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The Apostolic Tradition in Constantinople

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When I was invited to give the 2015 Rydén lecture, three things guided my choice of topic. One was that I was thinking about it at the time, in connection with the paper I was due to give at the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposium at the end of April 2015, which was devoted to the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. However, I had been thinking about the cult of the apostles in Constantinople long before that. I had thought about it when investigating the evidence for vanished churches in the vicinity of Hagia Sophia, which included sanctuaries dedicated to four major apostles. I shall mention them below. Yet my interest in the apostolic tradition in Constantinople goes back earlier still, to my work on the urban holy men who were put on the map by the much regretted Professor Lennart Rydén. This was the decisive reason why I chose to speak in Uppsala about apostles in medieval Constantinople: it emerges from the hagiographies of St Andrew the Fool and St Basil the Younger, the former edited and translated by Rydén,¹ and the latter now available in the Dumbarton Oaks edition and translation by Denis Sullivan, Alice-Mary Talbot and Stamatina McGrath.² In studying these texts, and in developing the comparison between them that Lennart Rydén had made,³ I came to the conclusion that one of their purposes was to celebrate their heroes as latter-day apostles, engaged in an apostolic mission to save the church and people of Constantinople in eschatological anticipation of the imminent end of time.⁴

¹ Rydén 1995.

² Sullivan, Talbot and McGrath 2014.

³ Rydén 1983.

⁴ Magdalino 1999: 93–96.

To reformulate the conclusion that I reached in my article of 1999, the unconventional, uncanonical urban lifestyles of Andrew the Fool and Basil the Younger were the Byzantine version of the apostolic poverty and apostolic preaching of the Mendicant Orders in the thirteenth-century West. Very bizarre, and very Byzantine, but apostolic nonetheless.

More generally, my reason for revisiting, if not actually raising, the question of apostolicity in Byzantium is my sense that this is a neglected and undervalued aspect of the Byzantine religious tradition. When we think of Orthodox religiosity and holiness, we think of the all-pervasive intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the divine patron of Constantinople. We think of the ubiquitous invocation and depiction of the soldier martyrs Theodore, George, and Demetrios, and the doctor martyrs Panteleimon, and the Anargyroi, Kosmas and Damian. We picture the paternal charity of St Nicholas, the Platonic intellectualism of the Church Fathers, the theatrical charisma of the Desert Fathers, the stylites and other solitary ascetics.⁵

Above and beyond all of them, we imagine the Byzantine Christ in his various manifestations as transcendental Logos and Wisdom of God, awesome Pantokrator, philanthropic Saviour, or the Man of Sorrows whose Passion Relics were treasured at the heart of the imperial Palace.⁶ We do not so readily think of the preaching and pastoral authority of Christ's apostles, and of the bishops who descended from them in apostolic succession. Nor do we think of Byzantium in connection with missionary activity, apart from Cyril and Methodius.⁷ All this is something we are more readily inclined to associate with Western Christendom, and especially with the church of Rome. Yet in looking at the highlights in the Byzantine religious picture, we are liable to overlook the presence and the importance of the apostles, not only as a supporting cast, but

⁵ For a general idea of Byzantine devotion to these holy figures, and the iconography in which they were most frequently encountered, see Maguire 1996 and 1998. For the Virgin, see most recently Peltomaa, Külzer and Allen 2015; for the military saints, Walter 2003; for St Nicholas, see Gazeau, Guyon and Vincent 2015, especially the articles by E. Akyürek, P. Magdalino and N. Ševčenko.

⁶ Belting 1980–1981, Magdalino 2004, Lidov 2012.

⁷ See Ivanov 2015 for the argument that the Byzantines undertook little evangelizing work, and attached little importance to the missions that they sponsored.

also as key actors who mediated and enhanced the holiness of the other central figures in the scene.

The apostles were basic points of reference in all kinds of religious discourse, both verbal and pictorial. Thus, for example, at the conclusion of an ecumenical council, the assembly set the seal on its decision by exclaiming “This is the faith of the apostles”.⁸ It was common practice in theological polemic to undercut the rhetorical and philosophical sophistication of one’s opponent by claiming to speak the plain, unvarnished gospel truth in the language of simple fishermen, as the apostles had been – ἀλιευτικῶς, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀριστοτελικῶς, to quote St Gregory of Nazianzos.⁹ The chancel screen dividing the sanctuary from the nave in Justinian’s Hagia Sophia displayed, on the exterior of its entablature, roundel portrait busts of Christ flanked by angels, prophets and the Twelve Apostles in silver repoussé; SS Peter and Paul were also represented flanking Christ on the altar cloth.¹⁰ The apostles were credited with the authorship of the first post-biblical collection of moral and ritual teachings and prescriptions, known as the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Part of this collection, the *Apostolic Canons*, became the basis of Byzantine canon law. It ends by adopting the voice of the apostles themselves, who tell their successors, the bishops, that only by observing the canons will they achieve salvation.¹¹

The *Apostolic Constitutions* are patently post-apostolic, and the Byzantines had worries about their authenticity. The collection belonged to a large corpus of traditions that grew up around the apostles in the first four centuries A.D., a corpus of which the canonical scriptures of the New Testament formed only a small part. The apostles became the principal protagonists or the supposed authors of a vast apocryphal literature of *acta*, gospels, moral teachings and apocalyptic visions that circulated among the Christian communities of the Roman Empire and

⁸ E.g. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, Session 5.35, ed. Schwartz 1933: 130/326.

