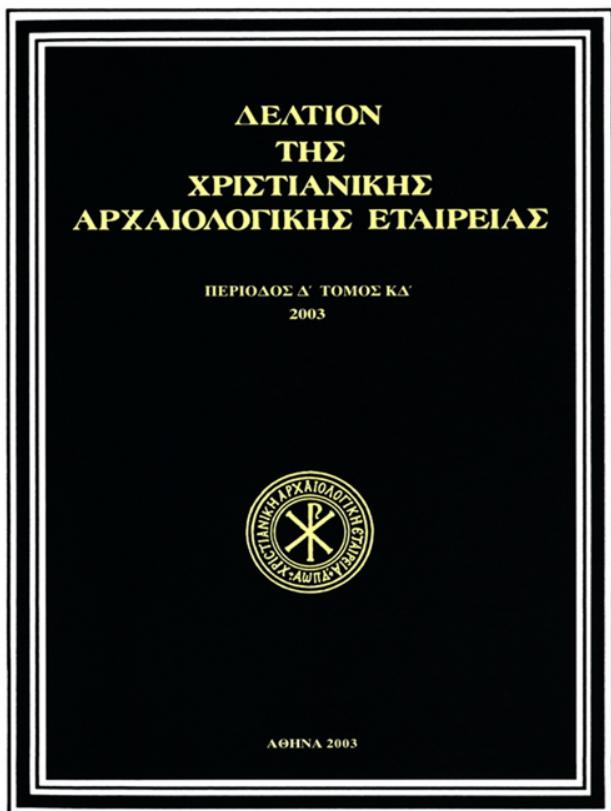


Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society

Vol 24 (2003)

Deltion ChAE 24 (2003), Series 4. In memory of Nikos Oikonomides (1934-2000)



The Iconographical Subject "Christ the Vine" in Byzantine and Post-byzantine Art

Apostolos G. MANTAS

doi: [10.12681/dchae.393](https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.393)

To cite this article:

MANTAS, A. G. (2011). The Iconographical Subject "Christ the Vine" in Byzantine and Post-byzantine Art. *Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society*, 24, 347–360. <https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.393>



ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑΣ

The Iconographical Subject "Christ the Vine" in
Byzantine and Post-byzantine Art

Apostolos MANTAS

Τόμος ΚΔ' (2003) • Σελ. 347-360

ΑΘΗΝΑ 2003

THE ICONOGRAPHIC SUBJECT “CHRIST THE VINE” IN BYZANTINE AND POST-BYZANTINE ART*

In the Gospel according to John (15:1-7), on the night that Jesus was to be betrayed, He said to his disciples: *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abideth not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

These words of Christ signal, of course, a completely new view of the relation between God and man, but they also comprise the continuation and evolution of an age-old tradition, since allegorical references to the vine are frequent in the Old Testament, where it symbolizes mainly prosperity and the chosen people of God¹. The Fathers of the Church who commend the parable in the New Testament construed

it in different ways, since its symbolic interpretation was not expounded by Jesus himself². Thus the vine has been interpreted as a symbol of the Church and of the life-giving force that binds it together³, has been associated with the Incarnation of the Word⁴ and with the Holy Communion⁵, while a strong soteriological and eschatological meaning has also been attributed to it⁶. Finally, in the Old Testament there is no reference to any further relationship between the husbandman and the vine. In the New Testament the husbandman is God the Father, while the vine is the Word Incarnate and the vine shoots are the Faithful. In this way the aforementioned parable underlines the new, at this point ‘corporal’, relationship between the Creator and creation, which springs from the Divine Incarnation.

The pictorial rendering of the vine parable is the subject of this study. The creation of the iconographic subject in the Late Byzantine period will be examined, along with its interpretation and the versions of it found in Post-Byzantine art down to the end of the seventeenth century.

In the visual arts the vine shoot often occurs as a Dionysiac

* Part of this paper was presented at the *Εικοστό Δεύτερο Συμπόσιο βυζαντινής και μεταβυζαντινής αρχαιολογίας και τέχνης*. Πρόγραμμα και περιήγησις εισηγήσεων και ανακοινώσεων, Athens 2002, p. 64. I would like to thank Professors M. Constantoudaki, N. Chatzidaki, N. Ghioles, V. Kepetzi and M. Vassilaki for their valuable comments.

1. For the symbolic representations of the vine tree in the Old Testament, see C. Leonardi, *Ampelos. Il simbolo della vite nell'arte pagana e paleocristiana*, Rome 1947, p. 65ff. G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961, p. 91.

2. For the different interpretations of the parable, see Leonardi, op.cit., p. 107ff. A.G. Mantas, *Ikonographische Beobachtungen zu einer königlichen Pforte aus dem Leimonos Kloster auf Lesbos (17. Jh.)*, *Symposium «Griechische Ikonen»*, Marburg, June 2000 (in press).

3. With reference to the parable of the Hired Labourers (Math., 20: 1-16) Origen (Commentaria in Evangelium Matthaeum XV, PG 13, 1360B) writes that the Vineyard is God's Church (ἀμπελῶν δέ [...] εἴη ἀν ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ). Gregory the Theologian (Oratio XXXV - De Martyribus, PG 36, 385A) calls the Church “God's living vine”

(ζῶσαν Θεοῦ ἀμπελον), while Eusebius of Caesarea (Commentaria in Psalms, PG 23, 972D-973A) relating the 79th psalm with the vine parable, states: «ἐκ τῶν ταύτης [τῆς ἀληθινῆς ἀμπέλου] τοιγαροῦν κλημάτων διαδοθέντων καθ' ὅλης τῆς οἰκουμένης συνέστησαν ἀμπελῶνες καὶ τούτων οἱ καρποὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸν [συνάγονται] ἐν ταῖς καθ' ὅλης τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐπαλησίαις». Cf. Leonardi, op.cit., p. 199ff, 209ff.

4. This association has been made on the basis that the relationship between the Vine and its branches springs from the human nature of Jesus. See Leonardi, op.cit., p. 112ff, 120-121. Mantas, op.cit.

5. The exhortation of the Lord: “Abide in me, and I in you”, found in the passage which refers to the vine, was associated by the Fathers of the Church with his reassurance: “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him” (John, 6:56), which unquestionably refers to the Eucharist. See Leonardi, op.cit., p. 110-111. Mantas, op.cit.

6. This association has been made on the basis of the reference to the way that vine-branches bear fruits abiding to the tree, as well as to the withering and burning of those separated from it. See Leonardi, op.cit., p. 121ff. Mantas, op.cit. (n. 2).



Fig. 1. Malles, Hierapetra. "Christ the Vine". Icon by Angelos Akotantos.

or decorative motif in pagan art⁷. Such representations were adopted in Christian iconography and from the early Christian era onwards they appear mainly on sarcophagi, altars, and in monumental painting⁸. In the Middle and Late By-

zantine period, the vine shoot continues to be found as a decorative motif in the religious art of both East and West⁹. However, in all these representations, which can be dated from the early Christian era until the end of the fourteenth century, there is no evidence that expressly connects the subject of the picture with the passage from John's Gospel in which the parable of the Vine is mentioned. The relevance of these representations to the evangelical text, even though it is considered to exist¹⁰, is rather vague and at no point does it become evident whether or not the words of the Lord were the source of inspiration¹¹.

In the first half of the fifteenth century three portable icons depicting the iconographic subject known as *Christ the Vine* were painted on Crete¹². These were the icons found in the monastery of the Hodegetria in Kenourgio, in the monastery of Varsamonero, and that from Malles, Hierapetra¹³. In each of them a symmetrically organized composition has been laid out, in the centre of which, at the point where two large branches from the trunk of a vine tree cross, is placed a bust of Christ stretching out his arms in blessing. On the curves of the helical shoots of the tree, which bear bunches of grapes and vine leaves, the Apostles are shown, facing the Lord, holding open books or unrolled scrolls. They are in hierarchical order, led by Peter and Paul, who are placed in prominent position on both sides of Christ's halo, while the rest, in groups of five arranged vertically, frame the two sides of the icon (Fig. 1).

The relation of the icons to the parable of the Vine is made evident by the open Gospel book in front of Christ, at the intersection of the branches of the tree; on the codex is inscribed the passage from John's Gospel, slightly altered:

7. For examples, see mainly Leonardi, op.cit., p. 7ff, 47ff.

8. For examples, see Leonardi, op.cit., p. 124ff, 211ff. A. Thomas, Weinstock, *LchrI* 4, col. 491.

9. For example, on the intrados of the arch of the north and south apse of Cambazli kilise (early 13th c.) in Cappadocia, and on the intrados of the arch of the south apse in the church of the Forty Martyrs (Altı parmak kilise, 1216-1217) in the same region. See C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et des ses abords*, Paris 1991, p. 198, 206, figs 122, 128.2.

