Saints Cyril and Methodius

For other uses, see Saints Cyril and Methodius (disambiguation).

Saints Cyril and Methodius

"Saints Cyril and Methodius holding the Cyrillic alphabet," a mural by Bulgarian iconographer Z. Zograf, 1848, Troyan Monastery

| Bishops and Confessors; Equals to the Apostles; Patrons of Europe; Apostles to the Slavs |
| Born       | 826 or 827 and 815 Thessalonica, Byzantine Empire (present-day Greece) |
| Died       | 14 February 869 and 6 April 885 |
| Honored in | Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Communion, Lutheran Church |
| Feast      | 11 and 24 May[1] (Orthodox Church) 14 February (present Roman Catholic calendar); 5 July (Roman Catholic calendar 1880–1886); 7 July (Roman Catholic calendar 1887–1969) 5 July (Roman Catholic Czech Republic and Slovakia) |
| Attributes | brothers depicted together; Eastern bishops holding up a church; Eastern bishops holding an icon of the Last Judgment. Often, Cyril is depicted wearing a monastic habit and Methodius vested as a bishop with omophorion. |
| Patronage  | Unity between Orthodox and Roman Catholics Bulgaria, Republic of Macedonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Transnistria, Archdiocese of Ljubljana, Europe |

Saints Cyril and Methodius (Greek: Κύριλλος καὶ Μεθόδιος, Old Church Slavonic: Кѷриллъ и Меѳодїи[more]) were 9th-century Byzantine Greek brothers born in Thessalonica, Macedonia, in the Byzantine Empire. They were the principal Christian missionaries among the Slavic peoples of the Great Moravia and Pannonia, introducing Orthodox Christianity and writing to the hitherto illiterate, pagan Slav migrants into parts of Macedonia and elsewhere in the Balkans.[2][3][4] Through their work they influenced the cultural development of all Slavs, for which they received the title "Apostles to the Slavs". They are credited with devising the Glagolitic alphabet, the first alphabet used to transcribe Old Church Slavonic.[5] After their deaths, their pupils continued their missionary work among other Slavs. Both brothers are venerated in the Orthodox Church as saints with the title of "equal-to-apostles". In 1880, Pope Leo XIII introduced their feast into the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1980, Pope John Paul II declared them co-patron saints of Europe, together with Benedict of Nursia.[6]
Early career

Early life
The two brothers were born in Thessalonica, in present-day Greek Macedonia – Cyril in 827–828 and Methodius in 815–820. Most reputable Byzantinists consider the brothers to have been ethnic Greeks who had learnt the Slav Macedonian/western Bulgarian dialect before introducing Orthodox Christianity and a new script to the hitherto illiterate and pagan Slav migrants into parts of Macedonia and elsewhere in the Balkans. Cyril was reputedly the youngest of seven brothers; he was born Constantine, but took the name Cyril upon becoming a monk in Rome shortly before his death according to the "Vita Cyrilli" ("The Life of Cyril"). Methodius was born Michael and took the name Methodius upon becoming a monk at Mysian Olympus (present-day Uludağ), in northwest Turkey. Their father was Leo, a droungarios of the Byzantine theme of Thessalonica, and their mother was Maria, who may have been a Slav.

The two brothers lost their father when Cyril was only fourteen, and the powerful minister Theoktistos, who was logothetes tou dromou, one of the chief ministers of the Empire, became their protector. He was also responsible, along with the regent Bardas, for initiating a far-reaching educational program within the Empire which culminated in the establishment of the University of Magnaura, where Cyril was to teach. Cyril was ordained as priest some time after his education, while his brother Methodius remained only a deacon until 867/868.

Missions in the Middle East
Cyril's mastery of theology and command of both Arabic and Hebrew made him eligible for his first state mission. He was sent to the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutawakkil to discuss the principle of the Holy Trinity with the Arab theologians, and to improve relations between the Caliphate and the Empire.

The second mission (860), requested by the Byzantine Emperor Michael III and the Patriarch of Constantinople Photius (a professor of Cyril's at the University and his guiding light in earlier years), was a missionary expedition to the Khazar Khaganate in order to prevent the expansion of Judaism there. This mission was unsuccessful, as later the Khagan imposed Judaism on his people as the national religion. It has been claimed that Methodius accompanied Cyril on the mission to the Khazars, but this is probably a later invention. The account of his life presented in the Latin "Legenda" claims that he learned the Khazar language while in Chersonesos, in Taurica (today Crimea).

