

**ON THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL AND THE
REASONS FOR ITS DEPICTION IN THE EXONARTHEX OF
THE MONASTERY OF SOPOČANI^{1*}**

Introduction, historiography and the aim of the paper

The parable of the Rich Fool illustrated in the exonarthex of the monastery of Sopoćani, on the fresco-layer dating from 1343 represents a unique example of illustration of this biblical account in Serbian medieval wall painting (Fig. 1, 2, 3). The wall paintings of the exonarthex of Sopoćani, although badly damaged, were a subject of study many times.² However, in the literature we find relatively few lines dedicated to the fresco with the representation of the said parable.³

The first scholar to mention the said fresco is the Russian, Aleksandar Gilferding. In the picture „on the outer wall of the tower“ he wrongly recogniz-

¹ * This paper was written within the project “*Serbian Medieval Art and Its European Context*” (177036), conducted at the Institute of Art History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, and financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. It has been translated by Andela Đ. Gavrilović (andjela1321@gmail.com)

² А. Гилфердинг, *Босна, Херцеговина и Стара Србија*, Сарајево 1972, 136-137 (прво издање: А. Гилфердинг, *Босния, Герцеговина и Старая Сербия*, СП Бургъ 1859); В. Петковић, *Прича о „прекрасном Јосифу“ у Сопоћанима*, ГСНУД 1 (1925) 35; N. L. Okunev, *Составъ росписи храма въ Сопочанахъ*, *Byzantinoslavica* I (1929) 136-139, рис. 22; V. R. Petković, *La Peinture Serbe du Moyen Age en Yougoslavie, II*, Belgrade 1934, 52, T. CL; В. Ј. Ђурић, *Сопоћани*, Београд 1963, 88-92, 138-139, T. LIX (= Ead., *Сопоћани*, Београд 1991, 160-164); Ead., *Византијске фреске у Југославији*, Београд 1974, 63; С. Радојчић, *Старо српско сликарство*, Београд 1966, 141 (= Ead., *Старо српско сликарство*, Београд 2010, 153); Б. Живковић, *Сопоћани. Цртежи фресака*, Београд 1984, 38-41; Д. Војводић, *Укрштена дијадимеа и „торакион“ две древне и неуобичајене инсигније српских владара у XIV и XV веку*, in: Трећа југословенска конференција византолога Крушевац 10-13. мај 2000, Београд-Крушевац 2002, 264, црт. 7, pass; И. Дрпић, *Три сцене из циклуса Христових чуда и поука у сопоћанском ексонартексу*, *Саопштења* 34 (2002) 107-129.

³ See the following footnotes in this paper.



Fig. 1 The Parable of the Rich Fool, the exonartex of Sopoćani, west wall, 1343.

Сл. 1 Парабола о Безумном богаташу, спољашња припрага Сопоћана, западни зид, 1343.

es workers building the temple, not mentioning any other data.⁴ He interprets the inscription „vasta“ as the name of the architect, and he also mentions the inscription „agonisa(n)te,“ still without any further explanation.⁵

The first scholar who correctly identifies the fresco we are dealing with as the parable of the Rich Fool is Vladimir Petković.⁶ He explains two mentioned inscriptions, expressing the opinion that these represent transcriptions of Italian words.⁷

The same author, several years later, in the manual of Serbian Art – „*La Peinture Serbe du Moyen Age en Yougoslavie*“ mentions this fresco with the correct title and includes its photo.⁸

The next author to deal with the fresco of the Parable of the Rich Fool is Nikolai Okunev.⁹ He describes the scene very minutely, considering, according to Petković's assumption, where the second episode may have been placed once, still allowing that the said episode on the Death of the Rich Man had not been illustrated at all. He mentions the inscription on the fresco **ω при-**

⁴ Гилфердинг, *Босна*, 136.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ В. Петковић, *Прича*, 35.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Petković, *La Peinture*, II, 52, T. CL.