10. Thomas, op.cit., cols 491-492.

11. Even in the case of the double representation of the enthroned Christ with ten more figures, also enthroned (Apostles?), in the midst of spiralling vine tendrils, which decorates the chalice of Antioch (c. 500), the question has reasonably been asked as to whether it constitutes the pictorial rendering of the aforementioned parable. V.H. Elbern, *Liturgische Geräte, RbK 5*, 1995, cols 723-724 (with earlier bibliography).

12. These examples are, to my knowledge, the earliest representations of the subject under examination. I am informed by Professor M. Con-

stantoudaki, that a catalogue dating to 1420 refers to a chalice with a depiction of the Vine, though without making it clear whether this is the subject under examination here or simply a representation of a vine shoot. Even if the former is the case, the conclusions reached in the present article are not dramatically affected: the creation of the iconographic subject is simply placed a few years earlier, but it remains in the same *Zeitgeist* and the contribution of Angelos Akotantos should be more associated with the establishment of the subject.

13. N. Chatzidaki, *Eἰκόνες τῆς κορητικῆς σχολῆς. 15ος-16ος αιώνας*, exh. cat., Athens 1983, p. 25-26. M. Borboudakis (ed.), *Eἰκόνες τῆς κορητικῆς τέχνης. Ἀπό τὸν Χάνδακα ὅς τὴν Μόσχα καὶ τὴν Ἀγία Πετρούπολη*, Herakleion 1993, nos 119, 124, 151, p. 475-476, 481, 506-507 (M. Borboudakis, with earlier bibliography). These icons copy a 16th-century Cretan icon now in the Byzantine Museum of Athens, as well as another one of the 17th c. now in the Museum of Zakynthos. See *Εἰδική ἔκθεση κευμάτων προσφύγων*, exh. cat., Athens 1982, no. 8, p. 14 (N. Chatzidaki). Z. Mylona, *The Zakynthos Museum*, Athens 1998, no. 99, p. 250-251.

ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Η ΑΜΠΕΛΟΣ ΥΜΕΙC ΤΑ ΚΛΗΜΑΤΑ ΚΑΙ Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΜΟΥ Ο ΓΕΩΡΓΟΣ ΕΚΤΙ ΠΑΝ ΚΛΗΜΑ EN EMOI MH ΦΕΡΟΝ ΚΑΡΠΟΝ (I am the vine ye are the branches and my father is the husbandman every branch in me that beareth not fruit). In this passage the interest of the painter is focused on the correct theological interpretation of the depiction. The phrase “I am the vine, ye are the branches” is taken from the fifth verse of chapter 15, while the rest, “and my father is the husbandman” is taken from the first verse. The last part of the text, “every branch in me that beareth not fruit”, is again taken from the fifth verse. The artist, that is, has not simply copied the text from the Gospel; on the contrary he has proceeded to make an eclectic transcription in order to make the content of the icon absolutely clear to the Faithful.

All three icons bear at the bottom the signature of the painter ΧΕΙΡ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΥ (Hand of Angelos), whose contribution to the creation of the iconographic subject under question was decisive, according to N. Chatzidaki¹⁴. The painter Angelos has been identified by M. Vassilaki with Angelos Akotantos, who lived and worked on Crete, in the town of Candia (modern Herakleion) in the first half of the fifteenth century¹⁵. He

14. Chatzidaki, op.cit., p. 25-26. Cf. Borboudakis, op.cit., p. 476, 481, 507. P.L. Vocopoulos, Τρεις είκόνες τοῦ 15ου αιώνα στήν Ζάκυνθο, in Θρύλαμα στην μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα, Athens 1994, I, p. 349. M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, *Icons of the Byzantine Museum of Athens*, Athens 1998, p. 170.

15. M. Vassilaki-Mavrakaki, ‘Ο ζωγράφος Ἀγγέλος Ἀκοτάντος. Τό ἔργο καὶ ἡ διαθήκη του (1436), *Thesaurismata* 18 (1981), p. 290-298. The same identification has also been made, though without any documentation, by M. Cattapan. See M. Cattapan, I pittori Pavia, Rizo, Zafuri da Candia e Papadopoulo della Canea, *Thesaurismata* 14 (1977), p. 199-200. We have considerable evidence for his life and work, deriving mainly from the will he wrote in 1436, on the occasion of his journey to Constantinople, as well as from other documents from the State Archives of Venice. See M.I. Manoussacas, Η διαθήκη του Ἀγγέλου Ἀκοτάντου (1436), ἀγώνουτον κορητικοῦ ζωγράφου, *ΔΧΑΕ* Β' (1960-1961), p. 139-150. M. Chatzidakis, “Ελληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Ἀλωση”, 1, Athens 1987, p. 147-154. M. Vassilaki, Από τον «ανώνυμο» βυζαντινό καλλιτέχνη στον «επώνυμο» κορητικό ζωγράφο του 15ου αιώνα, in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *To πορτραίτο του καλλιτέχνη στο Βυζάντιο*, Herakleion 1997, p. 161-168 (with earlier bibliography). M. Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, The Painter Angelos Akotantos: New Biographical Details (forthcoming).

16. In a document dated to October 1449, Akotantos’ predecessor in the office of πρωτοψάλτης was still alive; this date thus constitutes a *terminus post quem* for the holding of the office by the painter. An act on 17 June in the same year refers to the replacement of Akotantos in the office by Peter Gavalas, despite the fact that the artist was still alive. According to M. Constantoudaki, his replacement was due to Akotantos’ health problems, which led to his death later that year. I am grateful

was also πρωτοψάλτης of Candia, an office which he assumed after October 1449 and which he held for a short time, until 17 June 1450, the year in which he died¹⁶.

The artistic work of Angelos Akotantos is set in a period during which the religious life of Byzantium was dominated by preparations for a Council, the purpose of which was to achieve the Union of the Eastern and Western Churches¹⁷. The Council started in 1438 in Ferrara, and continued in Florence, where it was completed on 6 July 1439 with the Greeks and Latins signing the decree for the Union of the two Churches¹⁸. It is well known¹⁹ that the inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire and also the Greeks living in areas under foreign domination (like Crete²⁰) held divergent views on the issue of Union. Pro-unionists supported it mainly because they were persuaded that this was the only way to ensure that they would receive some help, in an attempt to contain the advance of the Turks²¹. Anti-unionists were quite fiercely opposed to it mainly because of religious convictions²². Unfortunately, it is impossible to gain a clear view of the exact attitude of Angelos Akotantos on this matter, though the fact that the painter held the office of πρωτοψάλτης of Candia²³ led M. Vassilaki to the reason-

to Professor M. Constantoudaki for this information. See also Vocopoulos, op.cit. (n. 14), p. 348-349, n. 10.

17. H.G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, Munich 1977, p. 319ff. J. Gill, *Church Union: Rome and Byzantium (1204-1453)*, London 1979.

18. J. Gill, *The Council of Florence*, Cambridge 1959, p. 293ff.

19. Ibid., p. 13-14.

20. For the attitude of the Cretans towards the Union, see mainly G. Hofmann, *Wie stand es mit der Frage der Kircheneinheit auf Kreta im XV. Jahrhundert?*, *OCP* 10 (1944), p. 91-115, esp. 94-96. N. Tomadakis, Μιχαήλ Καλοφρενᾶς Κοής, Μητροφάνης Β' καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὴν Ἔνωσιν ἀντίθεσις τῶν Κορτάνων, *ΕΕΒΣ* 21 (1951), p. 110-144.

21. According to Georgios Phrantzes (*Chronicon*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1838, p. 178.19-21) Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus advised his son to study the subject-matter of a Council, but never to attempt to put it into practice. Cf. Gill, op.cit., p. 30-31, n. 6.

22. Their argument was aptly worded by a quote which was later attributed to Luc Notaras “We would rather see the Turkish fez reigning in the midst of Constantinople than have the Latin tiara”. See *Michaelis Ducae nepotis historia byzantina*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1846, p. 264.14-16.

23. For the status of the Church in Crete under Venetian domination, see A. Panopoulou, Οἱ Βενετοί καὶ ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ πραγματικότητα. Διοικητική, ἐκκλησιαστική, οἰκονομική ὁργάνωση, in Ch. Maltezou (ed.), *Οψεις τῆς ἴστορίας τοῦ βενετοχροαύμενον Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Αρχειακά τεκμήρια*, Athens 1993, p. 288-297 (with earlier bibliography). For the offices of πρωτοπαπάς and πρωτοψάλτης in particular, see Z. Tsirpanlis, “Capitula” (1408) γιά τὸν πρωτοπαπᾶ καὶ τὸν πρωτοψάλτη Χάνδακος, in *Ροδωνιά. Τμῆμα στήν M.I. Μανούσακα*, Rethymnon 1994, I, p. 531-540 (with earlier bibliography).

able assumption that he was in all probability pro-unionist or at least tolerant regarding the matter of the Union²⁴.

