

Meaning-Making in an Imperial and Papal Context

The Relics of Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom

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Abstract

From a diachronic perspective, and considering both textual and visual evidence, this article traces the relic cult of ss Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom. It focuses on two historical contexts, hitherto not compared with each other, in which both the relics and the architectural frame in which they were placed acquired significant additional meaning and value: tenth-century Constantinople and sixteenth-century Rome. I will show how Emperor Constantine VII, in the Holy Apostles, and Pope Gregory XIII, in St. Peter's, used the same relics as an instrument in a process of meaning-making, thereby asserting their own authority and prestige.

Keywords

relic cult – diachronic – meaning-making – Rome – Constantinople – translation – appropriation

1 Introduction

Throughout the history of Christianity, rulers and dignitaries, be they Byzantine emperors and patriarchs in the East or kings, popes, and bishops in the West, have used relics as a means of affirming and strengthening their political authority and spiritual prestige.¹ Materially, relics could consist of bits of

¹ For the West see Julia M.H. Smith, "Rulers and Relics c. 750–c. 950: Treasure on Earth, Treas-

dust, oil, stone, or cloth or they could be corporeal remains, varying from bone splinters or members to the complete body of a martyr or saint.² Although of no material worth, relics had intrinsic spiritual value and as such were priceless. However, in order for relics to function as instruments by which authorities could affirm their own positions and increase their power and influence, additional value had to be created.³ This was done by claiming the appropriation and ownership of a relic, and by framing this in writing and liturgy as well as by visual and architectural means. Written evidence such as *vitae* and translation accounts attested to the origins, holiness, and authenticity of relics and of the way relics were obtained.⁴ In the case of tiny fragments, physical frames consisted of precious wrappings and reliquaries, whereas more substantial bodily remains were laid to rest in tombs or sarcophaguses, which in turn could contain smaller boxes. In both cases the containers found their place within the setting of an architectural frame.⁵ The meaning and value of relics was enhanced by their material framing and vice versa.

This article focuses on how the material manifestation of relics served to create meaning in both tenth-century Constantinople and sixteenth-century Rome. It was within each of those two contexts that the relics of St. Gregory

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- sure in Heaven," *Past and Present*, Supplement 5 (2010), 73–96; Edina Bozóky and Anne-Marie Helvétius, ed., *Les reliques. Objets, cultes, symboles. Actes du colloque international de l'Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale (Boulogne-sur-Mer). 4–6 septembre 1997* [Hagiologia. Études sur la Sainteté en Occident—Studies on Western Sainthood 1] (Turnhout, 1999). For the East see Holger A. Klein, "Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft: frühmittelalterliche Residenzen: Gestalt und Zeremoniell: internationales Kolloquium 3./4. Juni 2004 in Istanbul*, ed. F.A. Bauer [Byzas 5] (Istanbul, 2006), 79–99; S. Mergiali-Sahas, "Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics. Use, and Misuse of Sanctity and Authority," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzanzistik* 51 (2001), 41–60.
- 2 Smith, "Rulers and Relics," 75; Michel Kaplan, "De la dépouille à la relique: formation du culte des saints à Byzance du ve au xii^e siècle," in *Les reliques. Objets, cultes, symboles*, 19–38.
 - 3 On the social (re)construction of the value of relics, see Patrick Geary, "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Social Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge, 1986), 169–191, esp. 174–187.
 - 4 Anton Legner, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult zwischen Antike und Aufklärung* (Darmstadt, 1995); Martin Heinzelmann, *Translationsberichte und andere Quellen des Reliquienkultes*, vol. 33: *Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental* (Turnhout, 1979).
 - 5 On the material framing of relics see Jaś Elsner, "Relic, Icon and Architecture. The Material Articulation of the Holy in Eastern Christian Art," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein [Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection] (Dumbarton Oaks, 2015), 13–40. On the role of the church building as a shrine in the appropriation of relics see Mariëtte Verhoeven, "Appropriation and Architecture: Mary Magdalene in Vézelay," in *Monuments & Memory. Christian Cult Buildings and Constructions of the Past. Essays in Honour of Sible de Blaauw*, ed. Mariëtte Verhoeven, Lex Bosman, and Hanneke van Asperen (Turnhout, 2016), 107–120.

Nazianzen were transferred from rather inaccessible locations and elevated to the monumental setting of the Holy Apostles and St. Peter's, respectively, where they were paired with the relics of St. John Chrysostom. As I will show, both Emperor Constantine VII (913–959) and Pope Gregory XIII (1572–1585) imposed new value and meaning on the relics of ss Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom, as well as on the architectural frames in which they were placed, thereby asserting and reinforcing their own authority and prestige.

2 The Relic Cult of Nazianzen and Chrysostom in Constantinople

The mortal remains of ss Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom had originally found their resting place in rather remote places in the Byzantine empire, far away from the capital Constantinople. Gregory, appointed patriarch in 380, was buried in c. 390 in Nazianzus in Cappadocia.⁶ He had left Constantinople and returned to his hometown in 381 after opposition to his position arose at the Second Ecumenical Council of 380. John Chrysostom, patriarch between 398 and 403, was exiled twice from Constantinople by the imperial couple Arcadius and Eudoxia: the first time after he had been condemned at the Council of the Oak in 403, and a second time a year later.⁷ He did not survive this second banishment and died and was buried in Comana in Pontus in 407.

On 27 January 438, the remains of John Chrysostom were translated from Comana in Pontus to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. The translation of Chrysostom had been ordered by Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) on request of the patriarch Proclus.⁸ Proclus brought the body back to Constantinople where it was carried in solemn procession through the city and deposited with much honour in the Holy Apostles. Theodosius and his sister Pulcheria presided over the relic *adventus*.⁹ With his burial in the Holy Apostles, Chrysostom was officially rehabilitated.

The Holy Apostles, built by Emperor Constantius II (337–361) next to the mausoleum of his father Constantine the Great (306–337), is primarily known as the burial place of the Byzantine emperors.¹⁰ In a letter from Empress Pul-

6 Joseph-Marie Sauget, "Gregorio di Nazianzio," in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* VII, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1988), 194–204.

7 Daniele Stiernon, "Giovanni Crisostomo," in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* VI, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1988), 670–700.

8 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7.45, ed. G.C. Hansen (Paris, 2004); Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.36, ed. L. Parmentier and G.C. Hansen (Paris, 2009).

9 Ibid.

10 The great majority of the imperial tombs stood in the two mausoleums of the church.

cheria to Pope Leo I dated 451, Holy Apostles is described as the church where the patriarchs of Constantinople were interred and where the relics of the patriarch Flavian (446–449), who, like Chrysostom, had been banished, were brought by Pulcheria herself.¹¹ Until the sixth century, Chrysostom and Flavian are the only patriarchs whose burial is documented in the Holy Apostles.¹²

There are no contemporary sources that attest where exactly in the Holy Apostles the remains of Chrysostom were placed.¹³ According to the tenth-century liturgical book *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* the body of Chrysostom was deposited “under the sanctuary” or “under the altar” of the Holy Apostles.¹⁴ This was also the location where the relics of the apostles Timothy, Andrew, and the evangelist Luke had been interred in the fourth century.¹⁵ However, the contemporary sources that mention the rediscovery of these relics during the reconstruction of the Holy Apostles by Emperor Justinian I (527–565) and their solemn re-interment on the occasion of the inauguration of the reconstructed church in 550, do not say anything about the relics of Chrysostom.¹⁶

Five centuries after the translation of the relics of John Chrysostom, the remains of Gregory Nazianzen were translated to Constantinople by order of

See Glanville Downey, “The Tombs of the Byzantine Emperors at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 79 (1959), 27–51; Philip Grierson, “The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337–1042); With an Additional Note by Cyril Mango and Ihor Ševčenko,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962), 3–63.

11 “ἐν τῇ ἐνδόξῳ πόλει τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ τῆς ἀγίας μνήμης ἐπισκόπου Φλαβιανοῦ τὸ σῶμα διακεκόμεσται, καὶ ἐν τῇ βασιλικῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων, ἐν ᾗ εἰώθασιν οἱ προλειτουργήσαντες ἐπίσκοποι θάπτεσθαι, τῇ χρεωστουμένη τιμῇ ἀποτέθειται,” in G.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, VI (Florence, 1759–1798), 101.

