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Welcome to a fascinating dive into the world of the Serbian Orthodox Church! In this article, we will explore the dogmatic principles that shape the beliefs of this ancient and venerable institution. As one of the oldest Christian churches, the Serbian Orthodox Church carries a rich tapestry of traditions, customs, and doctrines. Join us as we uncover the core tenets that guide the faith, revealing a unique perspective that has withstood the test of time. Get ready to embark on a journey of discovery, gaining insights into the beliefs that have shaped the lives of millions throughout history. Let's explore and gain a deeper understanding of what the Serbian Orthodox Church truly stands for. Beliefs and Teachings of the Serbian Orthodox Church The Serbian Orthodox Church holds a rich tapestry of beliefs and teachings that shape the spiritual lives of its followers. Rooted in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the church emphasizes the importance of dogmatic principles, which serve as the foundation of its faith. These principles guide the Serbian Orthodox Church's understanding of theological doctrines and establish the boundaries of its beliefs. One of the central dogmatic principles of the Serbian Orthodox Church is the belief in the Holy Trinity, the unity of three divine persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This concept forms the cornerstone of Orthodox Christianity and underscores the church's understanding of God's nature and relationship within the divine essence. Furthermore, the church places strong emphasis on the veneration of icons. Icons are considered windows to the divine, offering a tangible connection to the heavenly realm. Iconography is highly regarded as an essential means of prayer and worship in the Serbian Orthodox Church, allowing believers to engage with the saints and receive their intercessions. The Serbian Orthodox Church also upholds the importance of the sacraments. These sacred rituals, such as baptism, Holy Communion, and confession, are believed to convey God's grace to believers and foster their spiritual growth. The sacraments are seen as profound encounters with the divine, enabling believers to participate in the divine life and draw closer to God. It is through these dogmatic principles, centered on the Holy Trinity, icon veneration, and the sacraments, that the Serbian Orthodox Church seeks to guide its faithful on a path of spiritual transformation and deepening communion with God. These beliefs and teachings serve as a timeless source of inspiration and guidance, shaping the lives of Serbian Orthodox believers for generations. The Holy Trinity and the Divinity of Jesus Christ The Serbian Orthodox Church holds firm to the belief in , two fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. According to their dogmatic principles, the Holy Trinity is the concept that God is one essence, yet revealed in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. This belief emphasizes the unity and coexistence of the three divine entities. In particular, the Serbian Orthodox Church upholds the divinity of Jesus Christ, affirming that He is not merely a prophet or a wise teacher, but rather the Son of God, equal in divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. They regard Jesus as the incarnation of God, who took on human form to redeem humanity and offer salvation. This essential doctrine of divinity is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Serbian Orthodox Church and is the foundation upon which their worship and liturgical practices are built. It serves as a guiding light in their understanding of God's nature, the significance of Christ's sacrifice, and the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. The Serbian Orthodox Church holds to these dogmatic principles as a source of spiritual guidance and a testament to their faith in the divine nature of Jesus Christ. By acknowledging the Holy Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, they strive to deepen their connection with God and live out their faith in accordance with these foundational beliefs. The Importance of Sacraments in the Serbian Orthodox Church The Serbian Orthodox Church places great importance on the sacraments, considering them to be essential for spiritual growth and salvation. These sacraments, also known as mysteries, are seen as outward signs of God's grace and presence in the life of believers. They are performed with the belief that through them, individuals are united with Christ and receive His divine energies. One of the most significant sacraments in the Serbian Orthodox Church is Holy Baptism, which is viewed as the gate to the spiritual life. It is through baptism that individuals are initiated into the body of Christ and receive the forgiveness of sins. The sacrament involves the pouring of water over the person's head three times, symbolizing their participation in Christ's death and resurrection. Holy Chrismation is another important sacrament in which individuals are anointed with holy chrism, a mixture of olive oil and fragrant spices. This sacrament is administered immediately after baptism and is seen as the sealing of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through chrismation, believers are strengthened and empowered for their life in Christ. The Eucharist, or Holy Communion, holds a central place in the worship and spiritual life of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The sacrament involves the partaking of consecrated bread and wine, understood to transform into the body and blood of Christ. Through the Eucharist, believers commune with Christ and receive His grace, nourishing their souls for eternal