12 Mobilizing sanctity

Pius II and the head of Andrew in Rome

*Maya Maskarinec*

On the Monday after Palm Sunday 1462, just north of Rome, Pope Pius II (d. 1464) welcomed a new treasure, the head of the Apostle Andrew, to Rome.\(^1\) The relic was greeted with elaborate ceremony and brought to the walls of the city. The following day it entered Rome in a festive procession that carried it in triumph to St. Peter’s. There speeches celebrated the reunification of the bodies of the two brothers on earth as their souls were in heaven.

Rome’s acquisition of this precious relic resulted from the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, and from Pius’ energetic lobbying of Thomas Palaiologos (d. 1465), a claimant to the Byzantine throne, who had fled to Italy, bringing with him the head of Andrew from Patras.\(^2\) Accordingly, Pius II used the occasion to call anew for a crusade against the Turks, as he had done unsuccessfully at the Congress of Mantua (1459).\(^3\) Our most detailed sources for the event are Pius’ *Commentaries*, as well as the monuments he commissioned to commemorate the occasion: both text and monument carefully craft the significance of Andrew’s head in Rome.\(^4\)

In the spirit of Teofilo Ruiz’s work, this essay considers the orchestration of this remarkable event and its subsequent commemoration from two perspectives that Ruiz has explored in depth: the historical continuities underpinning the performance of spectacle, and the discontinuities provoked by travel.\(^5\) Although staged as a singular, unique event, Pius’ reception of Andrew drew on a long history of Andrew’s mobility, as contrasted to his decidedly immobile brother Peter. Andrew’s propensity to travel, in life and after his death, was put to use in emphasizing the stability and primacy of Rome vis-à-vis Constantinople. Moreover, the versatile model of Andrew’s sanctity also served as a call to action. Andrew was to inspire Pius’ contemporaries to change their sedentary and complacent ways. Christians were called upon to leave the safe haven of St. Peter and become active imitators of Andrew: traveling missionaries and martyrs of the Christian faith.\(^6\)

As medieval popes were so fond of repeating, Peter was the rock on which Christ had built his church.\(^7\) In contrast, Andrew had been in motion from the very beginning. First to be called by Christ, as recounted in the Gospel of John, Andrew immediately hastened to find his brother Peter.\(^8\) This readiness to travel, together with Andrew’s love for the cross, would become the defining features of Andrew’s medieval profile.\(^9\)
Andrew’s extensive voyaging is one of the major themes in the *Miracles of the Blessed Apostle Andrew*, one of the most widely circulating texts about Andrew throughout the Middle Ages.\(^{10}\) The *Miracles* recount how, after the ascension of Christ, the apostles preached in different locations, Andrew in the Peloponnesian region of Achaia, Matthew in the otherwise obscure Mermidona. In Achaia, however, an angel of God appeared to Andrew, urging him to rescue his brother Matthew. Andrew protests that he does not know the way, but the angel assures him that he will find a boat to take him to his destination.\(^{11}\) Andrew obeys, setting off on a life of nearly continuous voyaging in the Peloponnesse, along the southern shore of the Black Sea, and in Thrace and Macedonia.\(^{12}\) At one point, when he has just stepped off the boat in Thrace, the angel even reappears, commanding him to resume his voyage, assuring both Andrew, and the text’s readers, that this is not meaningless vagrancy but rather proof of Andrew’s devotion to God.\(^{13}\)

In 1462 at St. Peter’s in Rome, the Byzantine scholar Cardinal Bessarion, speaking in the voice of Andrew addressing his brother Peter, declared:

> After I was sent first by the Savior and then by your orders to preach the gospel, after traveling through many and diverse nations whom I dedicated to the true Faith and the name of Christ, I came at last to Achaia.\(^{14}\)

Pius II too, in his *Commentaries*, begins by rehearsing Andrew’s voyages before explaining how Andrew had been martyred in Patras, whence Thomas Palaiologos had, so we are told, so many centuries later rescued him from the Turks.\(^{15}\) Andrew’s travels are presented as indicative of his missionizing zeal that, together with his eager willingness to be martyred, made him a suitable example for contemporaries.\(^{16}\)

What Pius II does not elaborate on in his *Commentaries*, but was certainly equally central to the staging of the event, was Andrew’s even more extensive posthumous travel.\(^{17}\) In the ceremony staged at the gates of Rome, from Pius’ perspective, Andrew was acquiescing to a temporary exile in Rome, just as he had acquiesced to the extensive translation of his relics throughout earlier centuries. Andrew was a saint willing to disperse himself in the quest for a universal united Christian ecumene.