12 See for the tombs of the patriarchs whose presence in the Holy Apostles is documented R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, première partie, *Le Siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat oecuménique*, vol. 3, *Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1969²), 49. Interestingly enough, Janin does not mention Chrysostom and also Nazianzen among the patriarchs whose tombs were in the Holy Apostles but among the relics that were in the church, *ibid.* 45.

13 Daniele Stiernon mentions in the lemma on Chrysostom in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* (see above), 686, that he was buried next to Arcadius and Eudoxia and refers to Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica*, but the latter does not report this.

14 “ἦτις καὶ ὑπὸ γῆν κέκρυπται κάτωθεν τῆς ἀγίας τραπέζης,” in *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e Codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi*, ed. H. Delehay (Brussels, 1902), 427–428C., 35–36; “κατετέθη ὑπὸ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων,” in *Ibid.*: 426C., 28–30.

15 John Wortley, “The earliest relic-importations to Constantinople,” in *Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204* [Variorum Collected Studies Series 935] (Aldershot, 2009), 207–225, here 214–220; Klein, “Sacred Relics,” 82.

16 Procopius, *De aedificiis* 1.4.21–22, in *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, vol. 4, ed. J. Haury (Leipzig, 1964).

Emperor Constantine VII *Porphyrogennetos* (913–959).¹⁷ According to Symeon Magister (tenth century), one part of the remains was buried in the Holy Apostles and another in the chapel of St. Anastasia.¹⁸ St. Anastasia was the house chapel where Gregory had preached after he arrived in Constantinople from the town of Nazianzus in Cappadocia in 379.¹⁹ The name “Anastasia” referred to Nazianzen’s mission to resurrect the Nicene faith in the Arian-dominated capital. The orations he delivered in the Anastasia included the famous Five Theological Orations that earned him the epithet “the Theologian.” Although it is not inconceivable that Emperor Constantine VII placed some of the relics of Nazianzen in St. Anastasia, the only evidence that supports this is the mention by Symeon Magister. Moreover, as I will show, the sources that can be directly related to Emperor Constantine VII only refer to the translation of Nazianzen’s relics to the Holy Apostles, the place to which the relics of St. John Chrysostom had been transferred five centuries earlier.

The translation and the disposition of the relics of Gregory of Nazianzen in the Holy Apostles took place on 19 January 946.²⁰ The remains were laid to rest in the sanctuary next to the relics of the apostles and those of John Chrysostom. This event has received relatively little attention in research on the Holy Apostles, although it was the culmination of a series of interventions by which the Macedonian emperors affirmed the importance of the Holy Apostles as an imperial church and by which Constantine VII, in particular, legitimized his power and authority.²¹

17 “Μετετέθη δὲ τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ λείψανον ἐκ Καππαδοκίας ἐπὶ τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν παρὰ Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ φιλοχρίστου βασιλέως τοῦ πορφυρογεννήτου, καὶ κατετέθη ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ πανευφύμων ἀποστόλων, ἔνθα καὶ ἡ σύναξις αὐτοῦ ἐπιτελεῖται,” in *Synax.*, 422C., 21–26. For an overview of the most important relic translations to Constantinople after the period of iconoclasm in which emperors were involved see Bernard Flusin, “Construire une nouvelle Jérusalem: Constantinople et les reliques,” in *L'Orient dans l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe. L'invention des origines*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and John Scheid (Turnhout, 2000), 51–70.

18 “καὶ τὰ λείψανα τοῦ θεολόγου Γρηγορίου, ἃ καὶ μερισθέντα τὰ μὲν ἐν τῷ σηκῷ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων ἐτέθησαν, τὰ δὲ ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς ἁγίας μάρτυρος Ἀναστασίας”: Symeon Magister, in *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 755C., 8–10.

19 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.7; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7.5 ed. G.C. Hansen (Turnhout, 2004). On the Anastasia see also Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique*, 22–25; Rochelle Snee, “Gregory Nazianzen’s Anastasia Church: Arianism, the Goths, and Hagiography,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998), 157–186.

20 Bernard Flusin, “Le Panégyrique de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète pour la translation des reliques de Grégoire le Théologien (BHG 728),” *Revue des études byzantines* 57 (1999), 5–97, here 12.

21 The most recent publication on the Holy Apostles is the collection of essays Margaret

According to the *vita* of Basil I (867–886), written by or composed of material assembled by his grandson Constantine VII, the first Macedonian emperor renovated the Holy Apostles and “thus he did wipe out the [traces of] old age and the wrinkles left by time and rendered the church beautiful and wrought new again.”²² Basil’s son and successor Leo VI “the Wise” (886–912) wrote a brief *ekphrasis* on the Church of the Holy Apostles at the end of a panegyric that commemorated the translation of John Chrysostom to the church in 438.²³ Leo’s son Constantine VII ascended the throne under the regency of his mother in 913 and from 920 until 945 he was co-emperor with Romanos Lekapenos and his sons. He became sole emperor on 27 January 945, probably not coincidentally the same date on which the relics of Chrysostom had been transferred to the Holy Apostles in 438. Constantine VII wrote two panegyrics, one on the translation of John Chrysostom, for which he took his father’s panegyric as example, and one on the translation of the relics of Gregory Nazianzen to the Holy Apostles.²⁴

Both panegyrics describe the emperor sending an escort with a silver casket to retrieve the relics. But unlike the emperor Theodosius in John Chrysostom’s case, Constantine, by means of an advance letter, seeks permission from Gregory for the translation of his remains and receives the saint’s agreement.²⁵ In the panegyric on Chrysostom, it is the patriarch Proclus, who requested the translation, who addresses the saint with words of welcome after the body arrives at Constantinople and who transfers the relics to the Holy Apostles, where the saint is deposited in the sanctuary of the church.²⁶ In the pane-

Mullett and Robert G. Ousterhout, eds., *The Holy Apostles. A Lost Monument, a Forgotten Project, and the Presentness of the Past* (Washington DC, 2020), which provides in the introduction an overview of earlier research.

22 *Vita Basilii*, Theophanes Continuatus, Lib. v, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 323–324; Quotation in English from *Chronographiae quae Theophanis continuati nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris amplectitur*, ed. I. Ševčenko (Berlin and New York, 2011), 267.

23 *BHG* 877h, ed. François Halkin in *Douze récits byzantins sur Saint Jean Chrysostome* [Subsidia hagiographica 60] (Brussels, 1977), 487–497. Leo VI in his turn based his panegyric on that of Cosmas Vestitor (eight-ninth century), *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* 8145, ed. K. Dyobouniôtes in *Ἐπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* (*EEBS*) 2 (1925), 70–79. See also Flusin, “Le Panégyrique de Constantin VII,” at 25–31; Theodora Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (Leiden, 1997), 136–138. On Leo’s *ekphrasis* of the Holy Apostles see Liz James and Iuliana Gavril, “A Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople,” *Byzantion* 83 (2013), 149–160.

24 Flusin, “Le Panégyrique de Constantin VII.”

25 The letter of Constantine *Porphyrogennetos* to Gregory Nazianzen (*BHG* 727) has also survived, see *ibid.* 6.

26 *Ibid.* 29–30.

gyric on Gregory Nazianzen, Constantine VII himself comes to meet the body of the saint as it arrives on the Asiatic coast of Constantinople and it is he who carries the silver casket when crossing the Bosphorus.²⁷ The body is first brought to a church in the imperial palace, and from there the saint is carried out of the palace in a reliquary decorated with imperial purple that is carried on the shoulders of high priests, with the emperor and his retinue behind it. And as the procession, more splendid than any other before, proceeds through the city's neighborhoods on foot, the men, women, elderly, youth, and children stand packed in the galleries and porches along the road to catch a glimpse of the saint. The procession ends at the Holy Apostles, where the silver casket is placed in the sanctuary, symmetrically arranged with that of St. John Chrysostom in relation to the altar, under the large dome with the mosaic depicting Christ Pantocrator.

