The article examines the six parables included in the painted decoration of the Monastery of Dečani. The soteriological and eschatological content of the four parables depicted in the parecclesion of Saint Nicholas leads to the conclusion that it was most likely used for memorial services, although its use cannot be specified. The choice of these particular allegorical stories is due to their liturgical importance in the Sabaite Typikon, which was adopted by the Serbian Church since the early fourteenth century. During this period parables in general are beginning to be included in the iconographic program of Serbian, for the most part, churches.

Key words: Dečani, iconography, parables, the Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep, the Pharisee and Publican, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Royal Wedding, the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

In the Synoptic Gospels the term “parable” is used to describe a particular teaching method used by Jesus Christ. Parables are allegorical stories, through which the addressees are exposed to unusual ways of conduct, which they are called upon to follow. They mainly teach that salvation can be achieved through love for one’s neighbour, penitence, and humility. At the same time, many of these stories contain eschatological elements, and express the importance of Christ’s teaching, as well as his opposition to Pharisaism. The Fathers of the Church and the medieval theologians almost always interpreted the parables symbolically, but this explanation was not always enough to make all the verses of the Gospel text clear. However, modern theology approaches them with the help of sciences that study the history, society, law and everyday life in Palestine at the time of Christ. This way, completely different (and sometimes surprising) conclusions are often reached regarding the original meaning of these allegorical stories.

The oldest surviving pictorial renderings of parables can be dated to the fifth and sixth centuries. Characteristic examples are two miniatures of the Rossano Gospel (Rossano, Museo Diocesano di Arte Sacra, sixth century), in which the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (fol. 2v) and of the Good Samaritan (fol. 7v) are illustrated. Excepting the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, which was included in the mosaic decoration of the upper zone in the church of Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (città 500), from the early Christian until the middle Byzantine period, represen-

tations of parables are seen almost exclusively in illuminated manuscripts.

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In the Palaiologan era these allegorical stories were also depicted in Byzantine churches, though rarely. Many representations of the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and two frescoes with that of the Royal Wedding are shown in painted churches of Crete. The parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins has also been depicted on a thirteenth century layer in the church of Saint George Diasorites in Naxos, as well as in the frescoes of the church of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki (1312–1320). Excluding the latter monument, the remaining representations were placed in the greater context of the composition of the Last Judgment, a place dictated by the eschatological character of the allegorical stories.

The situation is different in some Serbian churches, where a major number of parables were included in the iconographic program. The present article will focus on the study of the parables, which were depicted in Dečani (1335–1347/1348), as among the frescoes of this monument we find the oldest “cycle” of parables which were represented in a Balkan church. In total, six parables where included in the painted decoration of the katholikon of the monastery.

The first one is that of the Lost Sheep which is recited by Matthew (18:12–14) and Luke (15:4–7). The corresponding passage of the Gospel begins with a rhetorical
question by Christ: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of the, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it […] when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!” Likewise, Christ concludes, “joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance”.

The parable was rendered through a fresco on the northern wall of the prothesis of the katholikon.16 The upper part shows the conversation between Christ and a Jew, a scene which possibly depicts the narration of the parable by Christ.16 In the lower section, within a rocky landscape, a male figure, the shepherd, extends his hands to catch a ram, a scene through which the finding of the Lost Sheep is represented. In the third scene, which is placed directly beneath, a laid table stands at the centre; around it three beardless male figures are seated engaged in conversation (Fig. 1).17 The topic of the representation is not drawn directly from the Gospel text; the artist shows the invitation to the friends and neighbours of the shepherd, so that they share in his joy, in the form of a banquet.18

The shepherd of the allegorical story is not depicted in the form of Christ, as obligated by the patristic interpretations of the Gospel passage;19 so the iconography of the parable belongs to the narrative type.20 Finally, the inclusion of the allegorical story in the iconographic program of the prothesis remains a problem difficult to solve. The only explanation which could be given is its possible association with the liturgical sacrifice of the Lamb, which takes place daily in this part of the church.21