The most celebrated of Andrew’s relic translations was that to Constantinople. According to medieval sources, Constantius II (or, in some versions, Constantine himself) had the relics of Andrew (together with those of Luke) translated from Patras, where Andrew had been martyred, to Constantinople.\(^{18}\) For centuries panegyrics and polemics referenced this translation to bolster Constantinople’s episcopal claims to trace its lineage back to Andrew.\(^{19}\) In the west, already by the late 4th/early 5th century, Paulinus of Nola portrays this translation as indicative of the rivalry between Rome and Constantinople. This competitive spirit between the two cities continues to run through medieval accounts of Andrew’s relics.\(^{20}\) In Pius’ ceremony welcoming Andrew to Rome this rivalry is never explicitly mentioned, but it reverberates throughout the ceremony, most apparently in the decision to have Cardinal Bessarion play the part of Andrew, and the pope that of
Peter, reshaping the exchange between Andrew and Peter into a dialogue between the two Christian capitals – a dialogue in which Andrew at long last acknowledges the preeminence of Peter’s see.  

Constantinople and Patras were, however, by no means unique in their medieval claims to possess relics of Andrew. Already in Late Antiquity churches in Ravenna, Milan and Brescia celebrated their relics of Andrew; by the later 6th century Gregory of Tours reported how relics of Andrew had saved a burning church in Burgundy. Thereafter the pace of relic translation quickened. Among the most passionate of these claims was that of Scotland to have received relics from either Constantinople or Patras, back in the mid-5th century. Emblematic of Andrew’s reputation is an Ottonian traveling altar from Trier, with the shape of a foot, that was believed to contain relics of Andrew’s sandals (Figure 12.1). 

In the aftermath of the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204, relics from the east became much more widely available throughout western Europe. The city of Amalfi proudly claimed to have obtained the entire body of Andrew from Constantinople during the Latin sack of the city. Because of its scale, this new market of eastern relics, captured as booty, sold to raise money or carried into exile, may seem to us to contrast with earlier centuries of relic circulation. From the perspective of many contemporaries, however, who were willing to interpret

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Figure 12.1 Reliquary with the shape of the foot of St. Andrew

Source: Photo Credit: bpk, Berlin/ Trier, Domschatz/ Félicien Faillot/ Art Resource, NY
the Byzantine military defeat as the will of God, these new exchanges continued past patterns. Relics given as gifts – an exchange whose legitimacy was sealed by the saint – remained the most ‘respectable’ form of relic translation.28 Yet even in new circumstances, saints were understood to have retained responsibility for the fate of their bodily relics.

With the Turkish conquest of the Byzantine Empire, the translation of eastern relics took on a further degree of perceived moral urgency.29 Thomas Palaiologos, Pius emphasized, had rightly chosen to entrust the papacy with the head of Andrew, protecting him from the supposedly ruthless and impious Turks.30 Andrew surely wished to come to Rome.

This widespread circulation of Andrew’s relics throughout the Christian world was in particular contrast to that of Andrew’s brother Peter and his counterpart Paul: a figure mobile in life but stable in death who played only a restricted role in Pius’ ceremony.31 Frequently repeated (for example, in the widespread passio of Peter and Paul, and in the Golden Legend) was the story of how, soon after the apostles’ martyrdom, an earthquake successfully alerted Romans to an attempt by “Greeks” to remove the apostles’ bodies to the “East.”32 Andrew, it seems, had no such objections to an afterlife of movement, remaining in death, as he had been in life, a remarkably mobile saint.

