



PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST  
CYKLO-METHODIAN SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS


Skopje, 23 may 2024

Edited by  
Maja Angelovska - Panova



Skopje, 2025






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Unfortunately, all these manuscripts have been classified as "Bulgarian" since the 19th century when they found their refuge in these libraries.

This concerns an invaluable part of Macedonian cultural heritage, and I believe that the Macedonian Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with Macedonian museums, should urgently take action to at least obtain descriptions of these manuscripts, which should bear the designation "Macedonian." While we may not be able to physically return them to Macedonia, I believe that this would be sufficient to correct the unforgivable mistake of our predecessors, who, in a much more peaceful and favorable time for Macedonia and Macedonian studies, failed to give enough care for their cultural heritage. The consequences of this neglect are still felt today in the 21st century, with the denial and limitation of the history of the Macedonian language, restricting its beginnings to no earlier than the mid-19th century.

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THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY OF SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS, EQUAL TO THE  
APOSTLES, AS THE FOUNDATION OF MODERN EDUCATION

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**Abstract**

**T**his paper aims to highlight the importance of enlightenment and spiritual continuity in the modern educational system. The work of Saints Cyril and Methodius was closely linked to the educational process: the alphabet and written language for the Slavs were created for teaching, knowledge transfer, and preaching the Word of God. The result of their mission essentially represents transmission of an extensive written literature into the Slavic world. This led to dramatic changes, as the written language became a means for a deep understanding of the world, transmission of spiritual experience, and preservation of cultural and scientific heritage. This qualitative transition contributed to the development of national languages as well as the spiritual and cultural self-determination of Slavic peoples.

The educational mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius, based on integrity, authenticity, and dedication, serves as a model for today's educators. The analysis covers their methods of cultural and linguistic adaptability, personalized approaches to students, and the significance of learning by personal example. Additionally, the paper proposes practical strategies for modern educators, such as interdisciplinary methods and the integration of spiritual values. Emphasizing the importance of morality and spirituality, the study underlines the necessity of education that fosters holistic development in students.

The great enlighteners, the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius, laid the foundations of the spiritual ties among Slavic peoples. Their monumental work has pan-Slavic significance and represents the most important period in the development of Slavic culture. Through their mission, they enabled the Slavs to believe in one God, the merciful Father of all people, which freed their ancestors from fears of numerous "vengeful" pagan deities. The deepest significance of their work is reflected in the educational process: the alphabet and written language for the Slavs were created for teaching, knowledge transfer, and preaching the Word of God. From the beginning of their mission, a new script, a new liturgical language, and translations of essential liturgical books were established.<sup>2</sup> Through the translation of church books, they laid the foundations of Slavic literature and culture.

The work of Saint Constantine the Philosopher was primarily within the domain of teaching, while the educational activity of Saint Methodius covered a broader scope. As a clergyman and later a bishop, in addition to teaching, he performed church duties such as baptizing, ordaining clerics, and conducting services. As the first Slavic bishop, he organized the Christian Church among the Slavs. His educational mission was comprehensive, fully embodying the concept of "enlightenment" – namely, Christianization, including church rituals and spreading education in a broader sense.<sup>3</sup>

The foundations laid by the brothers Cyril and Methodius in the Slavic world became the framework for our church life, theological science, and spiritual education. Their legacy represents the evangelical leaven that radically transformed the lives of Slavic peoples. The shared Slavic language awakened their sense of national affirmation. Thus, the Holy Brothers became the founders and inspirers of the entire Slavic culture based on Orthodox Christian faith. As pioneers of this new culture, they firmly rejected medieval notions of privileged nations and languages, decisively promoting their guiding principle of the equality of all peoples and the parity of languages.

This study will focus on the significance of their spiritual legacy as a foundation for modern education. We will analyze aspects of their mission related to the educational process, emphasizing their vision of integrating spiritual and intellectual values. We will also examine their lasting contribution to the formation of Slavic culture, given their unique role in Christian history.

From the outset, the work of the Thessalonian brothers was conceived as a pan-Slavic endeavor. This is evident from the Proclamation to the Holy Gospel, in which Saint Constantine promoted the Slavic translation of the Four Gospels and

announced the program of the Slavic enlightenment mission. This Proclamation is significant as it represents the first didactic content created entirely in the Slavic language.<sup>4</sup> In it, he addresses all Slavs, saying: "Listen, Slavs, to the works of Christ!"<sup>5</sup> This confirms that Constantine deeply understood the importance of the incarnate Logos for our earthly and eternal life and the necessity for the Slavic people to hear this truth in their native language.