The next parable, which is depicted in the nave, is that of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. According to the Gospel of Matthew (25:1–13), which is the only one that recites it, Christ says that in the time of the Last Judgment “shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish”. When the bridegroom arrived “at midnight”, the Wise Virgins, who had brought extra oil with them, “went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut”. When the Foolish ones arrived later, their lamps having gone out due to lack of oil, they asked the bridgegroom to open the door for them, but he answered: “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”

The parable is represented in the middle decorative zone of the eastern section of the south-western pier of the church.22 Christ and the five Wise Virgins are shown in a depiction of the parable of the Lost Coin; v. V. R. Petković, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, col. 861. However, in modern photographs the damage has been undone. Therefore, it is quite certain that this scene represented the narration of the parable of the Lost Sheep; v. B. V. Popović, Program živopisa u oltarskom prostoru, in: Mural painting of Monastery of Dečani. Materials and studies, ed. V. J. Djurić, Belgrade 1995, 95; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 246, 247. The topic of the narration of a parable, even though it is a topos in illuminated manuscripts, is extremely rare in monumental painting. We see the sole – known to me – other example in the fresco with the parable of the Royal Wedding in the Chilandar monastery on Mount Athos; v. Mantas, op. cit., 124–125, 379. At this point it must be noted that some damage to Christ’s or the Jew’s hand in older photographs had led to the conclusion that it might be a depiction of the parable of the Lost Coin; v. V. R. Petković, D. Bošković, Manastir Dečani, Belgrade 1941, 40, pl. CCXXV.I. Cf. Wessel, Gleichnisse Christi, col. 861. However, in modern photographs the damage has been undone. Therefore, it is quite certain that this scene represented the narration of the parable of the Lost Sheep; v. B. V. Popović, Program živopisa u oltarskom prostoru, in: Mural painting of Monastery of Dečani. Materials and studies, ed. V. J. Djurić, Belgrade 1995, 95; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 246, 247. The topic of the narration of a parable, even though it is a topos in illuminated manuscripts, is extremely rare in monumental painting. We see the sole – known to me – other example in the fresco with the parable of the Royal Wedding in the Chilandar monastery on Mount Athos; v. Mantas, op. cit., 124–125, 379.


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19 For the texts, v. Mantas, op. cit., 418, fig. 166.

20 The depiction of the banquet is also seen on fol. 141r of the Gospel of Florence (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. Plut. VI 23, circa 1100), and on fol. 178r of the codex Par. gr. 1128 (fourteenth century) with the romance of Barlaam and Josaph; v. T. Velmans, Le Tétraévangile de la Laurentienne Florence, Laur. VI 23, Paris 1971, 45, fig. 240; S. Der Nersessian, L’illustration du roman de Barlaam et Josaph, Paris 1937, 127–128, fig. 259; Wessel, Gleichnisse Christi, col. 861; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 416, 418, fig. 161, 165.

21 For the texts, v. Mantas, op. cit., 243–244, n. 7–16.

tower-shaped structure with battlements. Christ extends His right hand in a gesture of denial; this denial is directed at the five Foolish Virgins, which are shown in the lower section of the fresco, outside of the structure, which symbolizes paradise, the closed door of which is being knocked by the leader of the group (Fig. 2).

The pictorial rendering of the bridegroom in the form of Christ can be found in all representations of the parable, as much in monumental painting as in illuminated manuscripts. Representations of marriage in antiquity, which with the necessary changes became Christian, were used as a model for the older illustrations of the parable, with a characteristic example being the above mentioned miniature of the Rossano Gospel. The parable was represented more often than all the others and can be seen already in the art of the catacombs; this frequency can be explained by the liturgical importance of the corresponding Gospel passage, which, according to the Armenian Typikon of the fifth century, was read on Holy Tuesday.


For the patristic comments which led to this identification, v. Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 146 with n. 7.

There are impressive similarities between the representation of the parable and the depiction of a marriage on a red-figure amphora by the Polygnotus’ painter, which is kept in Toronto and is dated circa 430 BC, v. J. H. Oakley, R. H. Sinos, The weding in ancient Athens, Wisconsin 1993, 96. Cf. M. Mayordomo, Kluge Mädchen kommen überall hin... (Von den zehn Jungfrauen), in: Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu, 491.


