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THE ROOTS OF ISLAMIC UNIVERSALISM

ИСТОКИ ИСЛАМСКОГО УНИВЕРСАЛИЗМА

Summary. *The article is devoted to the phenomenon of Islamic universalism, which is the key idea of many Muslim ideologists of the modern times, such as Sayyid Qutb, Ismail al-Faruqi and others. The article puts under consideration the religious and socio-political elements of Islamic universalism, the formation of which roots back mainly to the times of the building the Islamic tradition. The religious aspect of Islamic universalism is determined by the postulation of the superiority of Islam as a religion. It includes the following elements: consideration of this religion as the last revelation in the Abrahamic tradition, strict monotheism as opposed to the Christian idea of the God's trinity, the existence of a direct connection, without intermediaries, between a man and the God, religious equality of men and women. A special place among them is occupied by the idea of man's faith (al-Iman), which is interpreted in terms of man's submission to God.*

The socio-political aspect of Islamic universalism is determined by the degree of adaptability of the Islamic tradition to changing historical conditions. Among the main socio-political elements of Islamic universalism there are the absence, at least in Sunni Islam, of the institution for the faith legalization, the absence of a clear demarcation between the religious community and the state, the presence in Islam of the "mechanism" of faith renewal (ijtihad), and the flexibility of the concept of Jihad's interpretation, which has both physical and spiritual-moral dimensions. The flexibility of Islam can also be explained by the presence of contradictions in the Islamic primary sources, which allow different Islamic groups to justify their beliefs and make the Islamic tradition more resilient and adaptable. The absence in Islam of a clear demarcation of a state and the ummah makes it possible to use religious rhetoric in the sphere of social and political action.

Key words: dawah, ijtihad, Iman, Islam, Islamization of knowledge, Ismail al-Faruqi, jihad, Kharijites, Mutazilites, Murjites, Muslim Brotherhood, religious universalism, Sayyid Qutb, schools of fiqh, Shia Islam, Sunni Islam, taqlid, velayat-e faqih.

Religion, focusing its primary attention on the correlation between the divine and human, first of all deals with the category of "universality." Depending on the sort of religion, a set of components, having pretentions to universality, can vary slightly – from theology to social action, – but the main of them can be found among many religions. These components include the universality of the moral principles and doctrine, social regulations and so on. Especially it is true for Abrahamic religions, the one of which is the Islam.

Many religious traditions offered their versions of universalism, but only within the framework of two religions, Christianity and Islam, religious universalism was not only proposed, but also realized or, at least, the attempts were made to implement the social aspects of universalism in a large scale – the projects of so-called "the global world. "

The Christian world for the realization of "the global world" had to go through the period of de-Christianization, secularization of society, while yet keeping in the Western mentality the fundamental Christian values and ideals.

The Muslim world, despite the attempts of secularization in the XXth century (Turkey of Kemal period, Egypt under the Nasr's rule), has preserved its religious identity, adherence to Islamic values, doctrine, and ritual.

In the middle of the XXth century and even later, sociologists had predicted the global secularization and decline of a religion. But it quickly became clear that at least Islam has not only maintained its position in the society, but even strengthened it. The victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 was the strong argument. And after the entering the political scene of such organizations as the Muslim brotherhood and Al-Qaida, which are used the Islamic rhetoric, hardly anyone doubted the phenomenon of the Islamic revival. This restoration of Islam and Islamic consciousness would have been impossible without its striving for implementation of the idea of universalism in it's own way.

The central idea of Islamic universalism is the spread of the Muslim community around the world. The most demonstrative form of it is the calling to create "the world caliphate." By the beginning of the XXst century this idea had not only disappeared, but became visible for world community. Calls for the establishment of "the world caliphate" were heard in Western countries thanks to the activities of Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Under the slogan of establishing "the world of Islam everywhere" the terrorist organization IGIL has started its activity.

The idea of Islamic universality was actively declared in the first half of the XXth century, in particular, by the ideologist of the Muslim Brothers Sayyid Qutb. In his book "Islam: the religion of the future" (1954) he opened the first chapter with the next words: "Islam is a system for practical human life in all its aspects. This is a system that entails the ideological ideal – the convincing concept which expounds the nature of the universe and determines the position of man in this universe as well as his ultimate objectives therein... I believe that Islam will be the religion of the future. In fact, this Islamic system is so comprehensive, interdependent and interwoven that it covers all aspects of human life..." [11, p. 5].