Furthermore it is possible to detect in his artistic work what might have constituted the potential pro-unionist views of the painter. To Angelos Akotantos has been attributed a great number of icons representing the Embrace of Peter and Paul, an iconographic subject that was understood in Byzantium as a symbol of the Union of the Churches even before the Council of Ferrara-Florence²⁵. Moreover, the intense – though unsuccessful – effort to have the Union decree signed and read on 29 June²⁶, the feastday of Sts Peter and Paul, indicates that the two leading Apostles symbolized the Union of the two Churches not only for the Orthodox but also for the Catholic. Therefore, it is believed that the artist painted many icons representing this subject because it reflected his pro-unionist attitudes²⁷.

The creation and establishment of the iconographic subject of the Vine could also be seen in the same light. As mentioned above, the parable has been interpreted mainly as a symbol of the Church and of the life-giving force that ensures its Union. The fact that interest in its pictorial representation began to be shown at the same time as the deliberations for the Union of the Churches, permits the correlation of the establishment of the new iconographic subject with the religious events of

the time. The symbolism, not only of the secondary elements but also of the whole composition, suggests that the picture constitutes the visual expression of a number of arguments used by both sides at the Ferrara-Florence Council, in an attempt to underline the necessity of the Union.

The representation of Christ at the centre of the icon, on the intersection of the tree branches, projects the common descent of the Church and the united faith of all Christians, arguments which were heavily stressed during the speeches delivered in the Council²⁸. This position of the figure underlines the continued presence of the Lord in the Church and by extension in the Council, the work of which he is requested to bring to a successful conclusion²⁹. The busts of the Apostles among the vine tendrils represent the artistic expression of the conviction that they are the founders of the Church, while the embedding of the figures of Christ and the Apostles in the same tree stresses its former unity, which the Council was attempting to re-establish³⁰. By placing the two leading Apostles in a prominent position, either side of Christ's halo, their importance as the founders of the Eastern and Western Church is signified. Finally the bunches of grapes symbolize the Faithful, who have brought forth the fruits of the vine over the centuries and now aspire to Union, as argued rather extravagantly in the Council sessions³¹.

24. M. Vassilaki, A Cretan Icon in the Ashmolean: The Embrace of Peter and Paul, *JÖB* 40 (1990), p. 405-422, esp. 416-420. According to M. Catappan (Nuovi elenchi e documentanti dei pittori in Creta dal 1300 al 1500, *Thesaurismata* 9 (1972), p. 247) the reason for the painter's journey to Constantinople in 1436, was to meet with the Patriarch Joseph II, in the context of the preparations for the Council of Florence. However there is no written evidence to confirm this assumption. Cf. Vassilaki, op.cit., p. 418. It is also worth mentioning that in the city of Candia the πρωτοπαπάς, πρωτοψάλτης and a few priests were forced to participate in rituals of the Latin Church. See Tomadakis, op.cit. (n. 20), p. 117. The πρωτοπαπάς was also obliged, according to the Acts of a local Council in 1467, twice a year to read in public, in the church of St Mark or St Titus, the decrees of the Florence Council. See Tsirpanlis, op.cit., p. 536.

25. For this iconographic subject see, in addition to the aforementioned article by M. Vassilaki, H.L. Kessler, The Meeting of Peter and Paul in Rome. An Emblematic Narrative of Spiritual Brotherhood, *DOP* 41 (1987), p. 265-275 (with earlier bibliography). N. Chatzidaki, *From Candia to Venice. Greek Icons in Italy 15th-16th Centuries*, exh. cat., Athens 1993, p. 76-81.

26. To the Greek proposal «νῦν δὲ τῶν πρωτοχορυφαίων ἡ μνήμη καταλαβοῦσσα ... ἐπεὶ σὺ (διάπασς) διάδοχος αὐτῶν, ὀφειλον δοῦναι σοι τὸν τοιοῦτον στέφανον ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐν τῇ ἔλαβον αὐτοὶ τὸν ἀμάραντον στέφανον. σπούδασον σύν, ἵνα συλλειτουργήσωμεν ἐν τῇ ἔορτῇ αὐτῶν», the Pope answered «Θαρρω..., διτὶ ἡ ἔνωσις ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ τῶν ἀποστόλων Χριστοῦ τελεοθήσεται». It was also announced to the

Pope on behalf of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus that «τῇ ἔορτῇ τῶν ἀγίων ἀποστόλων γενήσεται ἡ λειτουργία καὶ ἡ ἔνωσις». See *Quae supersunt Actorum Graecorum Concilii Florentini*, ed. J. Gill, *Concilium Florentinum documenta et scriptores*, ser. B, vol. V, fasc. I, Rome 1953, p. 453.30-37, 454. 6-10, 20-22 (hereafter: *Quae supersunt*). Cf. Gill, op.cit. (n. 18), p. 284-285.

27. Vassilaki, A Cretan Icon, op.cit. (n. 24), p. 419.

28. In his inaugural speech, Bishop Marcus of Ephesus made a revealing statement: «μέχρι τίνος οἱ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς πίστεως βάλλομεν ἀλλήλους καὶ κατατέμονεν; μέχρι τίνος οἱ τῆς αὐτῆς Τριάδος προσκυνηταὶ δάκνομεν καὶ κατεσθίομεν, ἔως ἂν ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῶμεν». See *Quae supersunt*, p. 29.8-13.

29. See the quotes from the same bishop's speech: «εἰπὲ καὶ ὅμιν ὡς πρότερον διὰ τοῦ προφήτου σου· Ἰδοὺ ἐγώ μεθ' ὑμῶν καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα μου ἐφέστηκε ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν». See *Quae supersunt*, p. 30.3-6. For the conviction of the presence of Christ at the Church Councils, see Ch. Walter, *L'iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine*, Paris 1970, p. 147-148, 235.

30. Relating the past with the Council's undertakings, the same bishop reported: «Χριστὲ βασιλεῦ, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς προτέροις χρόνοις... διὰ σαντοῦ καὶ τῶν σῶν ἀποστόλων... πρὸς τὴν σὴν ἐπίγνωσιν ἐπέστρεψας ἀπαντας, οὕτω καὶ νῦν διὰ τῶν σῶν τουτωνί θεραπόντων... σύναψον ἡμᾶς ἀλλήλους καὶ σεαντῷ». See *Quae supersunt*, p. 29.14-24.

31. The inauguration speech by Bishop Marcus of Ephesus also stated: «μετέωρός ἐστι πᾶσα ψυχὴ καὶ ἀκοὴ πᾶσα, τὴν ὑμῶν ἀναμένουσα γνώμην». See *Quae supersunt*, p. 34.2-4.

The composition as a whole recalls the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (12:12-27), where it is stated that Christ is the head of the Church and the Faithful comprise its members. This phrase, through which the apostle stresses the necessity for unity among the Faithful, was often used by the representatives of the Eastern and by those of the Western Church, in their speeches at the Ferrara-Florence Council, in an attempt to establish the imperative need for Union³². The iconographic subject of the Vine indicates primarily the unity of the Church, especially since Christ, its institutor, is depicted surrounded by the Apostles, who took the lead in its foundation. The Faithful, who are represented by the grapes, have as a duty to assist the effort to maintain or re-establish unity whenever it is lost. The meeting of the Christians of East and West at that time, a meeting which had as its goal the achievement of Union, might possibly have led Angelos Akotantos, a painter of whom it has been reasonably assumed that he shared the views of the pro-unionists, to the creation of the subject under discussion. Furthermore, his contribution to the creation and establishment of new iconographic subjects or the enrichment of earlier ones with new details is already known from other works by him³³. However, it should be noted that neither in the preserved proceedings of the aforementioned Council, nor in the works published so far of those who played a leading part in it, is there any – as far as I know – express reference to the parable of the Vine. However, the fact that its pictorial representation starts at that particular time permits it to be associated with the *Zeitgeist* favoured by the Union³⁴.

The origin of the iconographic subject under discussion is to be sought in the representation of the Tree of Jesse³⁵, which by the first half of the fifteenth century had already acquired a rich tradition in the visual arts³⁶. These two subjects, of course, have completely different contents, since the Vine symbolizes the Church and the force that ensures its Union, while the Tree of Jesse gives expression, through the forefathers of Christ, to the reality of the Divine Incarnation³⁷. The close morphological relationship between the two pictures, however, makes it clear that for to create the later one, all that was necessary was to replace the figure of the Virgin in the Tree of Jesse by the figure of Christ, and at the same time the figures of the Prophets, who had foretold the advent of the Messiah, by those of the Apostles, who laid the foundations of his Church (Fig. 4). Furthermore, the addition of apostolic motifs to the Tree of Jesse had taken place in the West as early as the thirteenth century, the aim being to project the *Concordia* of the Old and the New Testament³⁸. The tree in the depiction of the Tree of Jesse was also frequently represented in the form of a vine³⁹. Hence the artist, by making slight changes to the traditional iconography of an earlier subject, created a new one with a completely different content, which in fact represents the progress and the evolution of the older one. As did the Lord, when he narrated the Vine-parable, the artist put *new wine in old bottles*.