⁹ Okunev, *Составъ росписи*, 138-139.



Fig. 2 The Parable of the Rich Fool, the exonarthex of Sopoćani, west wall, detail, 1343.

Сл. 2 Парабола о Безумном богаташу, спољашња припрага Сопоћана, западни зид, 1343.

ΠΛΟ(?)...| ...ΜΟΕΙ ΔΣΕ ... ΜΚ, which is important because the inscription is not readable today.¹⁰ However, he does not resolve it but makes a conclusion that it comes from the 19th verse of the account from the Gospel of Luke.¹¹

Some thirty years after Okunjev, Vojislav J. Đurić deals with the parable of the Rich Fool in his monograph on the monastery of Sopoćani. He points out the instructive character of the scene and makes a connection between it and the citation from the vita of Stefan the First Crowned on Nemanja's fear that „he would face the same destiny as the Rich Man whom everything bore fruit, and to whom God delivered the judgment that he must die immediately.“¹²

Finally, Ivan Drpić, in the paper concerning three scenes from the cycle of Christ's Miracles and Ministry, on the basis of the position of the scene of the Parable of the Rich Fool assumes that the original cycle of Christ's Miracles and Ministry could have been extensive and that it could have contained some seldom illustrated parables.¹³

¹⁰ See the previous footnote.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 138-139.

¹² Ђурић, *Сопоћани* (1991), 162.

¹³ Дрпић, *Три сцене*, 109, 110.

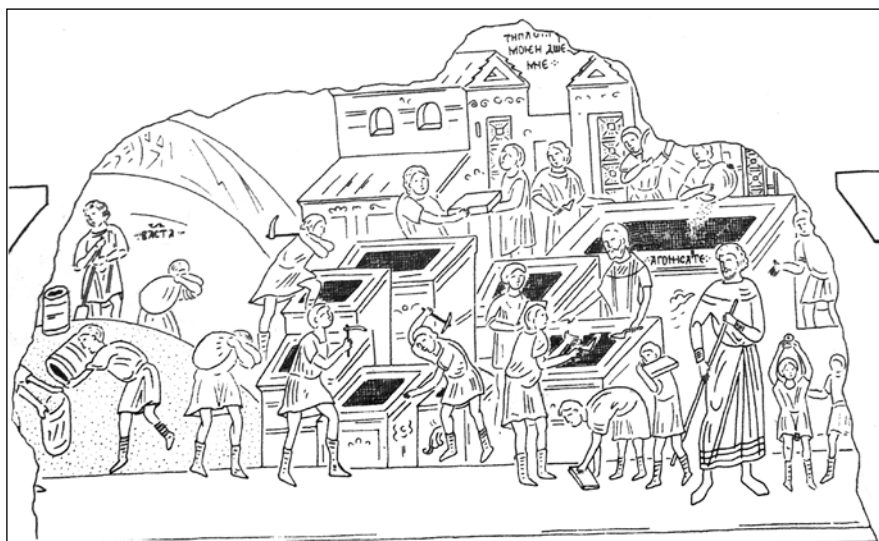


Fig. 3 The Parable of the Rich Fool, the exonarthex of Sopoćani, west wall, drawing, 1343.

Сл. 3 Парабола о Безумном богаташу, спољашња припрага Сопоћана, западни зид, 1343.

Apart from these observations, no further attention has been paid to the fresco of the parable of the Rich Fool, nor has any study been dedicated to it. As a unique example of this theme in Serbian medieval art, this fresco in certain way makes up for the general state of preservation of the wall painting of the exonarthex in Sopoćani and shows that there is still room for the analysis of certain themes in the programme of this area. Therefore with the aim of establishing the reasons for depicting of this fresco in the given spatial unit, we will examine the iconography of the said composition, its position in the exonarthex, programmatic placement in the broader scope of the given space and finally the interpretations of this biblical story by Byzantine and Serbian medieval writers. However, before that, we will first have a glance at the whole programme of the Sopoćani's exonarthex, by briefly stating the themes present in the wall painting of this area.

