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НОВИ САД

2019

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Одељење за ликовне уметности

MATICA SRPSKA
Department of Fine Arts

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ЧЛАНЦИ, РАСПРАВЕ, ПРИЛОЗИ
ARTICLES, TREATISES, CONTRIBUTIONS

ANĐELA Đ. GAVRILOVIĆ

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Оригинални научни рад / Original scientific paper

The Representations of Sun and Moon in the Monastery of Zavala and the Reasons of their Depiction**

ABSTRACT: The wall painting of the church of Presentation of the Mother of God in the monastery of Zavala (1619) contains unusual, prominent representations of the two heavenly luminaries – the Sun and the Moon. They are painted in the centers of the arches which form the western, central and eastern bays of the church. What is also exceptional is that the heavenly luminaries have been placed next to the figures of eight prophets depicted in the arches. Although several scholars briefly mentioned the representations of the Sun and the Moon in previous bibliography, the representations of the heavenly luminaries from Zavala monastery have not been given appropriate attention. Besides this, they are the work of a respected “Athonite” painter, Georgije Mitrofanović. The relationship between the representations of the Sun and the Moon and the verses inscribed on the prophets’ scrolls have also remained unexplained by scholars. Due to the mentioned reasons, these heavenly bodies and their meaning will represent the subject of our paper.

KEY WORDS: Zavala monastery (1619), Sun, Moon, prophets, iconography, meaning, Serbian art, Turkish period, painter Georgije Mitrofanović.

In Serbian monumental painting, executed in the Byzantine tradition during the Ottoman rule (1459–1800), the two main heavenly bodies – the Sun and the Moon, continue to be painted in accordance with the artistic tradition of displaying these two luminaries in Byzantine and Serbian medieval art before the fall of Constantinople (1453) and before the fall of the Serbian Despotate (1459; ГАВРИЛОВИЋ 2019; СКОВРАН 1958: 37–62; КАЈМАКОВИЋ 1977: 87–92; ОКИЉ 2015: 94, 95, сл. 34, 40, 41, 43, 46, 67). Apart from that, the Serbian art of this period also offers some rare and sometimes even unique iconographic solutions, which by their meaning rely on

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the Byzantine tradition. The examples which we will discuss in the present paper belong to the group of unique solutions.

Two greatest heavenly luminaries, the Sun and the Moon, are illustrated in the catholicon of the Zavala monastery dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin (1619), located in Popovo polje in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as separated figures in the scope of the complex conceptual unit (КАЈМАКОВИЋ 1977: Т. VII). They are depicted as counterparts and painted on prominent, unusual places in the church – in the centers of the supporting arches, which form the western, the central, and the eastern bays of the church (ill. 3; КАЈМАКОВИЋ 1977: Т. VII). The Sun is depicted in the center of the eastern arch (ill. 1) and the Moon in the center of the western arch (ill. 2). What is characteristic for these figures of the Sun and the Moon in Zavala is that both representations take a prominent place in the painted program of the church, both in terms of the position where they are placed and by the fact that they are presented as individual figures in separate square fields. Apart from that, these heavenly bodies along with the adjacent figures of Old-Testament prophets, represent a unique iconographic and programmatic unit within old Serbian art (СКОВРАН 1958: 42, 43, 48–50, 54, 56; КАЈМАКОВИЋ 1977: 98–104; ОКИЉ 2015: 94,



Fig. 1. *The Sun*, Monastery of Zavala; eastern supporting arch; painted in 1619. (photo: Anđela Gavrilović, 2018)



Fig. 2. *The Moon*, Monastery of Zavala; western supporting arch; painted in 1619. (photo: Miodrag Marković, 2012)

95, 97, 98). In the catholicon of the Zavala monastery two more figures of prophets have been preserved – prophet Zephaniah and prophet Zacharias the Younger (СКОБРАН 1958: 49; КАЈМАКОВИЋ 1977: 100, 101, 103; ОКИЉ 2015: 92, 95.36, 95.37). However, their position in the church and their context differs from the position of the eight prophets in the arches, so these two figures will not be the subject of this paper.