After his return to Constantinople, Cyril assumed the role of professor of philosophy at the University while his brother had by this time become a significant player in Byzantine political and administrative affairs, and an abbot of his monastery.
Mission to the Slavs

Great Moravia

In 862, the brothers began the work which would give them their historical importance. That year Prince Rastislav of Great Moravia requested that Emperor Michael III and the Patriarch Photius send missionaries to evangelize his Slavic subjects. His motives in doing so were probably more political than religious. Rastislav had become king with the support of the Frankish ruler Louis the German, but subsequently sought to assert his independence from the Franks. It is a common misconception that Cyril and Methodius were the first to bring Christianity to Moravia, but the letter from Rastislav to Michael III states clearly that Rastislav's people "had already rejected paganism and adhere to the Christian law."[13] Rastislav is said to have expelled missionaries of the Roman Church and instead turned to Constantinople for ecclesiastical assistance and, presumably, a degree of political support.[13] The Emperor quickly chose to send Cyril, accompanied by his brother Methodius. The request provided a convenient opportunity to expand Byzantine influence. Their first work seems to have been the training of assistants. In 863, they began the task of translating the Bible into the language now known as Old Church Slavonic and travelled to Great Moravia to promote it. They enjoyed considerable success in this endeavour. However, they came into conflict with German ecclesiastics who opposed their efforts to create a specifically Slavic liturgy.

For the purpose of this mission, they devised the Glagolitic alphabet, the first alphabet to be used for Slavonic manuscripts. The Glagolitic alphabet was suited to match the specific features of the Slavic language. Its descendant script, the Cyrillic, is still used by many languages today.

They wrote the first Slavic Civil Code, which was used in Great Moravia. The language derived from Old Church Slavonic, known as Church Slavonic, is still used in liturgy by several Orthodox Churches and also in some Eastern Catholic churches.

It is impossible to determine with certainty what portions of the Bible the brothers translated. The New Testament and the Psalms seem to have been the first, followed by other lessons from the Old Testament. The "Translatio" speaks only of a version of the Gospels by Cyril, and the "Vita Methodii" only of the "evangelium Slovenicum," though other liturgical selections may also have been translated.

Nor is it known for sure which liturgy, that of Rome or that of Constantinople, they took as a source. They may well have used the Roman alphabet, as suggested by liturgical fragments which adhere closely to the Latin type. This view is confirmed by the "Prague Fragments" and by certain Old Glagolitic liturgical fragments brought from Jerusalem to Kiev and discovered there by Saresnewsky—probably the oldest document for the Slavonic tongue; these adhere closely to the Latin type, as is shown by the words "Mass," "Preface," and the name of one Felicitas. In any case, the circumstances were such that the brothers could hope for no permanent success without obtaining the authorization of Rome.
**Journey to Rome**

In 867, Pope Nicholas I invited the brothers to Rome. Their evangelizing mission in Moravia had by this time become the focus of a dispute with Theotmar, the Archbishop of Salzburg and bishop of Passau, who claimed ecclesiastical control of the same territory and wished to see it use the Latin liturgy exclusively. Travelling with the relics of Saint Clement and a retinue of disciples, and passing through Pannonia (the Balaton Principality), where they were well received by Prince Koceľ (Kocelj, Kozel), they arrived in Rome in 868, where they were warmly received. This was partly due to their bringing with them the relics of Saint Clement; the rivalry with Constantinople as to the jurisdiction over the territory of the Slavs would incline Rome to value the brothers and their influence.

The brothers were praised for their learning and cultivated for their influence in Constantinople. Anastasius Bibliothecarius would later call Cyril "a man of apostolic life" and "a man of great wisdom". Their project in Moravia found support from Pope Adrian II, who formally authorized the use of the new Slavic liturgy. The ordination of Methodius and the brothers' Slav disciples was performed by Formosus and Gauderic, two prominent bishops, and the newly-made priests officiated in their own tongue at the altars of some of the principal churches. Feeling his end approaching, Cyril became a monk, was given the new name Cyril, and died fifty days later (14 February 869). There is some question as to assertion of the *Translatio* (ix.) that he was made a bishop.

**Methodius alone**

Methodius now continued the work among the Slavs alone; not at first in Great Moravia, but in Pannonia (in the Balaton Principality), owing to the political circumstances of the former country, where Rastislav had been taken captive by his nephew Svatopluk, then delivered over to Carloman, and condemned in a diet of the empire at the end of 870.