As mentioned already, the three icons of the Vine, by Angelos Akotantos, were painted in the first half of the fifteenth century. The next preserved representation of the same

32. The same bishop pronounced: «οἵμερον τὰ τοῦ δεσποτικοῦ οώματος μέλη... πρὸς τὴν ἀλλήλων ἐπείγεται ἔνωσιν οὐ γάρ ἀνέχεται ἡ κεφαλὴ Χριστὸς ὁ θεός ἐφεστάναι διηρημένῳ τῷ οώματι». See *Quae supersunt*, p. 28.10-16. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 30.10-13, 30.29-31.1. The content of the inauguration speech made by the Western speaker must have been similar, as may be concluded from a passage in the Acts of the Council: «ταῦτα τοῦ Ἐφέσου εἰπόντος, ὁ Φράντιοννης ἤρξατο κατὰ πάντα μιμηθεῖς τὸν Ἐφέσου». See *Quae supersunt*, p. 34.18-20. The Acts of the Florence Council are full of such views, and it would be repetitive to cite them all.

33. On these issues, see briefly Vocopoulos, *op.cit.* (n. 14), p. 349, n. 15.

34. For the dissemination at this period of other iconographic subjects with a pro-union content, see M. Constantoudaki-Kitromilidou, 'Ο ἄγιος Ἰερώνυμος μέ τὸν λέοντα σὲ εἰκόνες κρητικῆς τέχνης. Τὸ θέμα καὶ οἱ συμβολισμοὶ τοῦ', in N. Panagiotakes (ed.), *Ἄνθη Χαρίτων*, Venice 1998, p. 193-226, esp. 204-215.

35. For the iconography of the Tree of Jesse, see M.D. Taylor, *A Historiated Tree of Jesse*, *DOP* 34-35 (1980-1981), p. 125-176 (with earlier bibliography).

36. As examples from the monumental painting in Greece mention may

be made of the depiction adorning the outside of the south wall of narthex of the Mavriotissa church in Kastoria (1259-1264), as well as the fresco on the east wall of the south portico of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Thessalonici (short after 1315). See S. Pelekanidis, *Καστοριά. I: Βυζαντινά τοιχογραφία*, Plates, Thessaloniki 1953, pl. 85. St. Pelekanidis - M. Chatzidakis, *Καστοριά*, Athens 1984, p. 72f, 81, fig. 20. Ch. Stephan, *Ein byzantinisches Bildensemple. Die Mosaiken und Fresken der Apostelkirche zu Thessaloniki*, Worms 1986, p. 148ff, fig. 91 (with earlier bibliography). The subject is also found in Crete, as is clear from the depiction adorning the west part of the barrel vault of the aisleless barrel-vaulted church of St George in the village of Vianos (1401), and in St George at Koudoumas (1360). See T. Papamastorakis, Η ἑνταξη τῶν προεικονίσεων τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ τῆς Ὑψησης τοῦ Σταυροῦ σε ἑνα μιδότυπο εικονογραφικό κύκλο στὸν Ἅγιο Γεώργιο Βιάννου Κορήτης, *ΔΧΑΕ ΙΔ'* (1987-1988), p. 315, 324, fig. 6. M. Bougrat, *L'église Saint-Jean près de Koudoumas*, *CahArch* 30 (1982), p. 156.

37. Taylor, *op.cit.*, p. 143-144. Stephan, *op.cit.*, p. 171.

38. Thomas, *op.cit.* (n. 8), col. 552. Taylor, *op.cit.*, p. 157-158.

39. Thomas, *op.cit.*, col. 556. Id., *Maria die Weinrebe*, *Kurtrierisches Jahrbuch* 10 (1970), p. 30-55.

iconographic subject comes from the refectory of the monastery of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, the wall-paintings of which are attributed to the Cretan artist Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas and date from 1535 to 1541⁴⁰. In the extant representations of the subject, there is a time span of about a century between the first and the second depiction. If this is not accidental, it could be interpreted in the light of the failure by the Orthodox to impose the Union decree. That is, it is possible that the subject was temporarily abandoned, since it related to the Union, which was never accepted by the Greeks. When it was repeated later, the earlier ideological pressure had by then subsided, and the picture could symbolize the Church without now referring to the Union. At the same time, the different symbolical interpretations given to the parable under discussion might lead to completely different readings of the representation.

In the refectory of the Great Lavra, the Vine was depicted in the uppermost zone, on the tympanum of the north arm of the cross of this cruciform structure. In the middle zone was painted the Dormition of St Athanasios the Athonite, and in the lowest zone St Sisoës and the Tomb, as well as the Life of the Solitary⁴¹. Since only a small surface area was available for the representation of the Vine, the painter followed the iconographic type created by Angelos Akotantos by depicting Christ and the Apostles in bust. The choice of the Vine for the painted decoration of the refectory may be accounted for by the consideration that the majority of the iconographic subjects depicted in this area are connected either directly or indirectly with the readings for Lent⁴². Amongst these is included this parable, which is read at the vigil on the first Friday of Lent and on Maundy Thursday. At the same time, the composition is also found in the wall-paintings of the refectory near scenes depicting the vanity of human affairs, the death of a saint monk, and the quintessence of the monastic life, which is *dying to the world*⁴³. The choice of the Vine to crown these representations emphasizes that the

union of humans with God is attainable through the denial of the passions; in the present specific iconographic environment the composition of the Vine has a mainly soteriological and eschatological content, giving prominence to salvation as attainable by monks – and the Faithful in general – who lead a life of self-denial.

To the same iconographic type belongs the representation of the Vine rendered in the katholikon of Docheiariou monastery on Mount Athos (1568) (Fig. 2). Here the composition was painted in the esonarthex, in the middle decorative zone of the east part of the south wall. In the uppermost zone are depicted scenes with stanzas of the Akathistos Hymn and the martyrdom of saints whose memory is honoured in July, and in the lowest zone are the Baptism of Christ and figures of hermit-saints. The west part of the same wall also has scenes of the martyrdom of various saints, the Heavenly Ladder of John Climax (Fig. 3), figures of hermit-saints, as well as St Sisoës and the Tomb⁴⁴. The inclusion of the Vine in the painted decoration of the narthex may be interpreted in terms of the freedom of choice characteristic of the representations depicted in this area of the church, the painting of which is designed to supplement the strictly defined iconographic programme of the nave and exhibits notable variety⁴⁵. The placing of this scene at the same height as the Heavenly Ladder emphasizes its soteriological and eschatological content. Finally, as the gaze of the monks attending the services celebrated in the narthex⁴⁶ is directed to the east, the Vine appears to be a continuation of the Heavenly Ladder, thus contributing to the visual projection of the conviction that salvation and union with God are the outcome of hard struggle on the part of the Faithful.

The figures in the representation of the Vine are also executed in bust in the scene adorning the semicylindrical wall of the sanctuary apse in the katholikon of the Virgin Melinitzi monastery at Malesina, Locris, the wall-paintings of which were executed in 1599 by the painter Dimitrios Kaka-

40. J.J. Yiannias, The Refectory Paintings of the Mount Athos. An Interpretation, in J.J. Yiannias (ed.), *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, London 1991, p. 290. M. Chatzidakis - E. Drakopoulou, "Ελληνες ζωγράφοι μετά τήν Άλωση (1450-1830)", 2, Athens 1997, p. 382-383 (with earlier bibliography).

41. G. Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos. I. Les peintures*, Paris 1927, pl. 150.2. M. Garidis, *La peinture murale dans le monde orthodoxe après la chute de Byzance (1450-1600) et dans les pays sous domination étrangère*, Athens 1989, p. 152. Yiannias, op.cit., p. 273, fig. 4.23.

42. J.J. Yannias, The Palaeologan Program at Apollonia, in S. Čurčić - D. Mouriki (ed.), *The Twilight of Byzantium*, Princeton 1991, p. 161-174,

esp. 164ff. (with earlier bibliography).

43. Yiannias, The Refectory Paintings, op.cit. (n. 40), p. 287-288.

44. Millet, *Athos* (n. 41), pl. 241.1-2. Garidis, *La peinture murale* (n. 41), p. 165-167, fig. 173.

45. For the iconographic subjects painted in the narthex, see mainly R. Hamann-Mac Lean, *Grundlegung zu einer Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien*, Gießen 1976, p. 176ff.

46. For the services held in this area, see E. Deliyanni-Doris, *Menologion*, *RbK* 6, 1997, col. 215. K. Kirchhainer, *Die Bildausstattung der Nikolauskirche in Thessaloniki. Untersuchungen zu Struktur und Programm der Malereien*, Weimar 2001, p. 137.



Fig. 2. Mount Athos, Dochiariou Monastery, katholikon, esonarthex, south wall, east part. Christ the Vine.

