

**SAINT ANDREW A MISSIONARY OF ROMANIAN CHRISTIANITY.
THE PATH OF HIS VENERATION AS SAINT**

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Abstract. Honored, especially by the Ecumenical Patriarchy of Constantinople, by the churches of Greece, Russia, Ukraine and Romania, and in the Western tradition being considered patron and protector of Scotland, the country where the parts of his holy relics arrived in the 8th century, St. Andrew always calls all humanity to discover the pure and holy joy that never gets old, through the expression: „We have found the Messiah!” St. Andrew is related to the origins of Christianity at the Romanians, and is mentioned as a possible/sure missionary in Schythia Minor (Dobrogea from today) and implicitly in Tomis. The massive spread of Christianity in the territory between the Danube and the Sea is confirmed by various sources, arguing that, on a certain date, a Christianization of our ancestors was accomplished by their mass conversion, at the basis of which an important role was played by St. Apostle Andrew.

Keywords: *Saint Andrew; Christianity; missionary*

INTRODUCTION

With rare exceptions, the apostolicity of the Romanian Christianity was approached, until recently, in close connection with the preaching the Word of the Gospel in Dobrogea (*Schythia Minor*), by the Saint Andrew. The "tradition" underlying the argumentation of Christianity, of apostolic origin, for the autochthons in the north of the Danube is based on some representative aspects:

- The first which make mention regarding the teaching work of the apostle Andrew was the Origen church writer: "*When the holy Apostles and disciples of our Savior spread throughout the world, as the tradition say, Thomas received the Parthia and Andrew Scythia*"; [3]
- Following Origen's text, Eusebius of Caesarea stated: "*When the Holy Apostles and disciples scattered all over the inhabited earth, Andrew as it tradition say took for the evangelization Scythia*"; [4]
- The third source of information is represented by the Syrian doctrine of the Apostles, which confirms that "*the territories evangelized by the Apostle Andrew were: Nicaea, Nicomidia, Bithynia (...), and Gothia, the name under which we must understand the eastern region of Dacia.*

The writer Nichifor Calist confirms the work of St. Andrew, strengthening that, after "he went to the Romans, Geto-Dacians, passing through Thrace, arrived in Byzantium, and from there descending through Macedonia and Thessaly, arrived in the city of Patras", where will find its end. Also the Romanian researchers strengthen those above mentioned, the first among them being Dosoftei.

Of all the testimonies related to the presence of Saint Apostle Andrew in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area, the most valuable is considered by Eusebius of Caesarea, an author of a great prestige in the knowledge of Christianity of the first centuries. His statement is based on an old tradition, reinforced by the testimony of Hoppolitus of Rome, contemporary with Origen, which says that St. Andrew "has proclaimed (The Word of the Gospel) to Scythians and Thracians." There are also sources from the fourth century attesting the presence of the Holy Apostle Andrew in the territory of our country. The period that St. Apostle Andrew has spent in our lands is uncertain.

The Holy Apostle Andrew is celebrated on November 30th. He was born in Betsaida Galileia, a locality located on the shores of Lake Ghenizaret, in the north of the Holy Land. By the name of Saint Apostle Andrew is also related the origin of the Christian Church from Romania. From the testimonies of the historians and Holy Tradition, we are told that Saint Andrew is the first preacher of the Gospel to our Dacian-Romanian ancestors, being considered the "godfather of the Romanian people." Romanian Christianity is therefore an apostolic one. Being entrusted for the evangelization the lands around the Black Sea, it is certain that on his way, the first Apostle called preached the Gospel both in Southern Basarabia and in Scythia Minor (Dobrogea from today).[9] Today's Dobrogea has been called since the 1st century AD Scythia, Σκυθία, and a century later we know it as "Scythia Minor" (Σκυθία μικρά) because at the end of the third century, the Roman province of Scythia (the earliest mention of The Dobrogea as Scythia meets in a Greek insertion dating back to the beginning of the 2nd century AD, discovered at Histria. [7] At the time Eusebiu was writing, the territory between the Danube and the Sea was called Scythia Minor, and the Danube border Limes Scythicus.