Friendly relations had been established with Koceľ on the journey to Rome. This activity in Pannonia made a conflict inevitable with the German episcopate, and especially with the bishop of Salzburg, to whose jurisdiction Pannonia had belonged for seventy-five years. In 865 Bishop Adalwin is found exercising all Episcopal rights there, and the administration under him was in the hands of the archpriest Riehbald. The latter was obliged to retire to Salzburg, but his superior was naturally disinclined to abandon his claims. Methodius sought support from Rome; the *Vita* asserts that Koceľ sent him thither with an honorable escort to receive Episcopal consecration.

The letter given as Adrian's in chap. viii., with its approval of the Slavonic mass, is a pure invention. The pope named Methodius archbishop of Sirmium with jurisdiction over Great Moravia and Pannonia, thus superseding the claims of Salzburg by an older title. The statement of the "Vita" that Methodius was made bishop in 870 and not raised to the dignity of an archbishop until 873 is contradicted by the brief of Pope John VIII, written in June 879, according to which Adrian consecrated him archbishop; John includes in his jurisdiction not only Great Moravia and Pannonia, but Serbia as well.

**Methodius' final years**

The archiepiscopal claims of Methodius were considered such an injury to the rights of Salzburg that he was forced to answer for them at a synod held at Regensburg in the presence of King Louis. The assembly, after a heated discussion, declared the deposition of the intruder, and ordered him to be sent to Germany, where he was kept prisoner in Ellwangen for two and a half years. In spite of the strong representations of the *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, written in 871 to influence the pope, though not avowing this purpose, Rome declared
emphatically for Methodius, and sent a bishop, Paul of Ancons, to reinstate him and punish his enemies, after which both parties were commanded to appear in Rome with the legate.

The papal will prevailed, and Methodius secured his freedom and his archiepiscopal authority over both Great Moravia and Pannonia, though the use of Slavonic for the mass was still denied to him. His authority was restricted in Pannonia when after Kocel’s death the principality was administered by German nobles; but Svatopluk now ruled with practical independence in Great Moravia, and expelled the German clergy. This apparently secured an undisturbed field of operation for Methodius, and the Vita (x.) depicts the next few years (873–879) as a period of fruitful progress. Methodius seems to have disregarded, wholly or in part, the prohibition of the Slavonic liturgy; and when Frankish clerics again found their way into the country, and the archbishop's strictness had displeased the licentious Svatopluk, this was made a cause of complaint against him at Rome, coupled with charges regarding the Filioque.

Methodius vindicated his orthodoxy at Rome, the more easily as the creed was still recited there without the Filioque, and promised to obey in regard to the liturgy. The other party was conciliated by giving him a Swabian, Wiching, as his coadjutor. When relations were strained between the two, John VIII steadfastly supported Methodius; but after his death (December 882) the archbishop's position became insecure, and his need of support induced Goetz to accept the statement of the Vita (xiii.) that he went to visit the Eastern emperor.

It was not until after Methodius' death, which is placed, though not with certainty, on 8 April 885, that the animosity erupted into an open conflict. Gorazd, whom Methodius had designated as his successor, was not recognised by Pope Stephen V. The early Glagolitic alphabet was used in Great Moravia between 863 (the arrival of Cyril and Methodius) and 885 (the expulsion of their students) for government and religious documents and books, and at the Great Moravian Academy (Velkomoravské učilište) founded by Cyril, where followers of Cyril and Methodius were educated, by Methodius himself among others. The alphabet has been traditionally attributed to Cyril. That attribution has been confirmed explicitly by the papal letter Industrie tuae (880) approving the use of Old Church Slavonic, which says that the alphabet was "invented by Constantine the Philosopher". The term invention need not exclude the possibility of the brothers

Invention of the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets

The Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets are the oldest known Slavic alphabets, and were created by the two brothers and their students, to translate the Bible and other texts into the Slavic languages. The early Glagolitic alphabet was used in Great Moravia between 863 (the arrival of Cyril and Methodius) and 885 (the expulsion of their students) for government and religious documents and books, and at the Great Moravian Academy (Velkomoravské učilište) founded by Cyril, where followers of Cyril and Methodius were educated, by Methodius himself among others. The alphabet has been traditionally attributed to Cyril. That attribution has been confirmed explicitly by
having made use of earlier letters, but implies only that before that time the Slavic languages had no distinct script of their own.

The early Cyrillic alphabet was developed in the First Bulgarian Empire[16] and later finalized and spread by disciples Kliment and Naum in the Ohrid and Preslav schools of Tsar Boris' Bulgaria[17] as a simplification of the Glagolitic alphabet which more closely resembled the Greek alphabet. It was developed by the disciples of Saints Cyril and Methodius at the Preslav Literary School at the end of the 9th century.