V. n. 5 supra.

V. mainly J. Wilpert, Die gottseuwten Jungfrauen in den ersten Jahrhunderten der Kirche, Freiburg im Breisgau 1892, passim.

A. Renoux, Le codex arménien Jerusalem 121, Turnhout 1969, 126 with n. 23. On the same day is read the passage in the Church of Constantinople already since the tenth century; v. J. Mateos, Le Typicon de la Grande Église. Ms. Saint-Croix no. 40, Xe siècle II. Le cycle des fêtes mobiles, Roma 1963, 125.3-6.
proximity to the composition of the Last Judgment, a place which is necessitated by its eschatological content. At this point, an unusual representation on a relief above the entrance to the church of Theotokos at Hohannavank (Armenia, the thirteenth century) must be noted: this position is in accordance with the verse of a Syrian hymn which was written for the inauguration of the cathedral of Edessa (circa 543–554), in which we read: “Furthermore, five doors open into it [the church] after the likeness of the five virgins, And through them the faithful enter with glory, like the [wise].” In the katholikon of Dečani the fresco has been placed above the king’s throne in the church; this place has already been associated with the idea of wisdom and foolishness: as opposed to the Foolish Virgins, the leader of the nation as well as the hegoumenos of the monastery, must have the virtue of wisdom, with which they will correctly lead the state or the monastery.

The two parables examined above represent areas of the church that are at a great distance from each other. Their placement on these areas does not allow their inclusion into the “cycle” of parables shown in the monument, which was integrated in the decoration of the southern parecclesion of the katholikon, dedicated to Saint Nicholas. Four representations of parables were incorporated in the iconographic program of the parecclesion. These are the parables of the Royal Wedding, the Good Samaritan, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and also that of the Pharisee and Publican, which will be discussed below.

Following the sequence of the Gospel, the first parable to be examined is that of the Royal Wedding, recited by Matthew (22:1–14) and Lukas (14:16–24). According to Matthew, whose narration is the basis for the fresco, a king had invited obviously important people to the banquet that he organized to celebrate his son’s marriage. Despite his repeated invitations, during the banquet, the guests “would not come” offering weak excuses. The king then ordered his slaves to go to “the highways” and invite everyone they found there, “both bad and good” and “[...] the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. Then said the king to the servants: Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into the outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The parable of the Royal Wedding is depicted on the upper decorative zone of the south wall of the parecclesion and was represented with two scenes. In the first the feast and the expulsion of the inappropriately dressed man are shown. The centre of the significantly destroyed fresco is dominated by a laid table, around which no less than five male figures are seated. Behind them, Christ stands to the right, extending his right hand to the improperly dressed man. Two flying angels are dragging the impious man by the hair, distancing him from the table. In the second scene, two more flying angels are throwing the inappropriately dressed man, whose hands and feet have been bound, into a tower-shaped building, within which a large number of skulls can be seen.

The representation of the parable belongs to the symbolic iconographic type. As such, in the first scene, the king of the Gospel narration was depicted, according to the patristic interpretations of the text, in the form of Christ, an element which can be found in the iconography of the parable since the thirteenth century. At the same time the...
The parable is shown with three scenes which are placed on the south and west walls of the parecclesion. In the fresco on the south wall, the man’s journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, as well as the attack by the thieves, are represented (Fig. 5). Jerusalem, where the traveler begins his journey from, is depicted in the left part of the fresco atop a mountain; on the right, the traveler is seen on his trip. He is shown again at the lower section of the fresco naked and fallen to the ground, while winged demons are attacking him with clubs. The rendering of the thieves in the form of demons is an element based, as has been proven, as much on the patristic commentaries of the Gospel text as on hymnology.

The pictorial rendering of the parable is completed by an extensively damaged two-zoned scene on the western wall of the parecclesion. On the upper zone, the indifference shown by the Priest and the Levite, as well as the care of the Samaritan for the traveler, are represented. On the left, the wounded man is laying naked on the ground, while the Priest and the Levite are walking towards the left, ignoring him. On the right, Christ is shown attending to the, now seated, but still naked, wounded man (Fig. 6). The depiction of the Samaritan in the form of Christ, an element which can be found already in the miniature of the Rossano Gospel, is based on the patristic interpretations of the text and places the fresco in the symbolic iconographic type of the parable.