At the level of intellectual and educational activity, Muslims, primarily Muslims living in the West, began to implement the so called "Islamization of knowledge" project rooted to Ismaíl al-Faruqi and the International Institute of Islamic Thought. The ultimate goal of this project is the revival of Islamic civilization [1]. The ideologist of "Islamization of knowledge" project, Ismail al-Faruqi in his book "Al Tawhid: Its implications for thought and life" wrote

that "…the world ummah of Islam will not rise again or be ummah wasat except through that which gave it its raison détre fourteen centuries ago, its character and destiny through the ages, namely, Islam. It is a Muslim conception of himself as the khalifah (vicegerent) of Allah (SWT) on earth that makes him the vortex of human society" [6, pp. xiv-xv]. The American scholars John L.Esposito and John O.Voll imphasize the importance of Islam for Faruqi: "Faruqi saw the world through the prism of his Islamic faith and commitment focused on issues of identity, history, belief, culture, social mores, international relations. Whatever the national and cultural differences across the Muslim world, for Ismail al-Faruqi analysis of the strengths and weaknesses (past, present, and future) of Muslim societies began with Islam – its presence in society and its necessary role in development" [5, p. 27].

The contemporary representative of the Muslim group's intellectuals, who has developed the theoretical basis of "Islamization of knowledges," is Taha Jabir al-Alwai. In his book "The Ethics of disagreement in Islam" he underlines the primary needs of the ummah, the Muslim community, to be united: "Conscious workers for Islam are responsible for the urgent task of building a sound and stable base for the restoration of the unity and health of the ummah, and eventually for rebuilding the civilization of Islam" [3, p. 10]. The unity of the Muslim community, opposed to national disunity, is the key setting of Islam. Its origins can be seen in the substitution of the tribal solidarity (asabiyya) of pre-Islamic times by the universal unity of the Muslim ummah.

What have allowed Muslims to preserve its proselytizing power and declare the "truth of their faith" and the "most correct" model of society till the present days? When have these ideas shaped form in the Muslim history? Below, we will consider the origins of the religious and socio-political aspects of Islam which allow it to make pretentions to universality.

To understand the nature of Islamic universalism, we should turn to the period of the Muslim Sacred scripture forming, and unleashing of the ideological struggle in the Caliphate (VII – XIth centuries), reflecting the process of political groups ideology's and organizational structures' creation, as well as the formation of the theological schools of both Sunni and Shia Islam.

Now we will start with the religious components of Islamic tradition, particularly with those elements of Islam that allow this religion to have pretensions to universality, which are reflected in the Quran.

Firstly, Islam completes the Abrahamic religious tradition, to which Muslims attach a special importance. The mentioned above famous Islamic ideologist Sayyid Qutb paid a special attention to it: "Had the person of the Prophet been absolutely essential for the establishment and fruition of this message, Allah Almighty would not have made Islam a universal message, ordained it as the religion for the whole of mankind, given it the status of the last Divine Message for humanity, and made it to be a guide for all the inhabitants of this planet in all their affairs until the end of time" [12, p. 29]. The contemporary Muslim activists also consider Islam as the last revelation of the God and suppose it the strong

argument in favour of Islamic universality. An active member of the Islamic Society of Baltimore (USA) Hasan Awan stresses it by the next words: "Islam is the final revealed religion and seal of Prophetic Tradition. As the last revealed religion, Islam has a kind of religious and spiritual "youthful intensity" when compared to other living revealed traditions... Moreover, the way in which Allahu ta'ala revealed Islam makes of it a most opportune and practical form of Tradition to practice in the contemporary world we live in – both East and West" [4].

The status of the Last message of the God allow Muslims to consider Islam as the universal teaching for all mankind. And it should be emphasized that for Muslims the primary authority are those ideas and concepts, which can be found in the Quran.

The Muslims substantiate such kind a vision with the verses of the Quran: "Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but the Messenger of God, and the Seal of the Prophets; God has knowledge of everything" (33:40).

Even the direct indications of the Islam's supremacy can be found in the Muslim Sacred Scripture:

"It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may uplift it above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse" (9:33).

The next aspect of Islamic universalism is the concept of tawhid which means the unity of the divine principle. Muslims consider Islam as the religion to the utmost reveals the idea of a single God, counterposing it to Christianity and criticizing the last for the violation of the God's unity.

