

Article

The Contribution of Ss. Cyril and Methodius to Culture and Religion

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Abstract: The Byzantine mission of saint brothers Cyril and Methodius had a major impact on the spiritual history of Great Moravia. In the centuries that followed, their works paved the way for the political and historical development of the Slavic nations, mainly in South-East and East Europe. The mission, which reached Great Moravia in 863, had several dimensions. The most important were evangelism and the cultural and civilizational dimensions. Translations of the Gospel and liturgical texts into Old Church Slavonic intensified the religious life of our ancestors and laid the foundations of literature and culture for almost the entire Slavic world. From this point of view, research should be focused on the role and reflection of this historical and cultural heritage in the ecclesiastical and spiritual, national and cultural life of the Slavic nations. The aim of this article is to assess the significance of Christian and Byzantine cultural values in terms of the collective Slavic identity. The Cyrillo-Methodian idea manifests itself in the history of the Slavic world as a complex but solid foundation, capable of renewing the sleeping or inhibited energy and values in the areas of faith, culture, literature, arts, education, upbringing, as well as national consciousness.

Keywords: Ss. Cyril and Methodius; Old Church Slavonic; culture



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1. Introduction

History generally includes those aspects of the past that people remember and interpret to understand the course of time. People recall major and minor political changes that accompanied the development of human society. Many of these changes have turned into historic events and serve as a guide in the temporal delimitation of history. Their effects can be seen in all spheres of public life—political, social, economic, cultural and others. Today, they are an important part of professional discourse. One of the crucial turning points in the history of Slavs—with a long-lasting impact on their cultural history and identity—is the Byzantine mission of Ss. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius in Great Moravia in the second half of the 9th century. The impact of this mission on shaping the European cultural identity is largely accepted by the scientific community.

The Frankish and Byzantine Empires were among the most important political bodies in early medieval Europe. Both empires tried to expand their influence to the territories inhabited by the Slavs. This power struggle was also evident in Great Moravia, where the Byzantine mission headed by Constantine the Philosopher (better known by his monastic name Cyril, which he accepted shortly before his death upon entering the monastery) and his brother Methodius, was underway in the 860s. The Thessaloniki brothers laid the foundations of Slavic culture—they created the Slavic language and script and laid extensive foundations for Slavonic literature in a very short period of time. Although their mission was only a short historical episode, it had an irreplaceable role in the formation of European cultural identity. Ss. Cyril and Methodius were among the representatives of the Byzantine cultural elite, and the Slavs could better familiarize themselves with the Christian values and Byzantine culture through their mission. The work, which they authored together with their disciples, was received warmly by several Slavic peoples

and became an effective element in their self-definition. The heritage of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, which is preserved in the Old Church Slavonic writings, is still a relevant and current resource in today's pluralistic Europe. Interest in the spiritual and cultural activities of these co-patrons of Europe can therefore be noted in a number of European nations, which creates a certain kind of resource base for an exemplary cultural unification of East and West. The value of their work consists in uniting the nations through evangelism, emerging ecumenical dialog and education. The knowledge of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission, which determined the further development of society, as well as understanding the correlation mechanisms between the script, languages, and religious, national, cultural, and political development, is a prerequisite for understanding the contemporary society and a more detailed understanding of the Cyrillo-Methodian work.

The representatives of the Byzantine Empire used Christianization and missionary activities to form relations with the surrounding ethnic groups and their rulers. In addition to the religious and cultural dimensions, they also undoubtedly pursued political ends—the acceptance of primacy of the emperor and the Byzantine Empire itself. The individual Byzantine rulers regarded the spread of Christianity as a fundamental cultural mission, which was necessary for the salvation of mankind. The borders of the empire were considered to be identical with the boundaries of Christianity, and the emperor was the bearer of the mission and also the highest missionary. Missionary work and politics were inextricably linked and intertwined. The awareness of a common faith and culture was purposefully formed between the emperor and pagan rulers who accepted Christianity from Constantinople. Each ethnicity that adopted Christianity was also forced to accept the supremacy of the Byzantine Empire and its civilization and development. The Byzantines brought Christianity to many nations in this manner—the Goths, Turkic tribes and many others (Hurbanič 2005a, pp. 3–5; Ševčenko 1988–1989, pp. 7–27)—in the period from the 4th to 7th century. In the 9th century, the Byzantine Empire intensified its Christianization efforts thanks to Fotios the Patriarch of Constantinople (858–867, 877–86), an important thinker who focused on the Christianization of the Slavs.¹ When Fotios wrote the encyclical addressed to the Eastern Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem in 867, he mentioned the successful conversion of Bulgarians and Russians to Christianity and the return of the Armenians to the Orthodox Church because in 451 they failed to formally recognize the outcomes of the IV General Council of Chalcedon (as evidenced by the theoretical work by M. Hurbanič (2005b, pp. 103–12), these references do not completely correspond to reality). The Fotios encyclical, on the contrary, does not mention the successful Byzantine mission of Ss. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia, nor does it mention their earlier mission to the Khazars. The first common and undisputed diplomatic experience for Methodius and his younger brother Constantine-Cyril in the service of Byzantium was the message for the Khazars. Methodius' most important task was probably to form an alliance or to renew the alliance between the Byzantine emperor and the Khazar Khaganate. In summer 860 the Russians attacked Constantinople, and therefore the imperial court decided to find allies against them. Since the Russians were in the neighborhood of the Khazars, and considering their previous good diplomatic relations, the Byzantines referred to them. At the end of the year 860 the imperial mission, part of which were Constantine and Methodius, set out on its way. The mission of Ss. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius also had an evangelistic character. St. Constantine-Cyril had a doctrinal dispute during his visit to the Kagan, after which 200 Khazars were reported to be baptized. The mission also had another dimension, namely, the discovery of the relics of Pope Clement I (88/91–97/101) at the Crimean Cherson, which was under the administration of the Byzantine Empire. St. Constantine-Cyril took some of the relics with him and brought them to Rome in 867 to be stored in the Basilica of St. Clement. The second part of the relics remained in Cherson for more than a hundred years (Ivanov 2012, pp. 143–45; Науменко 2005, pp. 237–38). The Russian chronicle *Povest Vremennykh Let* indicates that St. Vladimir, the ruler of Kievan Rus, moved the relics to Kiev at the end of the 10th century (Бернштейн 1984, p. 72).

In the 860s, a struggle for the ecclesiastical orientation developed in the area between East Francia and the Byzantine Empire in which the interests of the East Frankish bishops, the Pope of Rome, and the Patriarch of Constantinople overlapped. A strong power structure known as the Great Moravia was formed in the area of Central Europe after 833. It was a place of intense Christianization, mainly under the leadership of the Bishopric of Passau. Thanks to this Christianization, East Francia (*Regnum Francorum orientalium*) had a huge impact on the territory of Great Moravia. The Great Moravian Prince Rastislav (846–869) tried to create a separate church administration independent of the Bishopric of Passau. First, he unsuccessfully turned to Roman Pope Nicholas I (858–67), followed by the Byzantine Emperor Michael III (842–67) in 862, with the request to send a bishop and teacher who would preach true Christianity in the Slavic language. In addition, Rastislav asked for a man who would be able to organize the laws.² As we know, the emperor issued his approval of the mission, although it was not headed by a bishop (Curta 2019, p. 120; Dvornik 1970, pp. 73–107; Ivanič 2020, pp. 655–67). It was St. Constantine-Cyril who was in close contact with Fotios. The role of the Patriarch of Constantinople in the Moravian mission is considered unquestionable regardless of the fact that the author of the hagiographic work *Life of Constantine* does not mention Fotios in it. However, it includes the content of Michael III's letter to Rastislav, in which the Byzantine ruler demanded that all would follow God and Rastislav would leave a memory of himself just like Emperor Constantine (the Great). In Fotios's view, Constantine the Great was the first Christian emperor and a true Orthodox ruler and protector of the Church against various heresies (Hurbanič 2005b, pp. 113–14). A strong Bulgarian Empire thrived in the southeastern part of Europe at that time. Its ruler, Khan Boris I Michal (852 to 889, † 907), adopted Christianity in 866 as the official religion through the Byzantine clergy. Boris took the name of his godfather—Byzantine Emperor Michael III. The baptism provoked a revolt during which 52 aristocratic families were massacred. Boris I Michael, however, tried to get rid of the dependence on the Byzantine Empire and create his own patriarchy. The Byzantine Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople did not respond favorably to his plea. Just like the Great Moravian Prince Rastislav, even he turned to Pope Nicholas I and the East Frankish King Louis the German (805/806–876, East Frankish King from 840/843) with a plea for missionaries. The Pope sent out bishop Paul and Formas, but refused to create a separate ecclesiastical province. In 867, the Byzantine missionaries were expelled. At the Council of Constantinople, which was held in 869–70, Boris finally managed to establish the archbishopric (Steinhübel 2012, pp. 163–66). After 886, Boris I Michael received some of the expelled disciples of Ss. Cyril and Methodius from Great Moravia, who brought culture, liturgy, and scripture in the Slavic language to Bulgaria. This cultural heritage of the Byzantine mission of Ss. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius successfully developed in Bulgaria with the support of the Bulgarian rulers (Бърлиева 2019).