life. The Serbian Orthodox Church also recognizes other sacraments such as Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders, Holy Unction, and Confession. Each of these sacraments holds immense significance in the life of believers, helping them to grow spiritually, receive God's grace, and deepen their relationship with Christ and His Church. Their importance lies not only in the rituals but also in the impact they have on an individual's spiritual journey. The Role of the Bible in the Serbian Orthodox Church The Serbian Orthodox Church holds the Bible in the highest regard, viewing it as the ultimate source of inspiration and guidance for all aspects of spiritual life. As part of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the church believes in the principle of Sola Scriptura, meaning that the Bible is the sole authority for matters of faith and doctrine. This emphasis on the Holy Scriptures has shaped the dogmatic principles of the Serbian Orthodox Church. One of the fundamental beliefs of the Serbian Orthodox Church is the belief in the Trinity. This doctrine states that God is one essence, existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. This concept is derived from various passages in the Bible, such as the baptism of Jesus and the Great Commission. Another significant dogma of the Serbian Orthodox Church is the belief in the Incarnation. This doctrine affirms that Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine, without any confusion or mingling of the two natures. The church finds support for this teaching in passages like John 1:14, which states, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Additionally, the Serbian Orthodox Church upholds the doctrine of the Resurrection. This belief holds that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion, conquering death and offering salvation to all humanity. The church finds evidence for this central event in the Gospels, particularly in the accounts of the empty tomb and Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to his disciples. To summarize, the Bible plays a crucial role in the dogmatic principles of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It serves as the authoritative source for understanding the nature of God, the Incarnation of Christ, and the hope of the Resurrection. Through a deep reverence for the Scriptures, the church endeavors to live out its faith in accordance with the teachings and wisdom of the Word of God. The Belief in the Intercession of Saints and Iconography The Serbian Orthodox Church has a long-standing belief in the intercession of saints and the use of iconography in worship. These practices are deeply rooted in the church's dogmatic principles and play a significant role in the spiritual life of its followers. Intercession of saints, also known as "prayer through saints," is the belief that the saints, who have reached a state of eternal bliss and communion with God, can intercede on behalf of believers and bring their prayers to God. It is not seen as a form of worshiping the saints themselves, but rather as seeking their help and guidance as powerful intercessors. Iconography, on the other hand, refers to the use of religious images, particularly icons, in worship. Icons are not mere paintings or artworks; they are regarded as windows into the heavenly realm, connecting the worshiper with the divine. They serve as visual aids in prayer and meditation, helping believers focus their thoughts on the teachings and mysteries of the faith. Both the belief in the intercession of saints and the use of iconography are deeply ingrained in the Serbian Orthodox Church's theology and worship practices. They are considered integral to the church's understanding of the communion of saints and its teachings on the Incarnation and the role of imagery in spirituality. By engaging in these practices, believers seek to deepen their spiritual connection with God and draw inspiration from the lives and examples of the saints. In summary, the Serbian Orthodox Church holds a strong belief in the intercession of saints and the use of iconography as vital aspects of its faith. These practices allow believers to seek the intercession of saints and engage in a visual and tangible expression of their spiritual devotion. Through the centuries, these dogmatic principles have been at the heart of the church's worship and continue to shape the religious experience of its followers today. The Orthodox Understanding of Salvation and the Afterlife In the Serbian Orthodox Church, the understanding of salvation and the afterlife is deeply rooted in its dogmatic principles. These principles, derived from Scripture and Church tradition, form the foundation of our beliefs regarding the ultimate destiny of humanity. 1. **Universal Call to Salvation:** The Serbian Orthodox Church believes in the universal call to salvation. It teaches that God desires the salvation of all people and offers His grace to everyone. However, individual response to this call is required for salvation to be realized. 2. **Process of Salvation:** We believe that salvation is a lifelong process involving both God's grace and human cooperation. This cooperation, enabled by the Holy Spirit, requires faith, repentance, and the participation in the sacraments. The sacraments play a vital role in our journey towards salvation, particularly baptism, chrismation, and the Eucharist. 