Themes in the Sopoćani's exonarthex

In the register of the standing figures on the eastern wall of the exonarthex, to the north of the main entrance, the figures of Nemanjić dynasty members in monastic attire are illustrated. These are: Queen Helen of Anjou, her husband Stephan Uroš the First and Simeon - Nemanja. In the same register to the south of the main entrance, the figures of the ktetor of the wall painting of the exonarthex, king Stephan Dušan, his wife Helen and their son Uroš are depicted. The last three figures are being blessed by Christ the Emanuel in a bust from a segment of heaven. Above them are the scenes from the cycle of Christ's Miracles and Ministry (Healing of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda, Healing of the

blind-born, on the north and the Conversation to the Samaritan Woman, on the south). Above the portal a monumental Deesis was once illustrated, with Christ, Virgin and John the Baptist all depicted in a bust, of which now only fragments are preserved. On the arch south of the portal a bust figure of St Andronicus in medallion is preserved, while above him is a fragment of the scene Daniel in the lion's den. On the pilasters south and north of the entrance are the figures of Christ and the Virgin Mediatrix. In the lunette above the entrance is the Pentecost. Across the main entrance, on the side walls of the entrance into the bell tower two figures of archangels with swords are depicted: archangel Michael in the north and archangel Raphael in the south. On the southwest pillar is the figure of archangel Gabriel in a bent posture, while writing a text on an open scroll. On the west wall, north of the entrance is a portrait of Joanikije the Second (1338-1346, archbishop, 1346-1354, patriarch), and across him south of the entrance is a long inscription, not yet interpreted due to the damage to the fresco.¹⁴ Above the entrance to the bell tower is a fresco depicting the parable of the Rich Fool. On the pillars are the fragments of a few figures of holy monks and hermits. In the second register of the south wall in the northern side aisle the composition of the Virgin feeding the Poor is found, while above it are fragments of an unidentified scene. In the same register of the north wall of the southern side aisle a standing figure of a certain martyr and a monumental bust of St Symeon Nemanja are preserved, while below them we can see three holy women, among whom is St Tecla.

The Position of the scene of the Parable of the Rich Fool. The composition of the Parable of the Rich Fool occupies a central place on the western wall of the Sopoćani's exonarthex, being illustrated on the central part of the wall in the central aisle (Fig. 1). Having in mind the present state of frescoes' preservation – and we believe that the original one did not much deviate from the present, preserved one – the fresco illustrating the parable of the Rich man's barns has been given a lot of space proportionally. This is the largest preserved fresco of the narrative character on the western wall of the exonarthex. The fresco does not only stand out with by its dimensions, but also with its position. Beside the fact that it occupies the central part of the western wall, it was once, most probably, accentuated by the arch, while on the north and on the south it is flanked by pillars.¹⁵ From the lower part it is also emphasized by the arched passage. In other words, it is depicted directly above the entrance to the bell tower. In such a way, the whole architectural profile of the western part of the exonarthex is from the inner part directing the gaze of the beholder toward this fresco.

¹⁴ Academician Gojko Subotić has dealt with this inscription, but the results of this investigation are not published.

¹⁵ We believe that the scene once occupied the whole space of the lunette lined by the arch. We think that it is less probable that there was enough space for certain composition above the preserved part of the fresco. Inter alia, it would visually and symbolically disrupt the harmony of vertical plane of the fresco layout. Such an assumption would be supported by the layout of frescoes (visual themes) in the lunettes of the side aisles of exonarthex, which are being occupied by only one horizontal fresco register above the standing figures. After all, the whole lunette of the west wall of the exonarthex belongs to the second fresco register.