⁹ *Oration* 23.12 (ed. Mossay 1980: 304).

¹⁰ Paul the Silentiary, *Description of Hagia Sophia*, lines 692–708, 786–91, ed. De Stefani 2011: 47–48, 54; tr. Mango 1972: 87, 89.

¹¹ Wagschal 2015: 92–95.

beyond.¹² It circulated mostly in Greek and in the lands that would later become the Byzantine world. With the definition of the scriptural canon in the third and fourth centuries, most of this literature was condemned and destroyed as uncanonical and heretical. However, we should not underestimate its influence in shaping and enriching early Christian culture with narratives about the companions of Christ and their role in the diffusion of Christianity. Many of the stories survived, in suitably sanitised and summarised form, because they were entertaining as well as edifying, and because they provided biographical information about the leading apostles whose lives were not covered by the canonical book of Acts.¹³ Thus the apocryphal *Acta* of St John, St Philip, St Thomas and St Andrew are more or less preserved. How and to what extent they were disseminated is far from clear, but we do have one piece of evidence that apostolic apocrypha were read out in church. Among the collected works of the twelfth-century poet known as ‘Manganeios Prodomos’ is a verse preface to the reading of the *Clementina* in the church of the Virgin Hodegetria in Constantinople.¹⁴ The *Clementina* or *Clementine Literature* were a collection of homilies and novellistic tales involving St Peter the Apostle, his disciple and later Pope Clement I, and Simon Magus.¹⁵ This evidence is important because it shows that for the averagely literate and pious Byzantine believer, the apostles were not remote and austere authority figures, known only from the canonical scriptures. They were folk heroes, in every sense the supermen of the Roman Empire, actively campaigning for the salvation of men and performing miracles through the grace of Christ and the Holy Spirit, with whom they were on intimate terms. Only Christ’s mother, the Virgin Mary, had a more direct and intimate line of access to God. Here it is important to note that she too was known to Byzantine believers primarily through

¹² See in general Richard A. Norris Jr. in Young, Ayres and Louth 2008: 28–35; Bovon 2003. Scholarly recent edition of the main texts in French translation in Bovon and Geoltrain 1997, and Geoltrain and Kaestli 2005.

¹³ Bovon 1999.

¹⁴ Miller 1883; 42–44; cf. Magdalino 1993a: 440–41.

¹⁵ Texts translated and introduced by Alain Le Boulluec in Geoltrain and Kaestli 2005: 1175–2003; cf. Edwards 1992.

apocryphal traditions, in which her story was inextricably linked with those of the apostles. Her early life was chronicled in a Gospel attributed to St James,¹⁶ and the legend of her Dormition and Assumption, attributed to St John, tells the story of how the apostles reassembled in Jerusalem to witness her falling asleep and to bury her body: some of them were already there, some came from nearby, while others were far away on missionary journeys and had to be transported on clouds to get there in time.¹⁷

Constantinople, as is well known, eventually adopted the Virgin Mary as its supernatural protector, building numerous churches to her, acquiring important contact relics and legendary portrait icons, and attributing to her its miraculous deliverance from enemy attack.¹⁸ It became, effectively, Theotokoupolis, and developed the legend that Constantine had founded the city in her honour.¹⁹ In contrast to the overwhelming presence of her cult is the lack of focus on any other single holy person, apart from Christ. There was simply no local saint of the stature of, say, St Peter in Rome or St Demetrios in Thessaloniki; the local martyr Mokios evidently did not meet the requirements. One might therefore be tempted to conclude that Constantinople adopted, and imported, the Theotokos to make up for the lack of an apostolic tradition. There is something in this idea, because Constantinople always suffered, in its ecclesiastical relations, from a mismatch between the weight of its political and demographic importance and the flimsiness of its sacred credentials. However, the cult of the Theotokos in Constantinople did not begin to take off until the second quarter of the fifth century, a good hundred years after the foundation of the city. Before that, the local archbishop, St John Chrysostom, could refer to it, in 399, as “the city of the apostles” (PG 56, col. 264).

¹⁶ Tr. Albert Frey in Bovon and Geoltrain 1997: 73–104.

¹⁷ Ed. and tr. Wenger 1955: 201–41; another version tr. Simon Mimouni, in Bovon and Geoltrain 1997: 165–88; cf. also Stephen J. Shoemaker in Peltomaa, Külzer and Allen 2015: 23–39.

¹⁸ Still fundamental is Cameron 1978; see also Mango 2000, Angelidi and Papamastorakis 2000, Pentcheva 2006, Shoemaker 2008, Krausmüller 2011.

¹⁹ Mango 2000: 23–24.