In Pius II’s ceremony that welcomed Andrew’s head to Rome, as well as in the commemoration of the event that followed, this relationship between the mobility of Andrew as contrasted to the stability of Peter was acted out spatially and verbally, adding a crucial inflection to an event that was in other respects staged as an imperial triumphal procession. Andrew, as the visual rhetoric made clear (and Pius takes care to reiterate) was not received as a captive subject to Rome, but as a temporary exile, warmly embraced by a welcoming city.33 The apostle Peter did not budge, providing a stable backdrop that set the parameters of the visit. Meanwhile Andrew, his head carried through the city in its bejeweled silver reliquary, would, so the ceremony suggested, set the city into motion (Figure 12.2).34

At first, so Pius II reports in his Commentaries, in his eagerness to honor so great an apostle, the pontiff had wished to bring the heads of Peter and Paul out of the city to greet, in person, the head of Andrew (Figure 12.3).35 Such an unprecedented departure from the city would, from a ceremonial perspective, have suggested that Peter and Paul were inferior in rank to Andrew. The heavy weight of the reliquaries in which the heads of Peter and Paul were enclosed, however, prevented Pius from carrying out his plan. These, Pius laments, could not be moved, let alone carried, without great inconvenience.36 Accordingly, a happy compromise was reached: the heads of Peter and Paul were exhibited to the public in the Lateran on the afternoons of the days on which the head of Andrew was processed. Only the pope, as Peter’s representative, exited the city to greet Andrew’s head, two miles north of Rome.

The location chosen for this encounter was the Milvian Bridge, a site rich in imperial Christian ideology, where the Emperor Constantine had first entered Rome after defeating his rival Maxentius. The path for the procession through Rome the following day, starting at the Flaminian gate (where Pope Pius and the
Figure 12.2 Reliquary of the head of St. Andrew

Source: Photo Credit: Enzo Carli, *Pienza, la città di Pio II* [Roma: Editalia, 1967], n. 62, with permission of Editalia
relic spent the night at S. Maria del Popolo), likewise emphasized Rome’s history of imperial triumph (Figure 12.4). It passed by, so Pius reports, the tomb of Augustus, the Pantheon, and Hadrian’s mausoleum, before arriving at St. Peter’s. The procession thus staged Rome’s apostolic past as the climax to its imperial pagan past. At St. Peter’s, Pius II had prepared the scene to greet the apostle: a new staircase to facilitate Andrew’s monumental entry into the church, flanked by two colossal, decidedly immobile, statues of Peter and Paul. Their expressive faces, modeled on early Christian imagery, as Rubenstein has argued, evoked the time of the apostles as a living present, rendering the scene more immediate.37

Peter and Paul, then, did not move, but the arrival of Andrew was staged so as to set all of Rome – and the wider Christian world – into motion. The date chosen for the event was the Monday after Palm Sunday. Andrew’s entry into Rome thus evoked that of Christ into Jerusalem, a comparison reinforced by the palm fronds waved by the crowds. Andrew, as was impressed upon the audience, had imitated Christ in his path to martyrdom; contemporaries were encouraged, literally, to follow his route. Pius II took pride in the size of the crowds, laity and clergy, carrying sacred relics, who attended the event, and he was especially eager even for Rome’s ecclesiastical hierarchy to accompany the procession on
foot, a plan unattractive to many of the cardinals, bishops and abbots, especially after heavy rains had filled the streets with mud. But Pius insisted that they “do honor to the sacred head by their own exertions” and proudly reports that “it was a grand spectacle (spectaculum) . . . many, raised in luxury, who previously were scarcely able to go a hundred feet except on horseback, on this day easily proceeded two thousand feet, weighed down with their sacred vestments, through mud and water.” His memoirs tally the many individuals, who despite their age, infirmity or pampered lifestyles, walked the length of the procession. The pope himself, who suffered from gout, went on horseback. Meanwhile at St. Peter’s the nave had been cleared of its congestion of tombs (which were moved to the walls). The dead, like the living, were to give way to Andrew.