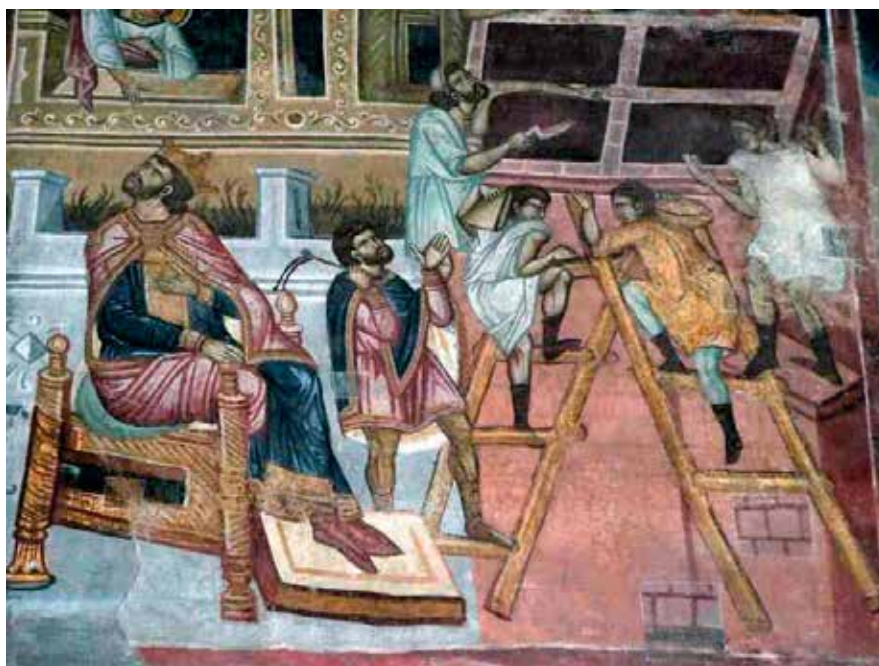


Fig. 4 The Parable of the Rich Fool, Curtea de Ardeș, 3rd quarter of the 14th century.

Сл. 4 Парабола о Безумном богаташу, Куртеа де Арђеш, трећа четвртина XIV века.

It should be noted that the parable of the Rich Fool is depicted in the second register of the wall painting. Ivan Drpić already emphasized the fact that the three scenes of the cycle of Christ's Miracles and Ministry have been given „a leading“ position in the programme of the exonarthex of Sopoćani, having been illustrated in the second register of the eastern wall, which „as a rule in the exonarthices of the Byzantine churches from the programme point of view has crucial role.“¹⁶ The fact that the parable of the Rich Fool is executed in the second register of the wall painting is important because it indicates that the fresco is given importance to a considerable extent. Besides, the parable of the Rich Fool is illustrated directly opposite the western portal of the church, above which once Christ's bust from the Deesis was illustrated.

Iconography of the scene. With respect to the iconography the scene depicts an image of everyday life in the Middle Ages, illustrating the work which follows the harvest (Fig. 1,2,3). In the left part of the scene there are the workers who are taking wheat and putting it into sacks. Then there are the workers who are building new barns with tools in their hands or transferring building material in the upper part of the scene, while in the upper right part the wheat is being put into barns. In the lower right part is the Rich Fool, accentuated by his height among the workers.

¹⁶ Дрпић, *Три сцене*, 109.

As this scene is very rare in Byzantine art and in the art of its cultural sphere, we can compare it only to the fresco of the same name from the church of Curtea de Ardeş – third quarter of the 14th century (Fig. 4).¹⁷ Strictly chronologically speaking, what is illustrated in the Romanian church is the moment of angel's addressing the Rich Man at the time when barns are not yet built up and when his soul is asked for.

On the Sopoćani's fresco the moment which precedes this one is depicted, because the angel is not present on the fresco. In the Romanian church the Rich Man is depicted in much more luxurious attire, even wearing the crown on his head, sitting and supervising the construction of the barns, while in Sopoćani he is depicted without ruler's insignia in a standing position.