Saint Constantine the Philosopher found the ideological foundation of these principles in the Holy Scriptures and patristic literature. In the First Epistle to Timothy, the Holy Apostle Paul says: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4). Considering these words, Saints Cyril and Methodius pondered: How will the Slavs come to know the truth if the Holy Scriptures and the liturgy remain incomprehensible to them? Hence, the mission to bring the Slavs to the knowledge of truth in their mother tongue was regarded as a sacred duty by the Holy Brothers. Until the end of their lives, their primary concern was the defense of the Slavic liturgical language against proponents of the medieval error that only three sacred languages were suitable for worship.

Although the work of Saints Cyril and Methodius belongs to all Slavs, it is doubly connected to Macedonia. Academic Petar Ilievski cited two reasons for this claim: first, the liturgical Old Church Slavonic language was based on the speech of the Macedonian Slavs from Thessaloniki, and second, after the mission's defeat in Moravia, its greatest preservation efforts were led by two of the closest disciples of the Holy Brothers—Saint Clement of Ohrid and Saint Naum of Ohrid. These two successfully continued the work of their teachers, which is why the oldest Slavic written monuments, preserved in the original Glagolitic script, are found precisely in the Ohrid region.<sup>6</sup>

The primary goal of Saints Cyril and Methodius was to introduce the Slavs into the family of Christians. The alphabet they created was not just a means of communication but a crucial instrument for theological and educational activity. Striving toward the same personal ideal – conforming to Christ and spreading the Gospel through written and spoken word – they enlightened the Slavic peoples, teaching them the truths of Christianity through the use of the Holy Scriptures in their native language.

<sup>4</sup> According to Хр. Илиевски, Светила незаодни, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Хр. Илиевски, „Проглас кон Светото Евангелие од блажениот учител наш Константин Философ, наречен Кирил“ во: За античката просодија во македонски препев. Скопје: Матица македонска, 1997, 113–121.

The transition from oral tradition to a written literary language became a powerful catalyst for the development of national cultures among all Slavic peoples. Many researchers emphasize that the work of Saints Cyril and Methodius was exceptionally fruitful, and the newly enlightened Slavic nations were characterized by a profound spiritual aspiration.<sup>7</sup> The equal-to-the-apostles brothers not only brought the Slavic peoples closer to the Gospel but also laid the foundation for a new educational model where spirituality and education were inseparably linked. Through their work, they transformed language into a tool for the spiritual and intellectual development of the Slavs, paving the way for the creation of national cultures and the strengthening of ecclesiastical life.

There is also evidence of how closely the work of Christian enlightenment, education, and upbringing was intertwined with the lives of the equal-to-the-apostles Saints Cyril and Methodius.<sup>8</sup> One of the characteristics of Orthodox theology is that theology must stem from the living experience of communion with God. A true theologian is one who has known God, lives a Christian life, and can unite intellectual experience with personal spiritual struggle. Saints Cyril and Methodius fulfilled this important criterion. That is why their mission was so successful and bore such great fruit. They were not only talented scholars but, above all, they were devoted to God. Through their lives, they bore witness to the Word of God. Despite often facing mortal danger, as their hagiographies recount<sup>9</sup>, they were not afraid to engage in the most perilous debates:

“Does not the rain fall equally from God for all? Does not the sun shine equally for all? Do we not all breathe the same air? Then why do you feel ashamed to acknowledge only three languages, while you want all other nations to be blind and deaf? Tell me, do you consider God so powerless that He cannot grant this, or so envious that He does not wish to?”<sup>10</sup>

Saint Cyril spoke these words in a heated polemic against those who argued that God should be praised only in three languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

The words of these enlighteners were persuasive and powerful precisely because they practiced what they preached to their disciples. Their disciples, in turn, were as strong in faith as their teachers. Thus, the enlightening mission continued in our lands, embodied in the work of Saints Clement and Naum of

<sup>7</sup> According to Хр. Илиевски, *Светила незаодни*, 6–7.  
<sup>8</sup> See Харалампие Поленакоски. *Во мугрите на словенската писменост*. Скопје: Македонска книга, 1988; Добрила Миловска and Јован Таковски. *Македонски житија IX – XVIII век*. Скопје: Табернакул, 1996; Петар Хр. Илиевски. „Константин Кирил Философ – ортодоксен теолог“ and „Просветителската мисија на Свети Методиј“ in: *Светила незаодни*, 96–123 и 144–155.