After the death of Cyril, Clement of Ohrid accompanied Methodius from Rome to Pannonia and Great Moravia. After the death of Methodius in 885, Clement headed the struggle against the German clergy in Great Moravia along with Gorazd. After spending some time in jail, he was expelled from Great Moravia, and in 885 or 886 reached the borders of the Bulgarian Empire together with Naum of Preslav, Angelarius, and possibly Gorazd (according to other sources, Gorazd was already dead by that time). The four of them were afterwards sent to the Bulgarian capital of Pliska, where they were commissioned by Tsar Boris I of Bulgaria to instruct the future clergy of the state in the Slavonic language.

After the adoption of Christianity in 865, religious ceremonies in Bulgaria were conducted in Greek by clergy sent from the Byzantine Empire. Fearing growing Byzantine influence and weakening of the state, Boris viewed the adoption of the Old Slavonic language as a way to preserve the political independence and stability of Bulgaria, so he established two literary schools (academies), in Pliska and Ohrid, where theology was to be taught in the Slavonic language. While Naum of Preslav stayed in Pliska working on the foundation of the Pliska Literary School, Clement was commissioned by Boris I to organise the teaching of theology to future clergymen in Old Church Slavonic at the Ohrid Literary School. For seven years (886-893) Clement taught some 3,500 students in the Slavonic language and the Glagolitic alphabet.

**Commemoration**

**Saints Cyril and Methodius' Day**

The canonization process was much more relaxed in the decades following Cyril's death than today. Cyril was regarded by his disciples as a saint soon after his death. His following spread among the nations he evangelized and subsequently to the wider Christian Church, and he was famous as a holy man, along with his brother Methodius. There were calls for Cyril's canonization from the crowds lining the Roman streets during his funeral procession. The brothers' first appearance in a papal document is in *Grande Munus* of Leo XIII in 1880. They are known as the "Apostles of the Slavs", and are still highly regarded by both Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. Their feast day is currently celebrated on 14 February in the Roman Catholic Church (to coincide with the date of St Cyril's death); on 11 May in the Eastern Orthodox Church (though for Eastern Orthodox Churches which use the Julian Calendar this is 24 May according to the Gregorian calendar); and on 7 July according to the old sanctoral calendar that existed before the revisions of the Second Vatican Council.

The celebration also commemorates the introduction of literacy and the preaching of the gospels in the Slavonic language by the brothers. The brothers were declared "Patrons of Europe" in 1980.[18]
According to old Bulgarian chronicles, the day of the holy brothers was celebrated ecclesiastically as early as the 11th century. The first recorded secular celebration of Saints Cyril and Methodius' Day as the "Day of the Bulgarian script", as traditionally accepted by Bulgarian history, was held in the town of Plovdiv on 11 May 1851, when a local Bulgarian school was named "Saints Cyril and Methodius": both acts on the initiative of the prominent Bulgarian educator Nayden Gerov,[19] although an Armenian traveller mentioned his visit to the "celebration of the Bulgarian script" in the town of Shumen on 22 May 1803.[20]

The day is now celebrated as a public holiday in the following countries:

- In Bulgaria it is celebrated on 24 May and is known as the "Bulgarian Education and Culture, and Slavonic Literature Day" (Bulgarian: Ден на българската просвета и култура и на славянската писменост), a national holiday celebrating Bulgarian culture and literature as well as the alphabet. It is also known as "Alphabet, Culture, and Education Day" (Bulgarian: Ден на азбуката, културата и просвещението). Saints Cyril and Methodius are patrons of the National Library of Bulgaria. There is a monument to them in front of the library. Saints Cyril and Methodius are the most celebrated saints in the Bulgarian Orthodox church, and icons of the two brothers can be found in every church.

- In the Republic of Macedonia, it is celebrated on 24 May and is known as the "Saints Cyril and Methodius, Slavonic Enlighteners' Day" (Macedonian: Св. Кирил и Методиј, Ден на словенските просветители), a national holiday. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia enacted a statute of the national holiday in October 2006 and the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia passed a corresponding law at the beginning of 2007.[21] Previously it had only been celebrated in the schools. It is also known as the day of the "Solun Brothers" (Macedonian: Солунските браќа).

- In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the two brothers were originally commemorated on 9 March, but Pope Pius IX changed this date to 5 July for several reasons. Today, Saints Cyril and Methodius are revered there as national saints and their name day (5 July), "Sts Cyril and Methodius Day" is a national holiday in Czech Republic and Slovakia. In the Czech Republic it is celebrated as "Slavic Missionaries Cyril and Methodius Day" (Czech: Den slovanských věrozvěstů Cyrila a Metoděje); in Slovakia it is celebrated as "St. Cyril and Method Day" (Slovak: Sviatok svätého Cyrila a Metoda).