The Sun is depicted on a dark background within the whitish medallion lined with a thin golden ribbon (ill. 1). It is shown en face in the form of the fiery, red sphere with human physiognomy that emits ten rays of light. Its gaze is directed towards the representations of Ancient of Days of Days and Christ Pantocrator in the central vault of the Church (ill. 3). The Moon is depicted on a dark blue background in a yellow medallion lined with a thin golden ribbon, en face, in a similar way – in the form of the cold, whitish–blue sphere with human physiognomy emitting light in rays (ill. 2). The heavenly bodies are not marked with inscriptions, but they do bear characteristic features.

The representations of the Sun and the Moon in the church of the Mother of God in Zavala were given equal space in terms of dimensions, which suggests that Georgije Mitrofanović did not rely on the biblical text which indicates that the Sun is greater light and the Moon is smaller heavenly luminary (Genesis 1.16), but on the Byzantine art tradition.



Fig. 3. Central vault with the representations of the Sun, the Moon and prophets in the arches, Monastery of Zavala; painted in 1619. (photo: Andela Gavrilović, 2018)

The heavenly properties of both luminaries in Zavala are first emphasized by their position in the painted program of a church – in the vault as the highest zone of the church, symbolizing the sky above the heavens (McVEY 1983: 99, pass. GAVRILOVIĆ 2018: 49.259, 64), then their spherical form (ГAVPPIЛOBIЋ 2019), as well as their depiction on the dark blue background which symbolizes the sky. What is particularly important concerning Zavala is the wider program whole to which, along with the Sun and the Moon, the figures of prophets belong. They are depicted on the arches under the representations of the Sun and the Moon, two figures next to each heavenly body on the north and two figures on the south (ill. 3). The usual place for depicting prophets is the tambour, however their position on the arches is, in church in Zavala, which has no dome, adapted to the space dictated by the architecture, and has the same meaning. Each prophet is depicted en face. Their iconography is traditional and each of them is holding an open scroll in his hand. Apart from the prophet Habakkuk, who is pointing to his ear, all prophets are making the gesture of blessing with their right hands and holding the scroll in their left hands.

Under the representation of the Sun, on the north side, prophet Solomon is painted with a text on his scroll: "Wisdom has built her house" (Prov. 9.1). Across him, the figure of prophet David is illustrated with the text on his scroll: "He shall come down like rain upon a fleece, like a drop falling upon the earth" (Ps. 72.6). Below prophet Solomon is prophet Jonah, with the text on his scroll: "I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble, and He answered me" (Jon. 2.3). Below prophet David is prophet Daniel who is holding in his hands the scroll with the text: "As I looked thrones were placed" (Dan. 7.9).

Next to the figure of the Moon, on the north side, prophet Isaiah is depicted, holding in his hand the scroll with the following verses: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel!" (Is. 7.14). Across him is prophet Jeremiah with the scroll with the verse from the Book of Baruch: "This is our Lord and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison of him" (Bar. 3.36). Below the figure of prophet Isaiah is a figure of prophet Habakkuk, who holds a scroll with the verse: "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid" (Hab. 3.1). Below the prophet Jeremiah is prophet Ezekiel, holding the scroll with the verse: "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and sent me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones" (Ez. 37.1).

The verse of prophet Solomon, "Wisdom has built her house" (Prov. 9.1), was interpreted with nuances and in different ways. It was read on numerous feasts, including the Feast of Virgin's Birth (September 8th), Annunciation (March 25th) and the Feast of Dormition (August 15th; RAHLFS 1915: 138, 140, 143, 145, 152, 158; GRAVGAARD 1977: 83.170). The words of this verse could refer to the Mother of God, to the Only-Begotten Son born of the Virgin, as well as to the Holy Trinity (ΚΟΚΚΙΝΟΥ 1979: 70–147; ΠΑΠΑΜΑΣΤΟΡΑΚΗΣ 2001: 191). This is the verse which according to the Apostolic institutions, along with the verses of Proverbs (Prov. 8.22; Prov. 9.1) and the Book of Isaiah (Is. 11.1) represents one of the main prophecies about the Incarnation of the Logos.