Pius II had begun preparations for Andrew’s arrival well in advance of the ceremony and had sent out a proclamation to the Italian cities promising participants a plenary remission of sins. For those who could not attend, he made sure that the path of Andrew’s head left its mark on the city: a topography of movement imprinted onto the stability of Rome. Two new monuments marked out the processional path. A small commemorative shrine with a statue of Andrew recorded the site, on the city-side of the Milvian Bridge, where he had first welcomed the head of Andrew to Rome (Figure 12.5). Its inscription granted a plenary remission of sins for the faithful who implored the intercession of Andrew on the Monday after
Palm Sunday.40 At the other end of the processional route, inside of St. Peter’s, a complementary shrine housed the precious relic.41 This was an expansion of a preexisting altar with the relics of Gregory the Great, who, according to medieval tradition, had been Rome’s first recipient of Andrew’s relics.42

Both of these monuments remind viewers of the movement of Andrew’s head. The inscription near the Milvian bridge records the day on which “Pius II Pontifex Maximus received in these meadows the sacred head of the blessed apostle Andrew, brought from the Peloponnese, and with his [Pius’] own hands bore it into the City.”43 Lunettes crowning the shrine in St. Peter’s represent Andrew’s
head held aloft by angels, their clothes billowing in the wind, emphasizing the transportable, and partial, nature of the relic (Figure 12.6). Most unambiguous is the relief on Pius’ tomb, incorporated into the shrine for St. Andrew after his death, which depicts Pius’ reception of Andrew’s head (Figure 12.7). Nor did Pius hesitate to further subdivide and move the relic; a jawbone was removed and given to Pius’ hometown of Pienza. This commemoration and perpetuation of Andrew’s mobility reinforced the message, which Pope Pius repeated throughout the ceremony:

you [Andrew] will be returned to your own seat, God willing, and one day you will say, “Oh happy exile, where such aid was found!” In the meantime, you will remain with your brother for some time, and you will have equal honor with him. For this is nourishing Rome, dedicated with your brother’s precious blood.

Andrew’s stay in Rome was to be provisional. Rome was a temporary asylum for Andrew, not a grasping devourer of his relics.

Indeed, as Pius II had intended, Andrew’s relics were to retain their mobility in subsequent centuries, although this was to take unexpected forms. The construction of new St. Peter’s required the dismantling of the shrine for Andrew. His head was relocated to one of the four pillars supporting the dome.

In 1848 thieves stole Andrew’s head, enclosed in its reliquary, from St. Peter’s. Twenty days later the head was rediscovered in a ditch outside of the gate of S. Pancrazio. To celebrate its retrieval, Pius IX, who was in the midst of trying to quell calls for liberal reform in Rome, staged a procession of the relic from the church of S. Andrea della Valle back to St. Peter’s. Yet again a pope mobilized Andrew in an attempt to redirect the course of the city of Rome. In commemoration of the event Pius IX, again following the example of Pius II, had a
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Figure 12.7 Tomb of Pius II, S. Andrea della Valle
Source: Photo Credit: Alinari / Art Resource, NY

small shrine erected at the site where the head had been discovered. This monument is analogous to that built by Pius II by the Milvian Bridge, except that here, suitably for the frenzy of the times, Andrew is missing his head (Figure 12.8). More recently, in a move calculated to signal the Catholic Church’s adaptability to change, on September 26th, 1964, Pope Paul VI had the relic returned by airplane to Patras, in a gesture of goodwill towards the Orthodox Church.
Figure 12.8 Commemorative shrine with statue of St. Andrew, Aurelian wall near Porta San Pancrazio

Source: Photo by author
Throughout the centuries, then, the relics of Andrew continued to offer a counterpart to Peter that allowed for more flexible maneuvering. Pius II, drawing on a long medieval tradition, had astutely recognized Andrew’s readiness to move. As such, Andrew remained a model of sanctity particularly suitable for moments of change.

Notes


2 Thomas Palaiologos, the youngest son of Manuel II, was despotes of the Morea but fled to Corfu in 1460 after Mehmed II conquered the Morea: Alice Mary Talbot, “Thomas Palaiologos,” *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, edited by Alexander Kazhdan et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). After negotiations with Pius II he arrived in Italy, at the port of Ancona on November 16th, 1460, where he handed over the reliquary to a papal legate. Thomas Palaiologos arrived in Rome on March 7th, 1460, where he remained until his death in 1465. Before its ceremonial entry into Rome on April 12th, 1462, the head was kept in a church in Narni, in Umbria.