By writing a panegyric for Chrysostom as well as Nazianzen, Constantine VII reinforced the translation of the latter to the Holy Apostles. Furthermore, with the translation of Gregory Nazianzen, Constantine VII not only imitated the translation of Chrysostom, but at the same time surpassed it by diminishing the role of the patriarch and by clearly claiming an active and decisive role for himself in this case. The comparison applies not only to the act of translation for which, unlike the Emperor Theodosius, Constantine had previously requested and received permission from the saint, but also to the fact that he literally and physically linked Nazianzen with Chrysostom. With the burial of Nazianzen next to Chrysostom in the sanctuary of the Holy Apostles, he turned them visibly into a pair.²⁸ A pair of saints, to be precise, whose bodies, full of angelic holiness, became like two Cherubs guarding the altar table containing the relics of the apostles.²⁹

The meaning and value of the relics was visibly enhanced by the material frame in which they were placed, namely the sanctuary at the intersection of the arms of Justinian's cruciform church of the Holy Apostles which had been

27 The details about the translation of Nazianzen presented here are described in paragraphs 23–34 of the panegyric, see *ibid.* 58–67. It had been under the direction of Pulcheria that the ritual of imperial *adventus* of relics including panegyrics written for the occasion was established, see Kenneth Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (Berkeley, 1982), 136–137; Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress. The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London and New York, 1994), 69.

28 Together with St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. John Chrysostom are venerated as the “Three Hierarchs” (feast day January 30) but that tradition was not established before the 1080s: Daniele Stiernon, “Basilio il Grande,” in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* 11, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1983), 924.

29 Flusin, “Le Panégyrique de Constantin VII,” 22 and 64–65, paragraph 31.

renovated by Constantine VII's grandfather Basil I.³⁰ The importance of the Holy Apostles for Constantine VII is expressed in an *ekphrasis* of the church, written in the form of a poem by Constantine of Rhodes, which was commissioned by the emperor. It is likely that the assignment of the *ekphrasis* preceded the translation of the relics of Gregory or Nazianzen because Constantine of Rhodes does not mention Chrysostom or Nazianzen in his poem.³¹ Both the *ekphrasis* and the disposition of the relics in the Holy Apostles must be seen in the light of the legitimation of Constantine VII's emperorship, which was disputed because he was the son born of Leo VI's fourth and uncanonical marriage with Zoe.³² Constantine of Rhodes in his *ekphrasis* repeatedly emphasizes the fact that Constantine VII is a son of his wise father and in his panegyric on Nazianzen's translation Constantine himself mentions that he became the supreme emperor thanks to the protection and intercession of Nazianzen.

The ecclesiastical officer and writer Nikolaos Mesarites, who witnessed the fall of Constantinople in 1204, specifies in his "Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles" the disposition of the relics of Nazianzen next to those of Chrysostom in the sanctuary of the church:

[...] the holy table, on the west, being quadrangular. And on its north side, toward the west, John the Great, the Golden both in tongue and mind [...], had his body laid to rest on the pavement. He pours forth myrrh sweeter than all sweet odours, which gushes up from his holy body as though from a strong-flowing spring and oozes out with the greatest force onto the image of him, formed of silver, which lies on the stone above

30 On the form and plan of Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles see Nikolaos Karydis, "Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles. A New Reconstruction Proposal," in *The Holy Apostles*, 99–130; on later changes to the church, including those under the Macedonian emperors, see Julian Raby "From the Founder of Constantinople to the Founder of Istanbul. Mehmed the Conqueror, Fatih Camii, and the Church of the Holy Apostles," in *ibid.* 247–283.

31 There is no agreement among scholars on the date of the *ekphrasis*. See, most recently, Floris Bernhard, "Constantine the Rhodian's Ekphrasis in Its Contemporary Milieu," in *ibid.* 145–156; Liz James, *Constantine of Rhodes, On Constantinople and the Church of the Holy Apostles. With a New Edition of the Greek text by Ioannes Vassilis* (Farnham, 2012), 141. Both authors do not take the translation of the relics of Nazianzen into account.

32 When in 912 Leo VI died, his brother Alexander succeeded him with the child Constantine as his nominal co-emperor. When Alexander reinstalled Nikolaos, the patriarch who had been deposed by Leo VI for condemning his fourth marriage, the marriage was illegal and Constantine illegitimate. After Alexander's death in 913, Constantine's mother Zoe took control of the government, but her position and that of Constantine remained precarious. See Arnold Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World* (London, 1973), 7–9.

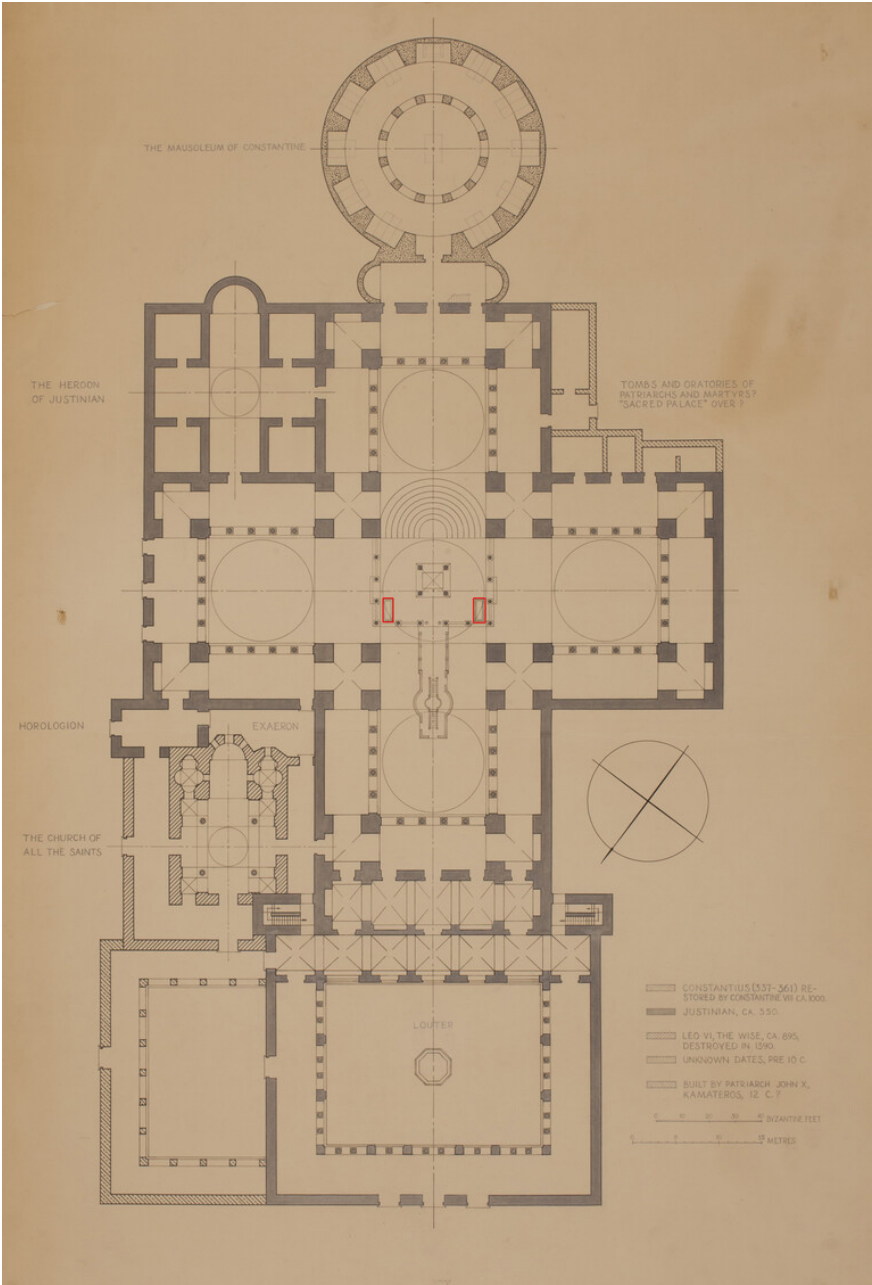


FIGURE 1 Ground plan of the Holy Apostles Church in Constantinople, drawing by Paul Underwood, Paul Atkins Underwood research papers, n.d. Graphite and fine-tip black ink pen on artist board, 101.76 cm×68.74 cm
MS.BZ.019-BF.F.1993.F2825, DUMBARTON OAKS, TRUSTEES FOR HARVARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

the tomb, graven with quite divine power; and it comes out of his head or from his hand, or at times it begins from his knees and goes to his beard and flows over the edge of his episcopal robe and forms a pool about the whole tomb. [...] Towards the south, opposite him, is Gregory, called the Theologian, who breathed fire from his mouth and consumed every heresy with fire, contained in an oblong rectangular sarcophagus of ruddy colour, because he who lies in it was ruddy with spiritual beauty, glowing ever in mind and heart with the fire of the spirit, and with his tongue adorned with the beauty of speech. The holy table of Christ itself conceals within itself, like an inviolate treasure, the bodies of Luke and Andrew and Timothy, who sacrificed themselves for Him; it is fashioned wholly of pure and shining silver.³³

From this description it can be deduced that Chrysostom's tomb was underground, as had already been mentioned in the tenth-century *Synaxarium* (see above). It is not known when the tomb was marked with an image of the saint, but this may have happened in relation to the translation of the relics of Nazianzen. Nazianzen's tomb, which like Chrysostom's must have contained the silver casket with the remains of the saint, was a sarcophagus above ground.