Although Chrysostom was not making a historical statement, nor denying the claims of any other divine patron, there is reason to think that he was voicing what Constantine had intended when presiding over the creation of Constantinople in 324–337. Whether Constantine intended to found a Christian city – whatever that meant in the early fourth century – is an open question, but he clearly wanted the apostles to have pride of place, along with himself, in its Christian space. The most imposing Christian structure in the new city, built at the highest point inside the new city wall, was the church of the Apostles that doubled as the emperor’s mausoleum, with his tomb at the centre of a cluster of cenotaphs commemorating the twelve.²⁰ This cosy arrangement was not allowed to last, probably because the Church felt uncomfortable with its audacious implications, and twenty years after Constantine’s death, his son and successor Constantius II added another structure to the complex, so as to separate the functions of apostolic church and imperial burial. But this only enhanced the importance of the apostolic presence and the apostolic tradition within the Christian life and the sacred space of the imperial city. For the rest of the fourth century the church of the Holy apostles tended to overshadow the other churches of Constantinople, including the new cathedral church of the Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sophia, which had also been built, or at least completed, by Constantius II. At least this is the impression that we get from the very fragmentary source material, to the point that historians long assumed, until corrected recently, that the Holy Apostles was the main cathedral of Constantinople in the second half of the fourth century.²¹ Yet there can be no doubt that the apostles enjoyed a certain priority in the Constantinian capital: this is indicated, above all, by the fact that the first Christian relics to arrive in Constantinople were the bones of three apostolic saints, deposited in the church of the Holy Apostles: St Andrew, brought from Patras in Achaia, and St Luke from Thebes, and St Timothy from Ephesos. It is not entirely clear

²⁰ The unique source for Constantine’s construction is Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, IV.58–60, tr. Cameron and Hall 1999: 176–77; for commentary, see Mango 1999 and Bardill 2012: 364–95. On the church of the Holy Apostles, see in general Janin 1969: 41–50; James 2012: 181–217.

²¹ Mayer 2000 and McLynn 2010.

whether the translation of their relics happened on the initiative of Constantius II in 357, as most of the sources state and most of the secondary literature assumes, or whether it was ordered by Constantine himself in 336, as Richard Burgess has argued on the basis of one good chronicle source.²² Either way, it is surely not far-fetched to see the translation as a partial fulfilment of an intention that had been there from the beginning. It is inherently less credible that Constantine intended the cenotaphs of the apostles surrounding his sarcophagus to remain no more than empty tombs. Rather, the logic of the evidence suggests that if he had had his way in an ideal imperial world, Constantine would have translated the bodies of *all* the apostles to Constantinople, and that what he or Constantius ended up with was not what they really wanted; they had to make do with what was available, which is another way of saying, what the emperor was able to negotiate with the local Christian churches that guarded the tombs of the saints – what those churches were prepared to release or to reveal. In this, the imperial translation of Christian relics was not unlike Constantine’s importation of pagan statues to adorn the public spaces of Constantinople: it removed precious markers of local identity from their meaningful contexts, to the detriment of the communities that had cultivated them.²³ The random selection of apostles for translation says it all. Only Andrew was one of the Twelve; the other two, Timothy and Luke, were second rankers, and the fact that their relics came from Ephesos hints at the possibility that they were what the imperial agents had to be content with after having failed to secure the probably vanished remains of St John the Evangelist.

Conjecture aside, the important fact is that Constantine chose to surround himself, physically and symbolically, with apostles and not with later martyrs. This is remarkable in view of the political and ideological context in which he had founded Constantinople. He had founded Constantinople to celebrate and commemorate his recent victory over Licinius, which had brought with it the final liquidation of the Tetrarchy of Diocletian.²⁴ What better way to mark his break with the past than to

²² Burgess 2003.

²³ Magdalino 2015.

²⁴ The intention to break with the Tetrarchy, and specifically to erase the memory of

pack his new city with shrines to the martyrs who had died in the persecutions of Diocletian and Galerius? He may have built churches to some local martyrs, and he or Constantius II may have translated one martyr, Akakios, from Nicomedia. However, the evidence is cloudy, as Albrecht Berger has recently shown.²⁵ In any case, Constantine certainly did not associate the martyrs of the Tetrarchy with his own burial. Why then the apostles? One obvious inference, which may have troubled his contemporaries and has certainly not been lost on modern scholars, is that in surrounding himself with the Twelve Apostles, Constantine was casting himself in the role of Christ. However, I prefer the explanation that Constantine saw himself as *isapostolos*, the equal of the apostles, or as the thirteenth apostle. His life hardly reads like an *imitatio Christi*, but it shows distinct signs of *imitatio Pauli*: his dramatic conversion by a bright heavenly vision, his stringent insistence on monogamy, and, above all, his statement, recorded by Eusebius, that he considered himself to be the “bishop of those outside [the church] (ἐπίσκοπος τῶν ἐκτός)” (*VC*, IV, 24). If this is taken to mean that the emperor assumed special responsibility for the spiritual care of his non-Christian subjects, as the missionary who would lead them to Christ, the expression is distinctly reminiscent of the division of apostolic labour that St Paul describes in his letter to the Galatians 2, 7–8: Peter was the apostle of the Jews, whereas Paul’s mission was to evangelise the Gentiles.²⁶

Where did Constantine get his reverence for the apostles, his notion of apostolicity, and the idea to combine his imperial mausoleum with an apostle shrine? The answer must be Rome, where Constantine had lived in proximity to the cults of Peter and Paul; Rome, where he had contributed to the building of the basilica of St Peter at a short distance from the mausolea of Augustus and Hadrian; Rome, where the basilica of St Paul was planned, if not already under construction, around the time of

Licinius, has been emphasized in different ways in recent literature: see Stephenson 2009: 192–94; Barnes 2011: 111–13; Bardill 2012: 251–53; Potter 2013: 239–41; Van Dam 2014.