Interpretations of Byzantine authors (Luke 12:16-21)

As an important passage in the Gospel of Luke the parable of Rich Fool has been interpreted by many Byzantine and Orthodox church writers (Theophilus of Antioch, St Basil the Great, St. Augustin, St Athanasius the Great, St Cyril of Alexandria, St John the Chrysostomos, St Theophilus of Ochrid, Euthymius Zigabenus and others).

However, in contemporary specialized literature devoted to the interpretation of Holy Scripture, the story of the Rich Fool is characterized as "one of the most neglected parables of the synoptic Gospels."¹⁸ However, in many ways, it is unique. It is unique in being the only parable in the Synoptic tradition in which God appears as a character and speaks (Luke 12:20). Moreover, this is the only time the author of Luke-Acts attributes direct speech to God.¹⁹

The explanations of this passage in the Gospel of Luke refer to its primary and general meaning of the moral that one in life should not exclusively occupy oneself with personal, passing, earthly concern and needs, that one should not use possessions given from God as a gift selfishly and accumulate wealth, but if one is to get rich he should get rich by God.²⁰

Thus, most writers, such as St Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258) in this parable recognize a warning against luxury and greed, equating man's accumulation of material goods with poverty before God.²¹ This author sees the root of all evil in love towards money and affirms that man should possess neither the wish towards acquisition nor the wish for wealth.²²

The second line of interpretation of this biblical story relates to the Last Judgment.

¹⁷ Virgil Drăghiceanu, *Curtea Domnească din Argeş, Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice* (Anul X-XVI 1917-1923), Bucureşti 1923, 233, fig. 273.

¹⁸ M. S. Rindge, *Jesus' Parable of the Rich Fool. Luke 12:13-34 among Ancient Conversations on Death and Possessions*, Atlanta 2011, 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰ V. *infra*.

²¹ Ph. Schaff (ed.), *Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix*, Grand Rapids, MI (2004) 837.

²² *Ibid.*

Thus, Ephrem the Syrian (306-374) associates this Luke's verse from the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 19:20) and the place in Mathew "For a what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Mathew 16:26) to warn the reader about the future judgment.²³

St Cyril of Alexandria (376-444), comparing this parable with the said passage from the Gospel of Mathew (Mathew 16:26) obviously considers that the error of the Rich Man lies in his excessive accumulation of wealth. He has added that the Rich Man wrongly considers that the fruit of rich harvest is his own possession. According to this author, a person's possession or wealth and overabundance does not make his or her life. The one who is rich before God is the one who does not love wealth but rather loves virtue, "whose hand is open to the needs of the poor," who gathers things in the storehouses that are above and lays up treasures in heaven, who shall find interest in doing virtuous thing and a reward in his right and blameless life.²⁴

St Basil the Great (329/330-379) also brings this passage in the Gospel of Luke into symbolic connection with the Last Judgment. According to him, the Rich Fool has not welcomed the moment of departing from body, i. e., the Last Judgment, prepared, but has meet God naked and poor, because he was lacking in every good deed – love, philanthropy, faith in God and eternal hope.²⁵

St. Ambrosius's (340-397) general commentary of this biblical story, that only virtue and charity follow the man after his death, is also worth mentioning in the context of our paper.²⁶ Namely, the Rich Man possessed neither virtue, nor charity, so the mentioned illustration of the parable indicates on the warning against such way of living.

St Theophilactos of Ochrid (1055-1107) describes the Rich Man as a person "who does not give any fruit in charity." He states that the Rich Man by collecting large amounts of wheat in his barns, collects for himself a large amount of sins. "The bellies of the poor" should actually be his barns, which, according to this author, are unshakable and indestructible, celestial and divine.²⁷ Another detail in the interpretation of Theophilactos refers to the explanation of the way the Rich Man died. He did not surrender his soul in joy and gladness to God, nor the God has taken it into His arms. "Terrible angels" as taxcollectors arrive and take his soul which was in a perpetual debt, against his will, because the Rich Man has appropriated to himself earthly treasures, due to his love of good life. They come to take his soul by night, which, according to this author, symboli-

²³ K. Mc Vay (ed.), *The Fathers of the Church. St. Ephrem The Syrian. Selected Prose Works* (translated by E. G. Mathews Jr. and J. P. Amar) Washington D.C. 1994, 350-351 (Letter to Publius).

