. Michael of Hildesheim, fol 10v. (Swarzenski, fig. 479)