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# THE ASTONISHING MISSIONARY JOURNEYS OF THE APOSTLE ANDREW

George Alexandrou, international reporter, writer, and political commentator, on his thousand-page book in Greek, *He Raised the Cross on the Ice*, exploring the sources, traditions, routes and cultures of St. Andrew's apostolate. George's own enthusiasm and love for St. Andrew made our long months of working together more than an assignment, it became a shared pilgrimage.

## BEGINNINGS

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RTE: George, please tell us about your background and how you began this epic project of reconstructing St. Andrew's journeys.

GEORGE: Yes, but before I begin, I have to say that at certain times in my life I've been very blind. I can speak about the Taliban, about international policy, about government leaders, but I'm not righteous enough to speak or write about St. Andrew. This is how I feel and I must say so at the beginning.

My background is that I went to the university as one of the best students in Greece, but dropped out to become a hippie and a traveler, a fighter for the ecological movement, and then just an "easy rider." When I returned to Greece, by chance, or perhaps God's will, I turned to journalism and was

quite successful. I became the director of an important Greek historical journal, had a rather flashy career in Cyprus as a TV news director, and traveled around the world for some major journalist associations. I worked freelance in many media, but finally understood that this was not exactly how I wanted to live my life.

Since then, I married, had two children, lost my health, and over the past few years have done a lot of thinking. Now, I'm with the Voice of Greece, broadcasting a weekly radio news show to Greeks and Greek-speakers world-wide. It's a very diverse audience including Greeks in the diaspora, Greek-speaking Russian Orthodox monks in Siberia, Pakistani immigrants who learned Greek here and have now returned to Pakistan, scholars of ancient Greek who want to hear the modern Greek language, and so on. Foremost, however, I'm a traveler and I travel still. I like to feel the essence of people all over the world.

RTE: I remember that you once told me you have come across many small unrelated ethnic groups who believed they were descendants of Alexander the Great.

GEORGE: Yes. In my own way, I'm a specialist in this. I've met people all over the world who claim to be of Greek ancestry. They may trace their heritage from the ancient Greeks, Byzantines, or modern Greeks, but they all claim to be Greek. It's very strange, you pick up a stone in any part of the world and underneath you'll find a Greek.

We have descendants of ancient Greeks in Calabria (southern Italy), the Crimea, and the whole Black Sea region. This is from the Greco-Roman world. Then, we have the legacy of Alexander the Great in central Asia, in India, in Sudan, in Egypt, in Iraq, in Armenia, even in the Taklimakan Desert in Niya (China). It isn't we Greeks who claim this; these people themselves have a long tradition that they are Greek. For instance, some leaders of the remote Araucan tribes of Chile claim that they are descended from the ancient Spartans (and they certainly didn't learn about the Spartans from history books). There are even central Africans who claim to be descendants of Alexander the Great's soldiers or the Ptolemaic Greeks.

Through the Ptolemaic Greeks, we also have a connection with Indonesia. During the Ptolemaic period, the Indonesians were very great travelers and sailed the Indian and Pacific Oceans for distances like that of Cardiff to New York. Greeks, Arabs and Indonesians all traveled to Tanzania.

You find Greek faces in strange places all over the world. There are descendants of Greek-Chinese in Niya, China's Sinkiang region, as I said, and there was a Greek-Chinese kingdom in today's Uzbekistan. For a time I was a scholar of Greco-Buddhism, which has a very strong legacy in central Asia, and there you can trace the origins of Buddhism's transformation from a philosophical practice to a world religion through the descendants of Greeks from the time of Alexander the Great in Greco-Indian Gandhara, in northwest India.

I've also investigated descendants of the Byzantine Greeks, who, in eastern lands under the Turks, were called Rum-Orthodox, meaning "Roman" Orthodox, as Constantinople was the New Rome: the Rum-Orthodox of Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, the Rum-patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem – and also the Catholic uniates of the Middle East who claim to be descendants of Byzantine Greeks who guarded the Byzantine Emperor and call themselves Greek-Catholics.

People journeyed over vast areas in antiquity and we know quite a lot about their travels. For instance, Claudius Ptolemy drew a map of the ancient world in the second century after Christ (and this is a real



*George Alexandrou*

map of the world as we know it today). From Ptolemy and other Hellenistic geographers and historians we know that there were extensive trade routes such as the Silk Road, the Cinnamon Road, the Spice Road, the Golden Road from the Kingdom of Zimbabwe to the Mediterranean Sea, and the Amber Road from the Baltic Sea to Rome, through Denmark and the British Isles. The Verangian Road (as it was called by the Byzantines) was traveled by Herodotus 1,400 years ago, and went from the Crimea through Kiev, straight to Valaamo and the Baltic Sea. Centuries earlier it was called the Dneper Road.

There was another major route connecting the Mediterranean to Cornwall in the British Isles, the Tin or Pewter Road. Then we had the famous Silk Route, which united the Chinese Han Empire with Rome. There was also a trade route along the Nile between Meroe and Axum, the kingdoms of Sudan and Ethiopia. The Cinnamon Road connected Shanghai in China with Indonesia and Borneo, through Java to Tanzania. The Spice Road united China through Burma, Sri Lanka and present-day Pakistan to the Red

Sea. You can imagine, these were all important routes and a simple, unostentatious man like St. Andrew could take any of them easily.

RTE: Were the ancient and classical maps more accurate than later medieval maps in the West?

GEORGE: Yes, later Christians would say, “Paradise was here, the earth was flat, etc.,” but if you look at the old Greek maps, they not only knew the earth was round, but the longitudes and latitudes are the same on their maps as we know them today. They are not exactly the same because we count ours from Greenwich and they didn’t, but you can correlate them precisely. You can even find America and Australia on some maps (i.e. the map of Crates the Maleot in 150 B.C.). This is why I believe we can accurately locate these places from the old traditions. When barbaric peoples invaded the older Christian civilizations and became Christian themselves, this was right spiritually, but it was a catastrophe for civilization. Night fell on education and learning, although spiritually and culturally it was a dawn for the barbarians. It was their time, for the first time in history.

RTE: Although there were dangers from bandits and smugglers, there probably weren’t the kind of border controls we have now.

GEORGE: Yes, but even now there are dangers. Going to Siberia isn’t any safer now than it was 2,000 years ago, but there was often another attitude towards travelers then. Although there were always dangers, in many ancient cultures a traveler was sacred, he was from far away and people didn’t want to despoil him; they wanted to hear about his country and his civilization. You didn’t need visas, documents, you were not even in need of friends because you were a special person, a traveler. You were coming with far-off ideas, different beliefs, strange dress. You were more often a person to admire than someone to fight or to steal from. In the ancient world passing travelers were laden with gifts – this was Marco Polo’s experience. Those were different times. With my own decades of traveling to difficult and exotic places, it is easy for me to understand how St. Andrew could have traveled as extensively as the traditions recount.

RTE: When we first spoke about your research you made the remark that when the Lord told the apostles to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, they did not think this meant their descendants. They took this literally.

GEORGE: Yes, we have many written traditions from the second and third centuries A.D. that the apostles went to Middle Asia, to sub-Saharan Africa, to India, even to old Burma. They went to the land of Sogdiana, which is modern Uzbekistan/western China... we had all these memories and traditions of the first years of Christianity, but we thought they were just strange tales. Now, with the help of archeology, we understand that these roads did exist, and that many, many people took them. We know, for example, that the Indonesians were traveling from Java to Tanzania across the Indian ocean. They had large, well-balanced outrigger canoes, and they would load them with their families, livestock, food and water, and set out from Java – sometimes traveling for a lifetime. This is how they discovered Madagascar. They sailed the open oceans without any fear. The Celts also were extensive travelers in the North Atlantic with their leather-covered boats, the *curraghs*.

Another example of widespread travel is that in 330 B.C., Pithias knew northern Europe well. He had been to Cornwall, to Scotland, to Thule (some say that ancient Thule was Iceland, others Greenland, others Northern Scandinavia) and from there he traveled to Marseilles in forty-five days.

RTE: In forty-five days!

GEORGE: Yes. And in Claudius Ptolemy's (100-170 A.D.) geography we have Diogenes – a second Diogenes, not the philosopher – who, during the apostolic times, left by ship from Alexandria and went to Azania, present-day Tanzania, to a place called Rapta. From Tanzania he walked for twenty-five days to the mountains of Ruwenzori between Lake Albert and Lake Edward in what is now Rwanda, Uganda, Congo-Zaire. You see, it was a small world at that time, and the Greeks already knew the source of the Nile.

So, when the Lord told the apostles to go to the ends of the earth, the Greco-Roman knowledge of the world at that time was quite specific. They knew where the ends of the earth were. For the ancient Greeks and Romans, the world ended in an abyss, the “Antipodes,” after the Prasmus Promontory in Zimbabwe. However, the ancient Israelites, the Himyarite Arabs, Phoenicians, and Nabataean Arabs knew that this was not the final abyss, but the *dzimba dza mabwe*, possibly the mines of King Solomon, or the Bantu Empire of Monomotapa (Mwene Muntapa).

My point is that, geographically, Ptolemy gave us all the known places and no one can say that this is rubbish. China, Indonesia, Lapland, Britain, Scandinavia were all known. It was not easy to go to the ends of the earth,

but it was possible. In his epistles, St. Paul speaks of being obliged to spread the gospel or he will be lost. In Greek, these words, “*to the ends of the earth*” are very precise, they are in no sense allegorical and the apostles would have understood this literally. The ancient geographers used this phrase as a precise geographical definition.

That the apostles accomplished this to some degree is borne out by the Church historian Tertullian, who wrote in 170 A.D.: “We have deacons, we have priests and we have churches, to the ends of the earth.” Then he describes the places: the Sarmatians, Sub-Saharan Africa, the British Isles, and the Scythians. The territory of the Sarmatians, for instance, stretched from the Caspian Sea to Lake Baikal; and from Mongolia to Siberia.

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## THE CROSS OF THE NORTH

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RTE: How did you begin to write about St. Andrew in particular?

GEORGE: If you had told me a year ago that I would be writing a book on St. Andrew, I would have said you were crazy. I never imagined that I would do such a thing. But when I had some serious problems, I went to New Valaamo Monastery in Finland where I was given the extremely kind hospitality of the monks and Igumen Sergei. It was like entering the doors of paradise. You can imagine; it was cold, quiet, silent, and the only things I had to face were God, nature, and myself.

At the time I wanted to write a book about the Kalash, the descendants of Alexander the Great on the northwest border of Pakistan, who are still pagan. Their religion is still very connected with ancient Greek paganism, and I feel an urgency to preserve their mythology and legends because this is an endangered culture and there are only two thousand of them left.

I had planned to begin this work in Finland, but I understood that the monastery was not exactly a proper place to write about pagans... so instead I began writing about the Karelian Orthodox saints. I was impressed that many Greek monks from Mt. Athos had gone to Karelia and that Karelian monks had gone to Mt. Athos and later returned to the Russian north – like St. Arseny of Konevits. One of our Greeks who went to Karelia was Monk Eliezar, and we have had a continual stream of Greek monks, hermits and

<sup>5</sup>Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, Chapter. 7, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 157-8. T&T Clark, translated by S. Thelwall.

ascetics in Karelia. Tradition says of Sts. Sergius and Herman, the founders of Valaam Monastery in Russia, that one was a Greek from Mt. Athos and the other a local Karelian. (Others say they were both Greeks from Kiev, and a third version holds that one was Greek and the other a pagan priest, but the fact remains that in each variant they had Greek influence and ideas.)

I am fascinated by what I call “The Cross of the North.” This is a geographical cross that you can trace on a map. The vertical bar links the far north of Russia to Greek Orthodoxy in the south. The crossbar connects Finnish, Russian and American Orthodoxy, from Sts. Sergius and Herman of Valaam, through the deserts of the “Northern Thebaid” to St. Herman of Alaska on Spruce Island.

I was thrilled to be at Valaamo, receiving the tradition of Valaam Monastery and writing about the saints. The abbot helped us very much. My wife is Ukrainian, a Russian national, and we were given access to the monastery archives and allowed to copy anything we liked. This was a very great gift of God and of Valaamo. We translated from many books and then came back to Greece to begin writing. Even then I knew that I must begin by writing the life of St. Andrew the Apostle.

RTE: The tradition that St. Andrew was in Karelia is still held today?