4 *Pii II Commentarii rerum memorabilium que temporibus suis continguerat*, Bk. 8, edited by Adriano van Heck, 2 vols. (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1984), vol. 2, 467–514; English translation by Florence Alden Gragg, with historical introduction and notes by Leona C. Gabel, “The Commentaries of Pius II.,” *Smith College Studies in History* 22, 1–2, 25, 1–4, 30, 35, 43 (1937–1957), Bk. 8 in vol. 35 (1951), 523–606; a revised translation based on that of Gabel is under way in Margaret Meserve and Macello Simonetta (eds.), *Pius II. Commentaries* I Tatti Renaissance Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003–). The text was first printed in Rome in 1584 in an edited version that presented the work as that of John Gobel;
only in the late 19th century was it edited by Louis Pastor based on the Vatican manuscript, Codex Reginensis 1995, written in part by Pius himself. For a history of the text, see the historical introduction in Gabel, “The Commentaries of Pius II.”


6 Throughout his Commentaries the apostolic guise in which Pius most commonly presents himself is that of Paul. In his final quest for a crusade Pius’ attempt to model himself on Andrew becomes more apparent. Regarding the presentation of Andrew as a model for contemporaries, in particular for Pius II himself, see Bert Treffers, “Il ritorno del fratello di Pietro. L’esemplarità di sant’Andrea quale perfetto soldato di Cristo,” in _Enea Silvio Piccolomini: arte, storia e cultura nell’Europa di Pio II. Atti dei convegni internazionali di studi 2003–2004_, edited by R. Di Paola (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006), 323–328.

7 Traditionally based on Matthew 16.18–19; for the development of this discourse see George E. Demacopoulos, _The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity_ (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); for its continued resonance throughout the Middle Ages see Edward Peters (ed.), _Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation_ (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980).

8 John 1: 40–41.


10 Gregory of Tours, _Liber de miraculis beati Andreae apostoli_ (BHL 430), edited by Jean-Marc Prieur, _Acta Andreae_, vol. 2 (Textus), Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 564–651 (reprinting the older edition in MGH SRM I.2 by Max Bonnet). This text is ascribed to Gregory of Tours. As its name suggests, this text details the miracles performed by Andrew, primarily during his lifetime, and although it does include a brief account of Andrew’s death, the _Miracles_ were often paired with a more extensive account of Andrew’s martyrdom, the so-called _Conversante et docente = Passio sancti Andreae apostoli_ (BHL 429), edited by Max Bonnet in “Acta Andreae Apostoli cum laudatione contexta,” _Analecta Bollandiana_ 13 (1894), 374–378.

11 _Liber de miraculis beati Andreae apostoli_ 1, ed. Bonnet, in Prieur, _Acta Andreae_, 569–571.

12 The route of Andrew’s travels, as presented by the _Liber de miraculis beati Andreae apostoli_, proceeds from Achaia to “Meridona,” Achaia, Nicea, Nicomedia, Byzantium, Thrace (Perinthus), Macedonia (Philippi, Thessaloniki), and back to Achaia (Patras, Corinth, Patras).


14 Transl. Gragg, 537; _Pii Commentarii_, 8.2, ed. van Heck, 484: “postquam a Saluatore primo, deinde tuo iussu ad predicacionem euangeli missus post multas diuersasque nationes, quas fidei recte christianaque nomini dedicaueram, tandem in Achaiaam…”

15 _Pii Commentarii_, 8.1, ed. van Heck.
Enthusiasm for missionizing as a concomitant of Pius’ enthusiasm for a crusade is exemplified by Pius’ Letter to Mahomet (probably never sent), in which Pius attempts to convince Mehmed that he should convert to Christianity: *Lettera a Maometto II*, edited by G. Toffanin (Naples: R. Pironti, 1953).


For the differing traditions see Glanville Downey, “The Builder of the Original Church of the Apostles at Constantinople: A Contribution to the Criticism of the ‘Vita Constantinii’ Attributed to Eusebius,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 6 (1951), 51–80; David Woods, “The Date of the Translation of the Relics of SS. Luke and Andrew to Constantinople,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 45, 3 (1991), 286–292; Frutaz, “Reliquie,” 499–500. Modern scholars, following Jerome’s *Chronicle* (which does not specify that the relics were brought from Patras) and subsequent Byzantine chronicles, accept the dating of the translation to the reign of Constantius II (r. 337–61); Paulinus of Nola credits Constantine with the translation.