²⁵ Berger 2013.

²⁶ Staats 2008.

his death.²⁷ If Constantine needed a model for planning the Christian monuments of Constantinople, Rome was the only place where he could find it, because no other city, including Jerusalem, had as yet (we are talking about 324) a Christian topography. Indeed, the Christian topography of Constantinople echoed that of Rome in one basic respect. It had two initial nodes, around which and between which it developed: a central cathedral church, dedicated to Christ, and an apostle shrine on the periphery.²⁸ However, Constantine was not the kind of city builder or empire builder who needed to follow a precedent. His imperial programme and his religious beliefs evolved considerably between his occupation of Rome in 312 and his planning of Constantinople in 324, which had a further twelve years to evolve by the time he constructed his mausoleum there in 336. Moreover, in the planning of Constantinople, Constantine had a *tabula rasa*, at least outside the site of ancient Byzantium, unconstrained by the traditions and the topography of Rome. Thus he was able to combine imperial and Christian memorial, and to bring the very special dead within the city walls.

To sum up, the apostolic tradition was fundamental to the origins and existence of Constantinople as a Christian city. Initiated by Constantine, it was profoundly and directly inspired by the example of Rome, and indeed should be seen as an integral part of Constantine's conception of his city as New Rome. However, it started off on a different footing from its Roman precedent, and followed a distinct trajectory, which with hindsight we can identify as typically Byzantine. The apostolic tradition in Constantinople venerated the apostles more as a group, and less as individuals. It involved, and indeed inaugurated, the translation and dismemberment of relics, which Pope Gregory the Great would later denounce, in 594, as a nasty Greek habit that was alien to the traditions of the Roman church – this was when the empress Constantina asked him for the head of St Paul.²⁹ Most importantly, the apostolic tradition in Constantinople was inextricably linked to imperial burial and imperial authority in matters of faith. It conferred apostolicity on the emperor, as

²⁷ Bardill 2012: 239–51; McKitterick et al. 2013.

²⁸ Noted by Mango 1985: 35–36.

²⁹ Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, IV 30, ed. Norberg 1982: 248–50; Mango 1990.

isapostolos or thirteenth apostle, and emperors would continue to use it in this way. Thus in the preface to the *Ecloga*, the law code issued in 741, the emperor Leo III likened himself to St Peter,³⁰ and the historian Anna Komnene asserted that her father, Alexios I Komnenos, deserved the title of thirteenth apostle even more than Constantine for his efforts in converting heretics to the true faith.³¹

The apostolic tradition in Constantinople was thus not only central to the city's Christian culture, but it was also highly official. We may wonder, however, whether this was altogether a good thing for the cult of the apostles themselves. Did it not turn them into remote authority figures lacking in charisma, faceless bureaucrats of the heavenly king who could not be approached with confidence by ordinary believers seeking favours and forgiveness, and whose pastoral care of the church, moreover, was compromised by their association with imperial power? Was not this the reason, or at least one of the reasons, why Constantinople in the fifth and sixth centuries went from being the city of the apostles to being the city of the Theotokos: because Byzantines needed a more effective and sympathetic intercessor with Christ? There is also the point that the Virgin Mary could identify with Constantinople because, having left no bodily remains on earth, she was not rooted in any other place, unlike the apostles who had emotional ties to the cities where they had preached, founded churches, suffered martyrdom in most cases and received burial. Thus St Philip and St John, to mention only the best documented, had flourishing cult centres at Hierapolis and Ephesos in Asia Minor, to say nothing of SS Peter and Paul in Rome, or St James in Compostela, which was, amazingly, on the Byzantine pilgrimage map in the eleventh century.³²

The apostles were perhaps initially and to some extent the victims of changing religious fashions, but the later history of their cult in Constantinople is far from being a simple story of demotion and marginalisation. To begin with, the cult of the apostles at the sanctuary of the Holy Apostles became less imperial and more ecclesiastical with the separation of

³⁰ *Ecloga*, Prooimion (ed. Burgmann 1983: 160).

³¹ *Alexiad*, XIV.8,8, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 2001: 457.

³² Theodore Prodromos, *Life of St Meletios*, ed. Vasilievskij 1886: 46–47.

the imperial mausoleum from the church, and with the use of the latter for the burial of sainted archbishops of Constantinople, starting with St John Chrysostom and later including St Gregory of Nazianzos and the patriarchs Nikephoros and Methodios, the champions of the veneration of icons.³³ Their entombment in close proximity to the relics of Saints Andrew, Timothy and Luke, buried under the high altar, effectively invested these ‘rock star’ fathers of the church with an apostolic status that rubbed off on their successors on the patriarchal throne. It was a notable case of the transfer of apostolicity to other saints, which we shall come across again.

Secondly, the cults of the Theotokos and of other saints, whose relics were received and whose churches proliferated in fifth and sixth-century Constantinople, did not take business away from the cult of the apostles. They added new layers to the religious life of the city, without cutting into or squeezing out the pre-existing strata. And this is not all. At the very time when Constantinople was completing its adoption of the Theotokos as its divine protector, in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, the cults of individual apostles were on the increase.