Despite the gradual decline of power, the Byzantine Empire remained the strongest, most culturally advanced, and best organized state. Church politics played the most important role in the internal political strengthening of imperial power in the Byzantine Empire, the power struggle for the imperial throne and the struggle between the imperial and ecclesiastical powers, and Patriarch Fotios possessed exquisite diplomatic skills. He attempted to increase the power and prestige of the Byzantine Patriarchate and extend its actual impact, which was achievable by strengthening the missionary activity, especially in the areas adjacent to the Crimean Peninsula and the Slavs in the southern Russian regions and Bulgaria (Hurbanič 2005b, pp. 103–16). The Byzantine policy on the Slavic surroundings changed from this period onwards. The Slavic peoples created the first real states in this very period. They had a logical need for a coherent ideology that would facilitate the political integration and centralization in addition to providing the necessary power and political means. Only the Christian ideology and culture could become such a unifying platform at that time. The Byzantine Empire, which vigorously resumed its power ambitions after the end of the iconoclastic disputes, well understood the emerging situation. The stabilization and centralization of political power in the Slavic environment allowed the

Byzantine Empire to use wider methods of action in larger ethnic and cultural units—and the new concept of missionary activities was introduced. This Byzantine attitude also had a political aim—the nations that accepted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire became their friends and allies and/or abandoned their hostile stance. Another political postulate was the requirement for the Slavic nations to acknowledge certain political powers of the Byzantine emperor and for the Slavic princes to recognize his hierarchical supremacy within the community of nations that accepted the Byzantine faith. These requirements were more or less obvious in the works of Patriarch Fotios (Avenarius 1992, pp. 46–48). If the Byzantine Empire had managed to expand its influence in Great Moravia, it could have exerted its Christianization pressure from both sides on the isolated Bulgarian State, which neighbored Moravia. The plan to create a new large Slavic ecclesiastical province, comprising Bulgaria and other Slavic countries in its neighborhood, became more realistic. The penetration into Central Europe would also strengthen the Byzantine position at the expense of the Franks and the Pope. The imperial court in Constantinople never considered immediately sending a bishop to Moravia to set up a separate diocese there. The Byzantine Church only set up the bishoprics in the fully Christianized areas, and the Byzantine officials had no precise knowledge about the situation in the Moravian state. A separate church organization (archdiocese) was ultimately created in the territory under the rule of Great Moravia thanks to St. Method, but it only happened during the reign of Rastislav's nephew Svätopluk, and it did not happen with the support of the Byzantine Empire, but the Roman Pontiff.

2. Results

Ss. Cyril and Methodius's heritage is a strong point that provides a solid foundation in the search for our "identification code" in the reality of an integrated Europe. The outlined critical analyses in the following text clearly point to the fact that Byzantine culture and education intensively and obviously determined the Slavic countries belonging to the Western Christian world today. Ss. Cyril and Methodius, originally from Byzantium, played an important role in the foundations of Slavic culture and spirituality. Recent scientific findings, which are indicated in the text, confirm the discussion on the use of writing in Slavs as early as 863. Current research on the issue proves that the Slavs in this developmental phase sporadically used some signs, probably runic, Greek, or Latin alphabet, to record important data. A qualitative change in the development of the universal Slavonic literary language occurred only after the creation of Glagolitic and its use in the translation of the basic liturgical texts into Old Church Slavonic. Thanks to the creation of Glagolitic and a rapid development of Old Church Slavonic literature, the Slavic culture reached a level comparable with the then European cultures with a dominant use of Latin and Greek.

3. Theoretical Background

The Russian Byzantine scholar Sergey A. Ivanov (2012, p. 166) scientifically and critically evaluated the missionary activity of the Byzantine Empire in the 9th century, concluding that its missionary results were modest—the Khazars adopted Judaism, the baptism of the Rus was ephemeral, Great Moravia remained under Roman jurisdiction, and the Bulgarians almost liberated themselves from the rule of the Constantinople Church. As evidenced above, the mission to Great Moravia was not successful according to the then Byzantine officials, but it was ultimately a huge success for the development of culture and continued the Christianization of the Slavs.

Kievan Rus is one of the most important interactions between the Byzantine Empire and the Slavic world. In the mid-10th century, Princess Olga, a widow after Prince Igor (912–945), was voluntarily baptized in Constantinople, became the god-daughter of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–59) and adopted the Christian name Helena. Her grandson St. Vladimir won the hand of the emperor's sister Anna for his military assistance to the Byzantine emperor Basil II the Bulgar Slayer and received Christianity from the

Byzantine Empire in 988. Vladimir was finally baptized in Cherson at the end of the 10th century, declared Christianity as the state religion, and ordered all his subjects to be baptized. This was mainly the responsibility of the numerous bishoprics established throughout Kievan Rus, which served as a supporting instrument of the state in the given system. In the first phase, Kievan Rus was visited by the Byzantine priests who brought literature, which had an effect not only on the Church, but also on law and history. Initially, the Archbishop of Cherson had oversight of the religious organization in Russia. The Byzantine missionaries undoubtedly used Greek in the liturgy. Vladimir did not want to limit the Christian contacts to the Byzantine Empire only. Kievan Rus was also visited by the Bulgarian missionaries who brought Slavonic liturgy and literature. Alongside Greek, the Russian Church also started using the Church Slavonic, which soon gained a dominant position because it had to be tolerated by the Byzantine missionaries, given the official backing of the emperor. After 1018 (the defeat of the Bulgarian Empire by the Byzantine emperor Basil II), the influx of the Bulgarian and Serbian clergy to Kievan Rus increased. The cultural and spiritual heritage of Ss. Cyril and Methodius's mission was also received by the eastern Slavs and it expanded even further (Бернштейн 1984, p. 61; Фріс 2003; Ivanov 2012, pp. 202–13; Николов 2013, pp. 23–38). In 1865, Kirillo-Mefodijevskij sbornik was issued under the editorial office of Professor Michail P. Pogodin that covered a significant number of primary resources connected to work of Cyril and Methodius, including medieval services. Political aspects of Cyrillo-Methodian celebrations were also mentioned there. Prominent Russian scientists (a philologist Fiodor I. Busleav, an ethnologist Piotr A. Bessonov, a literary scientist Ivan S. Aksakov, etc.) pointed out the fact that Cyrillo-Methodian heritage proved the unity of Slavic history. They understood a renewal of the religious memory of Cyril and Methodius as a proof of the rising idea of the Slavs in Russian public awareness. Their roots were supposed to be a key to the future religious connection of all Slavs (Потехина and Кравецкий 2013, pp. 18–19).

In general, there is considerable consensus regarding the recognition of their heritage in the multi-dimensional and multi-layered literary frameworks (Бърлиева 2019; Dvornik 1970; Илиевски 2001; Kocev et al. 2017, pp. 88–97; Турилов 2010; Vavřínek 2013). Quite understandably, the current interests of historical science and linguistics (Vaňko 2013, pp. 404–6) came to the foreground even in axiological research. In our analysis, we follow from the generally accepted axiom that the emergence of a new Glagolitic script and drafting of the first Old Church Slavonic texts in Glagolitic in 863 were of a crucial importance for the cultural development of the Slavic environment. The select examples not only illustrate the intensity of influence of the Cyrillo-Methodian work on the Slavic environment, but also a variety of supporting characteristics in the outlined cultural interactions. The analysis will focus on the Slavic countries where the Latin rite dominated.