When the Church of the Holy Apostles was rebuilt during the reign of the emperor Justinian (r. 527–65), the body of Andrew (along with that of Luke and Timothy) was reportedly discovered and the new church rededicated in their honor: Procopius, *Buildings* 1.4; Frutaz, “Reliquie,” 501. For the tradition that attributed to Andrew the foundation of the see of Constantinople see Francis Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 1958); this argument had become less prevalent, but was still well known, in the 15th century. Pius’ *Commentaries* mention that the body of Andrew was translated to Amalfi but do not specify that they were brought there from Constantinople. Instead the narrative would lead the reader to assume that these relics had been removed from Patras. This omission distinctly downplays Andrew’s Constantinopolitan associations. Pius, even as he was eager to associate Andrew with the Byzantine Empire, clearly did not want to suggest too close of a correlation of Constantinople with Andrew’s relics, which would have raised questions about the authenticity of the relics from Patras.

Paulinus of Nola, Carmen 19, *Carmina*, edited by Wilhelm von Hartel, *Opera*, vol. 2, CSEL 30 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1894), 118–143, here 129–130, lines 329–342. Another telling example is Agnellus of Ravenna’s 9th-century account of how the 6th-century bishop of Ravenna, Maximian, attempted to steal Andrew’s body from Constantinople and bring it to Rome, but the emperor protested, arguing that it was fitting for Andrew to remain at the imperial seat of Constantinople: Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 76, edited by Deborah M. Deliyannis, CCM 199 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 243–244.

As described in the *Commentaries*, it was Cardinal Bessarion who presented the relic to the pope outside the city by the Milvian Bridge; then, in the ceremony at St. Peter’s Pius II and Cardinal Bessarion exchanged speeches with Pius as Peter, Bessarion as Andrew. Repeatedly in Cardinal Bessarion’s ethopoetic speech as Andrew, he has Andrew acknowledge Peter’s and Rome’s primacy; for example: *Pii Commentarii*, 8.2, ed. van Heck, 484: “… ad te, sanctissimum fratrem, ad te preceptorem atque magistem, ad te, uniuersalem christiani gregis pastorem a deo constitutum, tanquam ad tutissimum portum me recipio”; or 8.2, 485: “Romani tui quorum Vrbem, magistram ante erroris inueniens, ureritatis disciplum atque regiam et sacerdotalem ciuitatem per sacram tuam sedem effecisti, caputque totius orbis religione diuina, quam terrena dominatione latius presidentem instituisti . . .”

Denoël, *Saint André*, 53: in Milan a feast on the 9th of May celebrated the “ingressio reliquiarum apostolorum Ioannis, Andreae et Thomae in basilica ad Portam Romanam”; in a sermon, the late 4th-/early 5th-century Gaudentius of Brescia celebrates the presence of relics of Andrew, among other saints, in a church in Brescia.
According to one version of the medieval legend, set in the time of Theodosius II, after King Angus of the Picts received a military victory through the help of Andrew, he received relics of Andrew (brought from Constantinople by one of their custodians, Regulus), with which he dedicated a new church and dedicated the city to St. Andrew; in another version the relics were brought from Patras by one of their custodians, Regulus: see Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, “St. Andrew before Alexander I,” in The Scottish Tradition: Essays in Honour of Ronald Gordon Cant, edited by G.W.S. Barrow (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1974), 1–13; Ursula Hall, St Andrew and Scotland (St Andrews: St Andrews University Library, 1994), 60–62.

This altar, together with a jewel-encrusted episcopal staff with relics of the staff of St. Peter, was commissioned by the Archbishop Egbert in the 980s: Thomas Head, “Art and Artifice in Ottonian Trier,” Gesta 36, 1 (1997), 65–82.