The precise fate of the tombs in the Holy Apostles after the plundering of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade of 1204 is unknown. The Byzantine statesman and historian Niketas Choniates, a contemporary of Mesarites who also witnessed the events of 1204, describes how the Crusaders "broke open the sepulchres of the emperors which were located within the Heroon erected next to the great temple of the Disciples of Christ and plundered them all," but he does not mention the tombs of Nazianzen and Chrysostom in the sanctuary.³⁴ The Crusaders brought a large number of relics with them from Constantinople, which possessed the most extensive collection of relics in the Christian world.³⁵ After the sack of the city, these ended up in churches and monaster-

33 Glanville Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 47, no. 6 (1957), 855–924, here 890. On Mesarites see Michael Angold, *Nicholas Mesarites. His Life and Works (in Translation)* (Liverpool, 2017).

34 *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit, 1984), 357.

35 According to Comte Paul Riant, "Des dépouilles religieuses enlevées à Constantinople au XIII^e siècle," *Mémoires de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France* ser. 4, vol. VI (1875), 1–214, here 38, the relics were distributed as follows: three-eighths each for the Venetians and the Emperor of the Latin Kingdom of Constantinople, Count Baldwin of Flanders, and two-eighths for the French.

ies in the Latin West.³⁶ The dispersal of saint's bones had become a common practice since the ninth-tenth century but it was the "ultimate theft" of 1204 in particular that, as a result of large-scale distribution, led to fragmentation of corporeal relics, whereby the sacred power of a saint also manifested itself in individual parts, and to claims of possession of the same relics in different places.³⁷ Regarding the relics of Nazianzen and Chrysostom, the Anonymous of Halberstadt notes in a list of relics that were taken from Constantinople that they were translated to the cathedral at Halberstadt by Bishop Conrad, who participated in the Fourth Crusade.³⁸ An inventory of the monastery of Clervaux mentions that the head of St. John Chrysostom had been brought to Clervaux, and from there to the abbey church of St. Bernard, a daughter house of Clervaux in Paris,³⁹ while according to *Venetia città nobilissima* by Sansovino (1581), one of his ribs was sent to Venice by the doge Enrico Dandolo, the leader of the Fourth Crusade.⁴⁰

But also in Constantinople, after the reconquest of the city in 1261, the Byzantines claimed possession of relics that were said to have left the city after 1204. Thus, Russian travelers to Constantinople in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries could attest to the presence of the relics of Nazianzen and Chrysostom in the Church of the Holy Apostles. According to Stephen of Novgorod (1350) "when you get to the sanctuary [of the Apostles Church], the tomb of St. Gregory the *Theologos* is on the right, inside the sanctuary railing, and the tomb of John Chrysostom is also there."⁴¹ And Ignatius of Smolensk (1389–1392) notes "In a chapel there [...] are the relics of St. John Chrysostom and the relics of Gregory the Theologian sealed in stone caskets."⁴² The heads of the saints, however, had by now ended up elsewhere in Constantinople: that of Chrysostom is said to have been in a silver casket in the Convent of the Virgin Percec⁴³ and that of Gregory Nazianzen in the Monastery of Peribleptos.⁴⁴

36 Paul Riant, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1877–1878).

37 Geary, "Sacred Commodities," 183–184. On the division of relics and sacred power of individual body parts see Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien. Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (München, 1997²), 149–157.

38 Riant, *Exuviae Sacrae*, 1: 20–21; Alfred J. Andrea, *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade. Revised Edition* (Leiden, 2008), 262.

39 Riant, *Exuviae Sacrae*, 2: 196–197.

40 Ibid. 268.

41 George P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* [Dumbarton Oaks Studies 29] (Washington DC, 1984), 42.

42 Ibid. 94.

43 Ibid. 374–375.

44 Ibid. 278. Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique*, 45, remarks that the Deacon Zosima did not mention seeing the relics of Nazianzen and Chrysostom in Holy Apostles in 1419. He sug-

3 The Relic Cult of Nazianzen and Chrysostom in Rome

In 807 Pope Leo III made donations to churches and monasteries in Rome, listed in the *Liber Pontificalis*. The list mentions a donation of a *canistrum* in silver of three pounds “in oratorio sancti Gregorii qui ponitur in Campo Martis.”⁴⁵ That oratorium was located in a “Greek” women’s monastery on Campo Marzio that was dedicated to ss Mary and Gregory.⁴⁶ That in regard to the last mentioned it concerned Gregory Nazianzen is attested in an archival record of the monastery dated 986: “[...] abbatissa venerabilis monasterii sanctae Dei genitricis semperque virginis Mariae domine nostre et sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni, qui ponitur in Campo martio [...]”.⁴⁷ The legend that nuns from the monastery of St. Anastasia in Constantinople, under persecution by the iconoclastic emperors Leo III (717–741) and Constantine V (741–775), fled to Rome and brought with them the relics of St. Gregory Nazianzen and were granted property by Pope Zacharias (741–752) was not recorded until the early seventeenth century by Giacinto de’ Nobili.⁴⁸ The translation narrative recounts Symeon Magister’s claim that nuns of St. Anastasia possessed relics of Nazianzen but dates their transfer from Constantinople to Rome two centuries earlier than the arrival of the relics in the Byzantine capital under Constantine VII *Porphyrogennetos*.⁴⁹

The oratory or small church within the Monastery of S. Maria in Campo Marzio dedicated to S. Gregory, which is first mentioned in Leo III’s donation of

gests that this means that possibly the tomb of Chrysostom was transferred to Hagia Sophia sometime after the 1390s since his feast day was solemnised there in the last years of the Byzantine Empire. This decision might have been influenced by the deteriorating condition of the Church of the Holy Apostles in the fifteenth century. However, Janin does not explain the consequences of the condition of the building for the other tombs in the church. See also Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 302.

45 *Liber Pontificalis*, 98, Leo III, c. 80, ed. L. Duchesne (Paris, 1886–1892).

46 Guy Ferrari, *Early Roman Monasteries*, 207–209; Jean-Marie Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne* (milieu du VI^e s.—fin du IX^e s.), 1. Texte (Brussels, 1980), 34. For the identification of the monastery as “Greek” see also Herman Geertman, *More veterum. Il Liber Pontificalis e gli edifici ecclesiastici di Roma nella tarda antichità e nell’alto medioevo* (Groningen, 1975), 126–127.

47 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms Vat. lat. 11391, no. 19. Published by E. Carusi, *Cartario di S. Maria in Campo Marzio (986–1199)* (Rome, 1948), 3, no. 1. See also Paola Boccardi Storoni, “La Chiesa di San Gregorio Nazianzeno,” in *Santa Maria in Campo Marzio*, ed. F. Borsi et al. (Rome, 1987), 101–149, here 105, n. 9.

48 Giacinto de’ Nobili, *La Cronica del venerabile monasterio di Santa Maria in Campo Marzio di Roma* (Rome, 1617).

49 Earlier, Cesare Baronio had stated in the *Martyrologium Romanum* (Rome, 1586), 258, note 3, that the tradition that Greek nuns who fled from Constantinople for the barbarians took the relics with them, could not be dated and was only transmitted orally.