The information base of this study consists of written and, to a lesser extent, archaeological sources, as well as the relevant scientific literature. However, it should be noted that a comprehensive analysis of all issues raised in this context is greatly prevented by the significant fragmentation of historical sources. In particular, the synchronous perspective, aided by typological and comparative methods, was taken into account in our approach to this issue. With these, but also with other biographical methods, criticism of sources, inductive and deductive methods, and other methods used in historiography, we were able to contribute to the causal analysis and to illustrate a number of complex phenomena, which accompanied the period under review. As a scientific method, an analysis offers the possibility of examining the relations between the Byzantine and Slavic worlds.

4. Use of Script by the Slavs before the Glagolitic Period

Together with the literary heritage, the Slavs also gained language and script thanks to the Christian missionaries. The political conditions for dealing with the language issues in relation to the evangelistic activities in Central and Eastern Europe were favorable in the 9th century in the period when the Slavs entered Christian Europe. In the era before the arrival of the mission of Ss. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia in 863, the

use of script by the Slavs is only documented by sporadic evidence. Based on a linguistic analysis, we can assume that the believers and missionaries in the West Slavic regions possessed short snippets of Christian texts (e.g., The Creed-Credo, The Lord's Prayer) in the local variations of the Slavic language. The scholars associate these texts with the missions directed to the territories inhabited by the Slavs from the neighboring Frankish Empire. The confessional prayers, or Freising Fragments, written in the Latin alphabet are a unique evidence of these missionary activities. As reported by V. Čermák, the Christian concepts such as oplatъ(host), mьša (mass), or križъ(cross) (Čermák 2013, p. 55) penetrated the Slavic environment from the West at this stage. The Roman/Latin script was also used for the names of Slavic pilgrims and nobles in the Cividale Evangelistary in the 9th century (Stanislav 1947–1948, pp. 87–100).

The discussion regarding the use of script in the Slavic environment in the 9th century has been underway mainly since the early 19th century when science generally became an integrating part of culture and society. An extensive debate on the use of script by the Slavs before 863 was also triggered by the fragments in the two surviving Old Church Slavonic writings—"On Letters" and *Life of St. Constantine*. In the tract titled "On Letters" (Skazanje o pismenech) written in the first half of the 10th century in Glagolitic, Monk Chrabr³ specifically states that the pagan Slavs had no letters, but used notches and cuts to decode and guess; and only after the adoption of Christianity did they use the Roman and Greek letters to write in the Slavonic language without the necessary order (Bartoňková and Večerka 2011, p. 325). The use of script by the Slavs before 863 is also evidenced by the recent discovery of a bone fragment with a runic inscription at an Early Slav settlement in the area of Břeclav-Lány (Czech Republic). This discovery is dated to the end of the 6th century. It includes six of the last eight runes from the Elder Futhark, and it is the only find in the non-Germanic context. Hypothetically, the runes could have been engraved by the Slavs, or may be direct evidence of the continuity of population in the region between the Lombards and the Slavs (Macháček et al. 2021, pp. 1–8).

Regarding the use of script by the Slavs before the emergence of Glagolitic, the mention in Chapter 8 of the well-known hagiographic work *Life of Constantine* is of special importance: during his stop in the Crimean Kherson while on his mission to the Khazars at the end of 860 (Ivanič and Lukáčová 2014, pp. 4–7), Constantine-Cyril found a gospel and psalter written in Russian letters and a man speaking Russian. A conversation with this man led Cyril to compare his language with his own and to the subsequent resolution of the letters, vowels, and consonants and, after meditation with God, to the mastery of early reading and reasoning (Bartoňková and Večerka 2010, p. 59). The mention of Russian letters elicits various reactions to this day, with the theory of French linguist A. Vaillant (1935) gaining traction: it assumes the correct reading of the "Surian letters" in the original, which is then associated with the word "Syrian". This theory was later developed in the works of R. Jakobson (1939–1944), one of the most outstanding philologists of the 20th century. Another hypothesis suggests that St. Cyril saw texts in the Gothic language during his stay in Kherson. In medieval times, Crimea and the Black Sea was inhabited by a Gothic population.⁴ The recent debate in the Czech scientific community was directed to the fact that in the original text *Life of Constantine* the term "rumsьkymi pisьmeny" should have been used correctly. According to Vitr (2005), this expression proves that the letters were Roman, i.e., Latin. However, Vavřínek (2005), a leading Byzantine scholar, was against this interpretation.

The two above sources form an argumentative basis for the supporters of the idea that the Slavs used Latin letters, alphabet, and script to record important data even before the creation of Glagolitic. In accordance with the propositions of professor L. Kralčák, we can currently conclude that the Slavs indeed used signs and letters even before the Glagolitic script; however, their use of the character sets was occasional, unsteady, and sporadic, and they were essentially an incomplete tool in the Slavic language—and therefore, they can be deemed unsystematic and inappropriate (Kralčák 2014, p. 23).

5. Glagolitic

A qualitative change in the development of the universal Slavonic literary language only occurred after the creation of Glagolitic and its use in the translation of basic liturgical texts into Old Church Slavonic. The authorship of this script has been assigned to St. Cyril since the 19th century, thanks to P.J. Šafárik. Even the said work “On Letters” by Monk Chrabr clearly mentions Cyril as the creator of the Slavic script with 38 characters (Bartoňková and Večerka 2011, p. 325). In the follow-up question regarding the origin of Glagolitic, the hypothesis that states that several Glagolitic graphemes demonstrate a shape similarity with the Greek alphabet was adopted widely. It is those Slavic letters whose pronunciation in the Slavonic alphabet was close to Greek. This is also part of Chrabr’s argumentation. The impact of the Greek script on the Glagolitic alphabet can be seen in the gradual adjustment of its alphabetical and numerical composition. In addition, according to the existing knowledge, St. Cyril was also inspired by the Hebrew script and other oriental writing systems. Some of the letters were also probably symbolic (Miklas 2002, pp. 281–311; Žagar 2013, pp. 49, 56–113, 129).

6. Old Church Slavonic Works

The preserved documents show that Ss. Cyril and Methodius translated the first liturgical texts before leaving for Great Moravia. St. Cyril planned to use a broader range of books in his missionary stopovers—especially the Holy Scriptures, psalter, codices, and missals. These fundamental texts were used in worship and in the catechesis. Therefore, he created the Old Slavic script, which together with his brother Methodius and/or his disciples allowed him to render a sizable translation and own literary work. Previous studies suggest that the Slavic dialect of their native Thessaloniki was used as a default language. However, its lexicon was not sufficient to fully translate the language-rich theological texts. Quite logically and understandably, the use of vocabulary derived from Greek was preferred. As the early translations were inspired by Greek texts, even grammar and sentence structure was based on this language. Through the translation of Holy Scriptures, even elements of Hebrew made it into the new literary language through Greek texts. Only during the mission to Great Moravia was the language enriched by the Great Moravian dialect, and the terms derived from Latin and Old Upper German (Čermák 2013, p. 57; Ohijenko 1953, pp. 163–78; Šarapatková 2008, pp. 185–88) made it into the language. The language, which was used to translate the first documents written in the Glagolitic script, is termed “Old Church Slavonic”. The term “Slavic Language” was used in the historical sources. Although no original works have been preserved, we can reliably reconstruct the rich literary and translation activity of the Thessaloniki brothers and their disciples from the subsequent rewriting of the original works based on the long paleoslavistic research.

The only finds straight from the Great Moravian period are the unique Glagolitic letters on pottery fragments, which were found in 2009 during archaeological research in today’s Zalavár in Hungary, the headquarters of the Slavic Prince Pribina after his expulsion from Nitra in 833, and later his son Kotsel. However, the words were not preserved in full length, and only individual letters could be traced. As noted by the period authors of the chronicle, Ss. Cyril and Methodius stopped at Kotsel’s Court in Zalavár in 867, and they stayed there for some time. Prince Kotsel himself liked the books written in Old Church Slavonic and he made some disciples available to the Thessaloniki brothers with the task to master this language (Szóke 2010, pp. 48–50).