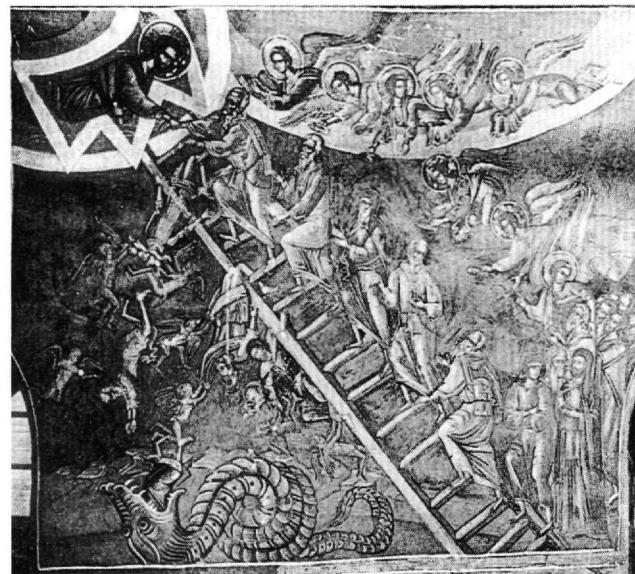


Fig. 3. Mount Athos, Dochiariou Monastery, katholikon, esonarthex, south wall, west part. Heavenly Ladder.

vas⁴⁷. This composition is not developed vertically, and the Apostles are depicted side by side, flanking the central figure of Christ. This creates a decorative zone extending the full width of the apse wall, inserted between the Communion of the Apostles and the Melismos. The choice of the sanctuary apse for the depiction of the Vine and the inclusion of this subject in this specific iconographic environment are fully accounted for by the eucharistic dimension of the parable.

A representation of the Vine adorns the right leaf of a triptych kept in the Vatican⁴⁸, which is thought to be the work of a Cretan painter of the late sixteenth century; on the left leaf is depicted the Tree of Jesse, and the central panel is occupied by Christ in Majesty surrounded by All Saints (Fig. 4). The iconography of the Vine exhibits a slight divergence from the iconographic type established by Angelos Akotan-

tos, with Christ rendered from the waist up in the same way as the Virgin and Child in the Tree of Jesse. In his rendering of the Apostles in the Vine and prophets in the Tree of Jesse, however, the artist follows the type of Akotantos and depicts them in bust. There is also an obvious attempt by the painter, who was perhaps a priest or monk⁴⁹, to transform the close morphological relationship between the scenes adorning the outer leaves of the triptych into affinity with subject: the Tree of Jesse bears the inscription H AMTIE-AOC ΘEO(TO)KOY (the vine of the Virgin), a phrase derived from patristic writings, in which the Virgin is also called Vine⁵⁰. The depiction of the Tree of Jesse on the left leaf of the triptych emphasizes that Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. The subject of the Vine on the right leaf projects the foundation of the earthly Church by the Lord, its consolidation by the Apostles, and

47. P. Lazaridis, Μεσαιωνικά Φθιώτιδος-Φωκίδος, *ADelt* 17 (1961-1962), Chronika, p. 161, pl. 172γ. Chatzidakis - Drakopoulou, *Zωγράφοι* (n. 40), p. 51.

48. M. Bianco Fiorin, *Icone della Pinacoteca Vaticana*, City of Vatican 1995, no. 18, p. 24-25, figs 27, 29. The Vine is also depicted on the right leaf of a triptych by the painter Victor, now in the Sinai monastery, which dates from 1684; on the left leaf of this is a depiction of the Tree of Jesse, with the Transfiguration on the central panel. See Chatzidakis, *Zωγράφοι* (n. 15), p. 196, fig. 62. A triptych in the Byzantine Museum of Athens, attributed to a workshop in Central Greece and dating from

the seventeenth c., has similar iconography, with the difference that the central panel has the Dormition as well as the Transfiguration. See M. Chatzidakis, Byzantine Museum, in M. Andronikos - M. Chatzidakis - V. Karagiorgis, *The Greek Museums*, Athens 1974, p. 337, fig. 22. Finally, it is worth noting that in the case of all these triptychs, the iconography of the central panel is associated directly or indirectly with the Sinai monastery.

49. Bianco Fiorin, op.cit., p. 24.

50. Leonardi, *Ampelos* (n. 1), p. 122-123. Thomas, *Maria die Weinrebe*, op.cit. (n. 39).

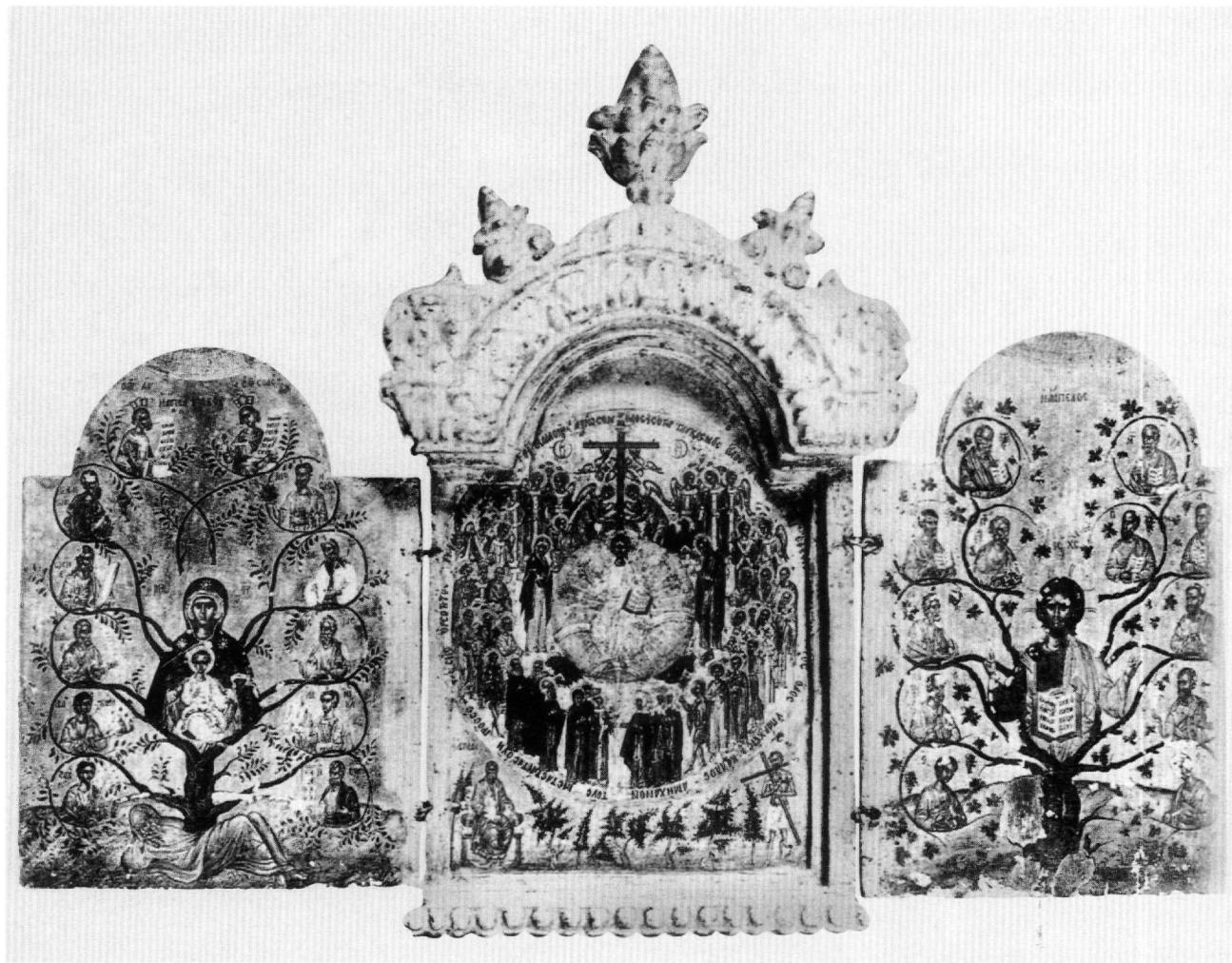


Fig. 4. Vatican, Pinacotheca. Triptych.

its unbroken continuity over the centuries through the clergy and Faithful. The representation on the central panel, which corresponds with the feast of All Saints, symbolizes the heavenly Church triumphant, of which the Faithful may become members after a hard struggle. The compositions selected for the painting of the triptych are thus a visual summary of the divine dispensation for the salvation of mankind.

A relief depiction of the Vine adorns the base of a communion chalice with Renaissance-style decoration and bearing

the stamp of Venice, which dates from the sixteenth century and is now kept in the monastery of St John the Theologian on Patmos (Fig. 5)⁵¹. In this composition, Christ is depicted full-length and enthroned, and the Apostles in bust. This is a new iconographic type, the use of which should probably be interpreted with reference to the shape and dimensions of the base of the chalice⁵². The choice of this subject to decorate a liturgical vessel is presumably due to the eucharistic interpretation of the parable.