GEORGE: Yes, by the monks of Old Valaam Monastery in Russia, some monks of New Valaamo in Finland, and by Finnish and Russian Karelians as well. St. Andrew is at the center of the icon, “Synaxis of All the Saints of Valaam” at New Valaamo Monastery.

As I began to write, I found myself coming across more and more scattered information about St. Andrew from all over the world. Finally, my Greek editor, Sophia Oriphanidou, said, “Wait on the lives of the saints of Karelia, write first about St. Andrew himself.” I didn’t feel right working on a book about an apostle, but I told myself, “Yes, I’m a very bad guy, but it happens that I have to write this book, so I will.” It was an inner obligation that I knew I couldn’t avoid. I’m not worthy to write about him, but I had to, and I ask everyone to forgive me.

Once I began, many sources came to me and people came forward to help, from northern Russia, central Asia, eastern Europe, Ethiopia – texts and oral traditions, even from the Kalash people of Pakistan, whom I mentioned earlier. Their texts speak of the presence of a messenger from God by the name of *Indrein*, and I cite this tradition in my book in their local language,



Mosaic, St. Andrew with staff and wheat, Patras Cathedral.

because in the old Romanian, St. Andrew is called *Indrean*. I collected many local traditions, everything I could find. At first it was very difficult, but then things began coming.

RTE: You said earlier that it was as if they were being put in your way.

GEORGE: Yes, but at the beginning it was chaos, just scattered information from around the world. Also, I knew that I didn't want to make traditions out of legends. I just wanted to follow the sources and see where they led; it was like putting a huge puzzle together.

I have already covered about a thousand pages and I quote almost fifty languages and dialects. The book is in Greek, of course, and I'm calling it, "He Raised the Cross on the Ice."

RTE: What languages did you work in?

GEORGE: The oral traditions and texts referring to St Andrew are in ancient Greek, modern Greek, Pontian and Calabrian Greek, Georgian, Abhazian, Slavonic, Serbian, Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Kalasha, Baganda, Kurdish, Ethiopian Geez, Ethiopian Amharic, Coptic, Arabic, Aramaic Syrian, Turkish, Turkic of Central Asia, Iranian, Bulgarian, old English, English, German, Italian, Latin, Albanian, Finnish, Karelian, Armenian, and many dialects.

I also had to deal with many languages, scripts and dialects, living and extinct, that didn't deal directly with St. Andrew, because I had to read the sources concerning the world in which he lived. These were in Hebrew, Samaritan, Bantu, Kushitic, Teso, San, Tokharian, Sanskrit, Chinese, Mongolian, Korean, Amazigh-Berberic, Gothic, Gaelic, Saami-Lappish, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish, Tadjik, Sogdian, and so on. Of course, I wasn't able to learn all these languages, but I was fortunate enough to find native speakers and scholars around the world to help me with these sources. And here I have to thank my wife and spiritual sister Olga, because her help with the Slavic sources was fundamental for my research.

Megas Farantos, the well-known professor of dogmatic theology in Greece and Germany, who represents the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Church in dialogue with the Roman Catholics and other religions, was a great help to me. He trusts my work and academically supports me. He told me, "Don't critique the traditions, this is not your job. Accept them or don't accept them, but don't critique them." Secondly, he said, "Adopt a principle of work-

ing. They can fight your interpretation, but not your principle." So, I took as a principle the premise that, "I accept all evidence as possible, whether it is a writing of the Holy Fathers, an oral tradition from Uzbekistan, a Coptic text from Ethiopia, a simple dream, or the archeological excavations of a Chinese scholar." It is impossible from our time to absolutely say that a certain isolated tradition is true or false. My idea was to work from another direction by putting down all the scattered sources to see if the different traditions of St. Andrew's journeys fit together geographically and time-wise. I wanted to see if they were even possible. Then, once I exposed the contradictions, perhaps I could find the actual routes of St. Andrew's journeys.

The question was if, by setting the various traditions side-by-side, I could trace St. Andrew's travels with any probability. Our strongest evidence, and what we always hoped for, was early written commentary about the apostle's visit to an area along with a separate, verified oral tradition from the same place that has been passed down until now. As I went on, I discovered that in time and geography the Kazakhstani tradition fit the Sogdiana tradition (modern Uzbekistan), the Sogdiana tradition fit into the Parthian tradition (Persia) and the Parthian tradition fit



Entrance to St. Andrew's cave, Romania.

the Syriac tradition. It was like a train, one car after another, until I had only twenty years missing from St. Andrew's return to the Black Sea from Valaamo until he went to Sinope – and from there to Patras in Achaia, to his martyrdom.

RTE: Were you able to resolve those twenty years?

GEORGE: Yes, I found a local Romanian tradition that St. Andrew lived twenty years in a cave in Romania, in Dervent, and during this time he traveled through what is now Romania, Bulgaria and Moldavia. But the most incredible thing was that, according to the early Romanian traditions, the years he was there was the exact period I was missing from the other traditions.

The most important thing is that these puzzle pieces – the separate local traditions of Bulgaria, Romania, Ethiopia, of the Aramaic people, the Syrians, the Copts, even the Greek and Roman church traditions all fit together, but you have to follow them step by step to recreate his life. Finally, I had only one piece that I couldn't fit, even as a possibility: the

# Baltic-Celtic Trade Routes

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Lapp Trade Route

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Greek Merchant Route





Declaration of Arbroath, the fourteenth-century Scottish declaration of independence from England which says that the Scots were taught the Christian faith by St. Andrew himself. Historians dismiss this, but I have to point out that his presence there was not physically impossible.

RTE: And who signed this declaration?

GEORGE: The nobles of the Scottish nation, in 1320.<sup>2</sup> The Arbroath tradition is interesting because there is no other written claim of St. Andrew in any



*St. Regulus' tower in Scotland.*

place in Scotland, although there are a few scattered legends that say he was in Scotland generally. The most common tradition says that St. Rule (or Regulus), who was possibly a Greek monk from Patras, brought some relics of St. Andrew from Patras to St. Andrew's in Scotland in the fourth century. St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland, and that the relics were there is undisputed. They disappeared from the cathedral only during the Calvinist Reformation destruction. There is a second tradition that says they were brought by an eighth-century abbot, but according to the nobles of the Scottish

nation, St. Andrew was actually there, and I wanted to finish my book by simply seeing whether this was possible or not.

For a long time, it didn't seem that there were any traveled routes connecting this place in Scotland to other places St. Andrew is known to have been, until I learned of a group of Lapps called "the Seal People." These were seal fishermen who lived on the Baltic coast in an area St. Andrew is known to have been. They traded by sea from Scandinavia to the Hebrides, the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and to northern Scotland – a place now called St. Andrew's, where the relics lay for centuries.

In the first century, Rome had already captured southern Britain, and the Scots and Picts further north were very hard-pressed. When trade in the south

<sup>2</sup>From the Declaration of Arbroath, 1320: "Most Holy Father and Lord, we know and from the chronicles and books of the ancients we find that among other famous nations our own, the Scots, has been graced with widespread renown...The high qualities and deserts of these people, were they no otherwise manifest, gain glory enough from this: that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, our Lord Jesus Christ, after His Passion and Resurrection, called them, even though settled in the uttermost parts of the earth, almost the first to His most holy faith. Nor would He have them confirmed in that faith by merely anyone but by the first of His Apostles – by calling, though second or third in rank – the most gentle Saint Andrew, the Blessed Peter's brother, and desire him to keep them under his protection as their patron forever."

was closed to them, they began to use this old Celtic-Lapp route over Norway, Denmark and Sweden. The ancient Greeks had already mapped this road, and Pithias of Marseilles went to these places about 330 B.C., and probably to Iceland and Greenland as well. I can't say that St. Andrew traveled with the Lapps, of course, but this route did exist, and if he did go to Scotland it would have to have been after his visit to the Baltic Sea and before Romania.

Except for this remote chance, I didn't see how he could have gotten to Scotland until I found something else that made it very possible. According to ancient Greek writers there was an inland route for Greek merchants from the Baltic Sea. From the Greek Crimea they traveled up the Russian rivers, the Dnepr, Dvina etc. to what is now St. Petersburg (as St. Andrew himself did according to Russian tradition). Then to avoid the hard Russian winter, they didn't return to Greece the same way but sailed the Baltic, where they bought amber, and then to Scotland where they made their way down the coast to Cornwall trading for tin. From Cornwall, they traveled down the Iberian Peninsula to Gibraltar, then past the (then) Greek cities of Marseilles, Nice, Antibes and the area of Monaco, and then to Rome, Sicily, and Greece.

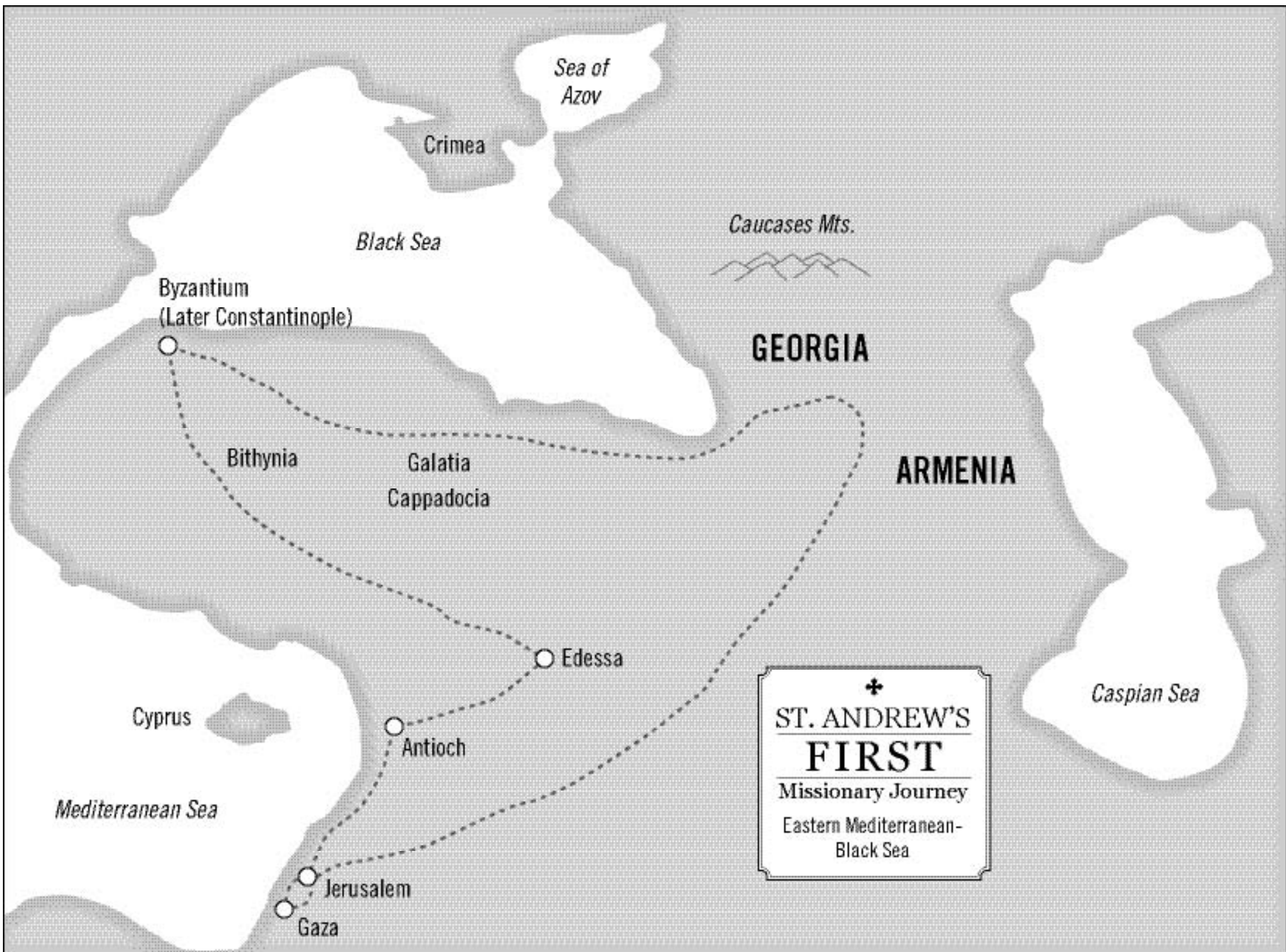


*Declaration of Arbroath.*

This is why the ancient Slavic sources recount that St. Andrew left Russia for Rome. In fact, I don't believe he ever got to Rome, because if he had this would surely have been recounted in the Latin tradition. For reasons that I go into in my book, I think that he returned to the Germanic lands where the Romans had created a new road connecting the Baltic with the Danube. From the Danube he could have sailed down to Dobrogea in Romania.