²⁴ Th. C. Oden (Gen Ed), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament III, Luke*, Downers Grove IL, 2003, 208.

²⁵ Св. Василије Велики, *Беседе*, Ман. Хиландар 2009, 97-98.

²⁶ Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 206.

²⁷ *Благовястникъ или толкованје блаженнаго Теофилакта, архиепископа болгарскаго, на Святое евангелие отъ Луки*, Казань 1907, 147.

cally indicates that the Rich Man was not illuminated by the light of knowledge of God, but instead lived in the tenebrosity of love of wealth, and, thus, clouded by it he finds death.²⁸

Interpretations in Serbian medieval literature

The parable of the Rich Fool occurs as a motif in Serbian medieval literature as well. Thus, writing the biography of his father, Stefan Nemanja, his second son and heir to the Serbian throne, Stefan the First Crowned, includes the biblical story about the Rich Fool twice. Stefan Nemanja, namely, recalls this story two times. First time it at full length forms part of Nemanja's penitential and oath prayer, which he pronounces before the construction of the monastery of Studenica. Stefan the First Crowned states that this parable led Stefan Nemanja to devote himself to the spiritual principles of life, at the time when he already strengthened his power and acquired great wealth. Stefan the First Crowned states:

„...having an untold fear of God in His heart, and being frightened of the story, he was saying: - Let not the Word from the story of My Lord fulfill in relation to me the sinful, which goes: The ground of certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself: 'What shall I do? I don't have enough place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself: 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy: eat, drink and be merry.' And so on. And waiting a little bit, the Word will reach me at the end, the Word which he said: 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'“²⁹

Immediately after this sentence, Stefan The First Crowned refers to the Last Judgment, associating it, in this way, with the Gospel passage on the Rich Fool.³⁰

Stefan the First Crowned once more recalls the Rich Fool, when describing the moment in which his father Stefan Nemanja found out that his youngest son had received angelic order on Holy Mount Athos. In Nemanja's lips he put the words of pious prayer of gratitude and encouragement of his own soul toward endeavor:

“Do not behold, do not, as Lot's wife, pay attention to the beauties of this earthly world which disappear quickly,” in order that you might not suffer the fate of the Rich Man, but rather remain silent and remember your promises (Math. 3:10; John 4:35). Because the time is near, and the ax is already at the foot of the trees and the fields already became white. Understand, it is harvest!

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁹ С. Првовенчани, *Сабрана дела* (предговор, превод дела и коментари Љ. Јухас-Георгиевска; издање на старословенском Т. Јовановић), Београд 1999, 40-41.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

... Yes, stand up, therefore, stand up and exert yourself in the easy yoke of Christ and in his light burden, (in order) that Christ opens to you the door of His kingdom.”³¹

After this statement, the same author speaks about the gospel story which symbolically anticipates the Last Judgment, thus once more associating the biblical story of the Rich Fool with this future event.

Summarizing our presentation on the interpretation of the Luke’s passage which concerns the parable on the Rich Fool, we might say that this scene, executed in the narthex of Sopoćani, contains a clear symbolic connotation of the Last Judgment. On the one hand, the interpretations of the mentioned Byzantine church authors and of the said Serbian medieval ruler of this parable, testify to this fact. On the other hand, the fact that the parable of the Rich Fool is illustrated on the western wall, where the Last Judgment is generally depicted, would support this assumption.³² Thus, the fresco of the Rich Fool could symbolically be associated with the fresco of Deesis on the eastern wall, painted right across from it. The depiction of archangel Michael and Raphael with swords on right-hand and on the left-hand side of the entrance to the bell tower is in line to such an interpretation.³³