51. A.D. Kominis (ed.), *Πάτμος. Οἱ θησανδροί τῆς Μονῆς*, Athens 1988, figs 39-40 (G. Oikonomaki-Papadopoulou).

52. The same line of reasoning may also account for the choice of the same

iconographic type to decorate a silver paten dating from 1622, kept in the Protaton. See *Θησανδροί τοῦ Ἅγιον Ὁρού*, Thessaloniki 1997, exh. cat., no. 9.89, p. 432-433 (G. Oikonomaki-Papadopoulou).

The icon T 1524 in the Byzantine Museum of Athens (Fig. 6), which dates from the second half of the sixteenth century⁵³, reveals a departure from the transcendental character of the representation of the Vine and a distinctly naturalistic intent. In this icon, both Christ and the Apostles are painted full-length⁵⁴. The main trunk of the tree, which tends to fill the space of the icon, serves as a footstool for the Lord, and its branches as thrones for the Apostles. Two branches cross above Christ's head, drawing attention to his hierarchical superiority over the others. The Apostles are turned towards the Lord, apart from the Evangelists, who converse in pairs; the importance of the two leading Apostles is indicated by their placement on the highest branches of the tree, while the Evangelists are depicted at the same level as Christ. Since this is a portable icon the provenance and original position of which are unknown, the particular symbolical ramifications of the representation cannot be traced. It is worth noting, however, that in a similar (Cretan?) icon, probably dating from the seventeenth century, which was formerly kept in the Coptic Museum of Cairo, the gospel book in front of Christ is open at the passage: "I am the bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:41)⁵⁵. This inscription makes it clear that the representation in the icon has a clearly eucharistic content, though this does not, of course, imply that the same is true of the Byzantine Museum icon.

On the painted cornice of the iconostasis in the south chapel of the Cave of the Apocalypse on Patmos (last decade of the sixteenth century), the representation of the Vine is rendered as a variation of the Great Deesis, with the addition of the Virgin and John the Baptist either side of Christ⁵⁶. All the figures are depicted in bust, on account of the limited space, and are enclosed by vine shoots. The Vine is also depicted as a variation of the Great Deesis (Fig. 7) on the



Fig. 5. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian. Communion chalice (detail).

painted cornice of the iconostasis in the chapel of the Holy Cross in the monastery of St John the Theologian on Patmos (1600-1610)⁵⁷. The combination of the Vine and the Deesis may be interpreted in terms of the soteriological and eschatological dimensions of the parable. The iconographic subject of the Deesis has the same content, and their amalgamation may be attributed to the affinity of the two representations⁵⁸. It is notable that the motif of the vine shoot, or the Vine, is found below the zone of the Dodecaorton or the Great Deesis on the entablature of almost all the published iconostases of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which come from Crete, the Dodecanese, Epirus and Mount Athos⁵⁹.

53. Acheimastou-Potamianou, *Icons* (n. 14), no. 50, p. 170 (with earlier bibliography). This icon is attributed by M. Acheimastou-Potamianou to the circle of Theophanis and his continuers.

54. The icon is copied by two more 17th c. icons: the icon by Leon Moskos (second half 17th c.) now in the Benaki Museum, and the icon by Elias Moskos (1649-1687) kept in the Correr Museum in Venice. See A. Xyngopoulos, *Katálogos tōn eikónōn tōn Mouséion Mptenákh*, Athens 1936, no. 26, p. 39-40, pl. 19.b. G. Mariacher, *Il Museo Correr di Venezia. Dipinti dal XIV al XVI secolo*, Venice 1957, no. 1002, p. 119-120. Chatzidakis, *Zωγράφοι* (n. 15), p. 202.

55. P. Van Moorsel (ed.), *Catalogue général du musée copte. The Icons*, Leiden 1993, p. 159, pl. 48a. I would like to thank the director of the Coptic Museum Dr. Maged Aziz for informing me that this icon has re-

cently been transferred to the Museum in Port Said.

56. M. Chatzidakis, *Eἰκόνες τῆς Πάτμου. Ζητήματα βυζαντινῆς καὶ μεταβυζαντινῆς ζωγραφικῆς*, Athens 1995², p. 109, 110. Cf. G. Kakavas, Το τέμπλο του παρεκκλησίου του Τμίου Προδρόμου στο κελλί του Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά στις Καρυές του Αγίου Όρους, in *Αντίφωνον. Αριστερά στον καθηγητή Νικόλαο Β. Δρανδάκη*, Thessaloniki 1995, p. 195, n. 79.

57. Chatzidakis, *Zωγράφοι* (n. 15), p. 137, pl. 146. Kakavas, op.cit.

58. For the iconographic subject of the Deesis, see A.G. Mantas, *Überlegungen zur Deesis in der Hauptapsis mittelbyzantinischer Kirchen Griechenlands*, in G. Koch (ed.), *Byzantinische Malerei. Bildprogramme - Ikonographie - Stil*, Wiesbaden 2000, p. 165-182 (with earlier bibliography).

59. Kakavas, op.cit., p. 192, n. 62.

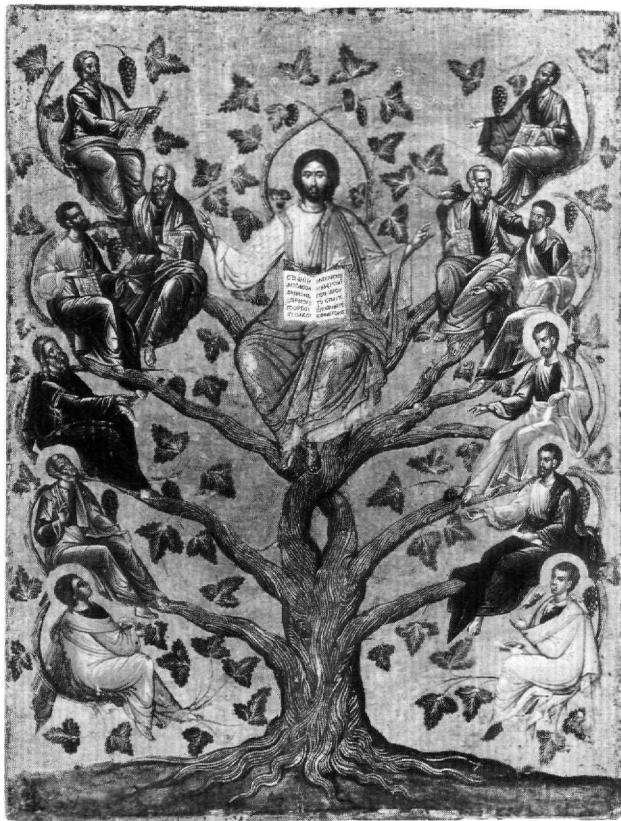


Fig. 6. Athens, Byzantine Museum. Icon T 1524.

Important additions to the iconography of the Vine may be observed after the middle of the seventeenth century. In an icon by Theodoros Poulakis⁶⁰, which comes from the iconostasis of the church of the Dormition at Mantzavinata on Cephalonia (now in the Byzantine Museum of Athens) and is dated to 1666 (Fig. 8), the Apostles are rendered full-length and Christ to the waist. The dove of the Holy Spirit hovers above Christ in an elliptical mandorla, while the bust of the Ancient of Days is depicted at the top of the icon in a

circular mandorla, inside which are winged heads of angels. God the Father stoops towards Christ and at the same time blesses with both hands⁶¹. The arrangement of the Apostles is similar to that in icon T 1524 of the Byzantine Museum, mentioned above (Fig. 6). The placing of the icon on the iconostasis of the church is due to the eucharistic interpretation of the parable, while the addition of the dove and the Ancient of Days adds to the representation the symbolism of the Holy Trinity. In this way, emphasis is laid on the fact that all the hypostases of the Holy Trinity work together for the salvation of mankind, and also on their presence in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist⁶².

It is not clear whether the enrichment of the Vine by the dove of the Holy Spirit and the Ancient of Days is an innovation of Poulakis or of the painter Victor, since it is also found at about the same period in an icon by the latter dating from 1647 and now in the Hellenic Institute in Venice⁶³. In other respects this icon is identical to icon T 1524 of the Byzantine Museum of Athens. Victor's composition is more austere than that by Poulakis, since the winged heads of angels and the mandorla surrounding the Ancient of Days – both of them elements of Western origin due to the influence of Flemish engravings on Poulakis' art⁶⁴ – are missing.

The depiction of the Vine on the royal doors – the only such example, as far as I know – from the cemetery chapel of the Leimonos Monastery on Lesbos, dating from 1656, requires a multi-dimensional interpretation⁶⁵. On these doors, which were painted by the hieromonk Iakovos⁶⁶, the Apostles are rendered in bust at the top edge of the leaves, while the figure of Christ, again in bust, adorns the lozenge-shaped icon that crowns the axial joint-cover. The next decorative zone is occupied by the Annunciation, with the concelebrant hierarchs in the bottom zone. The eucharistic symbolism of the parable accounts for its depiction together with subjects having the same content, and its connection with the Incarnation of the Word is associated with the reference made to the historical and liturgical Incarnation through the repre-

60. I. Rigopoulos, *Ο ἀγιογράφος Θεόδωρος Πουλάκης καὶ ἡ φλαμανδική χαλκογραφία*, Athens 1979, p. 47-48, 149-150, pls 75-76 (with earlier bibliography). *Bυζαντινό Μονοείο. Τα νέα αποκτήματα (1986-1996)*, exh. cat., Athens 1997, no. 26, p. 88-89 (Ch. Baltoyianni).