3. **The Afterlife:** In Orthodox theology, the afterlife is understood as the continuation and fulfillment of the person's relationship with God. We believe in the existence of heaven, hell, and a period of purification known as Purgatory. Hell is seen as a state of eternal separation from God, while Purgatory is viewed as a temporary state of purification for those who died in a state of grace but still require cleansing from their sins. 4. **Prayers for the Departed:** The Serbian Orthodox Church places great importance on prayers for the departed. Through these prayers, we ask for God's mercy and intervention on behalf of the souls who have passed away. We believe in the power of these prayers to aid in the purification and ultimate salvation of the departed. Key Beliefs Explanation Universal Call to Salvation The Serbian Orthodox Church believes in the universal call to salvation. It teaches that God desires the salvation of all people and offers His grace to everyone. However, individual response to this call is required for salvation to be realized. Process of Salvation We believe that salvation is a lifelong process involving both God's grace and human cooperation. This cooperation, enabled by the Holy Spirit, requires faith, repentance, and the participation in the sacraments. The Afterlife Orthodox theology understands the afterlife as the continuation and fulfillment of the person's relationship with God. It encompasses heaven, hell, and a period of purification known as Purgatory. Prayers for the Departed The Serbian Orthodox Church emphasizes prayers for the departed, seeking God's mercy and intervention on behalf of the souls who have passed away. These prayers play a significant role in helping the departed towards purification and salvation. Through these dogmatic principles, the Serbian Orthodox Church provides a clear understanding of salvation and the afterlife. We recognize the importance of both God's grace and human response in the journey towards salvation. Additionally, our beliefs encompass the existence of heaven, hell, and a period of purification. By offering prayers for the departed, we seek to assist their souls in finding eternal rest and communion with God. These teachings invite us to continually deepen our faith and strive for a closer relationship with God. The Serbian Orthodox Church's Perspective on Ethics and Morality What Does the Serbian Orthodox Church Believe? Dogmatic Principles The Serbian Orthodox Church places a strong emphasis on ethics and morality, guiding the faithful through the principles of their dogmatic teachings. These teachings provide a comprehensive framework for understanding what is right and wrong, encouraging individuals to lead virtuous and righteous lives. One of the fundamental ethical principles emphasized by the Serbian Orthodox Church is the belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every human being. This means that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, are regarded as equal and deserving of respect and compassion. The Church also emphasizes the importance of living a life centered around love and forgiveness. This means striving to love one's neighbors unconditionally and forgiving those who have wronged us. By practicing forgiveness, believers can experience personal growth and cultivate a harmonious and compassionate community. In addition, the Serbian Orthodox Church regards honesty and integrity as essential virtues. Believers are encouraged to be truthful in their words and actions, fostering trust and upholding the moral fabric of society. This commitment to honesty extends to all aspects of life, whether it be in personal relationships, professional endeavors, or interactions within the wider community. Key Principles of Serbian Orthodox Church's Ethics and Morality: Respect for the inherent dignity of every human being Love and forgiveness as guiding principles Honesty and integrity in all aspects of life It is important to note that is deeply rooted in its theological foundations. By adhering to these dogmatic principles, believers strive to align their actions and beliefs with the teachings of their faith, seeking spiritual growth and a closer relationship with God. In summary, promotes principles such as respect for human dignity, love, forgiveness, honesty, and integrity. These principles form the ethical compass for believers to navigate their lives in adherence to their faith and to promote a just and compassionate society. The Relationship between Church and State in the Serbian Orthodox Tradition In the Serbian Orthodox tradition, the relationship between the Church and the state holds deep historical and cultural significance. The Serbian Orthodox Church believes in specific dogmatic principles that shape this relationship and define its role within society. 1. Ecclesiology: The Serbian Orthodox Church sees itself as the mystical body of Christ on earth, guided by the Holy Spirit. It maintains that the Church is separate from the state but has a responsibility to provide spiritual guidance and moral direction in society. 2. Autonomy: The Serbian Orthodox Church emphasizes its autonomy and independence from the state, affirming its right to govern its internal affairs without interference. This principle ensures that the Church can freely fulfill its spiritual duties and preserve its traditions and teachings. 3. Cooperation: While maintaining its independence, the Serbian Orthodox Church acknowledges the importance of cooperation with the state authorities for the greater good of the society. This can include collaboration on issues such as social welfare, education, and cultural heritage preservation. 