The *Kiev Fragments* (*Kiev Leaflets*) codex can be unequivocally included among the rare sources from this period. Regarding this oldest preserved Old Church Slavonic document, the leading Czech Slavist Radoslav Večerka assumed that its original text was drafted by St. Cyril himself during his stay in Rome in 868. The codex contains translated prayers from a Latin sacramentary and is today considered a sample of the original Great Moravian Old Church Slavonic (Večerka 2014, pp. 280–83).⁵ The rich translation and creative activities of Ss. Cyril and Methodius and their disciples are also evidenced by the fact that their work

can be divided into several types of genres: biblical texts, liturgical texts, paraliturgical texts, legal texts, hagiographic works, homiletic lyrics, and original literary compositions. The Gospels, which were created in the Byzantine Empire and completed in Great Moravia, were the first translations into Old Church Slavonic. Their oldest wording was preserved in the Yugoslav Glagolitic (*Asseman Gospel Book, Codex Marianus, Orchid Fragments, Zographos Codex*) or Cyrillic (*Savvina kniga* and *Ostromir's Gospel Book*) writings from the 10th–11th century (Vepřek 2013, pp. 25–26). Chapter XIV of *Life of Constantine* says that when Constantine-Cyril created the letters, he wrote the following text from the Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...” (Bartoňková and Večerka 2010, p. 14). This important fact suggests that Cyril translated the *aparakos* gospel and not the tetra gospel, which begins with the first chapter of the Gospel of John. In the *aparakos* gospel, text is not organized in the natural order of the books, but according to the weekly church readings as used in the Eastern Orthodox Church, starting with the Holy (Easter) Week. This is also evidenced by the texts from the aforementioned oldest Old Church Slavonic codices (Žagar 2013, p. 47; Темчин 2013, pp. 49–72). *Proglas*, the preface written in verse, is usually linked with the celebration of the translation of the Gospels. It is documented in younger Cyrillic manuscripts, but most researchers attribute the authorship to St. Cyril. It is an original literary work of high literary qualities and content. Cyril formulated and justified his translation principles in the original Greek introduction to the Old Church Slavonic translation of the Gospels. Unfortunately, only a single letter written on parchment—known as Hilferding’s Cyrillic Page, dating back to the 12th century—has been preserved from its Old Church Slavonic translation. It can be concluded based on this short excerpt that Constantine paid considerable attention to the linguistic quality of translation and emphasized that the text in Old Church Slavonic should be equal to the Greek original (Vavřínek and Zástěrová 1982, pp. 174–75; Велев 2012, p. 339) as far as content and meaning is concerned. The *Book of Acts* and other letters of the apostles, the original translation of which was not preserved, were translated from the New Testament into Old Church Slavonic in Great Moravia. Only its later Cyrillic copies from the younger periods (e.g., from the 11th to 12th century in the *Apostle of Enin, Orchid and Christinople*) are known. They were clearly based on the Cyrillo-Methodian original, and the text itself was adapted on the lexical and grammatical level (Pilát 2014, pp. 266–79). The Psalter was translated from the Old Testament. This is documented by the *Sinai Psalter (Psalterium Sinaiticum)* written in the 11th century Glagolitic and discovered in the Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai (Tarnanidis 1998). The *Dimitri's Psalter (Psalterium Demetrii Sinaitici)*⁶ and several copies preserved in Cyrillic were preserved from the younger periods. The translation of other texts is debatable, given the fragmentation of the preserved sources and the mention in the *Life of Methodius*, which says that all books of the Holy Scriptures but the Book of Makabai were translated from Greek to Slavonic. The Old Testament lessons (pericopes) were preserved in the Cyrillic codices from the 12th and 13th century, which were used in the liturgy and called *parimejniky* (*Grigoričov, Chilandarský, Zachariov*). The liturgical works include the abovementioned *Kiev Fragments* and prayers along with the confessional rules in the *Sinai Euchologium (Euchologium Sinaiticum)* from the 11th century. It also includes paraliturgical texts written in Great Moravia (Vepřek 2013, pp. 2–29). Based on a detailed linguistic, cultural, historical, and liturgical analysis, the Czech paleoslavist Václav Konzal (2015) demonstrated that the paraliturgical text *Prayer Against The Devil* preserved from the 13th century was written in the Great Moravian period. The legal texts mainly include the *Zakon sudnyj ljudem*—laws on judicial practice in worldly matters. The legal code—most probably compiled by Methodius or his direct disciples—was based on the Byzantine *Ecloga*, but it also contained elements of domestic common law. In contrast to the established law of the Byzantine Empire, the author—compared to the *Ecloga*—eased the penalties, which were almost always corporal and very strict, or material—often with variations depending on the social origin of the sentenced. The collection often mentions corporal punishment alternating with ecclesiastical punishment and is much milder in terms of permanent consequences, but not in terms of reducing

the severity of the criminal act (for details, see [Илиевска 2004](#)). Together with the work *Exhortation to the Rulers* in the *Glagolita Clozianus codex* (*Glagolitic Clozianus*) from the 11th century, whose authorship is attributed to St. Methodius, it was the basis of governmental policy in Svätopluk's empire ([Bartoňková and Večerka 2013](#), pp. 177–81; [Dostál 1959](#)). For the church practice, the *Nomocanon* was translated from the Byzantine original—a mixed legal collection of ecclesiastical canons and civil laws used for religious needs. Two types existed in the Byzantine Empire. According to current knowledge, St. Methodius used Ióannes Scholastikos' work called *Synagogue* for the translation. The Old Church Slavonic translation has been preserved from the turn of the 13th and 14th century in the Cyrillic text *Kormchaya kniga of Ustyug*. Thanks to paleoslavistic research, we now know that it was not a literal translation, but that some provisions were deleted or merged compared to the original. The Old Church Slavonic text contains concepts linked to the Great Moravian linguistic environment, which led to the creation of a new type of nomocanon, which is slightly different from the Eastern tradition. The question is whether this work was used practically ([Jáger 2017](#); [Vašica 1955](#), pp. 9–41). The Great Moravian environment is also present in the original hagiographic works, which were affected by the then known Greek texts. After the death of St. Constantine-Cyril, a celebratory volume better known as *Life of Constantine* (*Žitije Konstantina*) was written, and it has become a key resource for the history of Great Moravia and the Cyrillo-Methodian mission. Its creation coincides with a period of intense activity of the Moravian Archbishopric and the expansion of power of Great Moravia during Svätopluk's rule. This work is theoretical, philosophical and theological, and in addition to the life story of the saint, it justifies the Slavonic language in the liturgy and the existence of Slavic culture. These assumptions are strictly defended in the work against the opponents from the Frankish and Roman environment. The authorship of this work remains unknown to the present day. Even the latest analyses have not conclusively confirmed a particular author. The most probable candidates are St. Clement of Ohrid or Methodius himself. Had the work not been written by the Moravian metropolitan himself, a logical assumption that the work was born as a result of his efforts ([Bartoňková and Večerka 2010](#), pp. 38–95) lends some credence. This legend, inter alia, contains probably the first “definition” of philosophy in the language of the Slavs ([Dupkala 2006](#), pp. 95–102). Constantine's definition of philosophy most probably includes the influence of ancient thinking, which has to do with his studies of philosophy at the University of Constantinople ([Zozulak 2018](#), p. 164). *Life of Constantine* is very closely linked to *Life of Methodius* (*Žitije Mefodija*), which belongs to the most fundamental historical sources from the second half of the 9th century. The importance of *Life of Methodius* lies primarily in the fact that it mentions the events between Constantine's (869) and Methodius' (885) deaths. It was written in Great Moravia shortly after the death of the archbishop, and it could have been penned by one of his disciples who was inspired not only by the Greek and Latin works of various contemporary thinkers, but also by the texts of both Thessaloniki brothers. The writer focused primarily on the description of the Byzantine mission from Cyril's death to the death of the second brother, and the defense of Old Church Slavonic as a liturgical language ([Bartoňková and Večerka 2010](#), pp. 114–40). Both life stories are closely connected to laudatory segments (panegyrics), which were most probably compiled by the most famous pupil of the Thessalonian brothers, St. Clement of Ohrid: *In Praise of Cyril* ([Bartoňková and Večerka 2010](#), pp. 96–100) and *Praise of St. Cyril and St. Methodius* ([Bartoňková and Večerka 2010](#), pp. 144–52). Both panegyrics contain specific information, which supplements the data in the *Life of Constantine* and *Life of Methodius*.

St. Cyril's work also probably includes the *Speech on the translation of the relics of St. Clement*, also known as the *Kherson Legend*. Thanks to Cyril's great authority, the original texts authored by him sometimes include the famous *Azbučna prayer* (Alphabet prayer) and other works ([Verček 2013](#), p. 32; [Велев 2012](#), p. 339).