The next Quranic verses reflect this attitude of Muslims to the sacred unity:

"People of the Book, go not beyond the bounds in your religion, and say not as to God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not, Three. Refrain; better is it for you. God is only One God. Glory be to Him – That He should have a son!... (4:171).

"God has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god with Him; for then each god would have taken off that he created and some of them would have risen up over others; glory to be God, beyond that they describe…" (23:91).

The Islamic universalism is also reflected in the idea of a direct connection of believer with the God. Especially it applies to Sunni Islam. Hasan Awan stresses that "qualities such as having direct access to God without the need of an institutionalized intermediary such as the Church (for example) and being able to pray the canonical prayers anywhere on earth make of Islam a very direct, practical and even primordial form of religion to practice" [4].

A special place in Islam is given to the religious equality of men and women, that is written in the Quran:

"Men and women who have surrendered, believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men and truthful women, enduring men and enduring women, humble men and humble women, men and

women who give in charity, men who fast and women who fast, men and women who guard their private parts, men and women who remember God oft – for them God has prepared forgiveness and a mighty wage" (33:35).

For ancient and medieval European society, the idea of the religious inequality of men and women was a norm. The submissive role of woman was proved by the Bible. The more amazing the fact that early Islam, that is fixed in the Quran, gives us the idea of unequivocal gender equality (33:35). This gives the arguments for supporters of the Quran holiness to consider this book as a universal scripture of all times.

The next religious aspect of the Islamic tradition is directly or indirectly related to the socio-political role of Islam. The basic principle that underlies human existence and should coordinate the human society, according to Islam, is the submission: submission to Allah, submission to sharia (the Muslim law), submission to a teacher (in Sufi tradition). It is a part of the "Iman – Islam" dichotomy, that has emerged during the Middle Ages' dogmatic disputes in Islam. A question about "the true faith" was appeared among Muslims of early epoque. Who is a true Muslim – a person who proves his faith by words, or by activity? In the Quran we can find at least two words that signify the belonging to the faith of Islam: "muslimun" and "muminun." The first word means "a submissive person" and the second one – "a believer." The word "Islam" that is directly links with the word "muslimun" occurs in Koran only 8 times. The word "Iman" (that is, "faith"), linked with the word "muminun," to the contrary, is more common in the Muslim Sacred book. However, in the Quran the submission to Allah is constantly prescribed as a fundamental principle and action. It is difficult to determine whether a person is a true believer, but submission to Allah and further, to Islamic law is enough to be a Muslim. So, if "muminun" has a strong religious connotation, "muslimun" appeals to social order. To be a Muslim means the external expression through submission of internal belief in God.

This dichotomy rooted back to the turn of the VIIth – VIIIth centuries, when among Muslims the differences in understanding of faith (al-Iman) occurred in relation to the person who committed a grave sin. The most radical position was occupied by the Kharijites. Considering faith as the totality of all acts of obedience to Allah, they claimed that a person who committed a grave sin ceased to be a Muslim and became an unbeliever. This thesis became politically important due to the fact that the Umayyads were also declared unbelievers by Kharijites, against whom it was necessary to fight. The opposite position was occupied by the Murjites, who were based on the thesis that faith is a recognition of the truth of Allah. They considered an action of a man as the less significant than keeping the purity of faith in heart, even if a man committed a grave sin. The position between Murjites and Kharijites was occupied by the Mutazilites, who developed the doctrine of "the intermediate position," between believer and non-believer. They believed that a person who committed a great sin, leaved the community of believers, but he did not become an unbeliever. The decision on his fate was postponed until the day of judgment. So, this dogmatic position

called upon Muslims to take a neutral position in conflict political situations [7, c. 175].

The groups of Murjites and Mutazilites have disappeared by now but the debates which group is to consider as true Muslims, or believers, have been continued.

A distinctive feature of Islam is its mobility and adaptability to the needs of time that helps the Muslim religion stay alive. It is a proof of Islamic universality in social aspect. This feature of Islam might be explained by the following factors: contradictoriness of the Muslim teaching's sources and absence of an authoritative religious institution.

The contradictory nature of the sources of Muslim teaching, which allowed a wide variety of points of view, influenced the fact, that there are lack of absolute and universally recognized criteria in the definition of "faith" and "error" in Islam.