4. Moral Influence: The Church sees itself as a moral compass for the state, aiming to guide and inspire the nation's leaders and citizens towards ethical and just behavior. It advocates for the principles of love, peace, social justice, and compassion, encouraging the state to embody these values in its governance. In summary, the Serbian Orthodox Church's belief in the relationship between church and state is centered around autonomy, cooperation, and moral influence. While distinct entities, both have a role to play in promoting the well-being of the nation and fostering spirituality, harmony, and justice. To Conclude In conclusion, the Serbian Orthodox Church holds a strong belief in the dogmatic principles that define its faith. Their adherence to traditional teachings and practices is unwavering, and they view these theological doctrines as the cornerstone of their religious identity. At the core of the Serbian Orthodox Church's beliefs is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, viewing God as three hypostases: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Their firm conviction in the divine nature of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, is central to their understanding of salvation and the ultimate goal of human existence. In addition, the Serbian Orthodox Church places great emphasis on the veneration of saints and icons, considering them as tangible manifestations of divine grace that bridge the gap between the earthly and the divine. The deep respect and reverence for these holy figures serve as a means of connecting with God and seeking intercession in times of need. Sacraments occupy a significant place in the life of the Serbian Orthodox faithful. Baptism, chrismation, confession, the Holy Eucharist, and the anointing of the sick are regarded as sacred rituals that bestow God's grace upon the participants, fostering spiritual growth and unity with the Church. Ethical commandments and moral principles are also paramount within the Serbian Orthodox Church's belief system. They promote compassion, humility, and unconditional love toward one's neighbors, as well as a commitment to upholding justice, truthfulness, and honest living. These values guide the faithful in their relationships with others and their pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. While firm in their convictions, the Serbian Orthodox Church maintains an inclusive and peaceful outlook, respecting the beliefs of others and advocating for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. They strive to foster understanding, unity, and compassion in a world often marked by division. By delving into the dogmatic principles upheld by the Serbian Orthodox Church, we have gained insight into the core tenets that shape their faith. With an unwavering commitment to traditional teachings, the church remains an anchor for its followers, providing spiritual nourishment, guidance, and a deep connection to the divine. Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Church Serbian Orthodox ChurchСрпска православна црквaSrpska pravoslavna crkvaChurch of Saint Sava in Belgrade, SerbiaAbbreviationSOC, СПЦ, SPCClassificationEastern OrthodoxOrientationSerbian OrthodoxyScriptureSeptuagint, New TestamentTheologyEastern Orthodox theologyPolityEpiscopalGovernanceHoly Synod of the Serbian Orthodox ChurchStructureCommunionPrimatePatriarch PorfirijeBishops44Parishes3,100AssociationsWorld Council of Churches[1]LanguageChurch Slavonic, SerbianLiturgyByzantine RiteHeadquartersBuilding of the Patriarchate, Belgrade; traditionally Patriarchate of PećTerritoryEurope (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Slovenia, Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Romania, Bulgaria, Austria, Switzerland)America (Canada, United States of America, South America), Oceania (Australia, New Zealand)FounderSaint SavaOrigin1219 Kingdom of SerbiaIndependence1219–14631557–17661879–presentRecognition1219 (Autocephalous archbishopric)1346 (Autocephalous Patriarchate)1557 (Autocephalous Patriarchate)1879 (Autocephalous metropolis)1920 (Autocephalous Patriarchate)Separated fromEcumenical Patriarchate of ConstantinopleSeparationsMacedonian Orthodox ChurchMontenegrin Orthodox ChurchGreek Catholic Church of Croatia and SerbiaMembers8[2] to 12 million[3]Other name(s)Serbian ChurchSerbian PatriarchateOfficial websitespc.rs Part of a series on theEastern Orthodox ChurchMosaic of Christ Pantocrator, Hagia Sophia Overview Structure Theology (History of theology) Liturgy Church history Holy Mysteries View of Salvation View of Mary View of icons Background Crucifixion / Resurrection / Ascensionof Jesus Christianity Christian Church Apostolic succession Four Marks of the Church Orthodoxy Organization Autonomy Autocephaly Patriarchate Ecumenical Patriarch Episcopal polity Canon law Clergy Bishops Priests Deacons Monasticism Degrees Bratstvo Autocephalous jurisdictionsAutocephalous Churches who are officially part of the communion: Constantinople Alexandria Antioch Jerusalem Russia Serbia Romania Bulgaria Georgia Cyprus Greece Poland Albania Czech Lands and Slovakia Autocephaly recognized by some autocephalous Churches de jure: America North Macedonia Autocephaly and canonicity recognized by Constantinople and 3 other autocephalous Churches: Ukraine (OCU) Spiritual independence recognized by Georgian Orthodox Church: Ukraine (UOC) Autonomous jurisdictions Sinai (JP) Finland (EP) Estonia (EP) Japan (MP) China (MP) Americas (RP) Bessarabia (RP) Moldova (MP) Semi-Autonomous: Crete (EP) Estonia (MP) ROCOR (MP) Episcopal assemblies Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania Austria Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg Canada France Germany Great Britain and Ireland Italy and Malta Latin America Scandinavia Spain and Portugal Switzerland and Liechtenstein United States of America Noncanonical jurisdictions Old Believers Spiritual Christianity True Orthodoxy Catacomb Church Old Calendarists American Orthodox Catholic Church American World Patriarchs National churches: Abkhazia Belarus Italy Latvia Montenegro Turkey UOC–KP Evangelical Orthodox Ecumenical councils First