The homilies, whose inception was foreseen in the period of Great Moravia, have been preserved in the menology known as *Codex suprasaliensis*, which has been compiled from various sources in the mid-10th century in the Bulgarian Empire. The texts of

homilies can be found in the *Clozianus Miscellany (Glagolitica Clozianus)* written in Glagolitic (Vepřek 2013, p. 31).

The translations into Old Church Slavonic from the Great Moravian period are generally notable for their excellent quality and full mastery of Greek and Slavonic (Vavřínek and Zástěrová 1982, p. 174). The creation of the Slavic script and the translations and native literary creations in the new Old Church Slavonic are a unique achievement, which exceeds the 9th century. It should be emphasized that the Byzantine culture was already Hellenized during the emergence of these texts and Greek became the sole language of the Byzantine Christian world. The Byzantine intellectuals, clergy, and laity believed in the complete superiority of Greek over all other languages and its role as a prime language to preach the gospel (Vavřínek and Zástěrová 1982, p. 170). It is therefore interesting from this perspective that the translations of the Gospel and liturgical texts into Old Church Slavonic by the Byzantines was a decisive turning point in the cultural development of Slavic nations at large. Thanks to this achievement, Ss. Cyril and Methodius became the leading thinkers with a timeless dimension. Old Church Slavonic became a cultural language of the Slavic linguistic community and it boasted certain standards, i.e., a set of lexical and grammatical means, which were regularly used. Thanks to the creation of Glagolitic and a rapid development of Old Church Slavonic literature, the Slavic culture reached a level comparable with the then European cultures with a dominant use of Latin and Greek. Chapter 16 of *Life of Constantine* mentions Cyril and his statement, which he made in defense of the use of Old Church Slavonic for liturgical purposes during the dispute with the so-called “trilinguals” in Venice, who advocated for worship strictly in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Cyril was able to name up to twelve nations—all of eastern Christian areas—“who have the Scriptures and praise God in their own language”: Armenians, Persians, Abkhazians, Iberians, Sogdians, Goths, Avars, Tyrs, Khazars, Arabs, Egyptians, Syrians, and “many others”. He used this example to establish the legitimacy of Slavonic liturgy and its language and script (Žagar 2013, p. 47).

Vavřínek and Zástěrová (1982, p. 187) conclude that Slavic literature should not have remained a mere tool for the adoption of Greek culture, but it was meant to be the basis for creating an original and creative Slavic culture, which would join the great Greek and Latin culture as their younger sibling. They based their claim on the reference in *Life of Constantine* (Chapter 14), which states that the Byzantine Emperor Michael III wrote a fervent letter to the Moravian ruler Rastislav after the creation of the Glagolitic script by Constantine the Philosopher: “God who wants all men to be saved, know the truth and achieve a higher degree of perfection, saw your faith and zeal, and therefore revealed the letters for your language. He did so now, in our time, which was not from the beginning, but only in the early years, so that you also may be counted among the great nations that glorify God with their own tongue” (Bartoňková and Večerka 2010, p. 80). In the creation of the written Slavic language, Ss. Cyril and Methodius did not hesitate to incorporate new terminology into it that settled in Moravia even before their arrival—in addition to the translations from Greek, which naturally prevailed, their literary school also produced literary translations from Latin. The literary creations of Ss. Cyril and Methodius and their disciples are remarkable for the era and also for their high level. In a very short period of time, the Old Church Slavonic became a standard and liturgical language thanks to the richness of its lexical and syntactic accuracy, and it served as a universal language of many Slavic nations in the coming period. Some authors are skeptical about the existence of such a large-scale work in the area of Great Moravia. They argue that such an operation had to receive strong support (especially financial) from the emperor, which includes the organization of schools, provision of Greek texts suitable for translation, and especially highly educated translators (Спасова 2005).

7. Liturgy and Its Service

In the context of translation of liturgical texts, the professional community has been addressing the issue of whether Ss. Cyril and Methodius served the liturgy according to

the Byzantine or Latin rite. There were no significant differences between these rites in the 9th century as was the case after the Council of Trent (1545–1563), and especially after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). We hold the prevailing view that the Thessaloniki brothers and their disciples practiced the Byzantine rite. In his publication about Seven Saints, Andrej Škoviera (2010, pp. 194–97) aptly summed up the arguments for this hypothesis, the most important of which include:

1. Chapter 15 of *Life of Constantine* presents arguments for the use of the Byzantine rite: “Soon, he (St. Constantine-Cyril) translated the whole ecclesiastical order, taught them the *utierna* (morning service), telling the times (elsewhere “time”), *obednica* (noon service), *večierna* (evening service), *povečerie* and *tajna služba* (divine liturgy).” For example, *obednica* is a Byzantine Church service, which has no counterpart in the Latin rite. The singular form of “time” (in some manuscripts) would also correspond to the Byzantine rite—namely, the *asmatiki akoluthia*.
2. Cyril and Methodius and their colleagues who came from Constantinople were brought up in the Byzantine environment, Byzantine liturgy, theology, and spirituality, and were undoubtedly deeply rooted in the Byzantine tradition, which they had experienced for years. To adapt to another tradition is no easy thing (especially in the field of spirituality and theology).
3. The Cyrillo-Methodian mission arrived in Great Moravia to defend the political interests of the Byzantine Empire because the mission was sent directly by the emperor, and it is clear that their task was to defend and promote the interests of the Byzantine Church even in the church area. The state and the Church were strongly interconnected in the Byzantine Empire. The use of the Byzantine rite was also in line with the interests of the imperial mission.
4. Chapter 14 of *Life of Constantine* tells us that St. Constantine-Cyril started his translation of the Gospel of John in the same way as the pericopes in Aprakos and/or the system of Gospel readings in the Byzantine rite, i.e., the Gospel for the Passover Sunday. This means that he adhered to the Byzantine reading system.
5. Chapter 15 of *Life of Methodius* mentions that St. Methodius completed the translation of the Bible on 26 October, and on this day he also celebrated the Feast of St. Demetrius. This suggests that the Cyrillo-Methodian mission used the Byzantine calendar because the Feast of St. Demetrius is celebrated on November 8 in the Latin rite. It would certainly be strange if they adhered to the Byzantine rite as far as the calendar is concerned, but celebrated the eucharistic liturgy and other worship in the Latin rite.
6. After being expelled, the disciples of Cyril and Methodius settled, e.g., in Bulgaria. Their work does not contain any elements of the Latin rite. Their whole liturgical work belongs to the Byzantine rite. Had they adopted the Latin rite in Great Moravia, their arrival in Bulgaria would have surely been a problem and the Greek clergy in Bulgaria and the Constantinople patriarchy would have definitely labeled them as a potential threat. In addition, if the disciples had received the Latin rite, they would certainly have been feared in Bulgaria as those who were once again trying to draw Bulgaria into the Latin sphere of influence. If they had practiced the Latin rite, why would they not have left into the sphere of influence of the Latin Church?

The literary sources also marginally mention the theory on the use of the Latin rite, which is supported, e.g., by the already mentioned *Kiev Fragments* or a claim that the pope would never have approved liturgical books of the Byzantine rite. However, it is questionable whether the pope would have been able to actively promote one liturgy only in this period. There is modest evidence suggesting that the popes tried it (Kalhous 2010, p. 394) in the 10th and 11th century. In this context, the theory on the use of the rare Liturgy of St. Peter should also be mentioned, which contains the Byzantine eucharistic liturgy accompanied by the Latin anaphora and other prayers. Its source and practical use (Mareš 2000, pp. 166–87; Vašica 1939–1946, pp. 1–54), however, are questionable. This liturgy contains the previously published fragmentary Glagolitic codex *Sinai 5/N* and manuscripts from later periods (Škoviera 2010, pp. 198–210).