61. There is a similar icon, attributed to the workshop of Poulakis, if not to the painter himself, in the church of the Hypsili Theotokos on Corfu, the only difference being that the Apostles are rendered in bust. See P.L. Vocopoulos, *Εἰκόνες τῆς Κερκίρας*, Athens 1990, no. 92, p. 134, pls 250-253.

62. Cf. N. Ghioles, *Ο βυζαντινός τρούλλος καὶ τό εἰκονογραφικό του*

πρόγραμμα (μέσα 6ον αι.-1204), Athens 1990, p. 90, 94.

63. M. Chatzidakis, *Ιcônes de Saint-Georges des Grecs et de la collection de l'Institut*, Venice 1962, p. 148, pl. 71. M.C. Bandera Viani, *Venezia. Museo delle icone bizantine e post bizantine e chiesa di San Giorgio dei Greci*, Bologna 1988, p. 10-11, fig. 11.

64. See Rigopoulos, op.cit., passim.

65. G. Gounaris, *Εικόνες της Μονής Λευμόνος*, Thessaloniki 1999, p. 74-75, fig. 20. Mantas, *Ikonographische Beobachtungen*, op.cit. (n. 2).

66. For the painter, see Chatzidakis, *Zωγράφοι* (n. 15), p. 318.



Fig. 7. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Holy Cross. Cornice of the templon.

sentations of the Annunciation and the concelebrant hierarchs. Finally, the soteriological and eschatological content of the Vine is in keeping with the symbolism of the other two representations, which give visual expression to the concept that the salvation of the Faithful is possible through the Divine Incarnation, and attainable through observation of God's commandments and participation by the Faithful in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

An icon by Antonios Skordilis, dating from 1691 and now in the new church of the Dormition at Adamas on Melos, is dominated by the figure of Christ the High Priest enthroned at the centre of the composition⁶⁷. From his shoes spring two vine shoots that are developed parallel with the vertical sides of the icon. They enclose the busts of the Apostles, rendered on a much smaller scale than the central figure of the Lord, which gives them a rather loose connection with it (Fig. 9). The iconographic type of the High Priest projects the hieratic quality of Christ and hence his multi-dimensional presence in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist⁶⁸. The choice of this type to depict the Lord in a representation of the Vine is thus accounted for by the eucharistic dimension of the parable⁶⁹.

A representation of the Vine is painted on the back of two *sakkoi* dating from the seventeenth century one of them in the Sinai monastery⁷⁰ (*sakkos* of Cyril of Crete) and the other in the Byzantine Museum of Athens⁷¹. The front of the first of these hieratical vestments is adorned with the Tree of Jesse and that of the second with the iconographic subject “Prophets from Above”. On the Sinai *sakkos* the Apostles and Christ (in the type of the High Priest) are depicted full-length, while on the one in the Byzantine Museum the Lord is rendered in bust and the Apostles to the thighs. The choice of the Vine to decorate this particular vestment has been associated⁷² with the prayer recited by the patriarch as he emerges from the sanctuary and holds the *dikerotrikera* (double or triple candlesticks) in front of the royal doors: “Lord, look down from heaven and behold and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted” (Psalm 79 (80):15-16). At the same time, the combination of the Vine in both *sakkoi* with iconographic subjects drawn from the Old Testament contributes to enhancing the conviction that the Church of Christ is the fulfilment of God's promise of the salvation of mankind. Finally, since the bishop

67. *A Mystery Great and Wondrous*, exh. cat., Athens 2002, no. 78, p. 244-245 (D. Kalomoirakis). At the iconographic level, the icon copies the same representation from a despotic icon that now adorns the iconostasis of the church in the Castle at Plaka on Melos, which is attributed to the painter Emmanuel Skordilis, an ancestor of Antonios.

68. For Christ as High Priest, see T. Papamastorakis, Η μορφή του Χριστού-Μεγάλου Αρχιερέα, ΔΧΑΕ ΙΖ' (1993-1994), p. 67-76. C. Grozdanov, Une variante de l'image du Christ Roi des rois et Grand Prêtre dans l'art post-byzantin (d'après les exemples de l'archevêché d'Ohrid), in *Ζητήματα μεταβυζαντινής ζωγραφικής στη μνήμη του Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη*, Athens 2002, p. 253-270.

69. Christ is also depicted as High Priest in an icon with a representation of the Vine, executed by the Greek or Moldavian painter Grigorios in 1703, now in the National Art Museum in Romania. See M. Acheimastou-Potamianou (ed.), *Ευρώνες της Ρουμανίας. 16ος-18ος αιώνας*, exh.

cat., Athens 1993, no. 53, p. 122. In this representation the connection between Christ and the Apostles is even looser than in the Skordilis icon, since the Apostles are placed on the frame of the icon and the branches of the vine enclosing them do not spring from the Lord.

70. M. Theochari, Χρυσοχέντητα ἄμφια, in K. Manafis (ed.), *Σινά. Οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς Ι. Μονῆς Ἀγίας Αἰγατερίνης*, Athens 1990, p. 237, figs 24-25.

71. *A Mystery Great and Wondrous*, op.cit., no. 79, p. 246-247 (E. Papastavrou, with earlier bibliography). From the same century dates the representation of the Vine that adorns the old *barlaki* of the church of St Spyridon on Corfu. See *Byzantinische und nachbyzantinische Kunst in Korfu. Kunstschatze und Kultur*, Corfu 1994, p. 215-216, fig. on p. 218-219 (M. Theochari).

72. Theochari, op.cit. (n. 70), Cf. A. Papas, *Liturgische Gewänder*, *RbK* 5, 1995, col. 758.

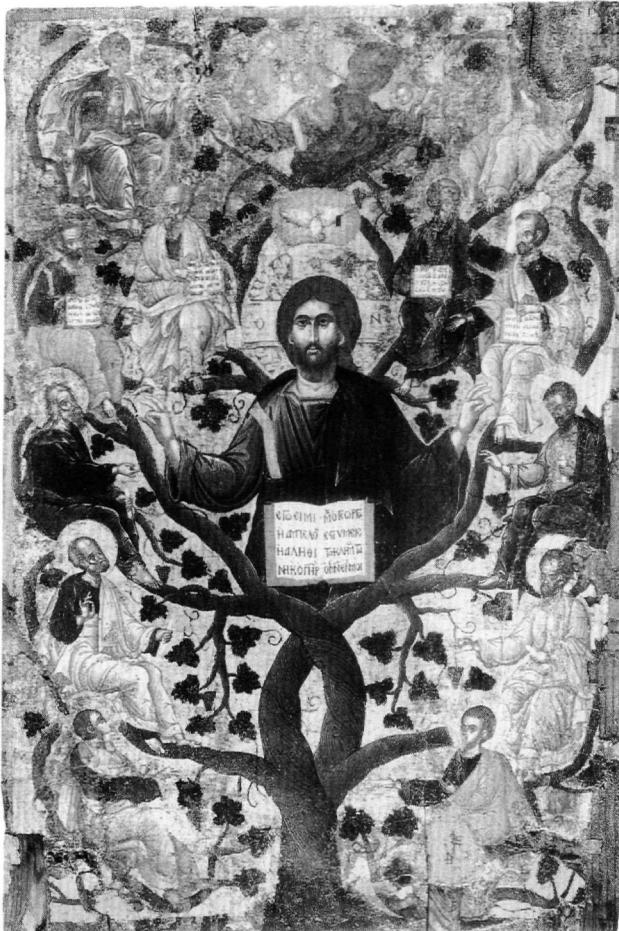


Fig. 8. Athens, Byzantine Museum. Icon by Theodore Poulakis.

wearing the *sakkos* is an “image” of Christ⁷³, the depiction of the vine also indicates the continuous presence of the Lord in the Church⁷⁴.

Finally, the iconographic subject of the Vine was selected to decorate the front of a silver-bound gospel book that probably comes from a seventeenth-century workshop on Corfu, which is now in the church of St Basil on that island⁷⁵. In this composition Christ is depicted to the waist and the Apostles



Fig. 9. Melos, Adamas, New church of the Dormition. Icon by Antonios Skordilis.

in bust. Above the Lord hovers the dove of the Holy Spirit, and at the highest point of the representation, the Ancient of Days in bust stoops towards Christ and blesses with both hands (Fig. 10). The choice of the subject to decorate the cover of the gospel book is due to the interpretation of the parable of the Vine as symbolizing the Church, which was founded as a result of the teaching of Christ and his sacrifice on the Cross.