Fig. 9. Dečani, parecclesion of St. Nicholas. Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, detail

servants, responsible for the expulsion of the impious man, are depicted as angels. The same also holds true for the representation of the corresponding figures in the second scene, in which the inappropriately dressed man is thrown into the outer darkness. The particular emphasis given to the teeth of the skulls in the hexagonal building, with which the outer darkness is represented, is a clear reference to the gnashing of teeth, a phrase with which the parable ends.

The next parable which was included in the iconographic program of the parecclesion is that of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37). According to Christ’s words, “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead”. A Priest and a Levite, “when they saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him ‘Take care of him: whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee’.”

al., Os θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους. Εικονογραφημένα χειρόγραφα, col. 856–860; De’ Maffei, Di alcune miniature del Salterio Tomić, 91–125 (with older bibliography); Hosoda, Darstellungen der Parabel vom barnhezigen Samariter, passim; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 196–215.

39 Skulls are also depicted in the miniature which illustrates fol. 45r of the Florence Gospel (circa 1100); v. Velmans, Le Tétraevangile, 31, fig. 99. For the origins of the topic from representations of the Last Judgment, v. Y. Christe, Das Jüngste Gericht, Regensburg 2001, 27 sq.

40 Cf. Marković, Hristova òada i pouka, 142.

41 For the iconography of the parable, v. Wessel, Gleichnisse Christi, col. 856–860; De’ Maffei, Di alcune miniature del Salterio Tomić, 91–125 (with older bibliography); Hosoda, Darstellungen der Parabel vom barnhezigen Samariter, passim; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 407–408, fig. 139.

42 Jerusalem, where the traveler begins his journey from, is depicted in the left part of the fresco atop a mountain; on the right, the traveler is seen on his trip. He is shown again at the lower section of the fresco naked and fallen to the ground, while winged demons are attacking him with clubs. The rendering of the thieves in the form of demons is an element based, as has been proven, as much on the patristic commentaries of the Gospel text as on hymnology.

43 The representation of Jerusalem atop a mountain is in accordance with the phrase going down of the text, which corresponds to the reality, as Jerusalem is built at a higher elevation than Jericho. The city is depicted in a similar way already since the ninth century, with the oldest surviving example being the miniature on fol. 143v of the codex Par. gr. 510 (879–882); v. L. Brubaker, Vision and meaning in ninth-century Byzantium. Image as exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, Cambridge 1999, 75–77, fig. 19; R. Zimmermann, Berührende Liebe (Der barnhezige Samariter), in: Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu, 549–544.

44 The thieves are also depicted as demons in other Palaeologan images of the parable, such as on fol. 203v of the Serbian Psalter of Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cod. Slav. 4, 1375–1400); v. Der Serbische Psalter, ed. H. Beltin, Wiesbaden 1978, vol. I, 151 sqq. 258 sqq, vol. II, fol. 203v; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 409, fig. 143.


46 For the iconography of the parable, v. Wessel, Gleichnisse Christi, col. 856–860; De’ Maffei, Di alcune miniature del Salterio Tomić, 91–125 (with older bibliography); Hosoda, Darstellungen der Parabel vom barnhezigen Samariter, passim; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 196–215.

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It is also worth noting that the Levite is holding a closed codex, which is an allusion to the Old Testament, as, according to the patristic commentaries, the Priest and the Levite were considered as symbols of the Law in general and of Moses in particular. On the lower zone of the fresco, on the left, the transportation of the wounded man, being supported by Christ, can be seen. The scene is different from the text, in which it is written that the traveler was transported to the inn on the *beast* of the Samaritan. This difference between text and image is attributed also to the symbolic interpretations of the parable, according to which Christ, with his sacrifice on the cross, made his own body a beast of burden, upon which the salvation of the people is made possible. On the right, the traveler is depicted on a bed, a topic which is not mentioned in the Gospel, but can be considered as obvious within the spirit of the narration. Behind the bed, the Samaritan/Christ pays the innkeeper. As much as it is possible to discern, the innkeeper appears to be rendered with the characteristics of the apostle Paul. If this observation is true, then one more symbolic element can be found within the fresco, as according to the patristic interpretations of the text the innkeeper was identified as the Church, the clergy, the apostles, and Paul in particular.