RTE: Would it also have been possible that some of the tribes he encountered in eastern Europe might have migrated to, or traded in, Scotland and that this was the origin of the tradition?

GEORGE: Yes, there are some theories that the Scot aristocracy were descendants of the Verangian Russ or the Scythians, but I'm doubtful about this. In the Declaration of Arbroath the nobles are talking about St. Andrew being in Scotland. That was their statement.



Sea of Azov

Crimea

Black Sea

Caucases Mts.

**GEORGIA**

Byzantium  
(Later Constantinople)

Bithynia

Galatia  
Cappadocia

**ARMENIA**

Caspian Sea

Edessa

Cyprus

Antioch

Mediterranean Sea

Jerusalem

Gaza

✝  
**ST. ANDREW'S**  
**FIRST**  
Missionary Journey  
Eastern Mediterranean-  
Black Sea

RTE: How do modern Scottish Christians see this?

GEORGE: They believe that the Arbroath tradition was based on St. Regulus' bringing the relics from Patras in the fourth century (or an abbot in the eighth), but I'm still open to the possibility that there is something older at work. The Declaration of Abroath is very important and from a time when people were careful of oral tradition. I would be surprised if they so quickly mixed up the tradition of his presence with that of his relics. Unfortunately, there is no collaborating evidence that he was there, so I can't say it was even probable, just possible.

RTE: How could he have traveled so freely among these vastly different peoples?

GEORGE: He was a humble, simple man, and for a simple man nothing is impossible. If he had been an arrogant European explorer he would never have trusted these people, he would have found his own way like Pitheas, who made a boat and sailed to Greenland from Marseilles. Although he respected their knowledge, Pitheas didn't fully trust the locals because he was a Greek and they were barbarians.

You see, my book is a cultural tapestry. It includes the Scythians, the ancient Scots, early Africa. It is about St. Andrew, but it is also about the world he moved in: the Slavs, the Pharisees, Epicureans, Stoics, the North Africans, the Lapp nomads, the Han Dynasty in China, the Mongols and the Turks. My editor told me, "Don't just write the life of St. Andrew, describe the places he went and the people he would have met." When I began writing about these places, I found that I had to depict the whole era – how Siberia and Finnish-Russian Karelia are connected to central Asia, Africa and Scotland – so that a reader can understand what the world was like at that time.

## THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

### *Judea to Constantinople, Pontus, and the Caucasus*

RTE: Can you trace St. Andrew's routes for us?

GEORGE: Yes, according to local tradition, St. Andrew first preached in Judea to the Samaritans and in Gaza, which at the time of Christ was inhab-

ited by Greek Philistines. If you compare the Masoretic text to the Septuagint, the word "Philistine" is translated as "Greek." This is clear and it is acknowledged by historians.

After Gaza, he went to Lydda in Palestine, where St. George would later be martyred, to Antioch, and then to Ankara and Edessa, today's Urfa in Turkey, which was an important center for the first Christians. Abgar, King of Edessa, became a Christian and this is where the icon of the Lord, "Made-Without-Hands" is from. According to the sources, this may have been the first Christian kingdom on earth, perhaps as early as 35 or 36 A.D. just a few years after the Crucifixion. After Edessa, some traditions say that St. Andrew went to the Greek town of Byzantium (later Constantinople) in 36 A.D. and appointed the first bishop, St. Stachys,<sup>3</sup> who was one of the seventy disciples of the Lord. Then he preached in Bythinia, Cappadocia and Galatia, up through Greek Pontus, which today is northern Turkey. Then traditions say he turned to Georgia, Armenia and the Caucasus. This was the first trip, after which he returned to Jerusalem.

## THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

### *Jerusalem to Central Asia*

The second trip was quite different. He followed the same route from Jerusalem, but after Antioch he took a ship to Ephesus to meet St. John. On the way he touched on Cyprus for a few days, at the Cape of St. Andrew. I'm not sure if he met any Cypriotes, it was only a stopping point for the ship. According to Cypriot tradition, because the crew and passengers needed fresh water and this was a desert place, he went ashore and prayed until water poured forth from a rock.

After Ephesus, he went to Antioch, then to Nicea where he stayed for some time. From there he went to Pontus again, and to Georgia. From Georgia, several traditions say that he passed down to Parthia (Persia) through Kurdistan, and then further to the *Cynocephaloi* in the desert of Gedrozia (now Balochistan) near the coast and the present Pakistan-Iranian border.

RTE: Who were the *Cynocephaloi*?

<sup>3</sup>St. Stachys, first bishop of Byzantium (later Constantinople), feast day October 31.



GEORGE: This is an extremely interesting subject as these people are mentioned in many early texts. *Cynocephaloi* translates literally as “the dog-head people.” They are also spoken of in the *Life* of Saint Makarios, which locates the tribe in a desert far beyond Syria. Tzetzis, a Byzantine historical commentator, refers to them as inhabitants of India, of which modern Pakistan would have been a part. In the Greek *Life* of St. Christopher (who some speculate came from this area), it is said that that he came to the Roman world passing through the Persian desert, and Marco Polo mentions them as inhabitants of the Indian Ocean. So they could be the same primitive tribes that Alexander the Greek found on his way to the sea coast of the Gedrosian Desert (modern Makran in Pakistan).

Our main source for the *Cynocephaloi* is Ktesias (5th century B.C.), a well-known ancient geographer, pharmacist and historian from Knidos, whose writings were taken seriously by Byzantine Church fathers, for example by Patriarch Photius the Great (see his *Myriobiblos*). In Ktesias’ book “*Indica*,” which St. Photius himself used, there is a whole text dedicated to the *Cynocephaloi*, “an Indian tribe.” These ancient folk tales (Ethiopian, Slavic, Persian, Arabic, Armenian, Greek etc.) all refer to the dramatic contact of Alexander the Great and the *Cynocephaloi*.

RTE: This also explains why I’ve seen many old Greek icons of St. Christopher with a dog’s head. At first I was shocked, it seemed like blasphemy and I wondered what on earth the Greeks were thinking. No one was able to explain it, except that St. Christopher’s life from the Menaion says that he was so tremendously ferocious-looking that when Emperor Decius saw him, he fell off his throne from fright. Do you think there was a connection?

GEORGE: Exactly. The sources say that St. Christopher came across the Persian Desert. These people lived on the other side of the desert.

I have my own theory, although this explanation is not in the old texts that cite these people, because the sources assume the reader is already familiar with the place names and locations. Several sources say that St. Andrew was in this northeast region of Pakistan, and we know that there were peoples in this area who slashed their cheeks from mouth to ear, so that all the teeth showed. Marco Polo saw this tribe, whom he called the *Cynocephaloi*. He said that they looked like mastiffs; that is, they didn’t have elongated heads like German shepherds with the long nose, but like mastiffs. You can imagine – a mastiff has a round, flat face shaped more like that of a human. They cut

the cheeks, filed the teeth, cropped the ears, and reshaped the skulls of their babies so that they would grow into a very ferocious aspect. All of this was to protect themselves from the constant invasions of the area.

If you go to some sub-Saharan tribes today along the Nile in Rwanda, or along the Amazon, or in New Guinea, the faces of some tribal peoples can frighten you terribly. They systematically mold their faces into something ferocious – the shape of the head, cheeks, teeth.... These people were ferocious in looks, but not ferocious in their ways. They were simply a primitive people who needed to protect themselves

According to the Syriac text, when St. Andrew went to these people they were transformed into normal human beings. In my opinion this means that after their baptism they simply stopped doing these things. In Deuteronomy it is forbidden to scar or mutilate the face, so this would have been part of the apostolic heritage that St. Andrew taught to this people.

The Syriac sources say that when St. Andrew first saw them he was horrified. He panicked and fled back to the shore to jump into the boat, but as he reached the shore he smelled incense and realized that the Lord Himself had guided the boat there. He even questioned God at first, “Why did you bring me to this place?” (He is a man you know. St. Andrew is a man like all of us, but he is special.) But when the people came to him, they were kind, they gave him hospitality. They were just fine primitive people, as are many tribes in the Amazon today, even those who fight each other.

We hear of this nowadays from people who have come into contact with “barbarian” tribes with strange customs, according to our cultures. Because they accept these people, they in turn are accepted by them. In Papua, New Guinea, in the Amazon, in the jungles of Africa, these people often embrace westerners who settle and live with them in a matter we can hardly imagine, with real love and tenderness. This happened to the apostles as well. The real problem for the apostles was when they were in the “civilized” world, not amongst primitive peoples.

So, from this place some sources say that St. Andrew went back through Pakistan and Afghanistan on the Silk Road to Sogdiana, now Samarkand and Bokhara in Uzbekistan, and not far from the border of western China – “Soh-Yok” in Chinese, which means “the ancient provinces.”

We ask now how he could have possibly gone to Sogdiana, but since archeologists and historians have found the route of the Silk Road, it is obvious that it was very accessible. All of the ancient biographers of his life say that

he was in central Asia, but they don't speak of any adventures in those places, so this means that either the texts were destroyed or nothing of note happened. Usually we only write down the difficult or the very miraculous, so if his visits were peaceful, perhaps the accounts didn't survive.

RTE: Is Sogdiana anywhere near the Chinese region where they recently found first-century Christian inscriptions and tombs?

GEORGE: No, those tombs are at the other end of China, but there was possibly a Chinese disciple of St. Thaddeus of the Seventy, whose name is St. Aggai in the Syriac tradition. This Aggai is said to have preached in Parthia, in Sogdiana, and in central Asia: Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and India. He found the tomb of St. Thomas in southern India, and after venerating the fragrant relics of St. Thomas, he died. His name in the Chinese sources may have been Wang-Hai – the important thing here is that according to the sources he was a silk producer and we know that no one could be a silk producer at that time unless he was Chinese. So, perhaps St. Aggai was the first Chinese disciple of an apostle of Christ. These newly-discovered Christian tombs and monuments date from about 75 A.D., so these really were apostolic times.

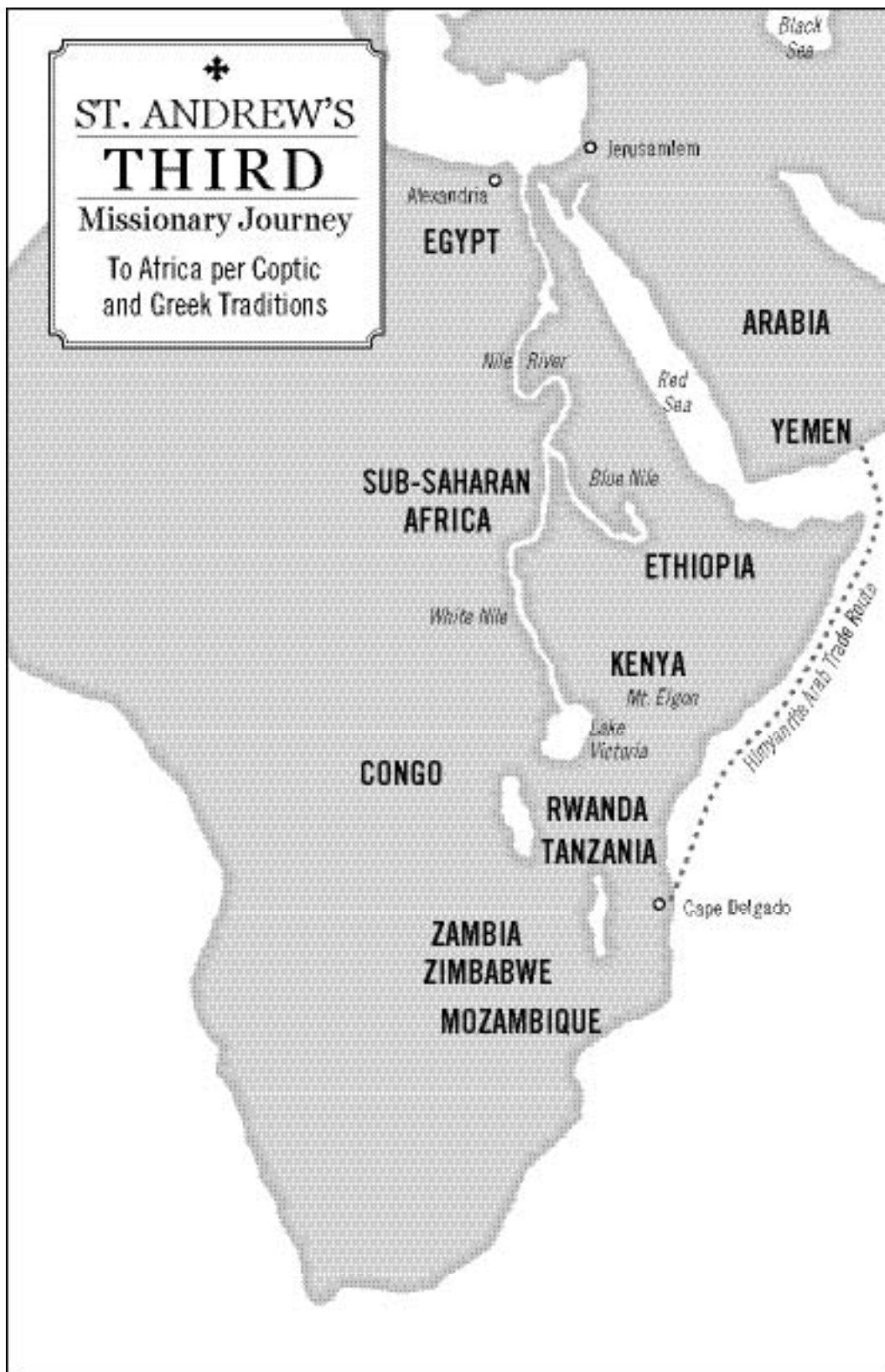
There are also traditions from the Yellow Sea, near Shanghai, of St. Thomas having been in China. This is not physically impossible because the area where modern-day Kazakhstan borders Mongolia and China was the cradle of the Huns, the eastern Scythians, and the Sacas. Gundaphorus, the king of India who met St. Thomas, was a Sacan king, and the Sacan empire was vast, stretching from Siberia to China and India. People knew these routes, they were well-traveled.