The content of the Quran arouse difference of mind among Muslims. Even a special principle was elaborated in Islam – "the abrogator and abrogated Quranic verses", based on the verse of the Quran and hadeeth that the later ayah, or, verse, canceled the previous one if they contradicted each other:

"And for whatever verse We abrogate or cast into oblivion, We bring a better or the like of it…"(2:106).

It should be borne in mind that every political action by the opposing groups was supported by the Quran and the sunnah. It was very important for them to prove their actions by the Quranic verses, which were created later then the verses of their opponents. Since the order of the Quranic verses is not determined by the chronological principle, this fact permits the existence of diverse opinions. Even more contradictions are contained in the Sunnah – many false hadiths were written in the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate (750 year of creation).

Thus, the inconsistency of the sources of the Muslim dogma provides a wide range of possible interpretations in social and political terms.

Furthermore, there is no generally acknowledged theological school or special institution for legalization of faith in, at least, Sunni Islam, as there are the Ecumenical Councils in the Christianity. The elaboration and interpretation of Muslim teaching was not a part of the caliph's legalization, of state, or religious institutions. The formation of opinions in Caliphate was the responsibility of private persons – religious authorities (ulama, fukaha), whose authority was based solely on their knowledge in the field of religious sciences [10, c. 11]. Not surprisingly, the authorities periodically made attempts to put such authoritative people under their control, offering them to occupy high-ranking positions. So, it was with Abu Hanifa (died 767), the founder of the Sunni Hanafi school of fiqh. When by the 740's Abu Hanifa became the most authoritative fakih of Iraq, the Caliph al-Mansur (reign 754 – 755) invited him to take the position of qadi (religious judge of the sharia court) in the new capital, in Baghdad, but Abu Hanifa refused because it would had meant that he fell under the governmental control.

In general, the separation of a religious decision making from the authorities as a whole made Islam very flexible in relation to the needs of society. Unlike Christianity, which proclaimed that the faith is obedience to the church, Islam was viewed from the very beginning as obedience to Allah. In other words, Islam does not recognize mediation between God and believers. And no social institute had been created that needed to adapt to new social and political conditions.

Nevertheless, the attempts to create close ties between the state and religion had been made. For example, the attempt to create so called "state religion" during the Abbasid period were made by the Mutazilites. It was happened during the reign of Caliph al-Mamun (813-833), who had been under strong influence of this group. Caliph tried to legislate as "a most orthodox" and protected by the state the Mutazilites' theology, which had to be obligatory for all Muslims.

By a proclamation of 827, he ordered to test in faith all judges, theologians, and lawyers. This proclamation was based on the Mutazilites' doctrine of the createdness of the Quran. In 833 a special institution started its work – mihna. But it had existed not so long. It was abolished between 848 and 851. During this short period many religious scholars were imprisoned, or killed unless they conceded the Mutazila doctrine of the created nature of the Quran. For example, in 845, when prisoners were exchanged with Byzantium, the Caliph officials accepted only those who recognized createdness of the Quran [10, c. 20]. But later Caliph al-Mutawakkil proclaimed "traditionally orthodox Sunnism", based on tradition, as the official confession. The Mutazilite teaching was forbidden.

The last major intervention of the caliph in Islamic teaching had taken place during the reign of Caliph al-Qadir (991-1031). In the beginning of XIth century there was an active dispute between the Sunnis-"traditionalists", on the one hand, and the Fatimid Ismailis, Mutazilites and Asharites, on the other hand. The "traditionlists" – representatives of the Hanbals school of fiqh took on the role of guardians and advocates of the teachings of "pious forefathers" (as-salaf), the followers of the sunnah of the prophet Muhammad. Caliph al-Qadir (991-1031) as the central authority tried to interfere in the dispute between these groups. In 1017, he tried to legitimize the teaching of the Hanbali school of law as the only "orthodox." For it he invited the Khanafi fuqaha (Islamic jurists) to the palace and demanded them to renounce the Mutazilites. In 1018, Kadir assembled 400 theologians of different schools into his palace, and then read them the so-called "Kadiri symbol of faith" [10, c. 21]. This "symbol of faith" identified the Sunni madhabs, the proponents of the Quran creation were declared unbelievers (Mutazilites), the shedding of their blood was considered permissible. This was the last major intervention of the Caliphs in the Islamic theology.