Despite the extensive activity of the Byzantine mission in Great Moravia, the disciples were expelled from this area shortly after the death of St. Methodius in 885 due to the ongoing conflict with the clergy of Western origin, mainly from within the Frankish Empire. Western Latin culture was almost exclusively applied in the original territory under the rule of the Great Moravian rulers. Translations of liturgical texts continued to emerge in Bohemia in the 10th and 11th century, i.e., in the beginning of the rule of the Přemyslids. The practical use of Old Church Slavonic is documented in the written sources, and it is linked to the Benedictine Monastery in Sázava, which was built in 1032, but the local monks were already expelled in 1097. Despite the short existence of the monastery, several works were preserved whose origin is associated with the local scriptorium (Kalhous 2010; Sommer 2014; Vepřek 2016, pp. 192–93). In the following period, Old Church Slavonic was no longer used in liturgy and as a literary language in Bohemia, but the Benedictines, who practiced the service in the Roman liturgy written in Glagolitic script in Croatian Church Slavonic, were invited into the newly founded monastery of Emmaus in Prague in 1347 during the heyday of the Czech kingdom and the reign of Charles IV (1346–1378). Pope Clement VI (1342–1352) himself agreed with their mission. The written sources, however, do not detail which monastery the monks came from and how many there were. Several works and fragments of texts written in the Glagolitic script in Church Slavonic survived the later devastation of the Emmaus Library. In addition to the Croatian monks, even the Benedictines of Czech origin enriched the local scriptorium with their translations and creations in Glagolitic.⁷ They translated from the Church Slavonic works written in Glagolitic and also from the works written in Latin (Čermák 2014, pp. 300–3).

8. Cyrillo-Methodian Cult in Poland

Earlier historical writings highlighted the existence of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition in the territory of Poland. One of the arguments was the reference in *Life of Methodius* to the baptism of Prince Vislanov by St. Methodius himself. Even the beginnings of the Krakow bishopric were traced back to the Great Moravian period. The Wiślicki Calendar from the 14th century lists St. Gorazd among the saints, whom Methodius named his successor. Some of the Polish researchers are inclined to believe that the Old Church Slavonic liturgy was used in the 10th and 11th century in Lesser Poland. In 1380, Prince Konrad II the Gray from Silesia invited the Benedictines from the Emmaus Monastery in Prague and founded the Olesnica Monastery. Ten years later, King Vladislav II Jagiello and his wife Hedwiga called them to Krakow and founded a monastery at the Church of the Holy Cross in the Kleparz suburbs where the Slavonic liturgy survived almost a century. Despite the dissolution of the monasteries, the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition persisted not only in the Orthodox Church in the eastern parts of the kingdom (Sharov 2019, pp. 129–40), but also in the Catholic Church, and it had an impact on the Polish cultural history in the centuries to come (Jaworska-Wołoszyn and Klementowicz 1784, pp. 43–51; Koźiak 2003, pp. 9–23; Mironowicz 2013, pp. 17–32; Smołucha 2017, pp. 196–97; Stawski 2014, pp. 358–63; Wyrozumski 1982). Therefore, it is no coincidence that devotion to Ss. Cyril and Methodius was specifically promoted by the Polish Pope John Paul II in the 20th century. Ecumenism was among the key themes of his pontificate. In his philosophical thinking, John Paul II highlighted some logical premises from which a clear conclusion emerged—the holy brethren knew that the fellowship between Rome and Constantinople is made complete through their own guarantee of the dynamic incarnation of Christian faith in the living tissue of new nations. They proclaimed the gospel on behalf of the undivided Church and their work embraced—directly or indirectly—the entire Slavic world. The Slavs entered the world stage during the tensions between the East and West, which culminated in divisions and splits. In 1980, the pope consecrated the European continent and put it under the protection of the Thessaloniki brothers. The declaration of Ss. Cyril and Methodius as co-patrons of Europe alongside St. Benedict was a firm step toward ecclesiastical unification. The desire for unity in a divided Church was reflected in several documents by the Polish pope. In the future, the emerging ecumenical dialog

can rely on the guiding light of Cyril and Methodius because the Church born from their mission had a universal sign of ecumenical calling professed by the brothers themselves. The pope also found a very strong motive in the Cyrillo-Methodian roots with authentic values that they taught, and the fact that their presence among the nations was charitable. Thanks to the missionaries, the Slavs received an inheritance that was accompanied by their own written language and script, which did not negate the hitherto qualities, but rather built on them. In his statements, the pope also pursued the pastoral role, i.e., the actual impact on life—the ardent and courageous love of the saints for Christ was mainly reflected in the fidelity to the missionary and evangelizing call (Zubko 2014, pp. 108–10).

9. Cyrillo-Methodian Work in Croatia

After the demise of literature in the Slavonic state, the Old Church Slavonic used in Great Moravia was transferred into a larger territory, resulting in several local and unrelated variations (Večerka 2006, pp. 98–112). Glagolitic was first used in the Bulgarian Empire, where upon the arrival of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century the new Cyrillic script was created for literature written in Old Church Slavonic. The Slavic script and literary creations in Old Church Slavonic, and later in Church Slavonic, contributed to the consolidation of Slavic-Orthodox community, which was interpreted as a clear sign of God's will with roots in the Moravian mission. It became a phenomenon that has persisted until the present day in the Bulgarian-Macedonian territory and later in all other Orthodox countries. It also determined the Croatian countries belonging to the Western Christian world (from Istria to Kotor Bay). When laying the foundations of Croatian culture and spirituality, an important role was played by the saint of Croatian origin who coincidentally became the patron saint of translators, thanks to his activities. Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus, better known as St. Jerome (Stridon, about 347-Bethlehem, 420), marked the history of Christian culture in the West and East with his life and work. The world remembers him as an expert on Semitic languages and the author of the Vulgate—Latin translation of the Bible—which has been used in the Western Church up until today. St. Jerome was also considered the author of the Glagolitic script on the part of the Roman Curia, as mentioned by Pope Innocent IV in his letter to Bishop Philip of Senj in 1248. With this privilege, the use of Church Slavonic written in the Glagolitic script was permitted in the Roman liturgy alongside Latin. Four years later, this privilege was also granted to the bishopric on the island of Krk. The liturgy in the Slavic language in the territory of today's Croatia had been used previously, as evidenced by the regulations of the church synod in Split between 925 and 1060, where the liturgy in the Slavic language was prohibited. Despite the ban, some clergy with the support of the local nobles continued to use the Glagolitic Slavic language in liturgy (Verkholtantsev 2014, pp. 58–60).

Since the 13th century there has been a boom in Croatian literature written in Glagolitic. Milan Mihaljević, a leading Croatian Slavist, notes that the Croatian medieval culture was unique in the Western European cultural sphere as it used three scripts (Latin, Glagolitic, and Cyrillic) and three languages (Latin, Church Slavonic, and Croatian). The Church Slavonic as well as the Glagolitic and Cyrillic scripts came to Croatia as part of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition. It is commonly recognized today that the late 9th or early 10th century was the beginning of the Croato-Glagolitic literature based on the Cyrillo-Methodian foundations. The Church Slavonic texts made their way into Croatia through two routes—from the north, i.e., directly from Moravia and Pannonia, and later from the south, i.e., from Macedonia by way of the intermediate regions of Duklja, Hum, and Bosnia. The northern route ceased to function at the beginning of the 12th century when the Church Slavonic liturgy and tradition became extinct in Czechia and Moravia. Therefore, we can conclude that the Croatian Glagolitism was a specific historical phenomenon with the following characteristics: Glagolitic script, Church Slavonic, Western liturgy, and jurisdiction of the Roman church. The Croatian Glagolites have always been torn between their Cyrillo-Methodian heritage and the aspiration for legitimacy in the Western Church. They had to

revise the Old Church Slavonic texts translated from Greek and adapt them to the official Latin liturgical texts of the Western Church (Mihaljević 2017, pp. 190–93).

10. Timeliness of the Work of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Religious Discourse

Based on the available sources, it is generally accepted that particularly St. Cyril was an extremely gifted, talented, and contemplative personality. According to the Greek tradition, human dignity peaks in knowledge. With his intellect and reason, man exceeded everything else in the world, and even came to know God himself. According to Aristotle and Plato, the pinnacle of philosophy is when human intellect ascends to God (Špidlík 2004, p. 180). The basic life values cultivated in the Byzantine Empire included responsibility, respect, fairness, honesty, tolerance, selflessness, trust, justice, peace, balance, love, philanthropy, and friendship. In addition to the deep theological and philosophical knowledge, the Thessalonian brothers must have also been experts on other texts from the Byzantine period dealing with law, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, theory of music, and other sciences. In the abovementioned works of the brothers, such as *Proglas*, *Nomocanon*, *Zakon sudnyj ľjudem*, etc., and also through the works of their followers, this knowledge and these values spread into Central Europe and other regions. The influence of Byzantine education and canonical and secular law in the Cyrillo-Methodian work can be seen in education, but also in the transfer of anthropocentric aspects toward humanism, i.e., in the issue of religious freedom—in the way the Slavs were Christianized, in the improvement of education, in the development of arts, literature, business, in the behavior of the rulers, in the respect for authorities in society and family, in the organization of family life, politics and diplomacy, social security, and behavior toward minorities. (Gallik 2016, pp. 98–105; Korec 2012, p. 8).