Cardinal Pietro Capuano, a papal legate, seems to have acquired the relics of Andrew during the Latin sack of Constantinople and donated them in 1208 to Amalfi’s cathedral: Frutaz, “Reliquie,” 502–506; Andrea Colavolpe, “Sant’Andrea e la chiesa di Amalfi,” in Tre apostoli una regione (Cava de’ Tirreni, Salerno: Di Mauro, 2000), 159–213.

In his Commentaries Pius explains that many ambassadors throughout Europe were offering large sums of money for the head, but that the pope admonished Thomas that he would be acting impiously if he gave the head to anyone but the pope (Pii Commentarii, 8.1, ed. van Heck, 468): “facturum uero impie atque crudeliter si alteri quam romano pontifici traderet, cuius est de sanctorum honoribus iudicare.”

One might further note that Paul, on account of his verbosity in life, was rather more difficult to ventriloquize, but also that, since Pius II styled himself as a Pauline figure, one might also see him as playing both roles in the ceremony.

For example, in Pius’ speech greeting the relic by the Milvian Bridge (Pii Commentarii, 8.2, ed. van Heck, 473): “atque equo animo patere quod pollutis manibus tua contractam ossa et te peccatores intra menia comitamur Vrbis. ingredere sanctam ciuitatem et esto propitius romanorum populo.”

This older, repoussé silver-gilded reliquary, ca. 30–35 cm high, was returned to Patras when the relic was repatriated in 1964 (see n. 46 below): Barsanti, “In memoria,” 320, 324–326.
Pope Urban V (r. 1362–70) had commissioned these highly precious silver bust reliquaries of Peter and Paul (destroyed in a fire in 1799) from Giovanni di Bartolo and Giovanni di Marco Argentario in 1368–69: Laura Filippini, La scultura nel trecento in Roma (Torino: Società tipografico-editrice nazionale, 1908), 114–116.

Pii Commentarii, 8.1, ed. van Heck, 470. In addition to their heads, the bodies of Peter and Paul, Pius tells us, likewise remained in place, under the altar of St. Peter’s, where the head of Andrew was brought: 8.2, 482–483.


Pii Commentarii, 8.2, ed. van Heck, 477.

Pii Commentarii, 8.2, ed. van Heck, 478: “Fuitque grande spectaculum . . . et nonnulli, qui prius in delitis enutriti uix centum passus ire poterant non equis uecti, hac die duo milia passum onusti sacris uestibus, in luto et acqua facile perrexerunt.”

This shrine consisted of a statue of Andrew with a cross (sculpted by Paolo Romano), within four alabaster columns, mounted on a base with inscription. The shrine was finished by June 1463. Thereafter a chapel was built nearby and the shrine became part of an enclosed garden (and cemetery) attached to the chapel. The architectural configuration has remained to this day, the shrine having survived proposals in the early 17th and late 18th centuries to dismantle the structure for its columns. These columns, however, were damaged in a mid-19th-century fire and replaced with travertine columns: Flavia Cantatore, “Il tempietto di Sant’Andrea a Ponte Milvio tra architettura e scultura nella Roma del secondo quattrocento,” Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura, Nuova Serie 57–59 (2011–2012), 37–48; Antoniutti, “Pio II e sant’Andrea,” 331–333.

The inscription reads:


The head was placed in the shrine on April 13th, 1462 (in the meantime it had been kept at Castel S. Angelo for safety). The shrine, located in the left nave, consisted, like that at the Milvian Bridge, of four columns; on top of these was placed a tabernacle for the relic. The subsequent addition of a statue of Andrew with his cross (by Pius III, Pius’ nephew) made the shrine’s similarity to that by the Milvian Bridge even more pronounced. This statue is now located in the sacristy of St. Peter’s. The ensemble remained in place until it was deconsecrated and demolished in 1605; many of its pieces were preserved and moved to new locations. For a fuller description see Antoniutti, “Pio II e sant’Andrea,” 334–7; Fernando Stoppani, “Sant’Andrea a Ponte Milvio,” L’Urbe: rivista romana di storia, arte, lettere, costumanze 7, 2 (1942), 7–14.

Later sources claimed that Gregory, as apocrisiary in Constantinople, had received an arm of Andrew from the emperor Tiberius II (d. 582) and given it to the monastery of St. Andrew that he founded. See further: Frutaz, “Reliquie,” 501.