807, became known as S. Gregorio Nazianzeno.⁵⁰ The earliest testimony to the presence of the relics of Nazianzen in S. Gregorio Nazianzeno, is an inscription, now lost, which records the presence and the reburial of the *corpus* of the saint under the altar of the church in 1505, and the translations from Nazianzus to Constantinople and from there to Rome, but without dates.⁵¹

How and in which manner the relics of John Chrysostom came to Rome is not documented.⁵² The first mention of the presence of the relics in Old St. Peter's, by Nicolò Signorelli, dates from c. 1425: "*item unum parvulum tabernaculum de cristallo guarnito de argento, in quo est unus digitorum Sancti Joannis Chrisostomi cuius corpus iacet in dicta ecclesia.*"⁵³ Tiberio Alfarano mentions in his description of Old St. Peter's, written around 1582, that the relics of Chrysostom had been in an altar that was located in the corridor (see no. 164 on Fig. 2a) connecting the rotundas of S. Maria delle Febbre (see letter e on Fig. 2a) and S. Petronilla (see letter d on Fig. 2a), the former Severian and Honorian mausolea respectively.⁵⁴ When, in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, S. Petronilla and the connection to S. Maria delle Febbre had to be demolished to make way for the construction of the southern transept arm of New St. Peter's, the relics of Chrysostom were transferred to the Lambert and Servatius altar (see no. 168 on Fig. 2a) in S. Maria delle Febbre, which had functioned as the church's sacristy since the fifteenth century. Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santori mentions in his autobiography that, in 1567, he dedicated the altar to "his advocate" St. John Chrysostom, and to ss Lambert and Servatius.⁵⁵

50 A part of the masonry of the surviving building is dated to the eighth-ninth century. See Boccardi Storoni, "San Gregorio Nazianzeno," 107; Robert Coates-Stephens, "Dark Age Architecture in Rome," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 65 (1997), 177–232, here 195–198. For a (building) history of S. Gregorio Nazianzeno and a description and photos of its current state, see Peter Cornelius Claussen, *Die Kirchen der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter 1050–1300*, Band 3, G-L (Stuttgart, 2010), 215–234.

51 "SITVM EST SVB HOC DI / VINO ALTARI CORP. DIV. / GREGORII EPI. NAZIANZENI ET PATRIARCHAE IN COSTANTINOPOLI SVB THEODOSIO SENIORE ANNO DOMINI CCCXC / OBIIT TRASLATVM INDE CORPVS COSTANTINO / POLIM DEINDE IN VRBE ROMA ET IN HAC ECCLESIA CONDI / TVM EST ET NVP. SVB IVLIO SECVNDO MDV IVNII / VO XXV POSTREMO EODEM ANNO MENSE IVLII / SVB ABBATISSA MARTIA DE PALOSIIS." In Boccardi Storoni, "San Gregorio Nazianzeno," 103.

52 Stiernon, "Giovanni Crisostomo," 685, mentions that according to tradition the relics came to Rome at the time of the crusade of 1204 but that this is unlikely because they were seen later in Constantinople.

53 Nicolò Signorelli, *De antiquitatibus Urbis Romae*, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3536, fol. 56v, as quoted in Tiberio Alfarano, *De Basilicae Vaticanae antiquissima et nova structura*, ed. Michele Cerrati (Rome, 1914), 137–138, n. 4.

54 Alfarano, *De Basilicae Vaticanae*, 137–140.

55 *Autobiografia di Monsignor G. Antonio Santori Cardinale di S. Severina*, ed. Giuseppe

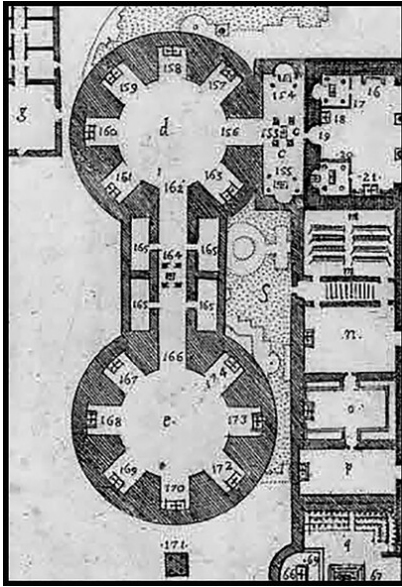


FIGURE 2A

Detail showing the rotundas of S. Maria delle Febbre (letter e) and S. Petronilla (letter d)

SIGN. DY 100-1900 GR RARO, BIBLIOTHECA HERZIANA, MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUT FÜR KUNSTGESCHICHTE, ROME

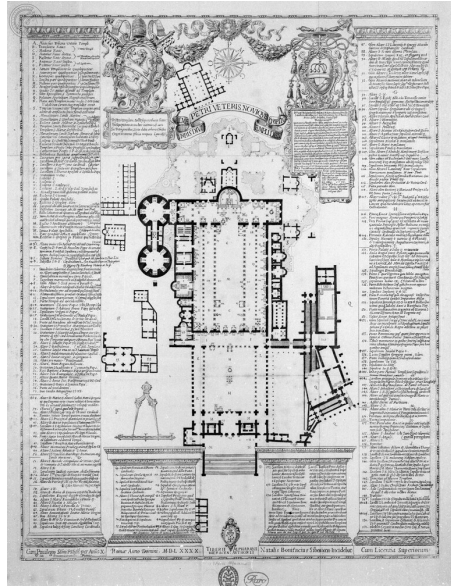


FIGURE 2B

Tiberio Alfarano, ground plan of Old St. Peter's in Rome, with its relationship to New St. Peter's, 1590, engraving

SIGN. DY 100-1900 GR RARO, BIBLIOTHECA HERZIANA, MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUT FÜR KUNSTGESCHICHTE, ROME

On 11 June 1580, by order of Pope Gregory XIII (1572–1585), the relics of St. Gregory Nazianzen were translated from the oratory dedicated to the saint in the monastery of S. Maria in Campo Marzio to the Gregorian Chapel in New St. Peter's.⁵⁶ The Gregorian Chapel (see no. 2 on Fig. 5) was the first completed

Cugnoni [Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria 12] (Rome, 1889), 327–372, here 344. When Santori dedicated the altar he was archbishop of Santa Severina in southern Italy and counsellor of Pope Pius v. Also, after he had been created cardinal in 1570, he was known as Cardinal Santa Severina. For the biography of Santori see Johannes Madey, “Santori (Santorio), Giulio Antonio,” *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 7 (1994), 1, 342–344.

⁵⁶ The most important sources on the translation of 1580 are: Francesco Mucanzio, *Diaria Caeremoniarum*, which survives in various manuscripts in Vatican City in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: MS Vat. lat. 12286 (used here, as transcribed in K. Zollikofer, *Die Capella Gregoriana. Der erste Innenraum von Neu-Sankt-Peter in Rom und seine Genese* (Basel, 2016), 250–256), 12313, 12314, MS Barb. lat. 2802, 2803; Fortunio Lelio, *Pompa et*

vaulted space in New St. Peter's. The construction had probably already begun under the direction of Michelangelo (d. 1564) and the shell had been finished under Giacomo della Porta by the beginning of 1578.⁵⁷ From that same year, Pope Gregory XIII is mentioned in the sources as the person who commissioned the decoration of the interior of the chapel, from then on referred to as the Gregorian Chapel.⁵⁸ However, the name refers not only to the pope but also to his namesake Gregory of Nazianzen, the translation of whose relics was originally planned for 16 March 1578 but had to be postponed due to heavy rains.⁵⁹

Although because of the similarity in name the choice for the transfer of the relics of Gregory of Nazianzen to the pope's chapel seems self-evident, it appears from the sources pertaining to the translation of the relics in 1580 that the motives behind it are more complex. According to the *Diaria Caeremoniarum* written by the papal master of ceremonies and eye-witness Francesco Mucanzio, Ugo Boncompagni chose to be named Pope Gregory XIII in honor of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) because he had been appointed cardinal on his feast day, 12 March, 1565.⁶⁰ There is no evidence that Gregory XIII had venerated Gregory Nazianzen before he decided to translate his relics to New St. Peter's.⁶¹ It would therefore have been easier to understand Gregory XIII choosing to translate the relics of Pope Gregory the Great whose tomb stood

apparato fatto in Roma nel giorno della Traslazione del Corpo di San Gregorio Nazianzeno da Santa Maria di Campo Marzo nella Cappella Gregoriana (Venice, 1585); Giovanni Berardino Rastelli, *Descrittione della pompa et del apparato fatto in Roma per la Translatione del corpo di San Gregorio Nazianzeno dal monistero di Santa Maria di Campo Marzio nella Chiesa di San Pietro nella Cappella Gregoriana* (Perugia, 1580).