Today more than 850,000 Romanians are named after Saint Andrew, considered the apostle of the Romanians, many monasteries and churches taking him as a protector. According to MAI data, 453,849 men are named Andrew, and 405,585 women are called Andrea. St. Apostle Andrew is also the protector of the Cathedral of Salvation of the Nation, which is the second patron of the church, after the Ascension of the Lord. St. Andrew's Day marks the beginning of the winter holiday season. In Romania there is the cave of St. Andrew, this being the oldest Christian church on the territory of our country, and considered the Bethlehem of Romanian Christianity. St. Andrew's Cave is situated in the Migilet Forest, on the Ion Corvin locality, Constanta County, only a few kilometers from the ancient Adamclisi Citadel and the Tropaeum Traiani Monument. The relics of St. Andrew were first brought to our country at Iasi in the year 1996.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to draw up this scientific approach regarding the missionary work of Saint Andrew, there were combined different bibliographic resources.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Short description of the path of his veneration as a Saint.

About St. Andrew we can begin by state that he is closely linked to early Christianity, especially when it comes to our country.

Andrew was therefore the first called to know The Christ, and he proclaimed this truth to the verdict of the apostles. Therefore, Saint Andrew received among the apostles the surnames of the "*first called*". The meeting with Christ the Savior has changed his whole course of life. [2,12,13,14,15]

Wherever the Lord went through villages and cities, mountains, seas, or deserts, Andrew was close to Him to feed from the living water spring of the Everlasting Word. [9] At the Apostolic Synod that took place around 49-50 AD. in Jerusalem, the apostles met and cast lots to decide where each will go. In the Tradition of the Church of the Apostle Andrew, Scythia (Dobrogea) was assigned to him. First, Andrew accompanied his brother (Apostle Peter) through Asia Minor, and then crossed the Balkan Peninsula through the



territory of today's Turkey, reaching Scythia, where it stopped for a while. Then he continued his preaching mission of the Gospel, reaching up to the southern Russia today.

Saint Andrew died as a martyr at Patras. Although we are known the tradition that the Apostle Andrew died on an X-shaped cross, it is claimed that this tradition dates back to the 14th century. The date of martyrdom is unknown. Some historians fix it during the persecution of Emperor Nero, in the years 64-67, others during the persecutions initiated by Domitian (81-96).



Around the year 350 Emperor Constantius II (the son of Constantine the Great) takes the relics of St. Andrew to Constantinople and places them in the Apostolic Church. They remained intact until around 850, when Byzantine Emperor Vasile I the Macedonian surrendered to the Patras people's requests and returned the head of Saint Andrew. In 1208, during the Fourth Crusade, the relics reached Amalfi, near Naples, and were kept in the San Andrea dome. In 1462 they were taken to Rome because of the Turkish dangers. In the fifteenth century Pope Pius II moved the relics of Saint Andrew to St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. In 1964 St. Andrew's head was returned to the Patras church.

He is the patron of Scotland (the Scottish flag is the cross of Saint Andrew), of Romania, of Spain, of Sicily, of Greece and of Russia. He is also the patron of the cities of Naples, Ravenna, Brescia, Amalfi, Mantua, Bordeaux, Bruges, Patras etc. Because he was a fisherman, Saint Andrew is considered by Greek sailors and fishermen as their protector too.

In Romania he is the one who preached the Gospel on these lands. Testimony is the toponyms from Dobrogea where he lived for a while. St. Andrew's Cave, St. Andrew's River are as many testimonies that prove the passage of the Apostle to these lands. According to the Tradition of the Church, the fate fell for St. Apostle Andrew to go to the Black Sea, known at that time as Scythia.