Seven Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I Constantinople I Ephesus Chalcedon Constantinople II Constantinople III Nicaea II Other possible ecumenical councils: Constantinople IV Constantinople V Other important councils: Quinisext Council Jassy Moscow Jerusalem Constantinople (1872) History Church Fathers Pentarchy Byzantine Empire Christianization of Georgia Christianization of Bulgaria Christianization of Kievan Rus' Great Schism Russia Ottoman Empire North America Moscow–Constantinople schism 15th–16th c. 1996 2018 Theology History of Eastern Orthodox theology (20th century (Neo-Palamism)) Apophaticism Chrismation Contemplative prayer Essence vs. Energies Hesychasm Holy Trinity Hypostatic union Icons Metousiosis Mystical theology Nicene Creed Nepsis Oikonomia vs Akribeia Ousia Palamism Philokalia Phronema Sin Theosis Theotokos Differences from the Catholic Church Opposition to the Filioque Opposition to papal supremacy Liturgy and worship Divine Liturgy Divine Services Akathist Apolytikion Artos Ectenia Euchologion Holy Water Iconostasis Jesus Prayer Aprakos Kontakion Liturgical entrances Liturgical fans Lity Memorial service Memory Eternal Omophorion Eastern Orthodox bowing Eastern Orthodox marriage Praxis Paraklesis Paschal greeting Paschal Homily Paschal troparion Prayer rope Prosphora Russian bell ringing Semantron Sign of the cross Sticheron Troparion Vestments Use of incense Liturgical calendar Paschal cycle 12 Great Feasts Other feasts: Feast of Orthodoxy Intercession of the Theotokos The four fasting periods: Nativity Fast Great Lent Apostles' Fast Dormition Fast Major figuresSaints (Russian (until 15th century), Russian (post-15th century), Serbian, American) Justin Martyr Athanasius of Alexandria Ephraim the Syrian Basil of Caesarea Cyril of Jerusalem Gregory of Nazianzus Gregory of Nyssa John Chrysostom Cyril of Alexandria John Climacus Maximus the Confessor John of Damascus Theodore the Studite Kassia Cyril and Methodius Photius I of Constantinople Vladimir the Great Sava I of Serbia Gregory Palamas Innocent of Alaska Other topics Architecture Folk Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs Cross Saint titles Statistics by country vte The Serbian Orthodox Church (Serbian: Српска православна црква, Srpska pravoslavna crkva) is one of the autocephalous (ecclesiastically independent) Eastern Orthodox Christian churches.[4][5] The majority of the population in Serbia, Montenegro and Republika Srpska of Bosnia and Herzegovina are baptised members of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is organized into metropolitanates and eparchies, located primarily in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Croatia. Other congregations are located in the Serb diaspora. The Serbian Patriarch serves as first among equals in his church. The current patriarch is Porfirije, enthroned on 19 February 2021.[6] The Church achieved autocephalous status in 1219,[7] under the leadership of Saint Sava, becoming the independent Archbishopric of Žiča. Its status was elevated to that of a patriarchate in 1346,[8] and was subsequently known as the Serbian Patriarchate of Peć. This patriarchate was abolished by the Ottoman Empire in 1766,[9] though several regional sections of the church continued to exist, most prominent among them being the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, in the Habsburg monarchy.[10] After the re-creation of Serbia, ecclesiastical autonomy was regained in 1831,[11] and the autocephaly was renewed in 1879. The modern Serbian Orthodox Church was re-established in 1920, after the unification of the Metropolitanate of Belgrade, the Patriarchate of Karlovci, and the Metropolitanate of Montenegro.[12] Christianity started to spread throughout the southeastern Europe during the 1st century. Early martyrs Florus and Laurus from the 2nd century, who were murdered along with other 300 Christians in Ulpiana, near modern Lipljan, are venerated as Christian saints. Bishop Irenaeus of Sirmium was also martyred, in 304. Emperor Constantine the Great (306–337), born in Naissus (modern Niš in Serbia), was the first Christian ruler of the Roman Empire. Several local bishops, seated in present-day Serbia, became prominent during the 4th century, such as Germinius of Sirmium, Ursacius of Singidunum and Secundianus of Singidunum (modern Belgrade), while several Councils were held in Sirmium.[13] In 395, the Empire was divided, and its eastern half later became known as the Byzantine Empire. In 535, emperor Justinian I created the Archbishopric of Justiniana Prima, centered in the emperor's birth-city of Justiniana Prima, near modern Lebane in Serbia. The archbishopric had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over all provinces of the Diocese of Dacia.[14][15] By the beginning of the 7th century, Byzantine provincial and ecclesiastical order in the region was destroyed by invading Avars and Slavs. The church life was renewed in the same century in the province of Illyricum and Dalmatia after a more pronounced Christianization of the Serbs and other Slavs by the Roman Church.[16][17][18][19] In the 7th and mid-8th century the area was not under jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.[20] Seal of prince Strojimir of Serbia (from the late 9th century),[21] one of the oldest artifacts on the Christianization of the Serbs The history of the early medieval Serbian Principality is recorded in the work De Administrando Imperio (DAI), compiled by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (r. 913–959). The DAI drew information on the Serbs from, among others, a Serbian source.