In general, the caliphs stopped attempts to impose a dogmatic system. The authorities' desire to establish the religious and political unity of the Muslim community was not successful. The problem of "orthodoxy" proved to be undecidable in Islam. To the contrary, cloth ties between the religious and political views in Islam, and wide variety opinions have supported its social

significance, and made Islam popular in any epoch. In such a way Islam has preserved its social flexibility.

A great question in Islam, that cannot be avoided, is the correlation between the ummah and statehood in Islam. By creating ummah Muhammad introduced actually a new moral and social order. A society based on tribal affiliation was replaced by a religiously bonded community that is to be an example to other nations and with a mission to create a new moral social order:

"You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour, and believing in God…" (3:110).

This commandment had a great influence on the Muslim behavior, practice, and political activity. Moreover, this command has also become a base for Muslim pretention to universalism in political terms.

The period of Muhammad and the first four caliphs of Islam, the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs (632–661), is viewed by Sunni Muslims as the best of times to which the community has often turned for guidance and inspiration. It was a time when the Islamic conquest of Arabian Peninsula was completed and the religion of prophet Muhammad spread around the Middle East and reached Africa. The Muslim army proved its power by smashing the Sassanian Empire (651) and inflicting a series of defeats to Byzantium. So Arabic caliphate became a world political force. Since that time, the notion that a strong state was a consequence of the right faith has begun to form in Islamic civilization.

It is no coincidence that since the period of the Islamic tradition formation, the problem of supreme authority has arisen. It has for centuries been actual, and not only because of the political ambitions of competing political groups and communities, but also because in the eyes of believers the legitimacy and righteousness of ruler served as guarantees for the righteousness of their life path, and vice versa. The struggle against "illegal" and "unrighteous" rulers became the ideological slogan of the Kharijtes and Shia movements.

At least two models of leadership – Sunni and Shia – can be distinguished in the Muslim world. For Sunni Muslims, early Islamic success in building the strong and influential state was an evidence of God's will following. As Abrahamyan aptly noticed, "the Sunni clergy linked political obedience to religious duty, and civil disobedience with religious heresy" [2, p. 19]. Therefore, for a Sunni Muslim, a strong state is very important. It is a proof of the truth of their faith and a righteous path. In Shia Islam, everything developed in a different way.

For Shia Islam (the Twelvers) the central figure of leadership is the Imam. He is both the religious and political leader of the community who is sinless thanks to his qualities and who has special relations with Allah. Thus, Imam represents a divine guidance for Shia community. The struggle became an integral part of the political order of Shia Islam. The model of this struggle is the confrontation between Ali ibn abi Talib and the Muawiyah, the founder of Umayyad caliphate. Thanks to the fact, that the group of Ali's supporters was pushed back from the leadership in the country, the return of lost power became the primary aim of Shiite. Gradually in the bosom of Shiism, a concept of "velayat-e faqih" had

been developed, the crowning achievement of which became the teaching of Imam Khomeini. It insisted that the government should be ruled by Muslim jurists in accordance with the sharia.

The next three Islamic concepts make this religious tradition incredibly adaptable to the needs of the time, and have helped it to stay alive. There are ijtihad, jihad, and dawah. Their forming comes back to the Middle ages, but they obtained a new breath during the Modern time.

Ijtihad literary means physical or mental effort. It can be viewed as a special "mechanism" for faith renewal, that helps to adapt Islam to the spirit of the times. It means the utmost effort in particular activity, but it is usually is connected with the making a legal decision. In early Islam it was used for clarifying those questions, that had not been resolved in sharia. Though in the course of time ijtihad almost used to implement for decision making, and the supremacy of taqlid, that means following the established tradition, or opinion of some religious authority, had predominated for a long time, since the XVIIIth century the request for its reopening was proclaimed by Muslims reformers like Sufi sheikh Wali Allah of India (1703 – 1762), salafi scholar and the founder of Wahhabi movement Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab of Saudi Arabia (1703 – 1792), or the Yemeni scholar Muhammad ibn Ali ash Shawkani (1739 – 1854). The extension of applying ijtihad in conditions of intensified Muslim migration to the West in the XXth century became more needed because western society put new questions to migrants the answers on which can not be found in taqlid tradition, and Muslim immigrants are forced to seek fresh solutions to their problems.