In 1995, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church decided that Saint Andrew's day would be marked with a Red Cross in calendar, and in 1997 St. Andrew was proclaimed "Protector of Romania".

The traditional customs related to the night of November 29-30 are a tangle of Christian celebrations with the ancient Dacian rituals. The legends on the territory of Romania speak of the last priest of Zalmoxis, who met Jesus and then the Apostle Andrew, the people making the transition to Christianity. Saint Andrew is considered the one who brought Christianity to our lands, thus becoming the spiritual patron of the Romanians and the protector of Romania.

The missionary itinerary of St. Apostle Andrew - an important route for Christianity and implicitly for church tourism

Faithful to the commandments of the Lord, he took nothing with him and went on to take the Good News of salvation to those nations. Following the mission of St. Andrew's missionary route, as it is described in various writings of the Xth century, in Synacsarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae, a longer version of the cities and provinces evangelized by it is described: Bitinia, parts of the Euxin Pontus and Propontide (the Marmara Sea The cities of Chalcedon and Byzantium), Macedonia, Thrace and the lands stretching to the Danube, Thessaly, Elada (central Greece), Peloponnese and Amissos, Trapezunt, Heraclea Pontului and Amartris.

He faced trials and dangers, diseases, the danger of thieves, persecutions of the Jews and pagans, but in all the places where he went the Holy Spirit went with him: he spoke through his mouth, wrought miracles and healing, brought patience in his soul and joy in his attempts.



Figure 1. The missionary itinerary of St. Apostle Andrew

He first went to Amisoss, on the Black Sea coast, and converted a large number of Jews to Christianity, then healed those who suffered from various diseases by the power of God. He continued his mission in Trebizonda and Lazic, and on Easter he returned to Jerusalem. After that, he left with St. John the Theologian at Ephesus and preached the Gospel for a while in the western regions of Asia Minor. Going to Propontida and proclaiming the word of eternal life in the settlements of Niceneia, Nicomidia, Chalcedon, Heraclea Pontului, Amastris, had many times faced the fanaticism of the idol worshipers and the deceptive thinking of the Sophists, but silenced them and others through his wisdom, his actions, and his wonders. Arriving in Sinope, he freed from chains, through prayer, the Apostle Matia. He was caught by the pagans who were angry and suffered torment from those who were thrown to the ground, struck from all sides, and St. Andrew did not seek to flee or defend himself. He accompanied Matia and Tadeu for a long time to the borders of Mesopotamia, and then went to the barbaric regions of the East Black Sea, southern Russia today, the Crimea and southern Ukraine. He then headed for Thrace and illuminated through his sermon the hearts of Byzantium's inhabitants. He founded a church dedicated to the Mother of God and ordained a bishop on Stachy, who is said to be the person mentioned by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to Romans 16, 9. He continued his

relentless periple in Thrace, Macedonia and Thessaly, reaching the Peloponnese, in Patras.[9]

The contact with the populations from Bitinia and Pont undoubtedly gave Saint Andrew information on the populations of Minor and Major Scythia, about their religions, cultures and traditions. Even more so, in Europe, more precisely in Macedonia, the first called one agonized more detailed data and information about these populations, their willingness to receive the Gospel. Macedonia was one of the most prominent Christian provinces, from which St. Andrew passed to Thrace, Moesia and Scythia Minor, or Dobrogea from today.