Ohrid. Through the activities of Saints Clement and Naum at the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century, Ohrid became an important literary hub of the Slavic language. The city also played a significant role as a church center throughout the Middle Ages, bearing witness to the extraordinary significance of the Slavic literary and educational tradition to this day.

A steadfast adherence to the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage is a fundamental characteristic of the renowned Ohrid Literary School. As the first educational center within the framework of the Church of Saint Clement, this school played the role of a savior of Slavic script and liturgy. Church books were written in Cyril's Glagolitic script, and liturgical services and sermons were conducted in the Slavic language, as emphasized by Academician Gjorgji Pop-Atanasov.<sup>11</sup> This school prepared educational personnel who were sent to engage in teaching, preaching, and clerical duties in many places inhabited by Slavs.

It is well known that the oldest sources, which contain the most data both about the first Slavic teachers and the founders of the Ohrid Literary Center, are artistic literary works with a didactic purpose—hagiographies written in the spirit of the Byzantine literary genre. Saints Clement and Naum first arrived in the regions of Devol and Ohrid as teachers, each serving in that capacity for seven years. The teaching, which had a religious content, was conducted in churches and monasteries. The Monastery of Saint Panteleimon, founded by Saint Clement, and the Monastery of the Holy Archangels, founded by Saint Naum, were not only religious but also educational centers. Beginners were taught basic literacy, while the gifted were introduced to deeper meanings of the sacred texts. Some students were oriented toward church service, while others pursued literary endeavors. Their numbers were not small—approximately 3,500 students were part of the Ohrid Literary School.<sup>12</sup>

Saints Clement and Naum were engaged in various literary activities. Together with their students, they organized scriptoria, and Saint Clement, in addition to his translation efforts, wrote original works that became classics of early Church Slavonic literature. They also carried out their educational mission through liturgical services. For this purpose, they were involved in the translation of liturgical books even during the lifetime of their teachers, Cyril and Methodius, and later continued this work independently.<sup>13</sup> Saint Clement is considered one of the first and most prolific writers of Old Slavic literature. He authored many sermons, homilies, and encomiums with didactic and exegetical content. Since the newly baptized Slavs did not fully understand the Christian faith, he dedicated himself to explaining it in comprehensible and beautifully crafted

<sup>11</sup> Ѓорѓи Поп-Атанасов. *Македонската глаголица*. Скопје: Македонска академија на науките и уметностите, 2015, 5.

forms, with a clear practical goal of moral edification. Thus, his works enthusiastically received in the Slavic world. They left a lasting mark on the literacy of regions influenced by the Macedonian linguistic variant, such as Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia.<sup>14</sup> His inseparable collaborator, Saint Naum of Ohrid, also known as a gifted hymnographer, credited with composing a canon for Saint Andrew the Apostle, structured in an acrostic.<sup>15</sup>

The overall result of their mission essentially represents the transfer of a written literary tradition into the Slavic world. This led to dramatic changes, where written language serves as a means for deep and comprehensive knowledge of the world, transmission of spiritual experience, and preservation of cultural and religious heritage. This qualitative transition contributed to the development of national languages and the cultural and spiritual self-determination of the Slavic peoples. Thus, the Ohrid Literary School of Saint Clement not only became the significant center of Slavic literacy but also the only place where the Cyrillic-Macedonian literary tradition was continued at that time. From Ohrid, Slavic literacy spread to various Balkan countries and to Kievan Rus.<sup>16</sup>

Saints Cyril and Methodius, along with their disciples Saints Clement and Naum of Ohrid, had a vision of integrating spiritual and intellectual values. Their educational efforts were not limited to the transmission of knowledge but were based on higher ethical and spiritual principles that surpassed the traditional educational model. A key aspect of their mission was the creation of literacy and a written language for the Slavic peoples, which formed the foundation for spreading Christian values and culture. Through their approach, they connected intellectual knowledge with spiritual development, creating conditions for a holistic approach to education.

According to the vision of Saints Cyril and Methodius, education should encompass both the worldly and the spiritual, the earthly and the eternal. This was central to forming good Christians who would contribute positively to society. Such an education could serve as a firm foundation for further studies in various subjects. For the enlighteners, the only source of doctrine was the Bible. The perspective required, above all, the ability to read and study it—hence the necessity of literacy.