[22] The Serbs were said to have received the protection of Emperor Heraclius (r. 610–641), and Porphyrogenitus stressed that the Serbs had always been under Imperial rule. According to De Administrando Imperio, the center from which the Serbs received their baptism was marked as Rome.[23] His account on the first Christianization of the Serbs can be dated to 632–638; this might have been Porphyrogenitus' construction, or may have encompassed a limited group of chiefs, with lesser reception by the wider layers of the tribe.[24] From the 7th until mid-9th century, the Serbs were under influence of the Roman Church.[25] The initial ecclesiastical affiliation with a specific diocese is uncertain, probably was not an Adriatic centre.[26] Early medieval Serbs are accounted as Christian by 870s,[27] but it was a process that ended in the late 9th century during the time of Basil I,[28] and medieval necropolises until the 13th century in the territory of modern Serbia show an "incomplete process of Christianization" as local Christianity depended on the social structure (urban and rural).[29] The expansion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople over the Praetorian prefecture of Illyricum is considered to have begun in 731 by Emperor Leo III when he annexed Sicily and Calabria,[30][31] but whether the Patriarchate also expanded into the eastern parts of Illyricum and Dalmatia is uncertain and a matter of scholarly debate.[32] The expansion most definitely happened since the mid-9th century,[20] when the Byzantines emperors and patriarch demanded that the Church administrative borders follow political borders.[25] In the same century, the region was also politically contested between the Carolingian Empire and Byzantine Empire.[33] The most influential and successful was emperor Basil I, who actively worked on gaining control over all the Praetorian prefecture of Illyricum (from Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian to Croatian Slavic peoples).[34][35][36][37] Basil I likely sent at least one embassy to Mutimir of Serbia,[38] who decided to maintain the communion of Church in Serbia with the Patriarchate of Constantinople when Pope John VIII invited him to get back to the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Sirmium (see also Archbishopric of Moravia) in a letter dated to May 873.[39][40][41] Alexis P. Vlasto argued that the Eparchy of Ras was founded during Mutimir's rule, as a bishopric of Serbia, at Ras with the church of Saint Apostles Peter and Paul,[42] as part of the general plan of establishing bishoprics in the Slav lands of the Empire, confirmed by the Council of Constantinople in 879–880,[42] most significantly related to the creation of the autonomous Archbishopric for Bulgaria of which Roman Church lost jurisdiction.[43][44] However, according to Predrag Komatina, there is no mention of any bishopric in Serbia. In early medieval Europe, the existence of a Christian church without a bishop in a specific land was not uncommon, and being placed under the Pannonian Bishop implies that there was no local Serbian bishop at the time.[45] Tibor Živković concluded, based on primary sources of the Church of Constantinople, that there was no information regarding the establishment of any new ecclesiastical center and organization in Serbia, that the Serbian ecclesiastical center and capital was at Destinikon, while Ras in the mid-9th century was only a border fort which became the ecclesiastical center of the bishopric by 1019-1020.[46] The imperial charter of Basil II from 1020 to the Archbishopric of Ohrid, in which the rights and jurisdictions were established, has the earliest mention of the Bishopric/Episcopy of Ras, stating it belonged to the Bulgarian autocephal church during the time of Peter I (927–969) and Samuel of Bulgaria (977–1014).[47][48] It was of a small size.[49] It is considered that it was possibly founded by the Bulgarian emperor,[50][51] but most probably it represented the latest date in which it could have been integrated into the Bulgarian Church.[52] The episcopy was probably part of the Bulgarian metropolis of Morava, but certainly not of Durrës.[53] If it was on the Serbian territory, it seems that the Church in Serbia or part of the territory of Serbia became linked and influenced by the Bulgarian Church between 870 and 924.[54][55][56] With Christianization in the 9th century, Christian names appear among the members of Serbian dynasties (Petar, Stefan, Pavle, Zaharije).[57] Prince Petar Gojniković (r. 892–917) was evidently a Christian ruler,[57] and Christianity presumably was spreading in his time.[58] Since Serbia bordered Bulgaria, Christian influences and perhaps missionaries came from there, increasing during the twenty-year peace.[59] The Bulgarian annexation of Serbia in 924 was important for the future direction of the Serbian church. By then, at the latest, Serbia must have received the Cyrillic alphabet and Slavic religious text, already familiar but perhaps not yet preferred to Greek.[42] Map depicting the Archbishopric of Ohrid in ca. 1020 Main article: Archbishopric of Ohrid Following his final subjugation of the Bulgarian state in 1018, Basil II, to underscore the Byzantine victory, established the Archbishopric of Ohrid by downgrading the Bulgarian patriarchate to the rank of the archbishopric. The now archbishopric remained an autocephalous church, separate from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. However, while the archbishopric was completely independent in any other aspect, its primate was selected by the emperor from a list of three candidates submitted by the local church synod. In three sigillia issued in 1020 Basil II gave extensive privileges to the new see.[60] In the first and third charter of Basil II was mentioned Bishopric of Serbia, while in the second charter of Basil II, dated 1020, the bishopric of Ras is mentioned, with the seat at the Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Ras.