To get an idea of the relative importance of the apostles in the heavenly hierarchy of Byzantine worship, we need to look at the festal calendar of the Byzantine church, and at the evidence for the relative importance of religious feasts. One document that illustrates this very clearly and reliably is the piece of imperial legislation that the emperor Manuel I issued in 1166 in order to limit the number of days when the law courts were in recess.³⁴ They were closed for the 12 days of Christmas, during Holy Week and on Sundays. Otherwise, there were 36 whole days and 28 half-days when they were allowed to close. Of the 36 full days, exactly half were feasts of the apostles, the rest being devoted to Christ, the Virgin, St John the Baptist, and the three principal Fathers of the Greek church: St Basil, St Gregory of Nazianzos, and St John Chrysostom. The

³³ Janin 1969: 49. Their tombs were venerated by emperor and patriarch in an Easter Monday ritual: Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, tr. Moffatt and Tall [ed. J. J. Reiske] 2012: 76–77.

³⁴ Macrides 1984, reprinted in Macrides 1999: 140–55 (text and translation), 184–90 (commentary).

28 half days included two apostolic commemorations: an extra feast for St James the brother of the Lord (23 October), and the celebration of St Peter's chains on 16 January.

When we look at the topography of the 18 major apostolic feasts, as prescribed in the tenth-century liturgical calendars of the church of Constantinople, the *Synaxarion* and the *Typikon*, interesting patterns emerge.³⁵ On only three occasions was the church of the Holy Apostles the main liturgical venue: the feast-days of St Luke (18 October), St Andrew (30 November) and the collective celebration of the Twelve on 30 June. So only one of the Twelve was celebrated there. For the others, in four cases the venue is not specified, and we should probably assume that they were celebrated in Hagia Sophia, which is specified for St Matthew (16 November). The remaining seven all had their own churches, apart from St Bartholomew, who was celebrated in the church of St Peter (24 August). On the other hand, St Mark the Evangelist, who was not one of the Twelve, but whose feast (25 April) is also listed as a full holiday in Manuel I's *novella* of 1166, was also celebrated in his own church.³⁶

Let us look more closely at the six apostles of the Twelve who were celebrated in their own dedicated churches. They were SS James, John, Paul, Peter, Philip and Thomas.³⁷ These apostles, together with Andrew, were undoubtedly the most popular of the twelve. Their names are the apostolic names most commonly given in baptism, both in east and west. They were the apostles who generated the most literature, both in terms of canonical scripture, and in the form of apocryphal *Acta* and gospels. Theirs too were the main apostle relics that were venerated in Constantinople outside the church of the Holy Apostles: the chains of St Peter,³⁸ the head of St Paul,³⁹ the body of St James,⁴⁰ the body of St Philip,⁴¹ the

³⁵ Mateos 1962; Delehay 1902.

³⁶ Janin 1969: 307.

³⁷ Janin 1969: 253–55, 264–70, 397–401, 493–94, 248–51.

³⁸ Anthony of Novgorod, tr. de Khitrowo 1889: 89; von Falkenhausen 1990.

³⁹ Anthony of Novgorod, tr. de Khitrowo 1889: 98; *Anonymus Mercati*, ed. Ciggaar 1976: 245; *Anonymus Tarragonensis*, ed. Ciggaar 1995: 121.

⁴⁰ *Anonymus Mercati*, ed. Ciggaar 1976: 255.

⁴¹ Anthony of Novgorod, tr. de Khitrowo 1889: 98

head of St Thomas and the lance with which he was martyred.⁴²

Turning to the churches where the six main apostles (apart from Andrew) were celebrated in the Middle Byzantine period, it is interesting to consider their dates and locations. What they have in common is that none of them is reliably attested before the sixth century⁴³, and none stood close to the church of the Holy Apostles. The church of St John at the Hebdomon, of indeterminate date, was in an important, but distant suburb. The church of St Philip at *ta Miltiadou*, said to have been constructed by the emperor Anastasios (491–518), was located in the zone between the Constantinian and Theodosian walls.⁴⁴ That of St Thomas near *ta Amantiou*, probably a contemporary foundation, was near the harbour of Julian/Sophia.⁴⁵ The other four churches – of St Peter, St Paul, St James the Brother of God, and St John – can all be dated, with the possible exception of St Peter’s chapel that was attached to Hagia Sophia,⁴⁶ to the late sixth and early seventh centuries, and all were clustered at the east end of the city, in close proximity to Hagia Sophia. The reasons behind this remarkable cluster of apostle dedications in the post-Justinianic period are not immediately obvious, and cannot occupy us here. Each church had its own story, and it would take too long to tell them all and put them all together. I would venture the suggestion that the main initiative came from Justin II (565–582), who is credited with the churches of both St James and St Paul.⁴⁷ I would also point out that

⁴² Antonopoulou 2013: 271–72, 413–14.

⁴³ The possible exceptions are the church of the Apostle John at the Hebdomon and that of St Thomas *ta Amantiou*, which are both mentioned in connection with events of the fourth and early fifth centuries. However, in the first case a copyist’s error has been suspected (Maraval 1985: 405), and in the second, the fact that the sources post-date the sixth century casts doubt on their reliability: see Featherstone and Mango 2003: 234–38 (who do not, however, mention the allusion to the church in the seventh-century and later hagiography of St John Chrysostom, which states that his body rested there when it was translated to Constantinople in 437: see Halkin 1977: 41, 485).