Furthermore, this fresco in symbolic sense represents encouragement to live in virtue and charity, that is, in purity. The instance of negative conduct toward God and His gift in the form of an abundant harvest, i.e. certain kind of idolatry toward material and in broader sense, earthly goods, should be corrected. Such negative behaviour is altered by Christ – by His miraculous healings and His ministry. In such a context, the parable of the Rich Fool addresses the same figurative core as the three scenes of the cycle of Christ’s Miracles and Ministry: the state of man’s soul, the darkness of man’s spirit and its spiritual blindness. However, at the same time, it represents direct contrast to the scenes on the eastern wall of the exonarthex, from the cycle of Christ’s Miracles and Ministry, in spite of the fact that they belong to the same fresco cycle. Namely, as we have said previously, the Rich Man lived in the darkness of the love for wealth, being darkened by it and unenlightened by the “light of knowing God.”³⁴ On the other hand, the compositions featuring the healing of the paralytic, the healing of the blind born and Christ’s Conversation to the Samaritan Woman, most directly speak of knowing God, through illumination. Christ is the enlightener of the souls blind in spirit, who illuminates them by the knowledge of truth.³⁵

³¹ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

³² On the scene of the Last Judgment and its placement in the iconographic programme in general see G. Podskalsky, A. Cutler, *Last Judgment*, Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, Vol. 2, Oxford-New York 1991, 1181-1183; A. Давидов-Темерински, *Циклус Страшног суда*, in: Зидно сликарство Дечана. Грађа и студије, Београд 1995, 191-209.

³³ On the positioning of archangels Michael and Gabriel on the entrances, in the function of the guardians of the entrance see Г. Геров, *Ангелите – пазители на входа*, Зборник радова Византолошког Института 46 (2009) 435-442.

³⁴ Благовястникъ, 149.

³⁵ Н. Давидовић, *Представа Богородице са Христом „Крмитељем“ у Богородици Љвешкој у Призрену*, Старине Косова и Метохије I, Приштина 1961, 88.

From a very early period these three last mentioned scenes from the cycle of Christ's Miracles and Ministry Cycle are interpreted in a baptismal context and they form a liturgical and contextual unit. Ivan Drpić, when analysing comparative material from the broader Byzantine territory, arrived at the conclusion that spaces where fonts for blessing water were installed in, over time, took over the iconographic program characteristic for baptisteria. He also made a conclusion that the rite of Great Blessing of Waters gradually developed from the saint mystery of baptism and that over time it increased in importance, growing into the central ceremony of the Epiphany feast.³⁶ In the context of the symbolism of baptism, one should mention that blessed water would, through God's blessings, acquire power to purify the soul and the body, remit sins, heal illnesses, chase away visible and invisible enemies, and purify nature from all evils.³⁷

The sermon of St Gregory the Theologian (329-389/390) on the Baptism feast confirms that the parable of Rich Fool once indubitably had baptismal symbolism. The call "receive the illumination (baptism) while it is time" and "Access Him and be illuminated and your faces will never be covered in shame, because you will not miss the grace," St Gregory associates with and transforms into the warning with a direct citation taken from the parable of the Rich Fool: "The end comes suddenly, when you least expect it and at the time you cannot predict."³⁸ Inter alia, the revered Constantinopolitan archbishop states that the postponement of baptism is caused by greed.³⁹

In such a manner, in the context of the said sermon, the representation of the parable of the Rich Fool symbolically fits into symbolism of the scenes of emphasized baptismal meaning: the Healing of the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda, the Healing of the Blindborn and Christ Conversation to the Samaritan Woman. Beside the fact that it contains a strong eschatological note in the context of the Last Judgment, it represents powerful warning about the necessity of baptism and living in purity.

St Gregory the Theologian in the said sermon on the Baptism also correlates medical treatment, healing and the Last Judgment, which leads us to believe that this homily, and other similar homilies, could have influenced a deeper interconnection between the frescoes from a certain area, in this case the exonarthex of Sopoćani, in accordance with its function.⁴⁰

³⁶ Дрпић, *Три сцене*, 127.