- In Russia, it is celebrated on 24 May and is known as the "Slavonic Literature and Culture Day" (Russian: День славянской письменности и культуры), celebrating Slavonic culture and literature as well as the alphabet. Its celebration is ecclesiastical (11 May in the Church's Julian calendar). It is not a public holiday in Russia.

The saints' feast day is celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox Church on 11 May and by the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion on 14 February as "Saints Cyril and Methodius Day". The Lutheran Churches commemorate the two saints either on 14 February or 11 May.
Saints Cyril and Methodius

Bulgaria - Statue of the two Saints in front of the National Palace of Culture in Sofia

Bulgaria - Statue of the two Saints in front in Pazardzhik

The monument in Ohrid

Statue of Cyril and Methodius near the Stone Bridge in Skopje

Czech Republic - Statue of Saints Cyril and Methodius at the Charles Bridge in Praha

Czech Republic - Saints Cyril and Methodius monument in Mikulčice

Czech Republic - Statue of Saint Methodius at the Holy Trinity Column in Olomouc in Moravia

Ukraine - The monument in Kiev

Russia - the monument in Khanty-Mansiysk

Serbia - the monument to Saints Cyril and Methodius in Belgrade
Other commemoration

The national library of Bulgaria in Sofia, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje in the Republic of Macedonia, and St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo in Bulgaria and in Trnava, Slovakia, bear the name of the two saints. In the United States, SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan, bears their name.

Saints Cyril and Methodius are the main patron saints of the Archdiocese of Ljubljana. Ljubljana Cathedral stands at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Square (Slovene: Ciril–Metodov trg).

St. Cyril Peak and St. Methodius Peak in the Tangra Mountains on Livingston Island, South Shetland Islands, in Antarctica are named for the brothers.

Saint Cyril's remains are interred in a shrine-chapel within the Basilica di San Clemente in Rome. The chapel holds a Madonna by Sassoferrato.

The Basilica of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Danville, Pennsylvania, (the only Roman Catholic basilica dedicated to SS. Cyril and Methodius in the world) is the motherhouse chapel of the Sisters of SS. Cyril and Methodius, a Roman Catholic women's religious community of pontifical rite dedicated to apostolic works of ecumenism, education, evangelization, and elder care.

Notes

a. New Church Slavonic: Кирилъ и Мефодий (Kirill” i Methodij)
   - Belarusian: Кирыла і Мяфодзій (Kiryla i Miafodziy) or Кирыла і Мятода (Kiryla i Mutoda)
   - Bulgarian: Кирил и Методий (Kiril i Metodiy)
   - Croatian: Ćiril i Metod
   - Macedonian: Кирил и Методиј (Kiril i Metodij)
   - Russian: Кирилл и Мефодий (Kirill” i Methodij), pre-1918 spelling: Кирилъ и Мефодий (Kirill” i Methodij)
   - Serbian: Ћироко и Методије (Ćiroko i Metodije)
   - Slovene: Ciril in Metod
   - Ukrainian: Кирило і Мефодій (Kyrylo i Mefodiy)

References

[1] In the 21st century this date in the Julian Calendar corresponds to 24 May in the Gregorian Calendar
[4] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Major alphabets of the world, Cyrillic and Glagolitic alphabets, 2008, O.Ed. "The two early Slavic alphabets, the Cyrillic and the Glagolitic, were invented by St. Cyril, or Constantine (c. 827–869), and St. Methodius (c. 825–884). These men were Greeks from Thessalonica who became apostles to the southern Slavs, whom they converted to Christianity.
[8] Cyril and Methodius, Encyclopaedia Britannica 2005
[11] English Translation of the 18th Chapter of the Vita Constantinii, Liturgy of the Hours, Proper of Saints, 14 February
As is customary, when one becomes a monk in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, one receives a new name. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Degrees_of_Eastern_Orthodox_monasticism)

Paul Cubberley (1996) "The Slavic Alphabets"


Equal to Apostles SS. Cyril and Methodius Teachers of Slavs, by Prof. Nicolai D. Talberg (http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/kyrill_and_methody_e.htm)

Catholic Culture (http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113cym.htm)

Cyril and Methodius at orthodoxwiki (http://orthodoxwiki.org/Cyril_and_Methodius)