These three lunettes, sculpted by Paolo Romano (like the statue of Andrew by the Milvian bridge), were once located on the three visible sides of the tabernacle on top of the shrine in St. Peter’s. They are now located in the Vatican Grottoes; for images see Antonio Pinelli (ed.), La Basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano, 4 vols. (Modena: F.C. Panini, 2000), vol. 4, 1138.

Pius II’s nephew, Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (elected Pope Pius III in 1503), decided to erect a tomb for Pius II at the shrine for St. Andrew at St. Peter’s.
was subsequently buried there as well. During the destruction of Old St. Peter’s, both of these tombs were moved to S. Andrea della Valle, where they remain to this day: Antoniutti, “Pio II e sant’Andrea,” 340–342.

46 The jawbone was placed in the older reliquary (in which the head of Andrew had arrived) and was given to the city of Pienza. The relic remains there today. However, when the rest of the head was returned to Patras, Pienza was given the newer reliquary (by Simone di Giovanni Ghini) that had been commissioned by Pius II to hold Andrew’s head in St. Peter’s; the newer reliquary is now in the Museo Diocesano in Pienza: Barsanti, “In memoria,” 320, 324–326.

47 Pio Commentarii, 8.2, ed. van Heck, 472:

non deerit germanus tuus tibi: restitueris in tuo solio cum gloria uolente Domino licebitque aliquando dicere: “O felix exilium, quod tale repperit auxilium!” interea temporis cum tuo germano aliquandiu moraberis et honore pari cum eo potieris. hec est alma Roma, quam prope cernis, pretioso tui germani sanguine dedicata.

48 This is in sharp contrast to so many of the relics dispersed from the east after the Latin conquest of Constantinople. Compare especially the relics acquired by Louis IX from Baldwin II for which the Ste.-Chappelle was constructed: Jannic Durand, “La translation des reliques impériales de Constantinople à Paris,” in Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2001), 37–41.

49 Each of these four pillars was dedicated with precious relics (of Andrew, Helen, Veronica and Longinus) and adorned with a corresponding statue. Chapels were located under the pillars. However, the frescoes related to Andrew (including that of Pius II receiving the head of Andrew) were placed in the chapel dedicated to St. Helen, as the orientation of the chapels was changed after the frescoes had already been executed: Antoniutti, “Pio II e sant’Andrea,” 338. The inscription in Andrew’s niche reads: “SANCTI ANDREAE CAPVT QVOD PIVS SECUNDVS / EX ACHAIA IN VATICANVM EXPORTANDVM CVRavit / VRBANVS VIII NOVIS HIC ORNAMENTIS DECORATVM / SACRISQVE STATVAE AC SACELLI HONORIVS COLIVolvIT.”

50 The theft was discovered on March 10th, the relic recovered on April 1st. At this time, Pius IX’s policies were in flux: on March 14th he issued a constitution, but on April 29th he pronounced his unwillingness to declare war on Austria: Giacomo Martina, “Pio IX, beato,” in Enciclopedia dei Papi (2000). For the relic theft see also Frutaz, “Reliquie,” 507.

51 This travertine shrine with marble statue is located on the Janiculum, adjacent to the Aurelian walls, near the Porta San Pancrazio. The inscription reads: “ANDREAEP APOSTOLO VRBIS SOSPITATORI / PIVS IX PONT MAX / VIC BVI CAPVT EIVS ABLATVM REPERIT / MONVMENTVM REI AVSPICATISS DEDIC AN MDCCXLVIII.”

52 Before the head was returned it was venerated in the basilica of St. Peter’s and then placed on view at S. Andrea della Valle. Upon its arrival in Patras it was handed over to the metropolitan at a triumphal arch erected in the square dedicated to the emperor Constantine and then processed to the cathedral: Barsanti, “In memoria,” 320. For detailed description of these events and pictures: L’Osservatore Romano: Sept. 24, 1964, p. 1; Sept. 25, 1965, pp. 1, 4; Sept. 26, 1964, p. 4; Sept. 27, 1964, pp. 1, 3; Sept. 28–29, 1964, pp. 3; Sept. 30, 1964, p. 2.