³⁷ Л. Мирковић, *Православна литургија или наука о богослужењу православне источне цркве, други посебни део (свете тајне молитвословља)*, Београд 1967, 151-157.

³⁸ Св. Григорије Богослов, *Празничне беседе*, Требиње-Врњачка бања 2001, 110.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁰ Origins of illustrations: 1) Andela Đ. Gavrilović; 2) Blago Archives; 3) Б. Живковић, Сопоћани, Црчежи фресака; 4) http://ziarullumina.ro/sites/default/files/articol/2011-11/178785input_file1021320_1.jpg.

Анђела Ђ. Гавриловић
О ФРЕСЦИ ПАРАБОЛА О БЕЗУМНОМ БОГАТАШУ И РАЗЛОЗИМА ЊЕНОГ
СЛИКАЊА У СПОЉАШЊОЈ ПРИПРАТИ СОПОЋАНА

У раду се обрађује фреска *Парабола о безумном богаташу* насликана у спољашњој припрати Сопоћана, на слоју живописа из 1343. године, према одговарајућем месту из Лукиног јеванђеља (Лк. 12:16-21). Реч је о јединственој композицији ове тематике у српском средњовековном сликарству. У раду се анализирају иконографија ове сцене, положај у цркви на којем је насликана, место које сцена заузима у програму живописа егзонартекса, разматрају се тумачења ове библијске приче код византијских и српских средњовековних писаца и сцена се доводи у идејни контекст са околним до данас очуваним композицијама из истог регистра односно циклуса.

Фреска *Парабола о безумном богаташу* заузима централно место на западном зиду сопоћанског ексонартекса и по површини представља највећу очувану фреску наративног карактера западног зида. Поред тога што заузима средишње место на западном зиду, она је некада, по свој прилици, била наглашена и луком, док је са севера и југа омеђена пиластрима. Такође, са доње стране је истиче лучни пролаз. Сцена Богаташеве житнице насликана у другом регистру живописа, што указује да је треба довести у програмску везу са фрескама из истог регистра, као и да је и њој у контексту сликаног програма дато на значају у знатној мери. Поред тога, она је насликана и директно наспрам главног западног улаза у цркву, над којим се некада налазила фреска са попрсејем Христа из Деизиса.

У погледу иконографије она представља приказ средњовековне свакодневице, илуструјући радове који следе после жетве. Како је ова сцена изузетно ретка у византијском сликарству и уметности њеног културног круга, можемо је упоредити само са истоименом фреском из цркве Куртеа де Арђеш. У румунској цркви је приказан моменат обраћања анђела богаташу у време када житнице још нису подигнуте и када се његова душа тражи, у Сопоћанима тренутак који му непосредно претходи, јер анђеоло није присутан на композицији. У румунској цркви је богаташ одевен раскошно, носи на глави круну, седи и нагледа изградњу житница, док је у Сопоћанима приказан у стојећем положају, у знатно једноставнијој одежди.

У погледу тумачења ове параболе већина византијских аутора у њој препознаје упозорење против луксуза и похлепе, изједначавајући човеково гомилање материјалних добара са сиромаштвом пред Богом. Друга линија тумачења ове приповести, односи се на Страшни суд.

Парабола о Безумном богаташу појављује се као мотив и у српској средњовековној књижевности, у житију Стефана Немање од Стефана Првовенчаног, који је доводи у везу са Страшним судом.

На основу изнетих разматрања, у раду је закључено је да поменути парабола у оквиру сопоћанске просторне целине садржи есхатолошку, и са њиме уско повезану, баптизмалну симболику и да је ту постављена са циљем да упозори на Страшни суд и да подстакне на живљење у врлини и чистоти. Поред других аутора, у раду је у том смислу посебно истакнута беседа св. Григорија Богослова на празник Крштења.