The process of the penetration of one culture into another and the related exertion of influence is a very complex phenomenon—unless it is viewed as a mere contact, touch, or ephemeral influence—and rather a long-term phenomenon with a lasting incorporation of certain phenomena crossing from the donor culture into the receiving culture (Avenarius 1992, p. 11). The transfer of the work of the Thessaloniki brothers should be viewed synchronously, and this aspect should also be applied to their evaluation in the historical processes in the context of current changes. Man stands at the center of various transformations and improvements in modern society. In the escalating situations of dehumanization and degradation, philosophy reiterates the need to redefine humanity and highlight its value. Religious thinking has had a substantial impact on the creation and formation of the very definition of man. Religious incentives are important tools in defining the basics of perception of the importance of man (Baloghová et al. 2015, p. 5). In this context, the Cyrillo-Methodian cult plays an important role in Europe.

European society is currently in the era of posthumanism, postcolonialism and postindustrialism. Pundits and forecasters are considerably divided in their opinions on the cultural and religious development of society after it passes through these “post” phases. Society is dealing with many problems resulting from long-term processes. Apart from the economic turmoil, a cultural and religious crisis is becoming more and more acute. Despite individualism, which is currently expected in almost all aspects of life, it is often forgotten that the formation of a strong and individualist personality should be accompanied by solid foundations and roots (Baloghová et al. 2015, pp. 65–66). The importance of Cyrillo-Methodian work is timeless and universal in this regard. The generally accepted axiom that the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition has been adopted by all churches in the Slavic countries and, in addition to the official circles, even by the broader society in its culture (Kalinová 2013, pp. 133–43), should be subjected to a closer scrutiny. However, one critical phenomenon remains: despite the proclaimed affiliation of swaths of the population to Christian churches, a clear contradiction can be observed between this fact and the actual status of religiosity. Globally, the cultures are being mixed, which in turn results in the increased protection of diversity and identity of own culture. In the area of symbols and ideas, and also in the field of religion, a new phenomenon—“supermarketization” of ideas

and symbols—can be observed. The result of market behavior in this area, which used to be an internal matter and untouchable, is the fact that religiosity has become a market commodity and is subject to the current offer according to individual preferences and needs. Therefore, own cultural and religious mosaic is being formed (Baloghová et al. 2015, pp. 69–70, 95).

Modern communities are immediately confronted with the latest developments in communication media and biotechnology. Andrea Vicini and Agnes M. Brazal talk about the relation between technology and spirituality in the context of an ever-increasing desire for the transcendental, theological discourse, images and symbols, and a demand for deep moral reasoning.⁸

Due to the significant value shifts of the population in developed countries, human values have shifted from an emphasis on economic prosperity to physical security, from materialist to postmaterialist values, whose aim is to pursue, inter alia, a free self-realization of individuals. One of the underlying reasons for this hedonistic way of life—centered mainly on consumption, which grew hand in hand with the onset of industrialization and technological progress in the 19th century—is an effort to fill the mental emptiness and insecurity. Consumerism, however, is no match for the right values, and it only soothes the inner emptiness. The individualization process has also been transferred into the religious sphere, and it has an unquestionable influence on the formation of human identity. Man has become equal to God—but also vulnerable—since the postmodern society provides no transcendental support. There is a general absence of idols in this support. One of the major consequences of these changes is secularization and the decline of Christian culture in today's society where man is put at the fore of everything. For these and other reasons, the desecularization tendencies are growing increasingly stronger. In late modernity, religiosity has been quite paradoxical, mainly in European society. On the one hand, one can notice an increasing interest in spirituality and the search for solid frameworks and values, and on the other, there is an equally strong deviation from the official institutionalized forms of religion and the lesser impact of churches on politics and society at large (Baloghová et al. 2015, pp. 76–97).

How can contemporary society be reintegrated when it has “distanced itself” from the traditional political, economic, and family relations, and lacks solid foundations, ideas and designs? Religion plays an integrating and legitimizing function in society. This religion should be a religion of humanity, and individualistic morality should be its rational expression. How will Europe deal with the decomposition and disintegration of society, which takes place not only in the cultural, societal, and religious areas, but also in the traditional family ties (Baloghová et al. 2015, p. 99)? Can the cult of the Thessaloniki saints be instrumental in this process? It was they who presented the Gospel of St. John with the Prologue to emphasize the need to link God's and human words. They personified God by rewriting God's word in the people's own language, whose use was ultimately approved by Pope Hadrian II. It was only a thousand years later that the Catholic Church officially recognized that God's word can be written in all languages of the world and God may be praised in every language.⁹ This happened during one of the most important milestones of spiritual renewal in the 20th century—at the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965)—whose focus was the mystery of Christ, but also the theological unification of churches. The main outcomes of the Council included a greater openness of the Church to the world, statements on permanent peace, human rights, coexistence of the family of nations, attitude toward other religions, religious freedom, etc., which even today make the world go round (Klobušická 2013, p. 579). A few years after the Council ended the Slavic Pope John Paul II found a suitable example in Ss. Cyril and Methodius as two non-conflicting saints who bridge all generations, regardless of their denominational differences. The pope immediately issued a strong new impetus to honor Ss. Cyril and Methodius in the apostolic letter *Egregiae Virtutis* in 1980, in which he declared them the co-patrons of Europe alongside St. Benedict. He then often revisited the meaning of their life and actions as a key to the unity of the Church—Eastern and Western. Man has become a pivotal topic in the pastoral

work of John Paul II since the early days of his priestly call. Additionally, as a former professor of ethics at the Theological Faculty in Cracow and Lublin Catholic University, where he founded the Polish Personalistic School, he made the concept of a person the focal point of his philosophical thinking. Already in his early academic beginnings, Karol Wojtyła drew insights from phenomenology when creating genuine personalistic syntheses and enriching the Thomistic metaphysics and anthropology. He was convinced that man can develop only if his focus is on asking questions about the desire for truth, freedom and responsibility, suffering, death, guilt, and hope, etc., which is a fundamental experience through which the nature of the human being can be detected. Wojtyła was characterized by universality. He attempted to reveal the existence of a human person both on the secular, social, and individual levels and on the religious, sacred, and mystical levels. As pope, he continued to use the personalistic argumentation (Baloghová et al. 2015, pp. 24–27). Based on this formation, he was able to find a very clear inspiration in the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage. In this inspiration, the usability and clarity of the Cyrillo-Methodian cult for present and future generations is ever so obvious.

According to the church historian Peter Zubko, the teaching of the Polish pope contains multiple topics and current issues implementing the Cyrillo-Methodian cult. In the political and social area, his work consolidates the common Christian roots of Europe—the roots that have enriched history and European institutions. The relation to this common heritage of the East and the West should not detract from the respective laicist nature of the political structures, but it can help preserve the continent from a dual danger—ideological laicism on the one hand and sectarian integralism on the other (Zubko 2014, pp. 107–8).

One of the key themes of John Paul II's office was ecumenism. In his philosophical thinking, John Paul II highlighted some logical premises from which a clear conclusion emerged—the holy brethren knew that the fellowship between Rome and Constantinople was made complete through their own guarantee of the dynamic incarnation of Christian faith in the living tissue of new nations. They proclaimed the gospel on behalf of the undivided Church and their work embraced—directly or indirectly—the entire Slavic world. The Slavs entered the world stage during the tensions between the East and West, which culminated in divisions and splits. In 1980, the pope consecrated the European continent and put it under the protection of the Thessaloniki brothers. The declaration of Ss. Cyril and Methodius as co-patrons of Europe alongside St. Benedict was a firm step toward ecclesiastical unification. The desire for unity in a divided church was reflected in several documents by the Polish pope. In the future, the emerging ecumenical dialog must rely on the guiding light of Cyril and Methodius because the church born from their mission had a universal sign of ecumenical calling professed by the brothers themselves. The pope also found a very strong motive in the Cyrillo-Methodian roots with authentic values that they taught, and the fact that their presence among the nations was charitable. Thanks to the missionaries, the Slavs received an inheritance, which was accompanied by their own written language and script, which did not negate the qualities hitherto, but rather built on them. In his statements, the pope also pursued the pastoral role, i.e., the actual impact on life—the ardent and courageous love of the saints for Christ that was mainly reflected in the fidelity to the missionary and evangelizing call (Zubko 2014, pp. 108–10). In order for the traditional religions to communicate and disseminate the Gospel in the era of individualization, they must use the media space in the digital world. The operation of Cyril and Methodius was not limited solely to the religious sphere. Faith in God suggested practical benefits related to the daily lives of individuals, families, and the entire community. The subsequent life decisions were directed to God, which laid the foundations of a new community, new justice and peace (Judák and Liba 2012, pp. 116–27). Thus, the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage inter alia provides a link to the Sacred Scriptures, Christian tradition, and the principles of the Christian doctrine and ecumenism to the religious-oriented population.