⁴⁴ *Patria*, III 189, ed. Preger 1901–1907: 275 (tr. Berger 2013a: 216–17).

⁴⁵ For the exact location, see Featherstone and Mango 2003.

⁴⁶ The evidence suggests a ninth-century context: Magdalino 2015a: 52.

⁴⁷ Theophanes, ed. de Boor 1882: 244 (tr. Mango and Scott 1997: 361, 362); *Patria*, III, p. 47, ed. Preger 1901–1907: 235 (tr. Berger 2013a: 166–67). On Justin’s artistic patronage in general, see Cameron 1979.

the achieved result, if not the original intention, was to provide the patriarchal clergy of Hagia Sophia with liturgical stations for the celebration of major apostle feasts that were close at hand and did not involve lengthy processions to the western parts of the city. I also suspect an eschatologically driven concern for apostolic intercession, comparable to the contemporary focus on the Theotokos as intercessor at a time of heightened apocalyptic expectation.⁴⁸ But whatever the intention behind the dedication of each of the four churches, they testify collectively to a remarkable upsurge of devotion to the apostles in Constantinople at the very end of antiquity.

Another, striking contemporary example of this devotion is the empress Constantina's request to Pope Gregory the Great, to which we have already referred, to be given the head of St Paul for the consecration of a chapel in the imperial Palace. It is interesting that she requested the relic for a palace chapel and not for the great basilica of St Paul that had recently been erected by Justin II. No less remarkable is the fact that the emperors evidently persisted in their request and some later pope granted it, because in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, foreign travellers record the head of St Paul among the relics in the imperial chapel.⁴⁹ One of these travellers, the 'Anonymous Tarragonensis' of the late eleventh century, states that on the collective feast of the apostles (30 June), the relic was taken by the patriarch in solemn public procession from the palace to the church of the Holy Apostles.⁵⁰ A Byzantine writer at the end of the twelfth century, Nicholas Mesarites, provides the additional information that from the Holy Apostles, the relic was taken on a further tour of the city.⁵¹ These sources give us a precious glimpse into the cult of the apostles in medieval Constantinople. They show that long after Constantine, Byzantine emperors continued to look to Rome as the ultimate source of authentic apostolic tradition. They seem to indicate that the head of St Paul eclipsed the body of St Andrew as the most precious

⁴⁸ See Leena Mari Peltomaa in Peltomaa, Külzer and Allen 2015: 131–37, with reference to Magdalino 1993b; see also Magdalino 2008: 123–25.

⁴⁹ Above, n. 38.

⁵⁰ Ciggaar 1995: 121.

⁵¹ Ed. and tr. Downey 1957: 916, 893.

and famous apostle relic in the city, to the extent that it was used to represent all the Twelve Apostles on their collective feast day. Finally, they show that although the emperors appropriated the relic for their own private devotions and spiritual protection, they were under pressure to put it on public display at least once in the year.

Relics were one way in which the saints manifested their presence and inspired devotion in believers. They also made themselves known by performing miracles and appearing in visions. As far as I know, the apostles did not generate any miracle stories in medieval Constantinople, but they did give rise to a number of visionary accounts. When I was working in the footsteps of Lennart Rydén, I was particularly struck by the role of apostolic visions in two tenth-century texts, the *Life of Andrew the Fool* and the *Vision of Kosmas the Monk*.⁵² St John the Evangelist appears more than once in the *Life of Andrew*, to Andrew himself, and to the holy man's spiritual son, Epiphanius, whom the apostle takes on a trip to heaven to show him the honour in which Andrew is already held at the court of the heavenly king⁵³. Kosmas the monk tells of a near-death experience in which he saw himself being guided on a tour of heaven by St John and St Andrew.⁵⁴ These particular apostles were not chosen at random. Their hagiographical apparitions, whether real or imagined, seem to me to reflect the real importance of Andrew and John as intercessors, cult figures, and – to repeat the expression – folk heroes in tenth-century Constantinople.

Both saints were regarded as apostolic founders of the church of Constantinople. At his hearing by the Photian synod of 861, the Patriarch Ignatios, who contested his deposition, claimed the right to be seated before the papal legates, saying, “I have the throne of the Apostle John, and of Andrew, who was the first-called disciple of Christ”.⁵⁵ The claim to apostolic succession from John, which was also voiced by Ignatios' successor, Photios,⁵⁶ was presumably based on the idea that John's

⁵² Magdalino 1999.

⁵³ Rydén 1995: 22–25, 126–27, 208–09, 214–17, 254–55.

⁵⁴ Angelidi 1983.

⁵⁵ Minutes of the synod, ed. von Glanvell 1905: 603.