The third parable included in the iconographic program of the parecclesion is that of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19–31). According to Christ’s words, “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.” When both of them died, the rich man, “being in torments, seeth Abraham far off, and Lazarus at his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame.” But the patriarch refused, reminding him “[…] thou, in thy lifetime, received thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things […]. And beside all this”, continued Abraham, “between us and thou there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”

The parable was rendered with three scenes, which are depicted on the west and north walls of the parecclesion. In the first of these, which is on the upper section of the west wall, the luxurious life of the Rich Man and Lazarus’ miserable one are represented (Fig. 7). The Rich Man, dressed in fine garments and with a crown on his head, is seated at a laid table, accompanied by other guests. His depiction as a king is an element which distances the scene from the text; it is a western influence, as this particular detail can be found in representations of the parable in the West, and is based on Latin commentaries of the text. The topic of the Rich Man’s luxurious life, possibly because of its pagan character, can be found rarely in depictions of the parable. An iconographic detail, unique in the pictorial rendering of the allegorical story in the East, is the depiction of a female figure which is seated next to the Rich Man. The spirit of the narrative makes it far more likely that this is an immoral woman rather than the Rich Man’s wife. The depiction, finally, of the half-naked Lazarus, who is shown wearing a hat, in front of the table, serves to emphasize the difference between the lives led by the two protagonists of the allegorical story.

The fresco on the north wall of the parecclesion depicts Lazarus’ death on the left and the Rich Man’s on the right (Fig. 8). Lazarus is laying half-naked on a straw mat, while two angels transport his soul to Heaven. The Rich Man is depicted laying in a marble sarcophagus, dressed in lavish garments, while an angel strikes his mouth with a trident. The subject of the two protagonists’ death is unique in the iconography of the parable in eastern art, as in other extensive representations of the allegorical story, only the burial of the two figures is shown, but not their death. The marble sarcophagus of the Rich Man is depicted laying in a marble sarcophagus, dressed in lavish garments, while an angel strikes his mouth with a trident.

The fresco on the south wall of the parecclesion, depicting the key scene of the parable, is shown right (Fig. 9). It can be seen. The scene is different from the text, in which it is written that the traveler was transported to the inn on the *beast* of the Samaritan. This difference between text and image is attributed also to the symbolic interpretations of the parable, according to which Christ, with his sacrifice on the cross, made his own body a beast of burden, upon which the salvation of the people is made possible. On the right, the traveler is depicted on a bed, a topic which is not mentioned in the Gospel, but can be considered as obvious within the spirit of the narration. Behind the bed, the Samaritan/Christ pays the innkeeper. As much as it is possible to discern, the innkeeper appears to be rendered with the characteristics of the apostle Paul. If this observation is true, then one more symbolic element can be found within the fresco, as according to the patristic interpretations of the text the innkeeper was identified as the Church, the clergy, the apostles, and Paul in particular.

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sarcophagus, in which the deceased Rich Man lays, is an allusion to his luxurious burial, which is the opposite of Lazarus’ poor one. This iconographic element is based on Augustine’s commentaries, who, with the occasion of the Rich Man’s burial, expresses his absolute denial of the luxurious mausoleums, in which the rich are buried. On the right side of the fresco, the Rich Man is seen naked in flames; extending his right hand, he attempts to communicate with Abraham, who is represented on a pier on the right, holding Lazarus’ soul in his bosom (Fig. 9). The depiction of the Rich Man at a distance from Abraham, a topos in the iconography of the parable, is an attempt to represent the gulf, which, according to the Gospel text, separates Heaven from Hell.

The parable of the Pharisee and Publican is the final one which was depicted in the parecclesion. According to Christ’s words (Lk 18:9–14), “Two men went up into the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee, and the other was a publican”. The Pharisee, within his prayers, included all of his righteous deeds and thanked God for them, as well as for the fact that he was different from the Publican. The latter, “standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. Christ concludes that this man [the Publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other.”