11. Conclusions

The Cyrillo-Methodian tradition has undergone a broad range of transformations. After its inception, the work of Ss. Cyril and Methodius determined the culture and politics in the development of Slavic nations in the following centuries, especially in Southeast and Eastern Europe (Sharov 2020, pp. 1157–71). The Byzantine missionaries and diplomats Cyril and Methodius were typical, but also prominent spiritual leaders and representatives of the educational elite of their era. In their age and time, the intellectuals and statesmen of the Byzantine Empire more than ever believed in its ecumenical mission. Cyril and Methodius embodied this Christian universalism, which the Church and Byzantine Empire brought to the new peoples of Europe. As asserted by Vavřínek and Zástěrová (1982, pp. 187–88), Ss. Cyril and Methodius can be described as the creators of Slavic culture in terms of the formation of the Slavic literary tradition. This was their originality and personal contribution.

The reasons for their invitation to Moravia were political, and the requirements imposed on them by the secular rulers included some specific tasks in church policy and organization. However, on their own initiative, they joined the performance of these tasks with a spectacular cultural program, which was unprecedented in its time. It was based on the creation of literature and liturgy in the language of the people among whom they worked. In the given historical conditions, it was a completely revolutionary and unique success—the work of outstanding individuals inspired by the traditions of the early Christian era. However, this literary work was not the exclusive domain of members of the Byzantine mission, which were not that many. The ability of Cyril and Methodius to create dozens of disciples in Moravia in a very short time, of which at least some took active part in the mission, determined its success and extremely wide reach. In the area of literary works, they were sufficiently qualified to work independently and strengthen the awareness of the Slavic civilization. In the Middle Ages and Modern History, the heritage of the mission of the Thessaloniki brothers was fertile ground for the further development of southern and eastern Slavs (Якимовска-Тошиќ 2018, pp. 159–72; Jakimovska-Toshic 2013, pp. 47–48).

The emergence of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition has become a major element in the further development of Eastern European civilizations and culture, and it embodies an authentic recognition of God (Велев 2012, p. 297). In the early 10th century, Glagolitic was replaced by Cyrillic in Bulgaria, which was created by the Preslavskia bishop Constantine, who dedicated it to his teacher Constantine-Cyril (Добрев 1995, pp. 301–16). The Cyrillic script, which included the Byzantine capital letters, was created at a time when this script was replaced by the minuscule in the Byzantine Empire. Since then, the Cyrillic script prevailed with all Slavs who adopted their culture from the Byzantine Empire and continued to use the Byzantine values. The Cyrillic script became a unifying element for the Slavs, and it allowed them to communicate with a common language, which was mainly used in worship (Zozuľak 2019, p. 18). Although the study is dedicated to the development in the countries of the Western Rite, it should be added that sizable linguistic research was also conducted in the Russian academic environment (Флоря 2004; Флоря et al. 2000).

According to Maddalena Betti (2014, p. 13), the 19th century was characterized by the substantial rediscovery of the figures of Cyril and Methodius, serving many ambitious causes, both political and religio-cultural. On the one hand, the recovery constituted an essential root of the Slavophile movement and of successive Pan-Slavic currents within both the Orthodox and Catholic Slavic worlds. The symbolic value of the rediscovery of Cyril and Methodius was also appreciated in Vatican circles. In the twentieth century the Cyrillic-Methodian question continued to be vibrant and relevant to the political and cultural life of the new Slavic states emerging. Pope John Paul II proclaimed Saints Cyril and Methodius co-patrons of Europe, together with Saint Benedict in the bull *Egregiae Virtutis* (31 December 1980), which reaffirmed the fact that the European Christian tradition had succeeded in integrating both East and West.

One possible starting point in how the language aspect of the work of Ss. Cyril and Methodius and their followers manifested outwardly in the European cultural space, and how these signs can be interpreted, is the understanding of language in the theory of German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, whose ideas of nations and national languages have had a significant impact on the national revival in many countries. According to Herder, the nuances of thinking in the individual nations are also determined by the linguistic peculiarities of their specific historical, social, and natural conditions, and the characteristic features of one language should not be forced on another (Herder 1993; Vargová 2009, p. 74).

Each culture is characterized by a certain degree of recess into the past. A particular culture recognizes its past by critically examining its own history. Following the historical and linguistic analysis, the authors attempted to reflect on the overlaps of the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage and the religious–ethical plane.¹⁰ In the context of spreading the Cyrillo-Methodian cult, the Slavic and cultural component is gradually being foregrounded, and the axiological preferences of the Byzantine system of values in the Slavic cultural environment are also being discussed, although Byzantine history and philosophy, which include the Cyrillo-Methodian mission, remain relatively unexplored (Zozulák 2017, pp. 3–11).

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Notes

- ¹ A scientific view of the Byzantine mission with an emphasis on the Slavs was first introduced by F. Dvornik (1970).
- ² Missionaries from the Frankish Empire, northern Italy and the Dalmatian-Istrian region (Ivanič 2016, pp. 662–64) were active in the territory of Great Moravia even before 862.
- ³ It is assumed that “Ciernorizac” Chrabr is the pseudonym of one of Cyril’s disciples. The black shirt symbolizes a monk, and the attribute “bold” suggests courage in the defense of the development of Slavic literacy on specific occasions (Žagar 2013, p. 48, n. 47).
- ⁴ Several Christian missionaries were active among the Goths. Wulfila (Ulfilas) was the most famous missionary of Gothic origin—he was ordained in 341 as bishop for the Christians living in the Danube region. In 369, he translated the New Testament and the Lord’s Prayer into Gothic. His translation played an important role in spreading the Arian Christianity among the Germanic ethnic groups (e.g., Goths, Vandals, Rugia, Heruls, Gepids). Unique fragments of Wulfila’s translation of the Lord’s Prayer and the Gospel of John (Vida 2016, pp. 93–105) were found at the 5th and 6th century cemetery in Hács-Béndekepuszta (Somogy County), which is located near Lake Balaton in Hungary.
- ⁵ There are other theories of the origin of *Kiev Fragments* (Diweg-Pukanec 2020).
- ⁶ The document was published only recently (Miklas et al. 2012).
- ⁷ The most famous surviving work written in Glagolitic, but in the Old Czech, is the *Czech Glagolitic Bible*, which has not been preserved in its complete form. The Czech Glagolitic works were analyzed by Pacnerová (1986, 2000).
- ⁸ Discernment may lead to selective and strongly critical attitudes and constructive involvement. After all, Christian imagery of the body of Christ is a biblical and theological resource, which provides ways of decision-making and strengthening the cybernetic concepts of the body toward solidarity by preventing “cyber-exclusion”. They emphasize the importance of embodiment, with this imagery implying the rejection of cyber-gnostic anthropology, which separates the body from the person and/or supports an escape from physical suffering. The sanctity of both worlds and the Eucharist as a sign of the Body of Christ allow us to identify the possible initiatives in sacralization or restoration by the Holy Spirit in today’s cybersociety. The human desire for transcendence in the cyberspace cannot be filled by Hollywood movies. In creative ways, it is possible to discern the presence of the Spirit and strengthen this desire within the framework of perception of the body of Christ in relationships only (Vicini and Brazal 2015, pp. 164–65).
- ⁹ In the reformed churches, this happened as early as in their constitutional phase.
- ¹⁰ The formation of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition in history also had an impact on the cultural landscape (Nemčíková et al. 2020, pp. 224–36).

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