[61][62] The 10th- or 11th-century Gospel Book Codex Marianus, written in Old Church Slavonic in the Glagolithic script, is one of the oldest known Slavic manuscripts. It was partly written in the Serbian redaction of Old Church Slavonic.[63] Other early manuscripts include the 12th-century Grškovic's fragment of the Acts of the Apostles and Mihanović's fragment of the Acts of the Apostles. Timeline showing the main autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Churches, from an Eastern Orthodox point of view, up to 2021 Saint Sava, first Serbian archbishop Serbian prince Rastko Nemanjić, the son of Stefan Nemanja, took monastic vows at Mount Athos as Sava (Sabbas) in 1192.[64][65] Three years later, his father joined him, taking monastic vows as Simeon. Father and son asked the Holy Community to found a Serbian religious centre at the abandoned site of Hilandar, which they renovated. This marked the beginning of a renaissance (in arts, literature and religion). Sava's father died at Hilandar in 1199 and was canonized as St. Simeon.[65] Saint Sava stayed for some years, rising in rank, then returned to Serbia in 1207, taking with him the remains of his father, which he interred at the Studenica monastery, after reconciling his two quarrelling brothers Stefan Nemanjić and Vukan.[66] Stefan asked him to remain in Serbia with his clerics, which he did, providing widespread pastoral care and education to the people. Saint Sava founded several churches and monasteries, among them the Žiča monastery. In 1217, Stefan was proclaimed King of Serbia, and various questions of the church reorganization were opened.[67] Saint Sava returned to the Holy Mountain in 1217/18, preparing for the formation of an autocephalous Serbian Church. He was consecrated in 1219 as the first Archbishop of the Serbian Church, and was given autocephaly by Patriarch Manuel I of Constantinople, then in exile at Nicaea.[68][69] In the same year, Saint Sava published Zakonopravilo (St. Sava's Nomocanon). Thus the Serbs acquired both forms of independence: political and religious.[70] After this, in Serbia, Sava stayed in Studenica and continued to educate the Serbian people in their faith. Later he called for a council outlawing the Bogomils, whom he considered heretics. Sava appointed several bishops, sending them around Serbia to organize their dioceses.[71] To maintain his standing as the religious and social leader, he continued to travel among the monasteries and lands to educate the people. In 1221 a synod was held in the Žiča monastery, condemning Bogomilism.[72] The following seats were newly created in the time of Saint Sava: Žiča, the seat of the Archbishop at Monastery of Žiča; Eparchy of Zeta (Zetska), seated at Monastery of Holy Archangel Michael in Prevlaka near Kotor in Zeta region; Eparchy of Hum (Humska), seated at Monastery of the Holy Mother of God in Ston, in Hum region; Eparchy of Dabar (Dabarska), seated at Monastery of St. Nicholas in Dabar (region); Eparchy of Moravica (Moravička), seated at Monastery of St. Achillius in Moravica župa; Eparchy of Budimlja (Budimljanska), seated at Monastery of St. George in Budimlja region; Eparchy of Toplica (Toplička), seated at Monastery of St. Nicholas in Toplica region; Eparchy of Hvosno (Hvostanska), seated at Monastery of the Holy Mother of God in Hvosno region (northern Metohija). Older eparchies under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Archbishop were: Eparchy of Ras (Raška), seated at Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul near Ras in Raška region; Eparchy of Lipljan (Lipljanska), seated at Lipljan in Kosovo; Eparchy of Prizren (Prizrenska), seated at Prizren in the south of Kosovo. Trojeručica meaning "Three-handed Theotokos" is the most important icon of the SOC, and the main icon of Mount Athos In 1229/1233, Saint Sava went on a pilgrimage to Palestine and in Jerusalem he met with Patriarch Athanasios II. Saint Sava saw Bethlehem where Jesus was born, the Jordan River where Christ was baptized, and the Great Lavra of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified (Mar Saba monastery). Sava asked Athanasios II, his host, and the Great Lavra fraternity, led by hegoumenos Nicolas, if he could purchase two monasteries in the Holy Land. His request was accepted and he was offered the monasteries of Saint John the Theologian on Mount Sion and St. George's Monastery at Akona, both to be inhabited by Serbian monks. The icon Trojerucica (Three-handed Theotokos), a gift to the Great Lavra from St. John Damascene, was given to Saint Sava and he, in turn, bequeathed it to Hilandar. Saint Sava died in Veliko Tarnovo, capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire, during the reign of Ivan Asen II of Bulgaria. According to his Biography, he fell ill following the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Epiphany, 12 January 1235. Saint Sava was visiting Veliko Tarnovo on his way back from the Holy Land, where he had founded a hospice for Syrian pilgrims in Jerusalem and arranged for Serbian monks to be welcomed in the established monasteries there. He died of pneumonia in the night between Saturday and Sunday, 14 January 1235, and was buried at the Cathedral of the Holy Forty Martyrs in Veliko Tarnovo where his body remained until 6 May 1237, when his sacred bones were moved to the monastery Mileševa in southern Serbia. In 1253 the see was transferred to the Monastery of Peć by archbishop Arsenije.[73] The Serbian primates had since moved between the two.[74] Sometime between 1276 and 1292 the Cumans burned the Žiča monastery, and King Stefan Milutin (1282–1321) renovated it in 1292–1309, during the office of Jevstatije II.