The Proto-Bulgarians who followed the Huns even had a church dedicated to St. Andrew, although after later invasions they had to be re-Christianized. Also we have the Hephtalit Huns, a barbaric Turkic tribe who were the first Christian nation in central Asia (third-fourth century).

It is very important to understand that there are three separate traditions of St. Andrew's missionary journeys to western China, eastern-central Asia, and Kalbin (*Khalbinski Hrebet*, a mountainous area on the borders of present-day Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Russia.) One of these traditions is from Kazakhstan, another is Syriac, and the third is from the Bulgars of the Russian steppes, who migrated through Greece and eventually settled in Italy, filling their villages with churches dedicated to St. Andrew.



*Synaxis of All Saints of Karelia, St. Andrew in front.*



According to Epiphanius,<sup>4</sup> a ninth-century monk historian of Constantinople, St. Andrew also went north of China, to the land of the Scythian Massagetae and Masakas (the cradle of the Bulgarians and Turks at the junction of present day Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Altai), the Proto-Bulgarian tribes, the Ungric and Trocharians, and also to the mountains of Kalbin in Altai, Siberia.

The route from Sogdiana to the land of the Massagetae was a route that Romans, Jews, and Greeks didn't use. It was a road that the nomadic tribes used when they collected payments from the Chinese for protecting the Silk Road. Regional traditions say that St. Andrew was there, and he seems to have been accepted by these nomads, who were considered to be some of the most savage people of that time. I don't think he was treated badly, because there are no records of misadventures in these places. This was eastern Scythia, not western Scythia which was Ukraine and Russia, and the Chinese were very afraid of the eastern Scythians. The Trocharians who lived here were Nordic, white people with blue eyes, blond hair and red beards who were living in China and in Mongolia.

RTE: A decade ago I saw people like that a little further north near the Mongolian border in Altai, Siberia. Along with the Altai who have obvious Mongolian roots, they are a second native ethnic group. The Russians call them "Turks," although they know they aren't from Turkey, to differentiate them from the Mongolians and Chinese.

GEORGE: Yes, exactly. These people moved up into Altai through Mongolia. They were from below Kalbin, in northern Asia.

RTE: I was recently told by a woman from the Urals that there is a widespread Siberian tradition that St. Andrew preached as far north as the present-day village of Kazanskoe in the Russian Urals, and prophesied that there would be widespread Christianity there someday. The village has a church dedicated to him.

<sup>4</sup> Hieromonk Epiphanius: Ninth century historian and priestmonk of Moni Kallistraton in Constantinople, who wrote a life of Saint Andrew: "*Epiphanius Monachi et Presbyteri - de Vita et Actibus et Morte Sancti, et Plane Laudandi, et Primi Vocati Inter Apostolos Andrae*" [in P.G. Migne, vol. 120]. He is also the author of the oldest extant Life of the Theotokos (P.G. Migne, vol. 120.). Epiphanius deeply venerated St. Andrew and tried to recreate his journeys based on ancient sources. Traveling extensively in the areas St. Andrew was known to have been, he gathered many local traditions and texts connected with the apostle's missionary journeys. It was a magnificent work for his era. Some of his passages concerning the martyrdom of St. Andrew are identical with the apocryphal "Acts of Andrew," and it is very likely that he also used Leucius Charinus' text.

GEORGE: Yes, and there are many other Russian traditions about his visiting Altai, Novgorod, Karelia, and Kiev.

St. Andrew returned from Altai, and, still following the footsteps of local traditions, he would have taken a different route to the Caspian Sea through the steppes where, according to many early traditions and texts, he preached to the Alans. From there he went to Kurdistan, where he was nearly martyred. He escaped, however, and returned to Jerusalem.

## THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

### *Coptic Ethiopian Traditions*

His third missionary journey, if we accept the traditions, began after the first apostolic synod in 49 A.D. This is the only point time-wise when he possibly could have gone to Africa. The sources for the African stories are Ethiopian Coptic traditions, and an apocryphal Greek source, of which we have a revised, edited Latin version by St. Gregory of Tours. If he did go to Africa, it was for a special reason, because this was not the place he originally had been sent to preach. He was to preach in Bythinia, to the Greeks and to the eastern Scythians.

RTE: By “sent to preach” do you mean the tradition that the apostles picked lots as to where they would go?

GEORGE: Yes, but I think it was not only by picking lots that they decided. They organized a plan, they didn’t all just set out into the wilderness.

Now these Coptic traditions say that he made a trip to the Berber (meaning “Barbarian”) lands, but we don’t know exactly where this was because the Berbers were living from the Siwa Oasis in Egypt to Morocco, Mauritania, Mali and Niger, and were the ancestors of the present-day Kabyls (the Turaregs) in Algeria. Perhaps he simply went to a place in modern-day Egypt.

From there, these sources say that he went to the land of the *Anthropofagi*, a very definite place in the area of the Great Lakes on the borders of Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Congo. Because, according to the ancient text, there was a volcano there, I believe that this was Lake Kioga, but this is my own opinion. Then, the legends say, he made his way to the abyss near Zimbabwe. According to research of the last century, the Himyarite Arabs were travelling at that time from Yemen to Mozambique to Zimbabwe, the ancient Ofir, where Hiram sup-

posedly took the gold for King Solomon, so possibly the Jews, Phoenicians, and Arabs knew this road, but not the Greeks or the Romans.

RTE: Who were the *Anthropofagi*?

GEORGE: According to the Coptic “Acts of St. Andrew and St. Matthias (Matthew),” an extremely colorful and fantastic apocryphal story, on his third missionary journey St. Andrew was commanded, either from heaven or by the apostles, to go and help St. Matthew because he had been captured by the *Anthropofagi*, who were man-eaters, cannibals.

RTE: These traditions say that St. Matthew was captured by cannibals and St. Andrew was sent to rescue him?!

GEORGE: Yes, although some traditions say that it was St. Matthias, the majority of the sources think it was St. Matthew because Matthias went to Georgia, while St. Matthew went to Alexandria and Ethiopia. The Coptic sources are definite on this.

Some people have suggested that this “land of the man-eaters” referred to in many ancient texts, was really in Pontus, in Sinope (today’s northern Turkey), but this is not possible. Sinope and Pontus were classical Greece. The only thing they can base this on is that Pausanias, a second-century A.D. geographer, came upon some isolated Greek inns where they sold dried or preserved bits of human organs as medicinal remedies, but this was never a social way of being, even in out of the way places.

RTE: Yes, but how much credence can we put in these apocryphal texts?

GEORGE: As I said, from our vantage we can’t look back in history and determine if something apocryphal was literally true, was based on something true that was elaborated on, or is a complete fantasy. There were different opinions among the Fathers. I believe St. Andrew could have been in Africa, and I substantiate this in my book, but remember, my primary task was to take every tradition, without judging the source, and try to discover if he could have physically traveled there, and, if so, how it fits time-wise and geographically with his other journeys. Admittedly, some of these can seem like wild tales to western readers.

There are many early traditions and texts, and not only Orthodox texts. Even those from heretical traditions like the monophysites may contain cor-



rect historical details. They include propaganda for their teachings that aren't right, but these can be revised or ignored. This is why St. Gregory of Tours, writing in the sixth century, and Hieromonk Epiphanius a monk-historian in Moni Kallistraton in Constantinople in the fifth, both use the text of Leucius Charinus, who was somewhat of a Manichean. St. Gregory recounts the travels of St. Andrew in his "Acts of Andrew," and Epiphanius in *Patrologia Greca*. They only corrected the doctrinal errors, and from this we can see that many of these early traditions were considered valid even by saints.

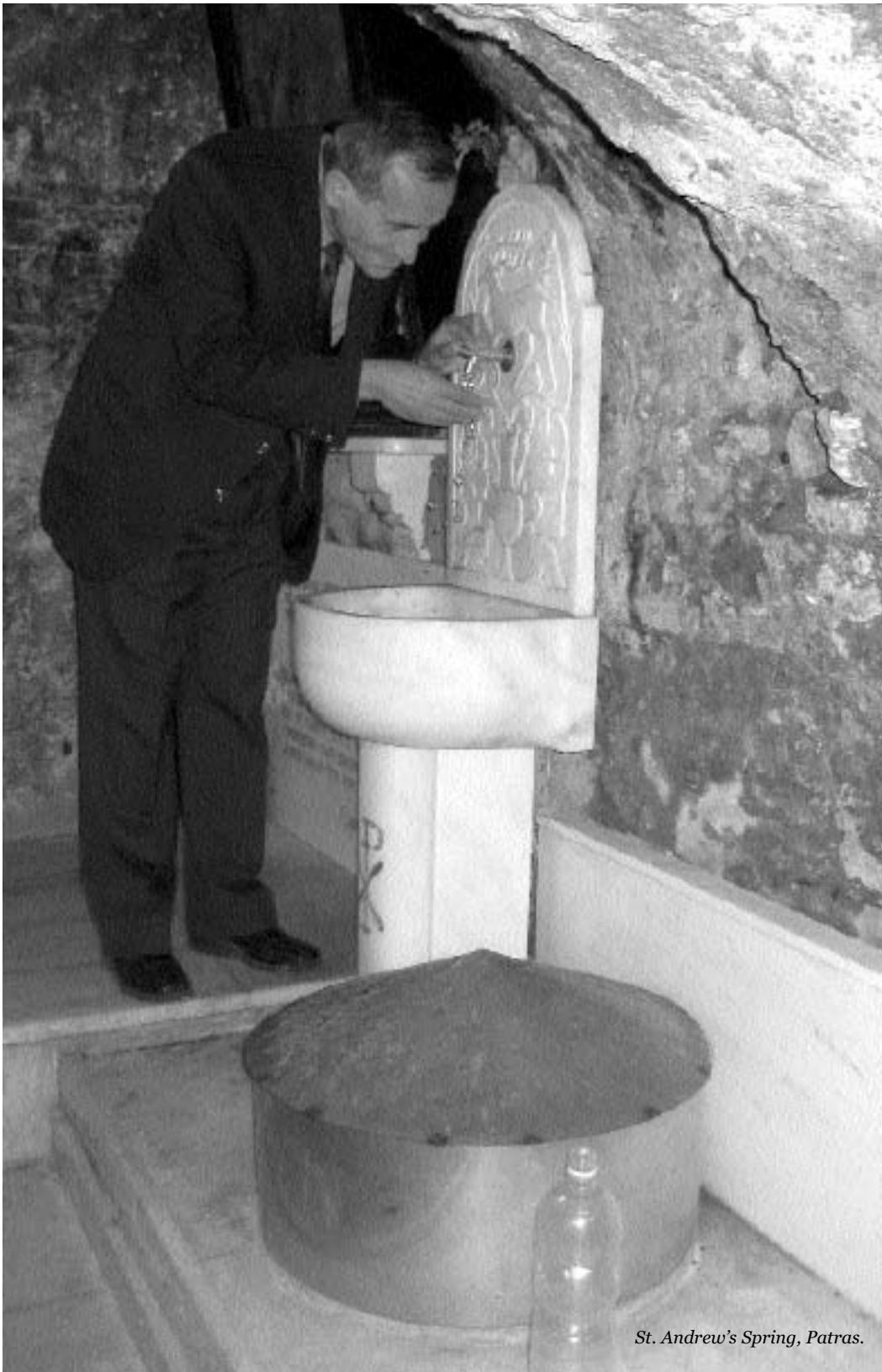
RTE: Can you explain how you worked with these texts?