⁵⁶ Greenwood 2006: 136.

see of Ephesos fell within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople. In the case of Andrew, the claim to possess his apostolic authority may have had something to do with the possession of his body in the church of the Holy Apostles, as a result of a translation by either Constantine or Constantius. Mainly, however, it was based on the tradition, which had circulated in various forms since perhaps as early as the fourth century, that the apostle, on his way from his mission in the Black Sea to his martyrdom in Patras, had stopped off in Byzantium, founded a church at the nearby town of Argynopolis, and consecrated the first local bishop, Stachys.⁵⁷ The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople still believes in the Stachys legend, whose value for the patriarch's authority is obvious: it enabled the church of Constantinople to counter the criticism, which it faced from the other patriarchates, that it had been raised up out of nothing by imperial decree, by demonstrating good apostolic credentials in the form of a foundation by no less an apostle than Andrew, known as the First-Called (πρωτόκλητος) because he had been the first of the Twelve disciples to answer Jesus' call, ahead of his own brother Peter. This was obviously a good card to play against the Petrine primacy asserted by the Roman Church.

There are signs that Andrew was treated as a local hero in Constantinople in the ninth and tenth centuries. Local tradition associated certain places with the memory of his visit. He was said to have lived for a time outside Byzantium, on the Golden Horn, where he built a church; he then moved inside the city and preached in a portico by the harbour.⁵⁸ Another tradition credited him with consecrating a church to the Theotokos.⁵⁹ This and other traditions inspired a major piece of hagiography. Between 815 and 843 a local monk, Epiphanius, was moved to write a new biography of the apostle, which to judge from its abundant manuscript tradition became a big hit. It is a remarkable document in two respects. Firstly, it is to my knowledge the only full-length *vita* of an apostle, based on a fresh compilation of the apocryphal *acta*, which was composed in Greek during the Middle Ages. Secondly, the author is

⁵⁷ See in general Dvornik 1958, and more recently, Mango 2009: 158–64.

⁵⁸ *Patria* III 179, ed. Preger 1901–1907: 271 (tr. Berger 2013a: 210–13).

⁵⁹ *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 120, col. 244. Vinogradov 2005: 179.

unusually informative about his motivation and his research. He tells us that his work took shape when he and another monk, Iakobos, decided to get away from the iconoclast regime in Constantinople. Taking with them a copy of the *Acts of Andrew* in the version attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus, they followed the itinerary of the Apostle's missions around the Black Sea from Bithynia to the Sea of Azov. As they went, they not only investigated the local traditions about the Apostle, but also sought out the relics of other saints.⁶⁰

At the same time, however, Epiphanius' text is remarkable for what it does not say. It takes barely two sentences to deal with Andrew's visit to Byzantion, and the only new information it adds is the reference to the church of the Theotokos on the acropolis. Epiphanius is clearly much more interested in what happened before and after Byzantion: the details of Andrew's preaching and miracles in Bithynia and around the Black Sea, and the story of his dealings with the proconsul of Achaia leading to his martyrdom in Patras. There is no way that Epiphanius' *Life of Andrew* can be regarded as propaganda for the apostolic pretensions of the patriarchate of Constantinople. Indeed, as Father Francis Dvornik pointed out many years ago, the church of Constantinople made remarkably little use of the Andrew-Stachys legend in its contest with the church of St Peter.⁶¹ It seems that the Byzantines were interested in Andrew because of his exploits, his preaching and the sacred topography of his life, both inside Constantinople and beyond. Here we should note that his cult persisted in the city of Patras, despite his translation to Constantinople.⁶²

In the same way, the cult of the Apostle John persisted at Ephesos, despite the construction of two major churches in his name in Constantinople.⁶³ John's popularity may also have been due to his miracles and

⁶⁰ Epiphanius Monk and Priest, *On the Life, Deeds and End of the Holy All-Blessed and First-Called of the Apostles, Andrew: Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 120, cols 216–260. Critical edition by Vinogradov 2005: 157–85; cf. Vinogradov 2011.

⁶¹ Dvornik 1958.

⁶² This is evident from an episode reported by Constantine Porphyrogenetos in *De Administrando Imperio*, 49: ed. and tr. Moravcsik and Jenkins 1967: 228–233; see also Avramea 1997: 132.

⁶³ For the city's continuing importance as a pilgrimage centre, see Foss 2002, esp. 130–

preaching, as recorded in his apocryphal *acta*. Yet John was a much more versatile character than any of the other apostles. He was the beloved disciple of Christ, a close associate of the Virgin Mary, the most philosophical of the four Evangelists, and, despite the doubts of such as Eusebius, recognised as the author of the book of Revelation, which became topical in the apocalyptic climate of the sixth and seventh centuries.⁶⁴ He was the original Theologian of the church. He was also the only apostle whose body parts were not to be found in any of his cult centres, a distinction he shared with the Virgin Mary. Like the Virgin, he was thought to have undergone a ‘relocation’ (*metastasis*), although not in the form of a bodily assumption to heaven, for it was widely believed that he remained alive on earth, awaiting the end of time, when he would reveal himself, together with Enoch and Elijah, in order to denounce the Antichrist. So widespread was this belief that it found its way into the main Byzantine commentary on Revelation,⁶⁵ and into the official hagiography of the tenth century, notably the great ‘rewriting’ (*Metaphrasis*) project of Symeon Metaphrastes, who used much apocryphal material in standardising the biographies of the Apostles.⁶⁶ His encomium for St John the Theologian ends by describing how the apostle laid himself to rest in his tomb and his disciples returned the next morning to find him gone, because he had “joined the company of Enoch and Elijah”.⁶⁷ The survival of St John until the end of the world is also an important apostolic motif in the *Lives* of St Basil the Younger and St Andrew the Fool. People suspect that Basil himself is St John the Theologian incognito⁶⁸ – an indication that other holy men may have attracted the same speculation. St Andrew the Fool, asked by his disciple Epiphanius during one

31, 138; on the church, see Thiel 2005. The church became the core of the settlement, and gave it its medieval and modern name of Theologos–Ayasoluk.