Christian anthropology is based on the doctrine of human integrity, in which mind, soul, and body, as well as intellect, emotions, and will, form an integral whole. If one aspect is developed while neglecting the others, disharmony occurs, ultimately destroying personal integrity. What is intellect without a properly guided will? Or what are noble feelings without the determination to act on them? The

enlighteners understood this well and therefore insisted that literacy must go hand in hand with spiritual and moral education. They believed that students should first be instilled with the ideas of goodness, truth, and virtue before acquiring other knowledge. After all, what use is all worldly knowledge if one does not understand the meaning of life and one's place and role in the world? All further education depends on the answers to these questions: what should be; what is important and what is secondary; what should be taught?

The feeling that the world was created for the benefit of humanity, for its spiritual development and growth, enables students to learn to be free and, at the same time, patient; to understand the concepts necessary for intelligent living on earth and to grasp the responsibility for their actions. All necessary knowledge is acquired by way of spiritual enlightenment and experience in spiritual education. This may include sketches, events dedicated to helping people, assisting animals, supporting the sick, etc. The overall connection leads to the ability to see the problems of the world, which are solved not only individually but also collectively, through joint efforts. All these concepts are essential for understanding that the world is vast and that every person's help is needed by someone.

Through spiritual enlightenment and the acquisition of necessary knowledge, a person begins to understand the need for love as a feeling that unites the entire world; the need for compassion as a sense of participation in everyone's life; the need for understanding as a feeling that brings people together; patience as a sense of respect for every individual; and mercy as the ability to recognize others' suffering and offer assistance. All this knowledge helps to remain open to what is happening in the world and to be aware of life's challenges.

Modern education can adequately respond to this vision of Saints Cyril and Methodius by advancing curricula that integrate ethical and spiritual aspects into daily learning. The application of interdisciplinary methods, connecting the humanities, ethics, and religion, allows the formation of generations that possess knowledge but also a developed awareness of human values. In this regard, the introduction of programs that encourage empathy and responsibility through active community engagement and the development of intercultural understanding is particularly important. Educators can create environments that foster creative thinking and problem-solving while emphasizing universal values such as justice, solidarity, and care for others.

Educational programs based on values like respect, cooperation, and responsibility can be further enriched with activities that allow for the practical application of these values, such as volunteer initiatives, debates, and cultural exchanges, which will simultaneously strengthen the sense of belonging and civic responsibility.

Modern educational institutions can also support this vision by developing learning materials that highlight the importance of cultural heritage and its connection to contemporary ethical dilemmas. Establishing cultural and spiritual centers for students, where discussions on integrating moral and spiritual values into daily life, can be a significant step forward.

Furthermore, promoting a global ethics in education, which includes principles of mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity, is essential in creating a society in which the values of Saints Cyril and Methodius continue to thrive. Introducing interactive and visual learning methods that bring students closer to historical and spiritual achievements will help strengthen their sense of connection with these values.

Encouraging research among young people by organizing workshops related to spiritual and cultural heritage can contribute to a deeper understanding of the significance of ethical and spiritual values. By creating opportunities for active student participation in such activities, their personal growth will be nurtured, preparing them for responsible behavior in the community.

The importance of critical thinking and ethical awareness should be central components of the educational process. Saints Cyril and Methodius contributed to this through their personal example and dedication. Their ability to affirm their values through their own lives created a model that can serve as an inspiration for modern educators. Teachers, as contemporary enlighteners, can follow the example of Saints Cyril and Methodius by demonstrating that education is not just the transfer of information but also an inspiration for personal and collective progress.

Saints Cyril and Methodius were not just teachers but also individuals of high moral integrity. They applied their teachings in their own lives, giving them credibility in the eyes of their students. Modern teachers can achieve this by practicing the values they teach, such as honesty, diligence, and responsibility, as well as by demonstrating authenticity in their approach to students, thereby creating a sincere relationship.

One of the enlighteners' successes was their approach, which took into account the cultural and linguistic specifics of their students. Modern education can implement this by developing curricula that respect students' diverse cultural backgrounds and adopting an individualized approach that recognizes each student's specific needs and interests.

Saints Cyril and Methodius spent decades translating and spreading literacy, demonstrating exceptional dedication. Today's teachers can follow their example through continuous professional development and education, as well as by striving for long-term goals for student development rather than just achieving short-term successes.