GEORGE: It is difficult, as I spend sixty pages of my book tracing the sources of the African journey, but I will try to give you a synopsis. There are several minor sources for this tradition and two major ones: the Greek text I just mentioned of the "Acts of Andrew," which may have been by Leucius Charinus, (later cleansed of heresy by St. Gregory of Tours in a Latin version) and the "Acts of Andrew and Matthias (Matthew)" by a Coptic source.

The original Greek "Acts of Andrew" was condemned by Pope Gelasius in the *Decretum Gelasianum De Libris Recipiendis Et Non Recipiendis*, which was not a synodal decree, but a local condemnation of some apocryphal texts as a reaction to the falsification of holy tradition that existed in the third and fourth century amongst heretics. This was before the Chalcedonian Council. The *Decretum*, although respected by Orthodox believers has never been a dogma *per se*, but it is a serious and enlightened guide, which everyone should consider as a valuable protection against heresy.

Although it condemns "the Acts in the name of the Apostle Andrew," and "the Gospels in the name of Andrew," (which were possibly the work of a Manichean gnostic, Leucius Charinus), it does not condemn the Coptic "Acts of Andrew and Matthias (or Matthew) in the Land of the *Anthropofagi*" nor the "Acts of Peter and Andrew" which were of Coptic origin. One might object that the Coptic texts are also forbidden under the term, "the Acts in the name of the apostle Andrew" but this reasoning doesn't match the other cases in the *Decretum* where, when we have condemned texts listed as "the acts" of two people, they are described by both names (e.g. "the book which is called the 'Acts of Thecla and Paul,'" "the book which is called 'The Repentance of Jamne and Mambre,'" "the Passion of Cyricus and Julitta").

The *Decretum* condemns "all the books which Leucius, the disciple of the devil, made..." but no one insists that the "Acts of Andrew and Matthias (or



St. Andrew's Spring, Patras.

Matthew) in the land of the *Anthropofagai*” and the “Acts of Peter and Andrew” are the work of Leucius Charinus. On the contrary, most scholars accept that these texts are the work of an unknown Coptic monk (with the national, not the religious meaning of Coptic, because this was the pre-Chalcedonian period). This author could have been a gnostic heretic or equally, he could have been an Orthodox ascetic of the desert. We don’t have enough evidence to support either view.

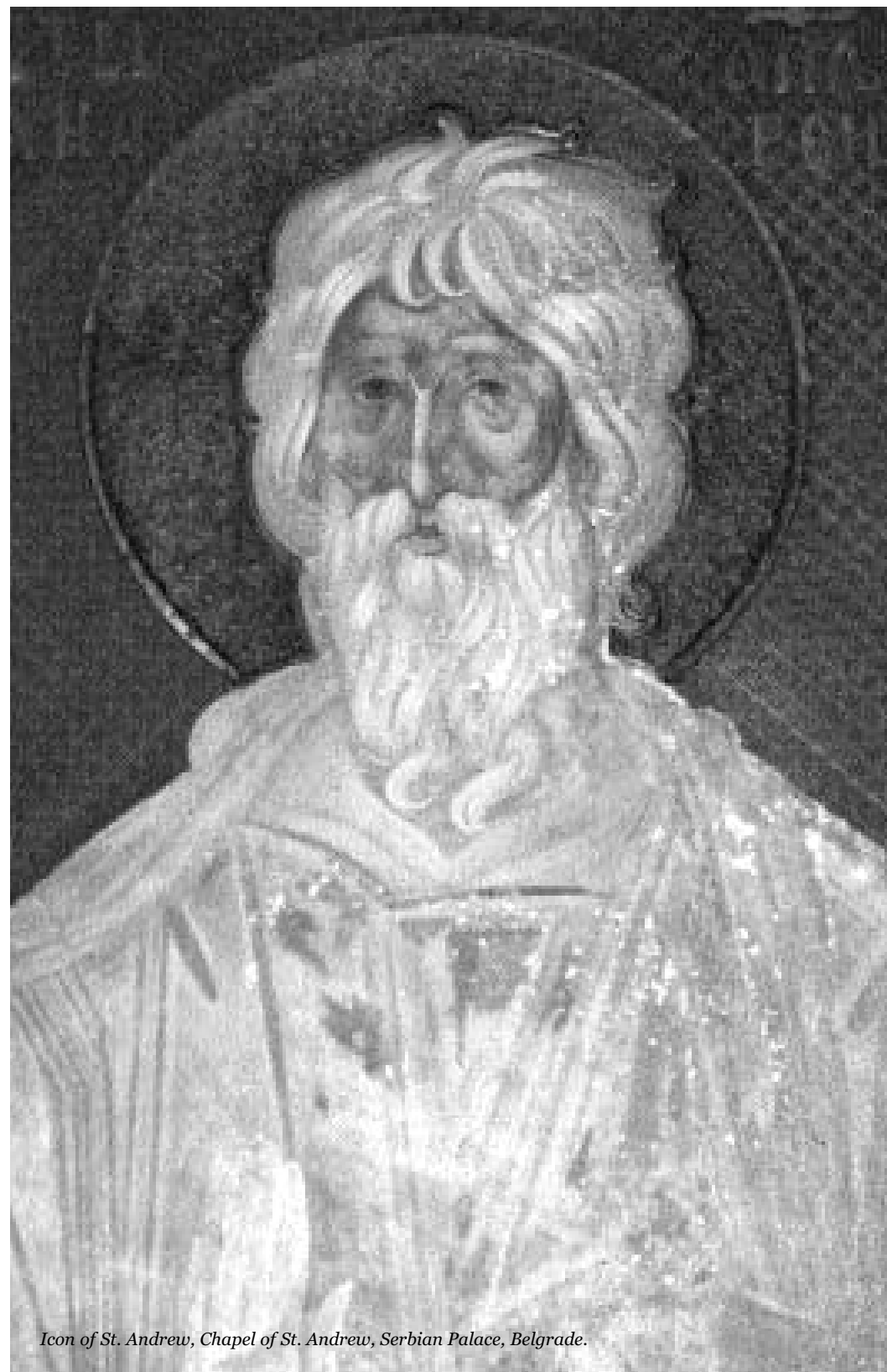
Both the great church historian Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Epiphanius of Salamis<sup>5</sup> also condemned the “Acts of Andrew,” but not “The Acts of Andrew and Matthias (Matthew) in the Land of *Anthropofagai*” and the “Acts of Peter and Andrew.” As far as we know, they didn’t even refer to these texts.

The reason I am even considering material that was originally from this condemned text is that in the sixth century St. Gregory of Tours corrected the heretical points in “The Acts of Andrew” by Charinus, publishing a revised text with the name “Vita and Patio” (Life and Passion of Saint Andrew,) which has been generally approved by the Holy Orthodox Church (parts of it appearing in hymns and services, and in the Synaxarion) as a basis for the Life of Saint Andrew. In this revision, St. Gregory of Tours accepts that Apostle Andrew preached to the *Anthropofagai* in Africa before his trip to Achaia-Greece. He obviously believed this. His version has never been condemned by the Church, and I use it as one of my possible sources.

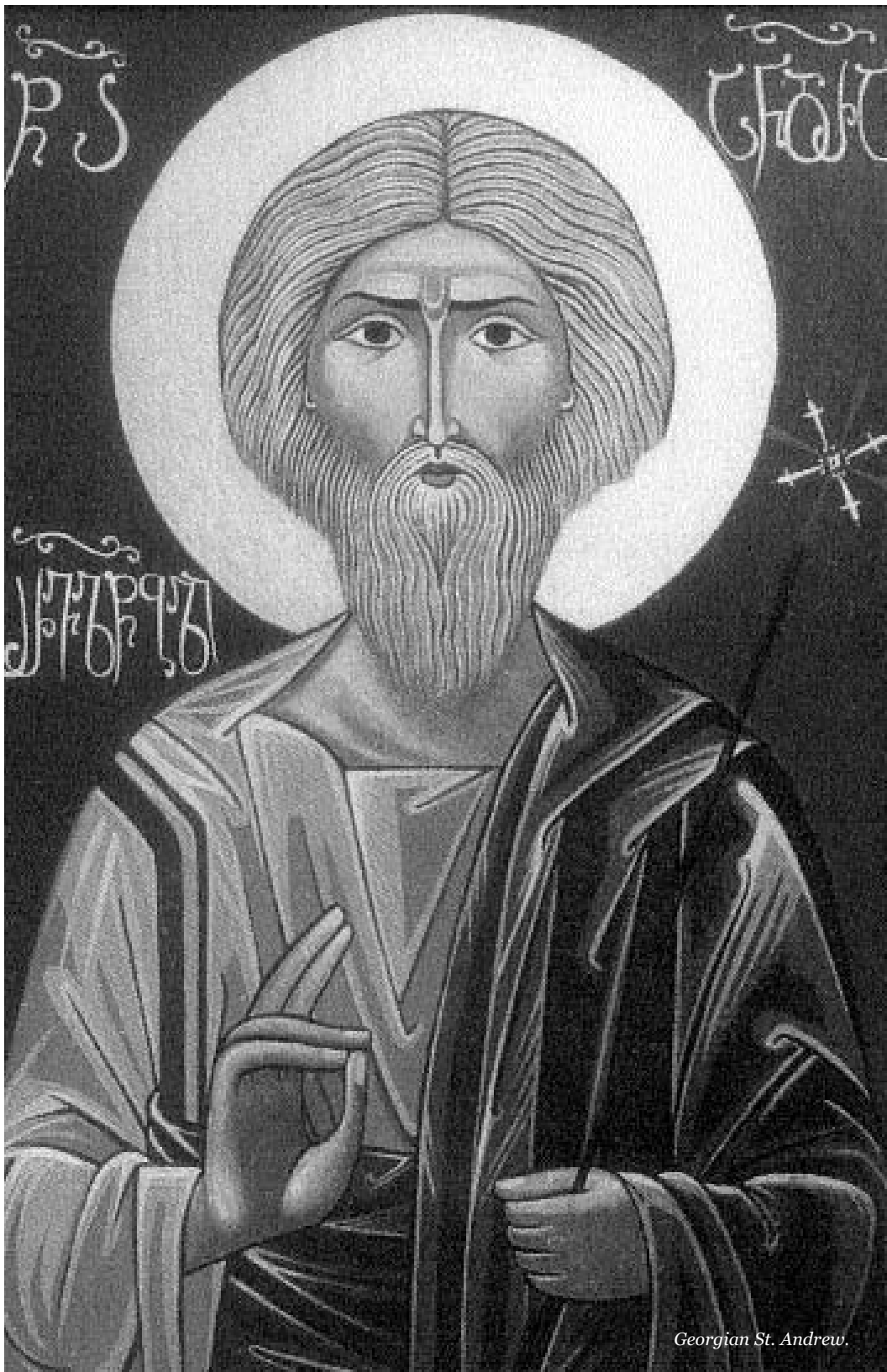
Neither have the Catholic or Orthodox Churches condemned the Latin “Golden Legend” of Voragine or the Anglo-Saxon epic poem “Andreas” (probably of Cynewolf) in which the old story of “The Acts of Andrew and Matthias (or Matthew) in the land of Andropofagi” re-appears in both a pious (Voragine), and folkloric (Andreas) form. This does not mean that they are accepted as historical fact, it just means that they do not contain heresy. Western scholars view them as legends.