The allegorical story is represented in a fresco which occupies the western part of the western cross vault of the parecclesion. At its sides, there are two ladders which lead up to a ciborium, crowned by a dome. The Publican stands on the lower zone of the left ladder, while the Pharisee stands on the upper zone of the right, places which correspond to the text of the Gospel (Fig. 10). A point of particular interest in the fresco is the depiction of the two ladders and the schematized architectural constructs beneath them. The ladders give the impression of leading to the roof of a structure which is beneath the temple. These elements as well as the architectural structures, which can be seen in the background of the scene, are based on byzantine descriptions of the Jewish temple. Theophanes Kerameus characteristically writes: “The temple was more raised from the ground of the city. For porticoes beneath the crepises and alternately apses raised it high off the ground. And from the outer sides stone staircases were raised from the lower sections up to the gates of it.” The influence of the text on the creation of the image is clear.

The choice of these particular parables for the decoration of the parecclesion of St. Nicholas does not seem to be accidental; it could be interpreted according to their eschatological and soteriological content. The parable of the Good Samaritan and that of the Pharisee and the Publican have a significant role in the iconographic program of churches from the Palaiologan era, and can be seen almost exclusively in Serbian monuments, as well as in the Serbian Chilandar monastery on Mount Athos. The choice of the parables that comprise the cycle is a significant clue, which can be utilized to explain their depiction in this particular area. The example of Dečani is characteristic, because more or less the same parables are also found in other Serbian monuments. The most commonly represented allegorical stories are those of the Royal Wedding, the Pharisee and Publican, the Good Samaritan, the Rich Man and Lazarus, as well as that of the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

The parables of the Pharisee and Publican and of the Wise and Foolish Virgins have a significant role in the Typikon of the Church of Constantinople and in the Sabaitic Typikon (Typikon of the Church of Jerusalem), as the first one is read on the first Sunday of the Triodion, while the

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62 Petković, Bošković, Manastir Dečani, 40, pl. CCCXXII; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 437–438, fig. 229.
63 Characteristic examples are the miniature on fol. 145v of the Gospel Par. gr. 74 (the mid-eleventh century) and that on fol. 165r of the Lectionary of Venice (Istituto Elenicco, cod. 2, the second half of the eleventh century). Cf. H. Omont, Évangiles avec peintures byzantines du X très siècle. Reproduction des 361 miniatures du Manuscrit grec 74 de la Bibliotheque nationale, Paris 1908, pl. 126b; Wolf, Die Parabel vom reichen Præsenter und armen Lazarus, 30–31, 32–33, fig. 4, 7–8; A. Xyngopoulos, Το αυτοτυπόν Εικοσατάχρονον του Ελληνικού Ινστιτούτου της Βενετίας, Θεσσαλονίκη 1962, 66, 73, pl. Vl; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 431, 432, fig. 208, 211.
64 For the iconography of the parable, v. Wessel, De publicano et pharisaeo, PG 132, 357A–B (“μετεωρότερος ἦν τῆς πόλεως ὁ ναός. Στοαῖ γὰρ κάτωθεν ἑπετειλμέναι”); Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 431, 432, fig. 208, 211.
65 A point of particular interest in the iconography of the parable, v. Wessel, De publicano et pharisaeo, PG 132, 357A–B (“μετεωρότερος ἦν τῆς πόλεως ὁ ναός. Στοαῖ γὰρ κάτωθεν ἑπετειλμέναι”); Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 431, 432, fig. 208, 211.
66 The influence of the text on the creation of the image is clear.
67 The Jewish temple was depicted in a similar way in four other Serbian monuments: Chilandar monastery (1321), Staro Nagorično (1317/1318), Gračanica (1320/1321), and Resava (ca. 1418). Cf. E. Tsigardas, Τοιχογραφίες της περιόδου των Παλαιολόγων σε ναούς της Μονοσολινίου, Thessaloniki 1999, 15; Todić, Serbian medieval painting, 128, 321, 323, 353; P. Miličković-Pepek, Delo ko zografiše Mihailo I Etihi, Skopje 1967, 59; Todić, Manastir Resava, 91, 94, fig. 105; Mantas, Die Ikonographie der Gleichnisse Jesu, 444–445, 446, fig. 253, 256.
69 Pantelić, The architecture of Dečani, 61 sqq.
70 while the parable of the Pharisee and Publican is not mentioned in the codex Stiavna 40 (950–959) as the first one of the Triodion in the Typikon of the Church of Constantinople, but this Gospel passage is read, accord-
second one is read on Holy Tuesday. The importance of the other parables is nonexistent in the Typikon of Constantinople, a difference between that and the Sabaitic Typikon. G. Bertonière’s studies have shown that the parable of the Royal Wedding was read in the Sabaitic Typikon on the second Sunday of Lent, that of the Good Samaritan on the fourth and that of the Rich Man and Lazarus on the fifth. The same quite possibly was true in older times for the Church of Constantinople, because the hymnology of these Sundays seems unrelated to the nowadays corresponding Gospel passages, while it shows a particular relationship with the aforementioned parables. The certain reading, however, of the Gospel passages with these parables on the Sundays of Lent in the Sabaitic Typikon makes their liturgical importance significant, a fact which explains their frequent depiction.