57 For a synopsis of the building history of the Gregorian Chapel see Zollikofer, *Capella Gregoriana*, 38–48; G. Möller, *Römische Papstkapellen des Cinquecento* (Petersberg, 2018), 57–59.

58 Zollikofer, *Cappella Gregoriana*, 33.

59 Mucanzio, *Diaria Caeremoniarum*, fol. 424v.

60 Ibid. fol. 4r–v.

61 According to Ludwig von Pastor, *History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages* 20 (London, 1924–1953), 569, particular veneration of Gregory Nazianzen by Gregory XIII appears from the fact that he ordered Cesare Baronio to write a *vita* of the saint. In the dedication to Gregory XIII, however, Baronio mentions that the *vita* was written on the occasion of the translation of 1580 (*Acta Sanctorum*, 68 vols., ed. J. Bollandus (Antwerp, 1643–1966), Maii II (1680), 373–374). More recently, both Gianni Pittiglio and Gina Möller hypothesised unconvincingly that Gregory XIII had a special personal interest in Gregory Nazianzen. See Gianni Pittiglio, “La Traslazione di S. Gregorio di Nazianzo tra urbanistica e opere di misericordia,” in *Unità e frammenti di modernità. Arte e scienza nella Roma di Gregorio XIII Boncompagni (1572–1585)*, congress proceedings (Rome, American Academy, 17–19 June, 2004), ed. C. Cieri Via, I.D. Rowland, M. Ruffini (Pisa, 2012), 89–110, there 89; Möller, *Römische Papstkapellen*, 78.

in the outer south side aisle of Old St. Peter's.⁶² However, the *Diaria Caeremoniarum* and Fortunio Leli, author of a commemorative booklet on the translation of 1580, mention that Gregory XIII originally wanted to translate the relics of St. John Chrysostom to his chapel in New St. Peter's.⁶³ In his recent monograph on the Gregorian Chapel, Kaspar Zollikofer suggests that the idea of transferring Chrysostom's relics to the Gregorian Chapel came from Cardinal Santori.⁶⁴ He had, as described above, dedicated the altar in S. Maria delle Febbre to his "advocate" Chrysostom. It was also at Santori's insistence that the Congregazione dei Greci was founded in 1573. They were given the task of binding the Greek and other Eastern Christian communities in Italy closer to Rome. Santori was a central figure for church politics under Gregory XIII, aiming, as they did, for a reunion of the Western and Eastern Churches. Santori also became the patron of the *Collegio Greco*, founded in 1577 by Pope Gregory, with the remit to train young clergy in the Byzantine rite and to reform the Basilian order.

Although it is plausible that Santori provided Pope Gregory with the idea of transferring the relics of Chrysostom to the Gregorian chapel, this is not suggested in the contemporary sources. Instead, the Portuguese Aquiles Estaço (Achilles Statius) is mentioned as the person who played a key role in the pope's decision to transfer Nazianzen's relics rather than those of Chrysostom. Estaço was a philologist and secretary of papal briefs, and under Pope Pius v he had translated sermons by the Eastern church fathers which had been included in the *Breviarium Romanum* in 1568. According to the *Diaria Caeremoniarum* and Lelio, on the feast day of Chrysostom, Estaço went to the altar of the saint in the sacristy of Old St. Peter's to pray.⁶⁵ There he mentioned to one of the *curatores* of the sacristy his surprise that the remains of the church father were just as inaccessible to believers as those of St. Gregory Nazianzen in the monastery of

62 Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's* (Cambridge, 1996), 24. Rice suggests that the fact that Gregory XIII chose not to translate the relics of the illustrious Gregory the Great, but instead those of the "lesser" Gregory Nazianzen, meant that the pope, like many of his contemporaries, regarded the Constantinian nave as permanent and inviolable.

63 "ab initio cogitasse de transferendo in d(ict)o Sacello no(n) B(eati) Gregorij Nazianzeni, sed B(eati) Jo(hannis) Chrisostomi corpore," in Mucanzio, *Diaria Caeremoniarum*, fol. 322r; transcr. Zollikofer, *Cappella Gregoriana*, 253; "il Papa uolea trasferire nella sua Cappella il corpo del suddetto San Gio. Grisostomo," in Lelio, *Pompa et apparato*, fol. 4v., transcr. Zollikofer, *Cappella Gregoriana*, 263.

64 Zollikofer, *Cappella Gregoriana*, 227.

65 Mucanzio, *Diaria Caeremoniarum*, fol. 322r; Lelio, *Pompa et apparato*, fol. 4v. Estaço himself wrote a poem on Gregory Nazianzen (published in *ibid.* fols. 5v–6v) in which he mentions that he notified Gregory XIII about the existence of the relics of the saint.

S. Maria in Campo Marzio, and that it would be desirable if the pope at least transferred the relics of his namesake to a more accessible place. The *curator* and another priest then made sure that Estaço's remark reached the pope. The latter ordered an inspection of the situation in S. Maria in Campo Marzio and he would have then decided to transfer the relics of Nazianzen to the Gregorian Chapel.⁶⁶

It appears from the sources that Gregory XIII wanted to transfer the relics of an Eastern church father to the Gregorian Chapel, but the fact that he ultimately chose the remains of Nazianzen over those of Chrysostom must have been determined by the significant and visible impact he could achieve with the translation of the former. Nazianzen's relics were not only the first to be placed in New St. Peter's but, unlike those of Chrysostom that were already present in Old St. Peter's, they came from elsewhere in the city. The translocation from a different place altogether gave the pope the opportunity to make the translation of Nazianzen's relics from the monastery of S. Maria in Campo Marzio to St. Peter's the event of the year in 1580.⁶⁷

Pope Gregory XIII went to some lengths to introduce, perform, and commemorate the translation of the relics of Nazianzen. By order of the pope, Francesco Panigarola delivered a laudatory sermon on Nazianzen in St. Peter's on 4 June 1580.⁶⁸ One day before the actual translation, the casket (*capsa*) of cypress wood that contained the relics of Nazianzen was opened and the relics taken out and placed in a new casket of the same material and displayed on the altar of the oratory in S. Maria in Campo Marzio. On the same day, Cardinal Santori took a collection of relics from St. Peter's sacristy that were to be deposited in the main altar of the Gregorian Chapel and placed them on the main altar in Old St. Peter's.⁶⁹

66 Tiberio Alfarano tells the same story but instead of mentioning Estaço's name he describes him as "one of the learned Greek men of Rome" ("uno de quelli tali dottissimo homini greci di Roma") in Alfarano, *De Basilicae Vaticanae*, 166–167.

67 Zollikofer, *Cappella Gregoriana*, 127, mentions this argument as well but sees it as a side effect of the decision to transfer the relics of Nazianzen, which according to the author was based on the similarity in name and the fact that the relics of Nazianzen were even more hidden than those of Chrysostom.

68 Francesco Panigarola, "Predica in laude di San Gregorio Nazianzeno," in *Prediche di Monsig. Rever.mo Panigarolo Vescovo d'Asti* (Venice, 1592), fols. 263r–276v.

69 Mucanzio, *Diaria Caeremoniarum*, fol. 372r. Large parts of the Constantinian church were demolished from the beginning of the sixteenth century but a section of the nave, aisles, apse, and the main altar with the tomb of the apostle Peter were preserved and protected from the construction activity for the new church, see Rice, *Altars and Altarpieces*, 17 and n. 2.