In the *Decretum* of Pope Gelasius, there are other texts condemned as well: “the book which is called ‘The Assumption of Holy Mary,’” “the book which is called the ‘Lots of the Apostles,’” “The Passion of Cyricus and Julitta,” and so on. If you read these, you find that in many points they are almost identical to the holy and sacred tradition of our Orthodox Church minus the heresies. (Compare these texts and the Orthodox Great Synaxarion). Even the names “Joachim and Anna,” the holy parents of the

<sup>5</sup>St. Epiphanius of Salamis, Cyprus (feast day, May 12): Condemned “The Acts of Andrew” and declared in his Panarion that, amongst other heretics, the Encratites, the Apostolici, and the Origenists used that text.



Icon of St. Andrew, Chapel of St. Andrew, Serbian Palace, Belgrade.



Georgian St. Andrew.

Mother of God, are only found in apocryphal texts which have survived from this early era. This does not mean that we can consider these sources as completely true or valuable in themselves. Rather, we accept that some of what is written in them can also exist in our holy Orthodox tradition. We cannot declare that everything in them is wrong (such as the dormition of the Mother of God, when the Lord took her body and soul to heaven, the martyrdom of Apostle Andrew in Patras, the martyrdoms of Cyricus and Julitta, the tradition that the apostles “drew lots”). In fact, these condemned sources may have some true historical facts mixed with legends and fairy-tales, and poisoned by heretical nonsense. The nonsense is what Pope Gelasius condemned and what St. Gregory cleaned up. Another example of this borrowing is that Orthodox writers and church fathers have generally accepted the texts of Tertullian as a valuable *historical* source, although his doctrinal errors were also condemned by the *Decretum*.

There are other sources of this tradition of St. Andrew in Africa as well: the hymnography of some Pre-Chalcedonian churches (e.g. Ethiopians and Copts) and the synaxarion of the Armenians which says that “Andrew preached among the cannibals, or in the land of Barbarians (*Enivarvaros*), a place identical to Azania according Claudius Ptolemy. As Orthodox, we cannot ignore this, because it is very likely that these sources come from the ancient period of the unity of the Churches. If not heretical, they could be an Orthodox tradition, although this has not yet been confirmed.

There are also non-Christian historical sources saying the same thing – Arab Islamic texts that say that the Holy Apostle Andrew preached in “the land of the cannibals, that was a land of the blacks.” These sources are important because they are not Christian, they come from the early traditions and memories of the Arabic peoples.

Finally we have to remember that not every apocryphon is a forgery or a legend. Orthodox theologians and fathers have taught us to classify as an apocryphon those ancient Christian documents of unknown or unreliable validity. Some are heretical, some are forgeries, others are fantasies and romances. Some have interesting information that may even seem familiar as they incorporate real pre-existing sources (which we no longer have copies of) that are the basis of some of our Orthodox tradition, hymnography, and iconography.

Not all apocryphal texts have been condemned by the Church. Of those that haven’t been condemned, our Christians fathers and theologians were free to express their own opinions. In Orthodox tradition, no human opin-

ion is considered infallible. Only our beloved Jesus Christ is infallible, and only the Ecumenical Councils declared unmistakable truths.

RTE: Thank you, that was very thorough, and you've obviously worked hard to get to the bottom of these sources. Can we go on now to whether St. Andrew could have physically gotten to Africa, and what the traditions say happened there?

GEORGE: Yes. These traditions say that when St. Andrew left Ethiopia, he went to the land of the cannibals, and this is not impossible because, according to Ptolemy, the land of the *Anthropofagi* is some distance after the Prasum Promontory. Prasum was somewhere in the coastal area between Zimbabwe and Tanzania; African historians locate it on Cape Delgado in modern Mozambique, an ancient place where the Bantu, Indonesians, Kushites, Arabs and Greeks met to trade. It was a known and used route. The land of *Anthropofagi* is on Ptolemy's map, and according to many traditions was a place inhabited by a Bantu tribe.

According to ancient Greek sources, the Land of the *Anthropofagi* is only in one possible place: in sub-Saharan Africa, between modern Rwanda and Uganda. The Coptic texts also speak of Prasum, Rapta, and "the land where the *Anthropofagi* dwell." Their description of the land and society of the *Anthropofagi* is exactly like that of the Bantu people in Tororo, Uganda near Mt. Elgon and Lake Victoria today, about 300 miles from southern Ethiopia. We have the exact placement from the text: "between the Mountains of the Moon and the land of Barbaria," and according to the Coptic text, St. Andrew left from the land of Barbaria to the land of the *Anthropofagi* – we even have the ancient longitudes and latitudes of these places. In the early Greek and Coptic texts the Land of *Anthropofagi* was called Mirmadona, and in the Bantu language today, *Emere muntu na* means, "the place where men are food."

At the end of the chronicles, St. Andrew frees St. Matthew and fights with *Amayel*, the demon-god of these people. The accounts say he fought with the devil and with demons in many places, but this demon of the land of the *Anthropofagi* was so powerful that St. Andrew couldn't fight him alone, so he asked God to send Archangel Michael to help him. Archangel Michael came, they joined forces and *Amayel* was destroyed. It was such a huge thing that the narratives say the people stopped their demonic practices and became Christian. According to the Coptic "Acts of Sts. Andrew and Matthias," the

native St. Plato was the first bishop of the land of the *Anthropofagi*.

Strangely enough, today the people of this area call the demonic spirits in this place *Amayebe*. Also, as a journalist I know that there is now a very strange sect, part of a guerilla force in Congo-Zaire that teaches "we must eat people to receive power," and they are eating human flesh. The name of the sect is *Amayei-Amayei*, almost identical to the old name of the demon.

RTE: Is there any living tradition of early Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa?

GEORGE: There is no memory of St. Andrew's presence or of early Christianity except in Ethiopia. Until recently, most of sub-Saharan Africa had no written traditions, and at first I was shy to write that even a small group of Bantu fighters have gone back to cannibalism. I thought, "This is going to be an insult for the Bantu," until I realized that many people during their history have been cannibals. One doesn't have to be embarrassed that a few Bantu may have turned back to cannibalism; what is important is to understand that the devil himself is fighting the Bantu people because they have a special grace of God. It is natural that they would be attacked, that the evil one would corrupt the soul's longing for the body and blood of Christ because he wants to keep them away from God – Africans are coming to Christianity by the millions.

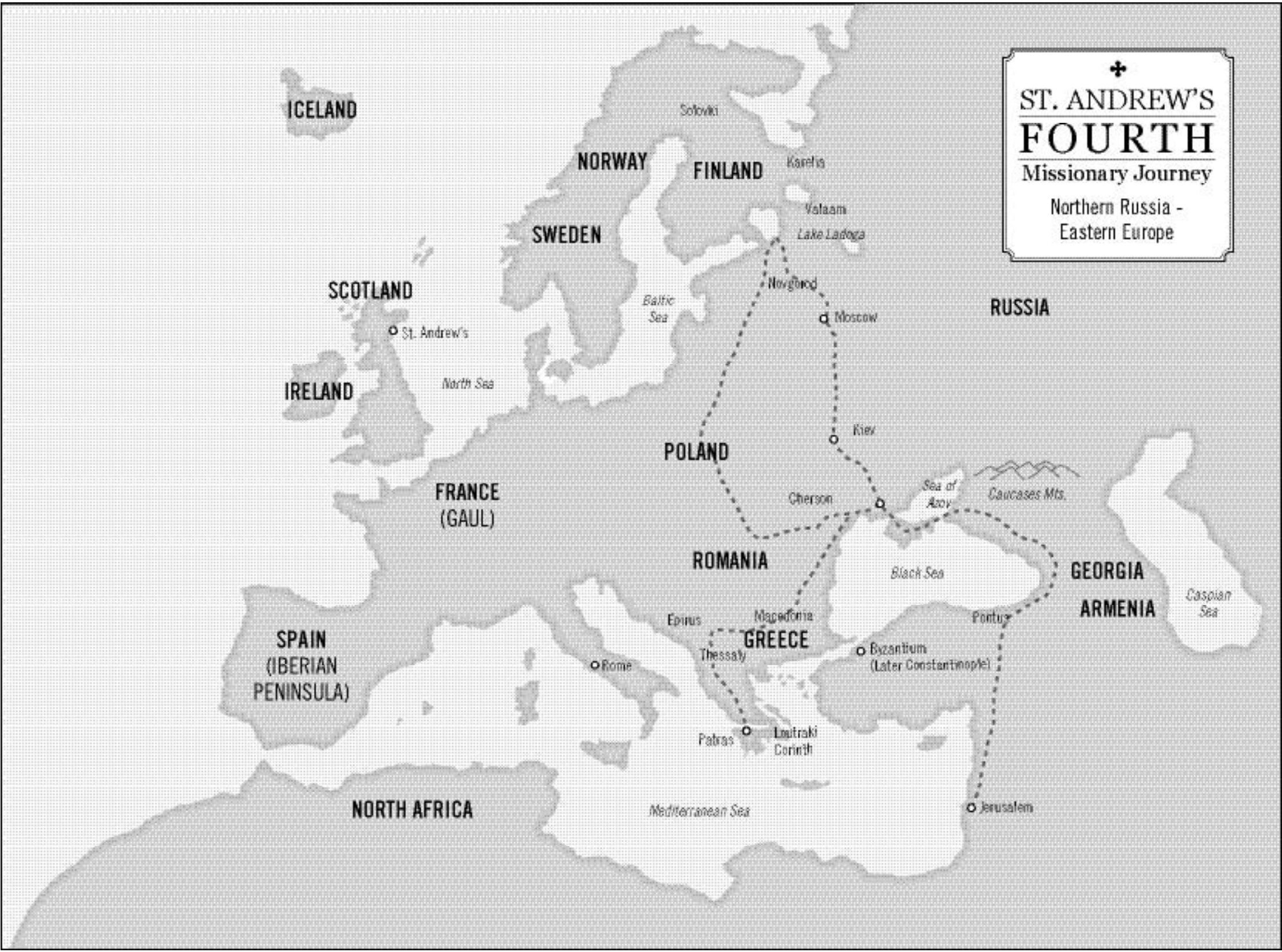
If you go to Orthodox churches of the Bantu you see a faith that is real and miraculous. In the Orthodox churches of Africa miracles are part of the everyday life of the people. They have miracles, but they also readily accept things we cannot, like death and disease, with great faith in the will of God. They have miracles but they are not seeking miracles; that is the Protestant way. They can accept the non-miracle as a miracle as well, as God's Providence.

If he indeed went there, St. Andrew could have returned through Ethiopia, then taken the road to Meroe, up the Nile and back to Jerusalem, which was a well-known route for the Greeks and Arabs.

RTE: Are there also traditions of St. Andrew preaching in Ethiopia?

GEORGE: Yes, we have local traditions of him in Ethiopia from Coptic manuscripts and some early traditions of the Church that are not easily understood now. For centuries we thought they were just legends, but if you read the geographical notes, they precisely describe the kingdoms of Ethiopia at that time, the Meroitic Kingdoms. But these texts describe them in a way that only Copts can easily understand that this is Ethiopia. For example, in

✦  
**ST. ANDREW'S**  
**FOURTH**  
Missionary Journey  
Northern Russia -  
Eastern Europe



America you won't always say, "San Francisco." You may say, "the Golden Gate," or "the Bay Area," or in the 1950s you could have said, "Frisco." In New York you say, "the City." It is the same with the term "the sacred mountains." Every Ethiopian understands that this was Gebel Barkal, but only if you are Coptic or Ethiopian do you know this.

## THE FOURTH MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

### *To the North*

After the dormition of the Mother of God, St. Andrew began his final journey from Jerusalem. The trail of tradition says that he went back to Pontus, then to Georgia, to the Caucasus, and to the Sea of Azov in southern Russia. From there he went to Donets, to the Crimea, up the Dnepr River to Kiev and to the Scythians of the Ukraine. In the Crimea, where he stayed with the Greeks of Sebastopol and Cherson, we know that there were first-century Christian communities organized by St. Andrew himself. From the Crimea and Kiev in the Ukraine, he would have gone north by river to what is now Moscow, to Novgorod and then to Lake Ladoga (Valaam). Early written narratives no longer exist, but this is a very likely route because the river trade from Crimea to northern Russia and Karelia (Lake Ladoga) was common and relatively easy. Extensive trade from the south is attested to by the great number of Roman and Byzantine coins found in Valaam and Karelia.