As we have said, the verse of the prophet David is the following: "He shall come down like rain upon a fleece, like a drop falling upon the earth" (Ps. 72.6). Motifs described in this verse, and as a subject present in Serbian medieval painting, have been elaborated in detail in terms of meaning (РАДОВАНОВИЋ 1988: 83–88). The mentioned verse was not read during a liturgical year. However, its motifs and allusions in the feast services in church poetry are very common. In these verses Blessed Theodoret of Cyr symbolically recognizes the Birth of Christ. According to him, this verse reveals "the birth in human flesh, which was silent, calm and secret" (MIGNE 1860: 1433A). Besides, concerning the rain which is from heaven, Blessed Theodoret says that "the angel announced that this tokos (birth, offspring) was divine, and not human" (MIGNE 1860: 1433A). Along the same lines, Euthymios Zigabenos says that this verse teaches how the incarnation of the Word of God was secret, and that it truly descended into the virgin's womb silently as rain, in such a manner that was undetectable (MIGNE 1864a: 725C–D). Byzantine patriarch Photios in his homily dedicated to the Annunciation attributes the following words to Archangel Gabriel: "I cry out, 'Hail, much-graced one,' and I praise the miracle in song, and worship the birth, but I am at loss to tell the manner of the conception. But if Thou wishest to accept credence of my tidings by means of examples, inferring great things from small ones, and confirming the things to come by things past, – Thou shalt conceive in Thy womb and bring forth a son in the same manner as Aaron's rod was budded without cultivation, acting

like a rooted plant (Num. 17.23). As the rain borne down from heaven on the fleece watered that alone but did not refresh the earth (Jud. 6.37), thus Thou too shalt conceive in Thy womb and bring forth the Lord. This Thy ancestor also, David, announces in advance, inspired by God of Thy pregnancy: ‘He shall come down like rain upon a fleece, like a drop falling upon the earth’ (Ps. 71.6). As the bush received the fire, and feeding the flames was not consumed (Exod. 3.2), thus shalt Thou conceive a son, lending Him Thy flesh, providing nourishment to the immaterial fire, and drawing incorruptibility in return. These things prefigured Thy conception, announced in advance Thy delivery, represented from afar Thy pregnancy. Those strange things have been wrought that they might confirm Thy child’s ineffable birth. They happened beforehand that they might delineate the incomprehensibility of the mystery: for the flaming bush, and the bedewed fleece, and the rod bearing leaves would not have contributed anything useful to life, nor would they have incited man to praise the Wonder-worker, nay the miracle would have fallen to no purpose, unless they had been set down as prefiguration of Thy giving birth, and been, as it were, the advance proclamations of the Lord’s coming” (MANGO 2017: 119–120). The church poets have also interpreted the rain as a symbol of Christ – Messiah (РАДОВАНОВИЋ 1989: 85).

The verse of prophet Jonah: “I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble, and he answered me” (Jon. 2.3) was read twice in a year: on the Feast of Epiphany and on Easter (RAHLFS 1915: 40, 61–62, 65, 89; GRAVGAARD 1977: 70.139), while in the Coptic church it was read on the other days as well (RAHLFS 1915: 68, 89). It is interesting that Alfred Rahlfs mentions that next to this verse in Syro-palestinian lectionary lies the remark: “atvespers of Epiphany and Easter” (RAHLFS 1915: 61–62). This verse was interpreted as a rule in the context of Resurrection (cf. e.g. MIGNE 1864c: 617D–620A; 1864b: 1729–D). However, it was also linked to the Feast of Epiphany, being read at Vespers of that day. The irmos of the 6th song read at the Forefeast of Nativity of the Lord (December 24) has the same meaning: “Jonah was caught in the belly of the whale, but not kept, bearing the image of Your birth as a child in manger, O Saviour...” (DEČANI 37, f. 197r).