Places related to St. Andrew that support an ecumenical tourism at the level of our country

St. Andrew's Cave is the first Christian church from our country. In the current church from the cave, in the ante-temple, in a niche, there is a kind of bed, initially hollowed into the stone, about which the tradition says that on it was resting the apostle Andrew. Today, those in trouble/sufferance come here to regain their health, spending a few days and nights on this "bed of St. Andrew". As a sign of honoring the place where the "first called" of the Lord himself has been, over the years, it has also been used as a burning place for candles or incense. [6,10]



After long periods of desolation, following a divine revelation, the holy cave was shown in the dream of the lawyer Jan Dinu, a man of the place. That is how the first Christian altar, from our country, was found. In 1935, priest Vasilescu kept a history of this place, which he had heard from the elders of the village, whom they also knew from other elders. They spoke about the existence of two caves that served as churches for the first Christians. In the summer of 1944, the cave transformed into the church was sanctified. Shortly thereafter, the invading Russian troops destroyed it.[5,6,11]



Only after 1990, through the monk Nicodemus Dinca, the church was restored and the given back to the cult. Today, St. Andrew's Cave has become an important landmark on the Christian map of Dobrogea. Thousands of believers from all over the country, but also from outside, come here to pray at the place where the apostle lived. Here, over the years, many miracles, miraculous healings, and the sanctifying power of the cave, the curative water quality and the gracious services of the venerable parents have made this area one of the most worshiped Christian places in our country. At every feast, tens of thousands of pilgrims come to the St Andrew's Cave as a true Bethlehem of the Romanians.

Cuzgun, the first baptism river from our country. At approximately 200 meters from the cave, on another slope of the mountain, the traces of old cells dug into the rock can be seen even today, where the tradition says that the Apostle's disciples lived. Beside from this evidence of St. Andrew's presence here, not far from the cave, is still visible the traces of the nine springs, of whose waters formed the Cuzgun river ("Pigeon", in old

Turkish, an obvious hint at the first baptism done here), in which the first Christians of these lands were baptized: Inn, Rimm, Pimm, who fell on the knees of the apostle after a preach and "they were very amazed, and giving all the poor, they remained with the apostle, who ordained them priests".

Because Saint Andrew is the one who preached the Gospel in the land of our country [1,8], and because it was the centennial year, a *commemorative coin* was issued in his honor. The commemorative medal is ennobled with pure silver 999/1000 and was beaten to the highest numismatic quality, according to the demands of the most demanding collectors. The broadcast is strictly limited. Only 5000 collectors will be proud to have this unique medal.



CONCLUSIONS

When establishing a missionary goal for an apostle, he must be understood in a missionary sense. Through the work of the Saint were Christianize: the Balkan Peninsula, some provinces of Asia Minor, Bitinia, Pontus, the Roman province of Thrace, Crimea, Macedonia, central Greece, the Peloponnese, Scythia. Saint Andrew was assigned to Scythia, in a missionary sense all the duties bearing this name, meaning Scythia Major and a vast territory comprising the northern and western Black Sea lands, and Scythia Minor, the present Dobrogea, therefore the Holy Andrew fulfilled his entire task, preaching in both Scythia Major and Minor, respectively Dobrogea.

The preservation of St. Andrew's work in the memory of the church and beyond is proof of a great missionary work, a work not only begun, or partly realized, but a completed one, completed by the laying of its highest successor the bishop in the local church. Therefore, the Saint "fulfilled the preaching of the Gospel of Christ" in the cities and provinces through which he passed as a missionary, which means that he offered to the founding Churches, and to those structures by which the Christian work continues the unfolding of Christian support activities. The missionary work of St. Apostle Andrew thus appears to us as a fully comprised component of all the missionary activity carried out in the Apostolic Age.

Declaration of November 30th as a national church celebration, through Law no. 147 of 23 July 2012, promulgated by Decree no. 517/20 July 2012, announced by the proclamation of the Apostle Andrew as the Protector of Romania (1997), is the sign of the veneration of the Apostle founded by Romanian Orthodoxy, and an occasion for affirmation of the Romanian identity, which carries the "seal of Rome", but also the seal of Christianity.

The customs related to the night of November 29/30 are a twist of the Christian feast with the ancient Dacian rituals, the people attributing to Saint Andrew features of pre-Christian divinity, becoming the divine personification of the solar wolf. A possible ecumenical touristic route could follow the missionary route of St. Andrew, for those who are believers.

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