There is also a local tradition that he went to Solovki, and they've found some very old coins in the Solovki Islands in the White Sea depicting St. Andrew, but we can't claim he was there solely on the basis of finding coins with his image. We can't completely exclude this legend, because it might be true, but we have no historical evidence to support it. Conceivably, he could have traveled from Valaam to Solovki with the Lapp reindeer herders who moved between Solovki in the summer and the protected shores of Ladoga in the winter.

Although we don't have extremely early texts, the accounts from Lake Ladoga and Valaam are not legends, they are tradition. We have an 11th century Russian text and we also have the tradition of Valaam itself. From Valaam it appears that he went to the Baltic Sea (then possibly to Scotland and back to the Baltic, although, as I said earlier, this is not certain). Then, through Poland and Slovakia to Romania, where he settled for twenty years.

Finally, he went back to Sebastopol (Crimea) to Sinope, and then to Greece and to his end in Patras.

We can trace his return route on this fourth journey because we have traditions for him during this time in Poland, Byelorussia, and even in Germany, although this is doubtful. We also have solid traditions for him in the lands of the Goths, although before the Goths moved into the Ukraine they lived in Poland alongside Germanic tribes. Possibly he returned through modern-day Poland and the tribes that later moved up into Germany carried the tradition of St. Andrew's passing with them, but we can't say that he was in Germany itself.

It was on his return south that he settled in Romania for twenty years. During that time he traveled in Moldavia and Bulgaria, on the Danube and along the coast of the Black Sea, but mostly he was in and around his cave in Derwent, Dobrogea, in southern Romania.

St. Andrew's Romanian cave is still kept as a holy place and Romanian Orthodox have gone there on pilgrimage for almost two thousand years. We also know the locations of other caves he lived in: in Pontus near the Black Sea (now Turkey), in Georgia, in Russia, in Romania, and in Loutraki near Corinth. It is all him, the same man.

RTE: Why did he stay in Romania for so long?

GEORGE: I didn't understand this myself at first, but it appears that he felt very close to the Romanians because they were monotheists. According to Flavius Josephus, their clerics were like Essenes. They were virgins, strict vegetarians who didn't even eat fleshy vegetables, but only seeds and nuts like ascetics in the desert. Dacian society was very free, the women had a good, equal position there, not like Greco-Roman society, and the Dacians didn't keep slaves. In fact, they were unique in the world at that time because they didn't have slaves. According to Romanian traditions and archeological findings, the Dacians became Christian under St. Andrew himself in the first century. It is natural that he would have felt at home with the Dacian clergy and that they would have readily accepted him and converted.

The Ethiopic tradition also describes St. Andrew as a very strict vegetarian. This is possible because, although most of the other apostles were married, both he and John the Evangelist were virgins. They had been disciples of St. John the Baptist and followed his hesychast tradition. They were the first monks and ascetics of the Christian world. Even in our Orthodox

hymnography we remember St Andrew as being closely associated with St. John the Baptist. In Orthodoxy we have choices: we have vegetarian hermits, sometimes very strict, living only on bread and water all their lives, and we also have saintly kings who ate pork and beef.

He was in Romania for twenty years and I think he loved this land more than anything after being with Christ. I believe that God allowed it as a consolation because he had been on such difficult missionary journeys. We have descriptions of places where he wasn't welcome, where he was forced to leave and his despair over this. Things were often very difficult, particularly when he was in the Slavic lands where human sacrifice was still practiced.

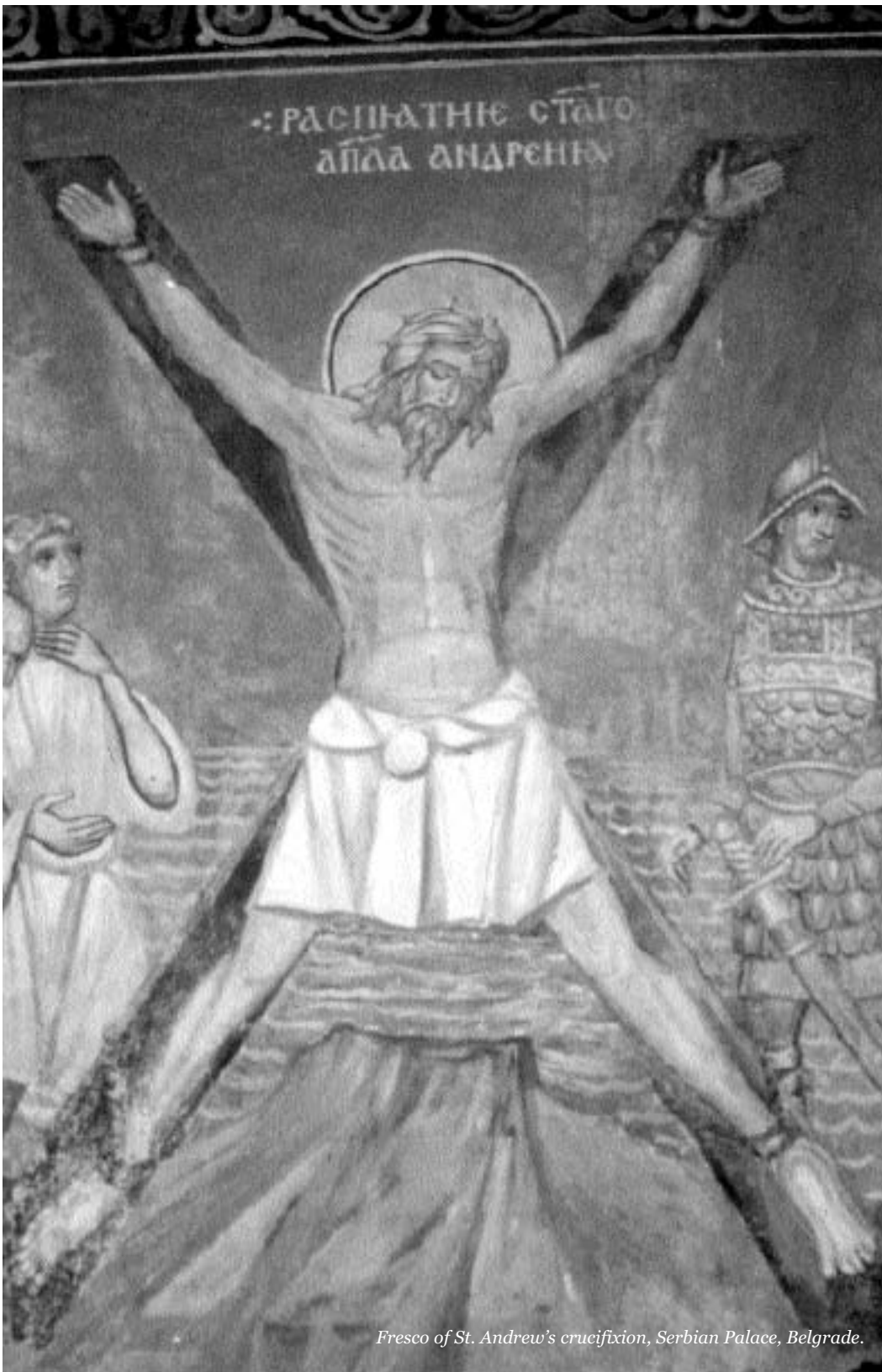
You can imagine, he was tired of living with this, and when he came to the Dacians, who had no slaves, where men and women were equal, where Jews and Greeks were accepted in the same manner, and where there were ascetic hermit-priests, you can understand how easily he fit in. He was able to teach, he was happy there. In fact, they thought that the religion he brought was not only better than theirs, but was a continuation of their old religion. They saw their native religion as a foreshadowing of Christianity. Twenty years is a long time, and you can understand why the Romanians remember more of him than any other tradition.

From Romania there are traditions that he went to Cherson in the Crimea and from there to Sinope, to Macedonia, and preached a bit in Epirus (northern Greece and southern Albania). Although we have references from early texts that he preached in Epirus, we don't have any local traditions there. The rest of the sites I've quoted are supported by both written texts and oral tradition.

## ST. ANDREW'S MARTYRDOM

From Epirus he went to Thessaly, to Lamia, then to Loutraki-Corinth. His cave in Loutraki can still be seen. From Corinth he went to Patras where he stayed a year or two, preaching in the Peloponnese. We also have local traditions that he went to the small island of Galaxidi, off of the Peloponnese. Finally, he was martyred at Patras at an extremely old age.

Something else that I understand from these traditions is that it is impossible that St. Andrew was martyred in the times of Nero. We have two Greek traditions; one placing his martyrdom under Nero, and the other under



*Fresco of St. Andrew's crucifixion, Serbian Palace, Belgrade.*

Domitian or at the beginning of Trajan's rule in the early second century. I think this last one is right. The Romanian tradition says this also, and if you follow the sources this is what fits.

In St. Gregory of Tours' version of the "Acts of Andrew," it says that before his martyrdom, St. Andrew had a dream in which he saw his brother Peter and John the Evangelist in Paradise. He saw them in Paradise *before* his martyrdom. So, this could be an indirect reference to the fact that St. Peter and St. John had already passed on. St. Epiphanius also says this, as does Pseudo-Abdia, the bishop of Babylon (or the historian who wrote in his name). If this is so, it places his repose after St. John's.

According to the scriptures, St. Andrew would have been younger than his brother Peter, because in the scriptures the name of St. Peter comes first, then Andrew. In the texts of civilized societies, the elder is always mentioned first, then the younger. But then the question arises, if he was younger, why in icons do we depict St. Andrew as much older than Peter, an old man in fact? Even Da Vinci did so in *The Last Supper* and he had taken his representation from earlier icons. In Sinai, at St. Catherine's Monastery, where we have some of the earliest icons in existence, St. Andrew is also depicted as old. This is because in iconography we make the icon of the person as we last saw him, and they remembered the older Andrew.

Only St. John is not depicted as an old man, because he was blessed by the Lord to "*tarry until I come*," but the other apostles are always portrayed at the age of their death, as is the Lord Himself.

## ST. ANDREW, THE MAN AND APOSTLE

RTE: Tell us now about St. Andrew himself. What have you learned about him?

GEORGE: If you compare the traditions from Kurdistan, Valaamo, Ethiopia and Persia, you see the same man. This is very important. You find exactly the same details about his character. I read these different traditions and say, "Yes, this is him. This is St. Andrew." After reading many, many texts from all different parts of the world, I have a feeling for what is really him. I feel now if a text is living authority, passed down from people who knew him or not. He was not a common man, he was strange.

RTE: Do you mean strange or unique?

GEORGE: Unique, but strange as well. He had a habit of putting up big stone or iron crosses everywhere. He carried a huge staff with a cross. He was modest, he didn't make a lot of disciples – just a few, in a few small circles. He didn't preach to huge crowds like Peter or Paul. St. Andrew gathered small companies, as would a *geronda* or a *staretz*.

Also, he had a sense of humor. For example, some of the sources say that when he first saw the saunas of the Slavs in what is now Novgorod he wrote letters to friends saying, "These Slavs are such strange people; they torture themselves with birch branches." He was laughing about it. You cannot imagine him as a master of strictness. He was a humorous man, very humble, very easy. As a Mediterranean person he was surprised by these strange traditions.

Of course, he was also a man who had seen many things. He traveled with Lapp reindeer herders, with Huns, spoke to Greek philosophers, Russian merchants, knew Chinese bureaucrats, visited primitive tribes in northern Pakistan and Berbers in the deserts of the Sahara.

You can understand from this how much he knew and how great his store of practical wisdom must have been. Not only grace-filled wisdom from the Lord, but his worldly wisdom. Because he was humble, he could speak to all these people. He was not an invader, he was not an explorer, he lived as one of them. He fished with them, ate with them, farmed with them, traveled with them – by any means they had – on foot, by canoes or boats, horses, camels, reindeer, elephants. You can imagine what he must have seen.

The important thing is that because he was humble he shared their experience. If you aren't humble, you cannot share another person's experience, you can only report about them, but he was their equal and he gained their wisdom, and they gained his.