The verse of prophet Daniel “As I looked thrones were placed” (Dan. 7.9) was not read during the liturgical year, however, it was interpreted in different ways. These words alluded to the Virgin, who is in church poetry and exegesis designated as a throne (DEČANI 36, f. 10r). Prominent church poet and homilist, St. John of Damascus, interpreted the mentioned Daniel’s verse in the same manner (MIGNE 1864: 469C–D). This verse at the same time refers to Christ’s incarnation, to His superiority and eternal dimension (ΠΑΜΑΣΤΟΡΑΚΗΣ 2001: 217–218). Well-known theologian, Gregory Palamas, in his homily on Annunciation refers through this verse to Christ’s incarnation and His human nature (MIGNE 1865: 712B–C). Saint Ephrem of Syria is saying that the thrones represent the mystery of the Son, Who will judge the living and the dead, he names the Son Ancient of the Days, “referring by this to His eternal birth from the Father” (СВЕТИ ЈЕФРЕМ СИРИН 2016: 414). Having in mind the above-said, as well as the meaning of the Sun and the Moon and the verses of other prophets in Zavala and the painted program associated to with the representations of the Sun and the Moon in Zavala, the verse of prophet Daniel should be understood as an allusion to Christ’s incarnation.

The text of prophet Isaiah “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel!” (Is. 7.14) was read on the eve before the Nativity of the Lord (December

24), on Friday of the second week of the Lent, and in Armenian church on the Feast of Dormition of the Virgin as well (RAHLFS 1915: 32, 36, 54, 67, 68, 77, 123; GRAVGAARD 1977: 52.91). It stands in line with the verse from Matthew (Mt 1.23), since Matthew directly transmits it, as a proof of Mother of God's virginal birth. The miraculousness of the miraculous sign given by God lies in the fact that Mary is a virgin who is really going to give birth. Theophilactus of Ochrid interpreted this verse by saying: "It is not said 'You will name him, but 'they will name him'. This means that His very works will show that He is God (who lives) with us, because in the Holy Scripture the names are given according to deeds, e.g.: 'quick to the plunder' (Is. 8.1)." Since, at the same time, with the birth of the Lord the deceit is plundered and defeated, therefore it is said that He was so named because He was named after the works He did" (MIGNE 1864d: 157D–160B). Euthymios Zigabenos states that the sign that God will give will be special, due to the fact that "the virgin will give birth" (MIGNE 1864e: 133A). It is interesting in which way Theodoret of Cyr explains this verse. He says that by it the special sign that God will give will be explained, and it represents the birth (the offspring) – the true sign "in depths and in heights", since Emanuel "descended into Hell and ascended to the heights". In fact, according to the same writer, "Emmanuel has risen Adam who was laying in Hell. He named the child Emmanuel, which means God with us, God who became man, Who received human nature, the Only-Begotten God, Who has both the Divine form and the form of servant" (MIGNE 1864b: 276 D–277A). Byzantine patriarch Photios in the mentioned homily on Annunciation attributes the following words to Archangel Gabriel: "For it was about Thee that the Prophet also cried out, saying, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.' He is mighty God, the Prince of peace, and the Father of the future age. The prophecies made concerning Thee I too announce to Thee today, and I am not come to offer my own words, but to bring commands of Him who has sent me. It is He that inspired the prophet Isaiah to prophesy concerning Thee; it is He again who entrusted me also to announce today the outcome of that prophecy which is soon to be fulfilled: 'And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.' And because through Him they will enjoy salvation, they shall call Him Jesus who has delivered them of their sins: His title *comes* from His bounty, His style from His function, His fair name from His deeds. They shall call Him Jesus, through whom the inexhaustible wealth of salvation flows to them; through whom the stings of the death are broken (I Cor. 15.56), while the grace of immortality flourishes, and the might of sin collapses..." (MANGO 2017: 117). "For He of whom the Son was ineffably and timelessly begotten, possesses also the unerring apprehension of Him; and He who has the true knowledge of the offspring, may be trusted also to apply an appropriate name. Whereforesaith the God of all and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am very pleased; hear ye him'... For this reason, it says, 'He shall be named,' not 'He shall become': for before all time He had been enthroned together with His substantial Father. Him Thou wilt conceive in Thy womb, and His mother Thou wilt be proclaimed; Him Thy virginal womb receives. Whom the heavenly vault could not contain, in the hollow of whose hand everything is held, the work of whose providence is the maintenance and continuance of existent things, Him Thou shalt conceive in Thy womb" (MANGO 2017: 118).