The actual translation involved a large and solemn procession from the monastery of S. Maria in Campo Marzio to New St. Peter's. According to the previously mentioned seventeenth-century monastery chronicle, the pope left an arm of the saint for the nuns of S. Maria in Campo Marzio in memory of the translation and as a token of thanks for preserving the body of Nazianzen for such a long time.⁷⁰ However, no mention is made of this in the contemporary sources, but rather of the fact that the nuns invoked the saint and were crying when his relics were taken from their monastery.⁷¹

The translation procession is described in two commemorative booklets, by the already mentioned Fortunio Lelio and by Giovanni Berardino Rastelli.⁷² For the procession, the casket with the relics was placed on a richly decorated catafalque with a baldachin of silver cloth. The casket was decorated with images of the saint in episcopal vestments. Many buildings along the route were decorated with tapestries, paintings, plates, and placards bearing epigrams and eulogies on Nazianzen, in Latin and in Greek. After the procession arrived at the stairs leading to the atrium of St. Peter's, the catafalque was put on the ground. The pope, seated on the *sedia gestatoria*, was carried down from the portico of the church to the foot of the stairs. From there he walked to the catafalque where, shedding tears, he embraced the casket and kissed it. After that, the shrine was carried through the nave of Old St. Peter's to the Gregorian Chapel and placed on the altar. Earlier that day Cardinal Santori had consecrated the altar in the Gregorian Chapel in honour of the Virgin Mary and St. Gregory Nazianzen and, as part of the same ceremony, the relics from the sacristy that had been placed on the main altar of St. Peter's the day before were translated to the altar in the Gregorian Chapel.⁷³

On 12 June, the relics of Nazianzen were placed in a lead box that had also been consecrated by Cardinal Santori, and put inside the altar of the Gregorian Chapel by Pope Gregory XIII himself.⁷⁴ The altar already contained the silver casket with the relics taken from the sacristy of St. Peter's. Remarkably enough, this collection of relics included, beside fragments of the jaw of St. Jerome and an arm of St. Basil of Caesarea, also a fragment of an arm of St. Gregory Nazianzen. The relics are mentioned in an inscription on a silver plate

70 De' Nobili, *Cronica*, 22.

71 Mucanzio, *Diaria Caeremoniarum*, fol. 360r.

72 See above, note 49. See also Minou Schraven, *Festive Funerals in Early Modern Italy. The Art and Culture of Conspicuous Commemoration* (Farnham, 2014), 132–136.

73 Mucanzio, *Diaria Caeremoniarum*, fol. 352v.

74 Francesco Stagnaro was paid on 22 March 1579 for the production of the lead box in which the relics were placed, see Möller, *Römische Papstkapellen*, 78, n. 508.



FIGURE 3 Main altar of the Gregorian Chapel, St. Peter's, Rome

PHOTO: FABBRICA DI SAN PIETRO IN VATICANO, ROME

that, together with an epitaph for Nazianzen, was also placed in the altar.⁷⁵ The fact that relics of Nazianzen and of the Western church father Jerome and the Eastern church father Basil were already apparently present in Old St.

⁷⁵ Mucanzio, *Diaria Caeremoniarum*, fols. 372r–373r.

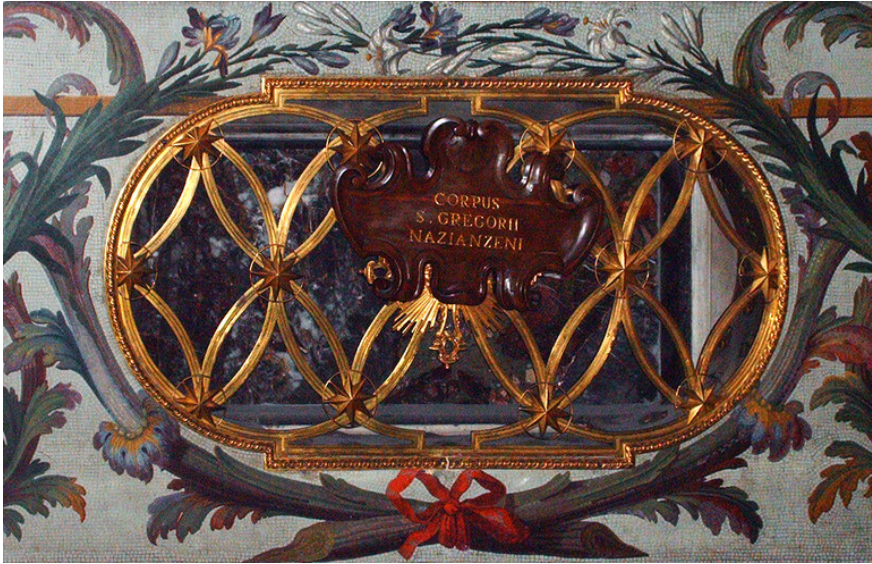


FIGURE 4 Main altar of the Gregorian Chapel, St. Peter's, Rome. Detail showing the *fenestella confessionis* offering a view to the tomb with the relics of St. Gregory Nazianzen

PHOTO: CENTRE FOR ART HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION, RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN

Peter's, indicates once more that the symbolic significance of the relocation of relics from elsewhere, and the fact that he would be able to claim that act, was decisive in Pope Gregory's decision to translate the relics of Nazianzen from S. Maria in Campo to New St. Peter's.

In the Gregorian Chapel the relics of Gregory Nazianzen were given the most prominent place in the main altar, but the iconographic program of the chapel, executed after the translation of 1580, was dedicated not only to the saint.⁷⁶ The side altars in the *navi piccole* of the Gregorian Chapel were each dedicated to another Eastern and another Western church father, respectively St. Basil of Caesarea and St. Jerome. The mosaics on the pendentives of the chapel represent ss Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Jerome, and Gregory the Great. The main altarpiece's dedication to the Virgin Mary is echoed in the mosaic decoration of the lunettes representing the Annunciation and the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah foretelling the Virgin's birth.

⁷⁶ For the interpretation of the iconographic program in the light of the church politics of Pope Gregory XIII, see Rice, *Altars and Altarpieces*, 25–26; Zollikofer, *Cappella Gregoriana*, in several places; Möller, *Römische Papstkapellen*, 74–80.

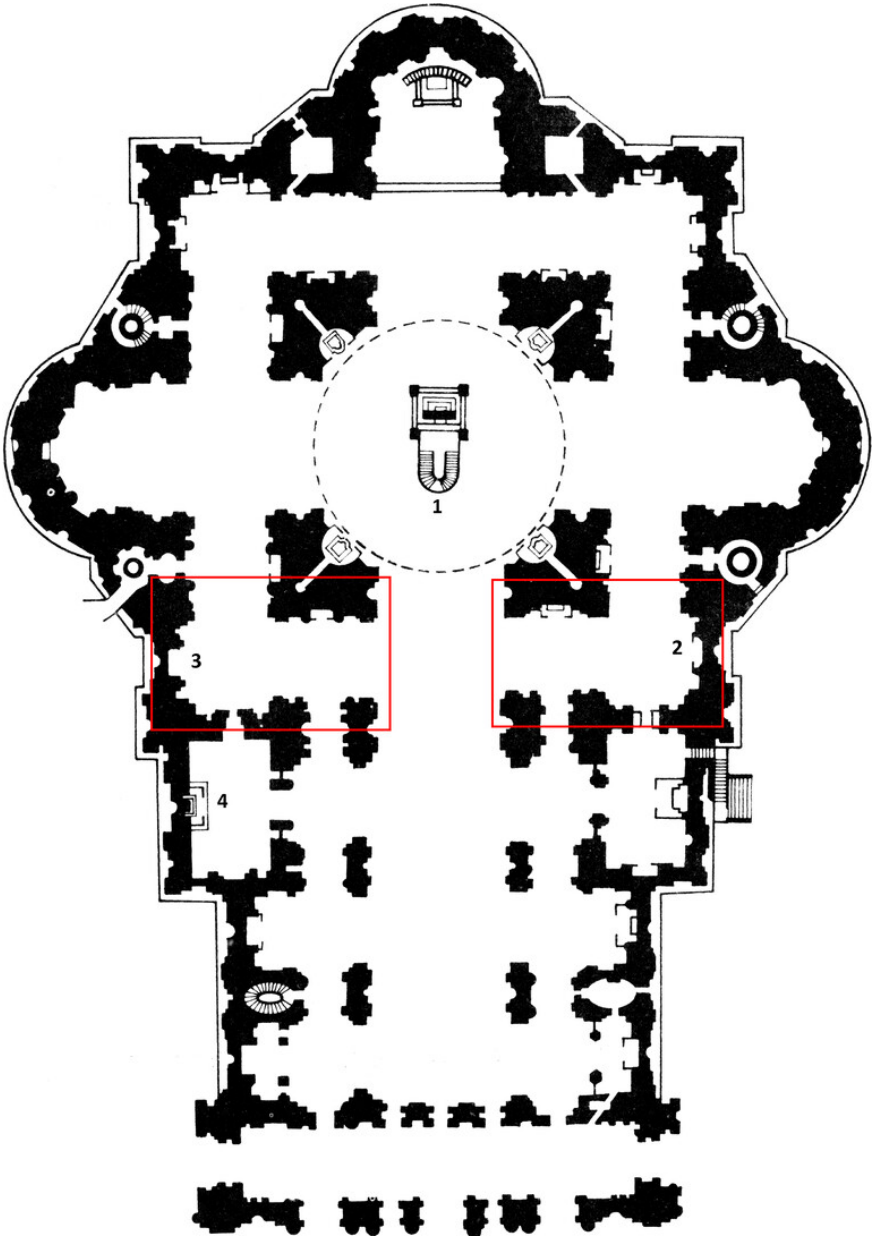


FIGURE 5 Plan of New St. Peter's with the grave of the apostle Peter (no. 1), the Gregorian Chapel (no. 2), the Capella Clementina (no. 3), and the Cappella del Coro (no. 4)
PHOTO (ADAPTATION): CENTRE FOR ART HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION, RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN

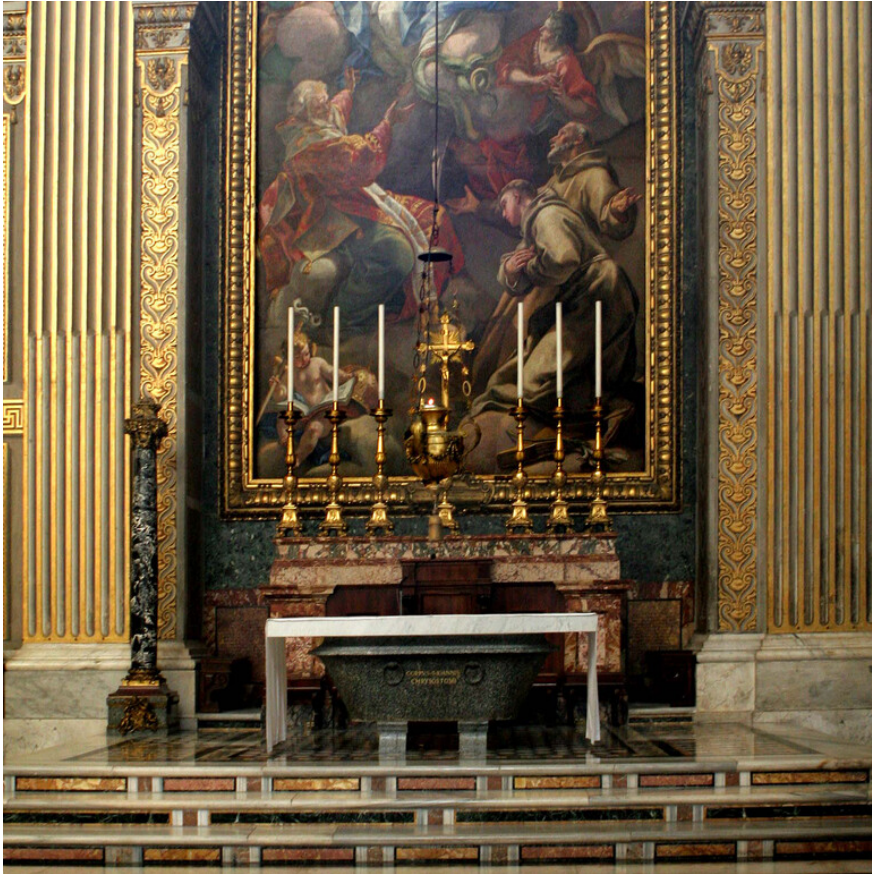


FIGURE 6 Tomb with the *corpus* of St. John Chrysostom, Capella del Coro, St. Peter's, Rome
 PHOTO: CENTRE FOR ART HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION, RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN

Pope Gregory XIII did not intend to limit the central theme of Western and Eastern church fathers to the Gregorian Chapel. After he had cancelled the plan to transfer the relics of Chrysostom to the Gregorian Chapel, he planned instead to dedicate the south eastern corner chapel of St. Peter's, the present-day Cappella Clementina, to St. John Chrysostom and to transfer his relics to that (see no. 3 on Fig. 5).⁷⁷ This plan was not implemented, and in 1626 it was finally Pope Urban VIII who had the relics of Chrysostom transferred to the Cappella del Coro in the nave of New St. Peter's (see no. 4 on Fig. 5 and Fig. 6).

⁷⁷ Zollikofer, *Cappella Gregoriana*, 227–228.



FIGURE 7 Reliquaries of SS. Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom, patriarchal church of St. George, Istanbul

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR, 2019

Pope Gregory XIII also wanted to dedicate the two western corner chapels to two fathers of the Western church, but he knew that he would not live long enough to see them completed. But to anticipate the translation of the relics of Leo I and Gregory the Great to the western corner chapels in New St. Peter's, he had their altars in Old St. Peter's decorated.⁷⁸

4 Conclusion

Both Emperor Constantine VII and Pope Gregory XIII created similar decisive roles for themselves in the transfer of the relics of Gregory Nazianzen and their disposition in a monumental setting through which the relics gained new meaning and which, conversely, enhanced the configuration of the sacred

⁷⁸ Ibid. 230.



FIGURE 8 Reliquaries of SS. Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom, patriarchal church of St. George, Istanbul

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR, 2019

space in which they were placed. In each case, the transfer of relics was from an inaccessible and rather humble location to the most worthy burial place of Constantinople and of Rome, and in both cases the transfer involved a procession that was unprecedented in its lavishness. Emperor Constantine VII followed in the footsteps of his predecessor Theodosius II but surpassed him. By linking Nazianzen with Chrysostom both in writing and materially, Constantine VII appropriated the latter and could claim the ownership of the paired placement of the relics of the two saintly patriarchs in the sanctuary of the Holy Apostles, an intervention with significant symbolic meaning and visual impact.

Pope Gregory XIII, in his turn, maintained the tradition of the papal church as the keeper of important relics with the first transfer of the relics of Nazianzen to the Gregorian Chapel, the first part of New St. Peter's to be opened for worship. The fact that it involved the remains of an Eastern church father gave Gregory the opportunity to reinforce his ideological intention of re-uniting the Western and Eastern churches, just as he had wanted to do with the placement of the relics of Chrysostom and the Western church fathers in the other corner chapels.

Although the provenance of the relics that were kept in Rome for centuries is and remains uncertain, they were “given back” by Pope John Paul II to Patriarch Bartolomew I of Constantinople in November 2004. During a solemn mass in St. Peter’s the relics of Nazianzen and Chrysostom, resting in two crystal and alabaster reliquaries, were brought to the altar and were handed over by the pope to the patriarch. The service in St. Peter’s was followed by one in the ecumenical patriarchal Church of St. George in Istanbul, where the reliquaries—with the bones visibly present—were placed next to each other in the left aisle of the church.

According to the patriarchate, the relics were taken to Rome after the Fourth Crusade and were returned by the Vatican as a visible gesture in acknowledgement of the tragic events of 1204, for which Pope John Paul II officially apologized on 29 June 2004, the feast day of ss Peter and Paul.⁷⁹ While the patriarchate in Istanbul claims the rightful return of the relics of Nazianzen and Chrysostom, the Vatican’s reading is that “a substantial part of the relics” was handed over, thereby implying that there are still body parts of the Eastern Church Fathers present in the altars in St. Peter’s, and no mention was made of the Fourth Crusade. Instead, the Vatican website records the tradition that the relics of Nazianzen were brought to Rome by nuns from St. Anastasia in Constantinople as early as the eighth century, and no explanation is given for the provenance of the relics of Chrysostom.⁸⁰ But both parties agree that the return of the relics was a significant symbolic step towards a reconciliation between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.⁸¹ However, the ceremonies and statements that accompanied the ceremonial transfer of the relics from Rome to Istanbul in 2004 are a testimony, above all, to the fact that these relics are still part of a living tradition in both East and West.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Elena Boeck, Sible de Blaauw, and Janneke Raaijmakers † for their valuable comments on the draft version of this article.

79 John Chrysavgis, *The Ecumenical Patriarchate Today: Sacred Greek Orthodox Sites of Istanbul* (Istanbul, 2014), 38–40.

80 http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/2004/documents/ns_lit_doc_20041127_reliquie_it.html.

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