Apostle Andrew was so modest that he didn't step forward with the triad of Peter, James, and John, although he was the "first-called." The first-called, but he never went first. He only went first when he had something to ask from God. We have three examples of this from the gospels. One was on Holy Thursday when the Lord went to the temple, "*there were certain Greeks among them that came to worship at the feast*." These Greeks came to Philip and asked if they could see Jesus. Philip didn't know what to do with them so he told Andrew, and Andrew took him and went to the Lord. He was not afraid to face God, and he knew Christ was God, he was the first



to understand and follow him. He was also the first missionary, to his brother Peter. The second time is the miracle of the five loaves and the two fish. Andrew was the one who went to the Lord and said, “We have this problem. Aren’t you going to do something?” He was never in the forefront for himself, but when it was for other people, he demanded help from God. The third time was in the Gospel of St. Mark, where, with Peter, James, and John, Andrew asked the Lord about the signs of the end times.

In these old traditions from the second and third century, Andrew was so humble that he thought everyone he met was Christ Himself – the captain of the boat, the peddler on the dock. The apostles didn’t have the arrogance of the Greco-Romans, or even of the Jews. They were very humble people and could meet both barbarians and Greek philosophers. We know that the Apostle Andrew was not against Greek philosophy. He liked to speak to philosophers and he even had as a disciple the Greek mathematician and philosopher Stratocles, the first bishop of Patras. Stratocles was probably a former Pythagorean, because the Pythagoreans had connected mathematics and philosophy with a unique mysticism. This is the secret, I think, to understanding St. Andrew’s soul, that he was very modest and that he saw everyone as an icon of Christ.

RTE: Yes. Where else was St. Andrew persecuted?

GEORGE: Coptic tradition says that he was persecuted in the Land of *Anthropofagi* (almost the only “uncivilized” place where we know he was badly treated). He was also persecuted in Kurdistan and Arab legends say that he died there. If this story is substantially true, I believe that his persecutors left him for dead, but that his great physical strength allowed him to recover and he left secretly, perhaps to protect disciples who remained behind.

He was persecuted again in Sinope of Pontus, in Thessalonica, and later in Chalandritsa near Patras. In Thessalonica, the Roman rulers put him into the arena with wild animals, but one thing that is very good for my conscience as a Greek is that during all of his persecutions the local Greeks defended him. In Thessalonica, a huge uprising stopped the persecution and the Romans were forced to take him from the arena.

You can explain this persecution in the Greco-Roman world, you know. The Christian belief was not an easy belief. We can’t understand today what it meant to put men, women, slaves, nobles, Jews (even Pharisees), barbar-



St. Andrew's Cathedral, Patras

ians, the sick, educated scholars, and former pagan priests at the same table, and even to allow intermarriage between them. It was against the norms of the whole society.

RTE: How old was St. Andrew when he was martyred in Patras?

GEORGE: From the Romanian traditions, which I take as the most reliable, he was more than 85, perhaps even 95. We believe he was martyred between 95 A.D. and 105 A.D. Because of the dream he had of St. John the Evangelist in heaven, it was perhaps after St. John's mysterious repose in Ephesus (you remember, the Greek tradition says that he was buried alive to his neck and then his body simply disappeared), which would make it 102 or 103 A.D. under Emperor Trajan, not Domitian as is often thought. In fact, there are still folk songs in Romania that speak of a meeting between Emperor Trajan and St. Andrew.

St. Andrew is exceptional, someone unique. He *allowed* himself to be crucified at a very old age. He easily could have avoided death if he had just told Maximillia, the Roman proconsul's wife, to return to her husband. But he wouldn't violate truth, so Aegeates, the proconsul, had him condemned. After he was crucified, a huge Christian crowd marched on Aegeates' palace and he was forced to order St. Andrew's reprieve, but the soldiers couldn't touch the apostle because St. Andrew himself wouldn't allow it.

St. Andrew was against the sovereignty of this world. He was a disciple of St. John the Baptist and he refused to compromise. If he had felt that Aegeates really regretted what he had done, he would have come down from the cross, but he didn't want to do a favor for a man who would use his rescue for his own political benefit. He wasn't a strange man who wanted to die on a cross, but what he wanted more was to love Aegeates and to be loved by Aegeates in a Christian manner.

It was a confrontation with the evil of the time and St. Andrew was fighting the devil himself through this. He did not love martyrdom, he was fighting for his Christ and that was the most important thing.

RTE: What happened to his relics? Weren't they eventually taken to Constantinople?

GEORGE: Yes, they were in Patras for several centuries and then were taken, along with St. Luke's relics in Thiva, to Constantinople in 357 by

the Byzantine commander-in-chief, Artemius,<sup>6</sup> to be put in the Church of the Holy Apostles. St. Andrew's head was left in Patras. This is the same period in which St. Regulus traditionally took a small portion of the relics to Scotland.

After the sack of Constantinople, the Crusaders took the relics to Amalfi, Italy, but St. Andrew's head remained in Patras until the 15th century when it was given to the Roman pope by the last rulers of Patras before the Turkish occupation. The Catholic Church returned it to the Orthodox in Patras in 1964, and it is now in the new Orthodox cathedral dedicated to St. Andrew, enshrined in a silver mitre. The old cathedral next to it still has the older sepulchre although all the relics were removed from it long ago.

His relics were scattered, but there are still a few small pieces in Amalfi. In 1969, the Pope took some to the new Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Mary in Edinburgh. Also, one foot of St. Andrew is enshrined on the island of Cephalonia (off the Peloponnese) in St. Andrew's Monastery and there is a small piece of the front of his skull in the Skete of St. Andrew on Mt. Athos.

The cross of St. Andrew was taken from Greece during the Crusades by the Duke of Burgandy, and returned to the Orthodox cathedral in Patras in 1968 from the Church of St. Victor in Marseilles.

RTE: Perhaps because they are so geographically close, the Greeks and Romans seem to have been tied together throughout history. Aren't there descendants of Byzantine Greeks still living in southern Italy? Could they have known St. Andrew?

GEORGE: Yes. In southern Italy we have both Greeks and descendants of proto-Bulgars from the Russian steppes who came to Greece. There is also a possibility that St. Andrew went to Calabria in southern Italy. There is a very old village there called *San Andrea, Apostolo D'Ionio*, "St. Andrew, Apostle of the Ionian Sea." We have an unusually large number of churches dedicated to St. Andrew in this place and it was only two days by boat to southern Italy over the Ionian.

It is mentioned twice by St. Gregory of Tours, that Stratocles, the first bishop of Patras and a disciple of St. Andrew, was from Italy. There is also an old tradition that St. Andrew resurrected people who died in a shipwreck coming from Italy to see him in Patras. He prayed and they came back to life. So, there seems to be a good possibility that Stratocles, if not Andrew himself, had connections with Calabria.

<sup>6</sup>Byzantine Commander-in-chief Artemius: Later Great-Martyr Artemius, martyred in Antioch.

RTE: You've spent time in these villages in southern Italy, haven't you?

GEORGE: Yes, and this is part of my own story. A close friend of mine, Antonio Mauro, is from the Greek-speaking region of southern Italy and for many years was an atheist and far left-wing fighter for human rights. I lived with him in Bova Marina and we shared many nice times. He was an atheist and I was Orthodox, but we traveled together very often and even covered the war in Serbia together, me as a journalist and he as a foreign observer.

Several years ago, long before I started this book, we were on our way to Athens when he said, "Let's go to Thessalonica instead." We went to Thessalonica and he said, "Georgio, what do you think? Do you want to baptize me? Let's go to Mount Athos." So we went to Mount Athos and a lot of strange things happened, like losing the once-a-day bus from Daphne to Karyes. There was no one else on the road so we had to walk on a very hot, difficult day. Finally, a man picked us up who had known me when I was the director of TV news in Cyprus. He was the brother of the *hegumen* (abbot) of Vatopedi, and took us to the monastery. The *hegumen* welcomed us warmly and when we said that Antonio wanted to be baptized, he told us that in this monastery there happens to be a monk, Fr. Dimitrios, who catechizes Italians in Italian.

Many things happened at Vatopedi, small miracles, but the most important of them was that after his baptism Antonio went to his room to lay down. In the meantime, as his godfather, I went downstairs to buy him a small gift. I wanted to give him an icon of St. Anthony, but the man said, "We don't have St. Anthony, take St. Andrew." So I bought St. Andrew, and when I came back I saw Antonio looking sick, and I said, "What happened?" He said, "Nothing." I gave him the icon and when he saw it he began to cry. He told me, "I've just seen this man in front of me on the wall, alive, and he told me, 'Antonio, you must fight,' and I said to him, 'My father, I've been fighting all my life.' Then he said again, 'You must be strong and fight.'" You see, Antonio didn't know if he would do alright after being baptized. He was feeling very good but he had some doubts. When he saw the figure on the wall, he thought it was his imagination, but then he saw the icon, exactly the same image, and he knew that something incredible had happened.

Later, I bought a small piece of land in Bova Marina and once, when Antonio was working there, he saw St. Andrew with a huge staff. He didn't know that St. Andrew carried a staff, but all of the traditions speak of him as



St. Andrew's cross, Patras.

carrying a great staff. He only saw him for a few moments, but he was shocked because it was the living image of the same person he had seen on the wall. When I came, he told me the story.

A little later, by chance, I bought a book about the local history of Bova Marina. We were amazed when we read there that several centuries ago Catholics had taken small pieces of relics of St. Andrew from the Orthodox Church of Bova and thrown them into the fields. (We had no idea that St. Andrew's relics had ever been there.) The Catholics did this because St. Andrew is the patron saint of Constantinople and they wanted to cut the ties between Constantinople and this Greek-speaking area of southern Italy so that people would become Catholic. No one knows where they threw the relics. It could have been in any of the fields around the village.

RTE: Perhaps it was even your own field.

GEORGE: Yes, perhaps. Only God knows.

RTE: Do you feel close to St. Andrew?

GEORGE: Sometimes he is very close. I often have impressions to look up things I would never have thought of on my own, and almost always find missing pieces or new evidence.

As I was researching this book a very close relative of mine had a dream in which she saw a monk we know from Valaamo Monastery in Finland with the abbot of Valaamo. My relative was surprised because the abbot of Valaamo in her dream was a very different man from Igumen Sergei. He was a big man with a large nose, very tall. I had been working on the book, but had told her nothing about St. Andrew's looks, but the man in her dream fit precisely with the descriptions of the apostle in all the early traditions. The most incredible thing, though, is that in her dream this man was the abbot of Valaamo, but she saw him in Sebastopol of the Crimea (the ancient Cherson) and she knew (as you know things in dreams) that he was also the Metropolitan of Thrace. What she had no idea of at the time was that St. Andrew was the enlightener of Thrace, that he had been in Sebastopol-Cherson, and you might say that he was the abbot of Valaamo because he first brought Christianity there.

Of course, all of this could be coincidence, but the thing that makes me believe this was more than a dream is that when I called our monk-friend in

Valaamo to tell him about the dream, the monks told me that he had recently left for the Skete of St. Andrew on Mt. Athos!

RTE: Wonderful. What do the early sources say St. Andrew looked like?

GEORGE: In all the world traditions, and in the book by Max Bonnet<sup>7</sup>, who did a commentary on the "Acts of Andrew" by St. Gregory of Tours, he is described as being very tall, a bit stooped, with bushy eyebrows that meet over a large nose, curly hair and a beard that is mixed black and grey and which separates into two parts at the bottom. In her dream, my relative saw him with blue eyes, short-necked and very, very strong. We know he would have had to have been strong because he traveled and lived in very difficult places. He went from -40 C. in Valaamo and the Caucasus to +50 C. in the deserts of the Middle East and Central Asia. You can imagine what kind of a man he was. You can even see this in his martyrdom. He was crucified for three days, but still couldn't die, although he was very old.

RTE: How has your feeling for St. Andrew changed since you began writing about his journeys, and how has the book changed you?

GEORGE: I'm still a sinner. Nothing can change me. I'm just very happy that I'm writing this book and I'm also very shy about it. I want to write it and at the same time I want to avoid writing it, because this is a high obligation and I'm afraid. It's something I am obliged to do, and when it's finished I will leave it quickly because it's too much for me.

RTE: Like Peter saying, "Lord, let us put up three tents."

GEORGE: Yes, like this. I've been thrilled by St. Andrew's life. He was so humble, so completely unimportant socially, but he was the first man on earth called by Christ Himself to be His disciple. What was it that the Divine eyes saw in his soul? He had an exceptional soul because God Himself came to him. If Mother Mary is for the women, then St. Andrew is for the men. ✦

<sup>7</sup>M. Bonnet, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Greg. Turon. II, pgs. 821-47