Briefly, then, the iconographic subject of Christ the Vine was created in Crete in the first half of the fifteenth century by the painter Angelos Akotantos. The parable has mainly

73. A.G. Mantas, *Tό εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα τοῦ Ιεροῦ Βήματος τῶν μεσοβυζαντινῶν ναῶν τῆς Ελλάδας (843-1204)*, Athens 2001, p. 137-138 (with earlier bibliography).

74. The same rationale may help to interpret the depiction together of the Vine and the Tree of Jesse on double-sided wood-carved *enkolpia* from the second half of the 17th c. onwards. See *Greece at the Benaki Museum*, Athens 1997, p. 324, figs 534, 537.

75. *Kunst in Korfu* (n. 71), fig. on p. 191. The subject of the Crucifixion

on the front of a silver cover of a gospel book dating from 1676, now in the Benaki Museum, is also flanked by a representation created by the amalgamation of the iconographic subjects of the Vine and the Root of Jesse. See M. Borboudakis (ed.), *Oι Πύλες τοῦ Μνοιχρίου. Θησαυροί τῆς Ορθοδοξίας ἀπό την Ελλάδα*, exh. cat., Athens 1994, no. 101, p. 273 (A. Ballian, with earlier bibliography). *Greece at the Benaki Museum* (n. 74), p. 380, fig. 650.



Fig. 10. Corfu, church of St Basil. Silver cover of a gospel book.

been interpreted as a symbol of the Church and the life-giving force that binds it together. At the same time, the emer-

gence of interest in a clear visual rendering of the subject coincides in time with the convening of the Ferrara-Florence Council, the purpose of which was to achieve the Union of the Eastern and the Western Church. This evidence permits us to associate the creation of the new iconographic subject with the religious events of the period.

In the iconographic type created by Angelos Akotantos and repeated frequently during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Christ and the Apostles are depicted in bust. In a variant of this type, which makes its appearance in the sixteenth century, though it was never very widespread, Christ is depicted to the waist and the Apostles in bust. In a second – also rare – iconographic type that made its first appearance in the sixteenth century, Christ is depicted full-length and the Apostles in bust. From the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, a third iconographic type is found in which all the figures are rendered full-length. This type was very common and widespread, mainly from the seventeenth century onwards.

The symbolical content of the iconographic subject of the Vine in the many depictions of it dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries depends on the nature of the work of art for which it was chosen, on the general iconographic environment in which it was included, and on the detailed iconographic elements of which it was composed. Depending on these factors, the representation may have a soteriological and eschatological content, or an eucharistic dimension. It may also contribute to the projection of the continuous multidimensional presence of Christ in the Church, which was founded by his teaching and sacrifice.

PROVENANCE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Fig. 1. Εικόνες της κοντινής τέχνης, fig. 151.
 Fig. 2, 3. G. Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, pl. 241.
 Fig. 4. M. Bianco Fiorin, *Icone della Pinacoteca Vaticana*, fig. 27.
 Fig. 5. Πάτμος. Οι θησαυροί της Μονής, fig. 39.

Fig. 6. Photo Byzantine Museum, Athens.

Fig. 7. M. Chatzidakis, *Εικόνες της Πάτμου*, pl. 146.

Fig. 8. Βυζαντινό Μονοσό. *Τα νέα αποκτήματα*, fig. 26.

Fig. 9. *A Mystery Great and Wondrous*, fig. 78.

Fig. 10. *Byzantinische und nachbyzantinische Kunst in Korfu*, fig. 191.

Απόστολος Γ. Μαντάς

ΤΟ ΕΙΚΟΝΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΟ ΘΕΜΑ «ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ Η ΑΜΠΕΛΟΣ» ΣΤΗ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΤΑΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗ ΤΕΧΝΗ

Το εικονογραφικό θέμα του Χριστού-Αμπέλου, βασισμένο στην ομώνυμη παραβολή του κατά Ιωάννην Ευαγγελίου, δημιουργήθηκε και καθιερώθηκε στην Κρήτη το πρώτο μισό του 15ου αιώνα από το ζωγράφο Αγγελο Ακοτάντο, για τον οποίο έχει βάσιμα υποτεθεί ότι είχε φιλενωτικές απόψεις. Η παραβολή έχει κυρίως ερμηνευθεί ως σύμβολο της Εκκλησίας και της ζωοποιού δύναμης που τη συνέχει. Παράλληλα, η εμφάνιση του ενδιαφέροντος για τη σαφή εικαστική απόδοσή της συμπάτει χρονικά με τη σύγκληση της Συνόδου Φερράρας-Φλωρεντίας (1438-1439), η οποία αποσκοπούσε στην Ένωση της Ανατολικής και της Δυτικής Εκκλησίας. Τα στοιχεία αυτά επιτρέπουν το συσχετισμό της δημιουργίας του νέου εικονογραφικού θέματος με τα θρησκευτικά γεγονότα της εποχής. Ο συμβολισμός τόσο των επιμέρους στοιχείων όσο και της όλης σύνθεσης καθιστά δυνατή την υπόθεση ότι η παράσταση αποτελεί την εικαστική έκφραση πολλών επιχειρημάτων που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν και από τις δύο πλευρές στην εν λόγω Σύνοδο, για να υπογραμμιστεί η αναγκαιότητα της Ένωσης. Στον εικονογραφικό τύπο που δημιουργήθηκε από τον Άγγελο Ακοτάντο (Εικ. 1) και επαναλαμβάνεται συχνότατα το 16ο και το 17ο αιώνα, ο Χριστός και οι απόστολοι εικονίζονται σε προτομή, στοιχείο που τονίζει το συμβολικό και υπερβατικό χαρακτήρα της παράστασης. Παραλλαγή του τύπου αυτού, η οποία εμφανίζεται το 16ο και συνεχίζεται και το 17ο αιώνα, χωρίς όμως να γνωρίζει μεγάλη διάδοση, αποτελεί η απεικόνιση του Χριστού μέχρι την οσφύ και των αποστόλων σε προτομή (Εικ. 4). Σε ένα δεύτερο εικονογραφικό τύπο, που εμφανίζεται το 16ο αιώνα, ο Χριστός εικονίζεται ολόσωμος και οι απόστολοι σε προτομή (Εικ. 5). Ο τύπος αυτός χρησιμοποιείται και το 17ο αιώνα, αλλά παραμένει σπάνιος και επιλέγεται συνήθως όταν οι μικρές διαστάσεις του προσφερόμενου για διάκοσμο χώρου δεν επέτρεπαν την απεικόνιση όλων των μορφών ολόσω-

μων. Από το δεύτερο μισό του 16ου αιώνα απαντά ένας τρίτος εικονογραφικός τύπος, στον οποίο όλες οι μορφές αποδίδονται ολόσωμες, στοιχείο που προσδίδει ζεαλισμό σε μια κατά βάση συμβολική παράσταση (Εικ. 6). Ο τύπος αυτός γνωρίζει μεγάλη διάδοση και χρησιμοποιείται ευρέως κυρίως από το 17αίωνα.

Το συμβολικό περιεχόμενο του εικονογραφικού θέματος της Αμπέλου στις πολυπληθείς απεικονίσεις του το 16ο και το 17ο αιώνα εξαρτάται από το είδος του καλλιτεχνικού έργου για το οποίο επιλέχθηκε, από το ευρύτερο εικονογραφικό περιβάλλον στο οποίο εντάχθηκε, καθώς και από τα επιμέρους εικονογραφικά στοιχεία που το συνθέτουν. Στη μνημειακή ζωγραφική (Εικ. 2, 3 και 7) το θέμα συναπεικονίζεται με άλλες παραστάσεις που συμβάλλουν στην προβολή του σωτηριολογικού και εσχατολογικού περιεχομένου της παραβολής ή της ευχαριστιακής της διάστασης, με την οποία ερμηνεύεται επίσης η φιλοτέχνηση της Αμπέλου σε λειτουργικά σκεύη και σε εικόνες τέμπλου. Η απεικόνιση της σύνθεσης σε αρχιερατικούς σάκους εναρμονίζεται με την πίστη ότι ο αρχιερέας αποτελεί «εικόνα» του Χριστού και συμβάλλει στην προβολή της συνεχούς παρουσίας του Κυρίου στην Εκκλησία, ενώ η επιλογή του θέματος για το διάκοσμο αργυρών σταχώσεων ευαγγελίων (Εικ. 10) οφείλεται στην ερμηνεία της παραβολής ως συμβόλου της Εκκλησίας.

Ο συνδυασμός της παράστασης με εικονογραφικά θέματα που προέρχονται από την Παλαιά Διαθήκη (Εικ. 4) συντελεί στην εικαστική προβολή της πίστης ότι η ίδρυση της Εκκλησίας του Χριστού αποτελεί την εκπλήρωση των παλαιότερων υποσχέσεων του Θεού και έτσι αποδίδεται εικαστικά το σχέδιο της Θείας Οικονομίας για τη σωτηρία των ανθρώπων. Με την προσθήκη τέλος της περιστεράς του Αγίου Πνεύματος και του Θεού-Πατρός (Εικ. 8) η παράσταση αποκτά τριαδικό συμβολισμό.