The other two mentioned traditional Muslim concepts worked out by means of ijtihad. They were declared to be the main instruments for maintaining ummah, such as dawah and jihad.

Jihad literary means "an effort" (striving or struggling) but usually is understood, especially in the condition of a threat, as a physical struggle against non-Muslims. But this term could also signify a peaceful struggle. Jihad is sometimes referred to as the sixth pillar of Islam.

During the Middle Ages, an entire classification of jihad had been developed in Islam: greater and lesser jihad, jihad of sword, jihad of heart, jihad of tongue and jihad of property. It should be borne in mind that the Quranic jihad is primarily a military jihad, that is, a physical struggle with the enemy. The concept of a greater jihad, based on the exegetical interpretations of the Quran, had started to develop predominantly among early ascetics [8, pp. 24 – 25].

A great role in forming this conception has been played by the ascetic movement in the Caliphate since the Abbasid period. Many people, dissatisfied with the power of the Umayyads, went to the borderland to demonstrate the truth of their faith and righteous life with weapons in their hands. They lived in fortified monasteries. Later, when the borders of the caliphate expanded, some soldiers remained in these fortresses, led an ascetic life.

Since there it was no direct physical contact with the enemy, they developed a different content of jihad, which was understood as fighting against their vices

and internal flaws. Later, the concept of a greater jihad became universal in the Islamic tradition, to preserve its legitimacy in the conditions of democratic societies of the modern period.

The term dawah or "Islamic call" means "the call of Allah" to believe. And this meaning implies the close ties between dawah and iman. Dawah can also be interpreted as the call of every Muslim to unbelievers and it means the peaceful missionary work [13, p. 344]. So long as there have not been any demarcations in Islam between religion, on the one hand, and society, state, policy, economy, on the other hand, "the Islamic call" covers all fields of society too. In such a way a missionary can be viewed as not only a religious person but as a political agent.

Ijtihad, jihad, and dawah in fact, became the main instruments of Muslim socialization in non-Muslim surroundings. Ijtihad generates new ideas and concepts helping ummah to adapt to changing conditions. Jihad and dawah promote to implement the new concepts.

After reviewing the basic elements of Islamic universalism, it can be noted that Islam, like no other religion, has a strongly pronounced socio-political orientation. In many respects this is explained by the fact that there is no separation of the state from the community of believers in the Quran. Thus, Islam claims to be the regulator of public relations, which the state usually assumes. At present the claim to the universality of Islam in all spheres of human activity is stronger than ever. The process of globalization not only does not contradict the idea of affirming the Muslim ummah on a world scale, but generates among the Muslims projects for the reorganization of the entire world into an Islamic way.

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THE ROLE OF THE MISSION OF CYRIL AND METHODIUS IN THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN CENTRAL, SOUTHEASTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE

РОЛЬ МИССИИ КИРИЛЛА И МЕФОДИЯ В РАСПРОСТРАНЕНИИ ХРИСТИАНСТВА В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ, ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ И ВОСТОЧНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ

Annotation: This article discusses the role of the mission of Cyril and Methodius in the spread of Christianity in the region of Central, Southeast and Eastern Europe. Provides information known to science about the origin of the brother, their childhood and youth. The mission of Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia is described in some detail. The relationship of the Roman Church to the new alphabet created by the Solun brothers is shown.The author describes the activities of Methodius, appointed bishop of Moravia and Pannonia.The author expressed his opinion on the significance of the mission of Cyril and Methodius. The article discusses the activities of the disciples of Cyril and Methodius. One of them is the creator of the Cyrillic alphabet. Based on the facts known to science, the history of the Cyril and Methodius tradition in European countries during the Middle Ages is traced.

Keywords: Cyril, Methodius, christian mission, Great Moravia, Glagolitic script, Cyrillic script, slavic liturgy, heritage of Cyril and Methodius

Cyril and Methodius were born in the 9th century in ancient Thessalonika (modern Salonica, Greece), an important center of commercial and political life in the Byzantine Empire. It played an important role in the intellectual and social life of the Balkans. Being situated on the border with the Slav territories, it also had a Slav name: Solun. Methodius was the elder brother and his baptismal name was probably Michael. He was born between 815 and 820. His younger brother Constantine was born in 827 or 828 [19]. He went down in history under his monastic name Cyril. Their father was a senior official of the imperial