The work of the enlighteners Cyril and Methodius was inseparable from the community in which they operated. To continue their path, modern teachers should be active participants in community life through projects and initiatives, creating an environment in which students feel part of a greater mission, whether through volunteer activities or participation in social projects.

Innovative approaches such as project-based learning, creative workshops, and the use of digital tools to promote cultural and spiritual heritage can be key in this direction. Through these activities, students will gain knowledge and learn to nurture the moral and spiritual principles that form the foundation of society.

Ultimately, modern education should emphasize the importance of experiential learning, encouraging students to apply their acquired knowledge and values in everyday life. Organizing local and international initiatives, such as humanitarian actions and cultural programs, will allow students to practice learned values and develop a sense of responsibility and belonging to the global community.

The integrative approach of Saints Cyril and Methodius makes their work relevant even today, fostering not only intellectual but also spiritual progress as the foundation for modern education.

However, today, it is impossible not to notice the process of abandoning traditional and spiritual values, which is intensifying in contemporary education. The Church is often criticized for "interfering" in education precisely because of its advocacy for spiritual values in modern education. Yet, the Church has not only contributed to the enlightenment of people throughout history, but the very educational system in Macedonia—the Ohrid Literary School of Saint Clement—was founded and developed at the heart of the Church.

Is it possible for a school or university to bear with dignity the name of a saint and an educator while not having room for spiritual education and religious values in its curriculum?

Philosophy, sociology, history, political science, and other disciplines shape worldviews. However, theology, using an interdisciplinary approach, can help supplement these subjects with traditional value-based guidelines, as it most clearly and comprehensibly articulates the fundamental values of our culture.

Undoubtedly, theology is called to connect various related disciplines with value frameworks, ideological and methodological tools. Theology contains the unshakable foundations of existence that can help modern individuals both in scientific endeavors and in everyday life.

Indeed, many today believe that “faith and science cannot cooperate,” that they are “two incompatible fields that do not overlap,” or even that “religion and science are in conflict.” However, such views are superficial. If we allow ourselves to delve deeper into the essence of this question, we will see that religion and science are meant to complement each other. Not only are they not contradictory, but they possess the potential to build a constructive and mutually beneficial dialogue. They influence two of the most important spheres of human life: the spiritual and the material. Unless, of course, we limit human life to a purely material existence without any spiritual needs.

In principle, science and religion, enriching one another, can achieve great results. Theology can broaden the worldview of future scientists. Knowledge of the fundamentals of the Orthodox religion can assist scientists in their research activities and provide them with certain epistemological criteria. At the same time, scientific knowledge and communication with scientists can help modern theologians in their mission to address contemporary challenges that life presents to theology today.

Theology opens horizons unknown to humanity and expands consciousness. No other field of knowledge possesses this quality. No matter how advanced science becomes, it will not be able to penetrate the profound mysteries of the human person without theology. True education, combined with the perception of moral foundations in the heart and mind, enables a person to appropriately evaluate and apply acquired scientific knowledge. In this sense, theology provides a stable foundation for education.

Saints Cyril and Methodius understood this and undoubtedly confirmed it through their work. Their achievements highlight the importance of moral principles in the educational process. They did not merely create an alphabet and translate Christian texts but also established an educational model that encompassed all aspects of human dignity. This model aimed to liberate students from spiritual darkness and introduce them to the world of knowledge and virtues, which form the basis for personal and societal development.

On the other hand, the secularization of education creates a highly subjective and limited understanding of culture and morality. This results in a distorted “modernization” of human upbringing, as it detaches itself from the traditions of the past and the highest moral ideals. Our society faces the challenge of developing a theological approach to education that will enrich the educational system and contribute to the formation of a harmonious individual. Therefore, education based on spiritual values should be a primary goal of the 21st century. If we speak about the future of our homeland and the world as a whole, it is necessary and essential to teach theology in schools and universities. Moreover, in preschool institutions, children should be introduced to morality, love, compassion, and other similar virtues at an appropriate level.

Understanding spiritual education and theology as a service to God also remains part of the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage, which should continue to guide us in our work today. It is crucial to remember this, not only for a proper understanding of the historical path of our literacy and culture but, more importantly, for the responsibility we bear in transmitting spiritual and cultural values through education and upbringing. This is the most essential condition for the sustainability of any nation and society. As heirs to the work of the enlighteners, it is our responsible duty to preserve the values they championed so that they are not overshadowed by contemporary educational reforms.