A question that easily occurs is the following: For what reasons where these particular parables included in that exact time period in the iconographic programs of Serbian churches? This question can be answered if we examine the what reasons where these particular parables included in that significant, a fact which explains their frequent depiction.

At this point it must be noted that many archbishops of Serbia, such as Sava III (1309–1316) and especially Danilo II (1334–1337) played a significant role in the organization of the iconographic programs of the churches in their domain. A characteristic example is the latter’s involvement in the conception of the painted decoration of Dečani. These personalities had as their objective the connection of the Serbian monuments with the Church of Holy Sion in Jerusalem, in which, as it is known from philological sources, the parable of the Pharisee and Publican was depicted. As a result, it is not possible to exclude that the inclusion of the other parables within the Serbian churches is related to similar depictions in the Church of Holy Sion. This hypothesis, however, based on our current knowledge, cannot be supported.

ing to the same codes, on the Sunday before that of the Prodigal Son; v. Mateos, Le typicon de la Grande Église, 3 with n. 2.

71 V. n. 29 supra.


74 The inclusion of the examined parables into the iconographic program of Serbian monuments since the fourteenth century could therefore be related to the reformation of the Typikon of the Serbian Church, and in particular its adoption of the Sabaitic Typikon, in which, as mentioned above, the liturgical value of said Gospel passages was significant.


Der Nersessian S., Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the twelfth to the fourteenth Century, Washington 1993.


Epiphani Monachi, Enarratio Sionae, PG 120, 261D.

Euthymi Zigabeni, De chrystiana sacellis in Matthaeum, PG 58, 482.


Grabat A., La fresque des saintes femmes au tombeau à Doura, CA 8 (1956) 12–14.


Ianniss Chrysostomi, Homiliae in Matthaeum, PG 58, 482.


Представе Христових парабола
у српским средњовековним црквама. Пример Дечана

Апостолос Г. Мандас

Представе Христових парабола појављују се у зидном сликарству православних цркава од XIV века, углавном у српским храмовима. Један од њих јесте католикон Дечана. У његовом олтару и наосу могу се видети параболе о изгубљеној овци и десет девица, док су у западном делу параклиса Светог Николе приказане параболе о царској свадби, добром Самарићанину, богаташу и убогом Лазару, као и о фарисеју и царинику.

Појава парабола у проскомици и наосу могла би се објаснити на много начина; ипак, сликање додатних парабола у параклису Светог Николе у складу је с њиховој сотрицаношћу и есхатолошком природом, која одговара могућој употреби параклиса за фунерарне службе. Избор приказаних парабола у складу је с Тициком Јерусалимске цркве, који је почетком XIV века преведен на српски језик, а потом је био у употреби у Српској цркви. По том тику, читање наведених делова јеванђеља, којима у византијској цркви није придаван посебан значај, било је изузетно важно у Јерусалимској цркви, с којом су Срби имали снажне везе још од времена светог Саве. На тај начин може се објаснити често представљање поменутих парабола у српским црквама од XIV века надаље.