The verse of prophet Jeremiah “This is our Lord and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison of him” (Bar. 3.36) was read twice in a year: on the day before the feast of Nativity and on the feast of Nativity (RAHLFS 1915: 32, 54, 136; GRAVGAARD 1977: 64.124). This text refers to Christ’s first coming, as the condition of salvation and eternal life and indicates the primacy of true, Christian God over pagan gods (ГАВРИЛОВИЋ 2018: 73). According to Theodoret of Cyr, this verse refers to Christ Pantocrator, Who is the supreme governor, the Creator, the ruler of everything and the head of everything (MIGNE 1864b: 773A).

The verse of prophet Habakkuk, “O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid” (Hab. 3.1) was not read during the liturgical year (GRAVGAARD 1977: 44.72; БАБИЋ 1987: 73). According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, “the Word of God” signifies the word said about the Father’s Son and His incarnation that is the power of the Fathers’ deeds. Saint Cyril of Alexandria is explaining the meaning of these words in name of the prophet addressing the Lord: “O Lord and Ruler of all, even if You actually made flesh, I am stuck with fear on hearing the report of You, or news and revelation. I am astounded. . . at the magnitude of the event, knowing that, though You share form and equality in everything with the one who begot You, You would willingly empty yourself, become human being like us from a woman, endure the form of slavery, entitle Your own father as God with us, and become obedient, even to death, death on a cross. Accordingly, I heard of You, and I was afraid; I comprehended Your works, and was astonished” (MIGNE 1864c: 896B–897A).

The verse of prophet Ezekiel “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and sent me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones” (Ez. 37.1) was read on Holy Saturday (RAHLFS 1915: 40, 62, 65, 72, 73, 99; GRAVGAARD 1977: 40.62). According to that, Blessed Theodoret of Cyr states that “the hand of God signifies divine power” and asserts that the prophet “did not observe what was revealed to him with his bodily eyes, but that he saw the revelation of the Holy Spirit”. The same writer is then saying that prophet meant by these words “the resurrection of dead bodies, teaching, thus, all people, that everything is easy for Him if He wants to do it” (MIGNE 1864b: 1189A–B). In this sense, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem interpreted this verse in one of his catechetical lectures, stating that the root of all good deeds is the hope for resurrection (MIGNE 1857: 1017A pass.). Saint Ephrem of Syria also explains this verse in the same manner: “Spirit of God gives the prophet Ezekiel a revelation of the resurrection of dead” (СВЕТИ ЈЕФРЕМ СИРИН 2016: 398; on this verse see also: NEUSS 1912: 180–188). We can assume that Ezekiel’s verse could be interpreted in both the context of Epiphany and in the context of Easter, in the same manner as the verses of prophet Jonah and Habakkukin Virgin’s church in Zavala, which could be explained in both ways.