⁶⁴ The major Byzantine commentary on the Apocalypse of St John, by Andrew of Caesarea, has been dated to the second decade of the seventh century, at the darkest moment of Byzantium’s great war with Sassanian Persia: Constantinou 2013; Magdalino 2003: 249–51; ed. Schmid 1955–1956.

⁶⁵ Schmid 1955–1956: 110–111.

⁶⁶ Bovon 1999.

⁶⁷ *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 116, col. 704.

⁶⁸ Sullivan, Talbot and McGrath 2014: 148–49, 278–79.

of their tutorials what has happened to the Prophet Elijah, replies that not only are Enoch and Elijah alive and well and waiting to fulfil their eschatological roles, but

John the Theologian also lives and is in the world, like a pearl in the mud, left to live in the flesh on earth to face Jesus Christ for our sins and to avert his just wrath against us, when our trespasses are multiplied so that he wants to blot us out because of our sins. Many of the righteous have seen him, although they did not reveal him because of the wickedness of the faithless and inquisitive human mind.⁶⁹

Thus the apostle John was imagined in the role of the ultimate intercessor for mankind before the Last Judgement. Imagined, though never fully certified, because the story of his empty tomb was apocryphal, and a school of religious opinion, going back to St John Chrysostom, refused to accept it. This included the pop theologian Michael Glykas, writing in the twelfth century, when eschatological speculation was less intense.⁷⁰ But it also included, most remarkably, the copyist of one of the earliest surviving manuscripts of the Metaphrastic corpus, dating from around the turn of the millennium. The scribe of Istanbul, Hagia Triada 77, copied out the whole of Symeon Metaphrastes' encomium of St John the Theologian, but then decided – or was ordered by his superior – to change the ending. He did so by cutting out the folios with the offending text, leaving only the inoffensive final section at the beginning of the next folio. He then inserted a new bifolium on which he wrote his alternative conclusion, citing Chrysostom in support of the idea that John had died a normal death and been given a normal burial.⁷¹

Yet the evidence for the continuing belief in John's *metastasis* shows that the apostolic tradition in Constantinople was nothing if not creative. Its creativity lay not only in finding troubleshooting roles for established apostles, but also in conferring apostolicity on other spiritual authorities,

⁶⁹ Tr. Rydén 1995: 704.

⁷⁰ Ed. Eustratiades 1912: 108–12.

⁷¹ I owe this information to Marina Detoraki, who generously shared with me the unpublished paper she gave at the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Sofia 2011).

and eliding apostles with other kinds of saints. This took various forms. I pass over Cyril and Methodius, the apostles of the Slavs, and Constantine-Cyril's translation of the relic of St Clement to Rome. As we have seen, emperors and patriarchs were given a share of apostolic grace by being buried *ad apostolos*, in the church of the Holy Apostles and its annexes, much as the Roman Popes emphasised their Petrine succession by being laid to rest near the tomb of St Peter. A corpus of Christian Neoplatonic writings composed in the late fifth or early sixth century was given apostolic authority by being attributed to a minor character in the Acts of the Apostles, who was given a new identity as Dionysios the Areopagite, disciple of St Paul, first bishop of Athens and first bishop of Paris.⁷² He was portrayed among the Church Fathers in Hagia Sophia.⁷³ So too was St Nicholas, who effectively became an associate apostle by being paired, in the liturgical space of Hagia Sophia, with St Peter: his chapel at the south-east corner of the church was exactly symmetrical with that of St Peter on the north-west.⁷⁴ But the most creative piece of apostolicity in medieval Constantinople was undoubtedly the creation of Andreas Salos, St Andrew the Fool for Christ. Andrew bore the name of the first-called apostle who had ordained Stachys, first bishop of Byzantium. His mission on earth, and his life of homeless poverty, were authorised by visionary appearances of St John the Apostle. His mission was highly apostolic, in that its goal was to prepare his spiritual disciple, Epiphanius, to become the patriarch of Constantinople. And one of the ways that the middle Byzantine, probably tenth-century, author of the text chose to give it an authentic, fifth-century atmosphere, was to have Andrew see a vision of the church of the Holy Apostles in the form in which it would be rebuilt by Justinian.⁷⁵ The Holy Apostles, not Hagia Sophia. Very bizarre and very Byzantine, but unquestionably apostolic.

⁷² For a recent study of the Dionysian corpus, see Golitzin 2013.

⁷³ Mango 1962: 48–58.

⁷⁴ Magdalino 2015a: 50–52. Note that the cult of St Nicholas in Constantinople was promoted by the patriarch Methodios, who also contributed to the hagiography, and the copying, of St Dionysios: Canart 1979. The Byzantine cult of St Dionysios in the ninth century merits further study.

⁷⁵ Rydén 1995: 132–35; cf. Magdalino 1999: 96.

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