[75] In 1289–1290, the chief treasures of the ruined monastery, including the remains of Saint Jevstatije I, were transferred to Monastery of Peć.[76] During the rule of the same king, the Monastery of Gračanica was also renewed,[77] and during the reign of King Stefan Uroš III (1321–1331), the Monastery of Dečani was built,[78] under the supervision of Archbishop Danilo II.[79] Serbian Patriarch Danilo III, fresco from the Patriarchal Monastery of Peć Main article: Serbian Patriarchate of Peć The status of the Serbian Orthodox Church grew along with the expansion and heightened prestige of the Serbian kingdom. After King Stefan Dušan assumed the imperial title of tsar, the Serbian Archbishopric was correspondingly raised to the rank of Patriarchate in 1346. In the century that followed, the Serbian Church achieved its greatest power and prestige. In the 14th century Serbian Orthodox clergy had the title of Protos at Mount Athos. On 16 April 1346 (Easter), Stefan Dušan convoked a grand assembly at Skopje, attended by the Serbian Archbishop Joanikije II, Archbishop Nicholas I of Ohrid, Patriarch Simeon of Bulgaria and various religious leaders of Mount Athos. The assembly and clergy agreed on, and then ceremonially performed the raising of the autocephalous Serbian Archbishopric to the status of Patriarchate. The Archbishop was from now on titled Serbian Patriarch, although some documents called him Patriarch of Serbs and Greeks, with the seat at Patriarchal Monastery of Peć. The new Patriarch Joanikije II now solemnly crowned Stefan Dušan as "Emperor and autocrat of Serbs and Romans" (see Emperor of Serbs). The Patriarchal status resulted in raising bishoprics to metropolitanates, as for example the Metropolitanate of Skopje. The Patriarchate took over sovereignty on Mt. Athos and the Greek archbishoprics under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (the Archbishopric of Ohrid remained autocephalous), which resulted in Dušan's excommunication by Patriarch Callistus I of Constantinople in 1350.[80] In 1375, an agreement between the Serbian Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Constantinople was reached.[81] The Battle of Kosovo (1389) and its aftermath had a lasting influence on medieval legacy and later traditions of the Serbian Orthodox Church.[82] In 1455, when Ottoman Turks conquered the Patriarchal seat in Peć, Patriarch Arsenije II found temporary refuge in Smederevo, the capital city of Serbian Despotate.[83] Among cultural, artistic and literary legacies created under the auspices of the Serbian Orthodox Church during the medieval period were hagiographies, known in Serbian as žitije (vita), that were written as biographies of rulers, archbishops and saints from the 12th up to the 15th century.[84][85][86] Serbian Patriarchate of Peć (16th–17th century) Main article: Serbian Patriarchate of Peć The Ottoman Empire conquered the Serbian Despotate in 1459, the Bosnian Kingdom in 1463, Herzegovina in 1482 and Montenegro in 1499. All of the conquered lands were divided into sanjaks. Although some Serbs converted to Islam, most continued their adherence to the Serbian Orthodox Church. The church itself continued to exist throughout the Ottoman period, though not without some disruption. After the death of Serbian Patriarch Arsenije II in 1463, a successor was not elected. The Patriarchate was thus de facto abolished, and the Serbian Church passed under the jurisdiction of Archbishopric of Ohrid and ultimately the Ecumenical Patriarchate which exercised jurisdiction over all Orthodox of the Ottoman Empire under the millet system. After several failed attempts, made from

These churches can be found in Belgrade and Vojvodina, which were occupied by the Austrian Empire from 1717 to 1739, and on the border with Austrian (later Austria-Hungary) across the Sava and Danube rivers from 1804 when Serbian statehood was re-established. "A Portrait of the Evangelist", a miniature from the Radoslav Gospel (1429) Icons are replete with symbolism meant to convey far more meaning than simply the identity of the person depicted, and it is for this reason that Orthodox iconography has become an exacting science of copying older icons rather than an opportunity for artistic expression. The personal, idiosyncratic and creative traditions of Western European religious art are largely lacking in Orthodox iconography before the 17th century, when Russian and Serbian icon painting was influenced by religious paintings and engravings from Europe. Large icons can be found adorning the walls of churches and often cover the inside structure completely. Orthodox homes often likewise have icons hanging on the wall, usually together on an eastern facing wall, and in a central location where the family can pray together. Flag of the Serbian Orthodox Church The Serbian tricolour with a Serbian cross is used as the official flag of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as defined in the Article 4 of the SOC Constitution.[114] A number of other unofficial variant flags, some with variations of the cross, coat of arms, or both, exist.[clarification needed] List of heads of the Serbian Orthodox Church List of eparchies of the Serbian Orthodox Church List of Serbian Orthodox monasteries List of Serbian saints Timeline of the Serbian Orthodox Church Archive of the Serbian Orthodox Church ^ Serbian Orthodox Church at World Council of Churches ^ World Council of Churches: Serbian Orthodox Church ^ Johnston & Sampson 1995, p. 330. ^ Radić 2007, p. 231–248. ^ Fotić 2008, p. 519–520. ^ "His Holiness Porfirije, Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch enthroned". Serbian Orthodox Church [Official web site]. 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