Having in mind the above-said, we can conclude that holy fathers perceive in the Sun and the Moon the mystery of Christ and the Virgin, more precisely the mystery of Christ’s incarnation. Such a conclusion is also supported by the works of the church writers. Thus, in one encomium, crucial for defining the symbolism of the Sun and the Moon in Zavala, which describes the Dormition of the Mother of God, we find an interpretation of prophet Habakkuk’s words concerning the Sun and the Moon. When mentioning different allusions relating to the Virgin, as well as Christ’s appearance on Earth in flesh – the rain descending on the earth, the closed gate on the East, holy mountain of which the stone was separated, Teoteknos of Livia, bishop in Palestina (6th century), also states: “the other prophet compared You with the

Moon saying: ‘The Sun has risen and the Moon has remained in its place’ (Hab. 3:1), which means that Christ has descended from You and that Your virginity has remained in its place” (WENGER 1955: 286–287; for the Moon as prefiguration of the Virgin see also ГАВРИЛОВИЋ 2019). The motif of a Virgin giving birth to Christ-the Sun is present in church poetry, where Christ is glorified as a Sun. We will mention several examples. In the service for December 5th, we read: “He passed from Your womb, o Most Pure, as through a closed, impenetrable gate, Christ as Sun of Justice, has shone the world, because he was glorified” (DEČANI 37, f. 27r). “The Lord revealed himself to Isaiah as a burning coal and shone to those led astray in darkness as the Sun from the Virgin womb, and gave them divine reason and enlightenment” (DEČANI 37, f. 29v–30r). „O Merciful One, You have shone from the Virgin, as the Sun from the clouds...” (DEČANI 37, 59r; December 8). „You have shone from corruptible loins, o Virgin, in the corruptible body You have carried the Sun of Glory, who became like us...” (DEČANI 37, f. 62r; December 9).

The representations of the Sun and the Moon in the catholicon of the Zavala monastery bear these meanings. They show the erudition of their painter, Georgije Mitrofanović, who came from Holy Mount Athos and who apart from Zavala worked in other important Serbian monasteries – the centers of Serbian culture and spirituality, whose works leave space for further investigations.

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ПРЕДСТАВЕ СУНЦА И МЕСЕЦА У МАНАСТИРУ ЗАВАЛИ И РАЗЛОЗИ ЊИХОВОГ СЛИКАЊА

Резиме

Живопис Цркве Ваведења Богородице у херцеговачком манастиру Завали (1619) садржи истакнуте представе небеских видела Сунца и Месеца (сл. 1–3). Оне, што је карактеристично, заузимају запажено место у сликаном програму Богородичине цркве, како положајем сликања у цркви, тако и чињеницом да су представљене као индивидуалне фигуре омеђене засебним, квадратним пољима. Изведене су у теменима лукова који деле простор цркве на западни, средишњи и источни травеј. Оно што је особеност ових представа јесте и околност да су уз фигуре Сунца и Месеца у луковима приказани и ликови осморице пророка. Изузев сумарног помена у литератури, до данашњег дана представама ових небеских светила није указана пажња. Осим тога, ова небеска светила су дело уваженог сликара „са Атона”, Георгија Митрофановића. Ни значењу текстова на свицима пророка у контексту представа небеских светила у науци није посвећена пажња. Из наведених разлога, иконографија и значење ових небеских светила представљају предмет овог рада. И Сунце (сл. 1) и Месец (сл. 2) су приказани у виду сфера људских физиономија на тамноплавом фону у светлим ме-

даљонима. У раду су текстови на свицима пророка (ПрС 9.1; Пс. 72.6; Јн. 2.3; Вар. 3.36; Дан. 9:7; Ис. 7:14; Ав. 3:1; Јез. 37.1) на основу објашњења византијских црквених писаца протумачени у контексту Богородице и Христовог оваплоћења, при чему Сунце симболично означава Христа, а Месец Богородицу, што јесте смисао приказивања ових небеских светила у Богородичиној цркви у Завали. На тај начин они су доведени и у везу са Христовим представама у западном и централном своду храма.

Кључне речи: Сунце, Месец, пророци, иконографија, значење, српска уметност, турски период, манастир Завала, 1619, Георгије Митрофановић.

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