
SPOLOK SV. VOJTECHA

CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND SCIENCE

FOR 150 YEARS

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(Received 4 July 2020, revised 29 July 2020)

Abstract

In the present text we focus on the Spolok sv. Vojtecha (Saint Adalbert Association), which is one of the first publishing houses in Slovakia. Through the individual parts of the paper, the theoretical background of the issue, the history of the researched subject and its current position in the concept of publishing as a media and educational institution are discussed. At the same time, we will try to describe selected printed matter - periodic and also non-periodical. The article focuses on the publishing activities of Spolok sv. Vojtecha, but also summarizes the existing Christian media in Slovakia and offers an excursion to the most famous publishers of religious literature in Slovakia. The text has a theoretical-empirical character.

Keywords: letterpress, Catholic Church, religious media, religion, values

1. Introduction

The invention of letterpress meant a huge revolution and revolution in the history of mankind in the perception of information, its dissemination and access to it. Not surprisingly, the media visionary and media theorist Herbert Marshall McLuhan, who was a member of the Toronto School, marked the period that came after the invention of the letterpress with the metaphorical term 'Gutenberg Galaxy'. Johannes Gutenberg carried out his first experiments around 1450. He had previously some experience with printing, but in 1452 Gutenberg began printing his Bible. It was written in Latin, and six typesetters planted letters during the process. The Bible was printed on six presses and in 1455 the Bible was completed. It had 1200 pages, the load was around 180-200 pieces. It was the first printed book, but for obvious reasons it cannot yet be called a mass medium. From 1490 to 1520, Venice was the capital of the printing industry in Europe. The development of letterpress brought with it the emergence of new professions, but books were expensive and even the most read books of the past cannot be subsumed under the term mass media. This was mainly due to the fact that only

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about 4% of the population was able to read. Though paid teachers were active in the countryside and in the towns this knowledge was mainly available to people of higher population, but during the time of the printing press, the way of loud reading of texts in front of a group of potential recipients prevailed. A reversal came after the introduction of compulsory schooling in the 18th century [1]. In connection with the issue, we must also state that at the time of the book printing, certain specifics were present in our territory, the territory of Slovakia, which were signed under the slower development of book printing. In this context, closer sources of our facts show a sadder balance of medieval Slovakia. They point out that although material culture - architecture, urban planning, and fine arts - was mainly due to (German-populated) cities at a relatively advanced level and testified to the economic fitness and relative wealth of citizens, literary culture was much worse off. This culture is closely related not only to the personal cultural level of its creators, but also to its recipients, so its development is much more dependent on the general level of education, literacy and development of the school system. And in this respect, the situation in Hungary in the 15th-16th, but also the 17th century was not pink. Illiteracy was not a rare phenomenon even among the nobility. Slovakia was one of the last areas where the printing industry settled. Nevertheless, over time, respected institutions such as academic printers have emerged, one of which was based in Trnava. In the 17th century it was one of the most important in the whole Hungary and it printed about 5000 different works in Latin, German, Hungarian and Slovak. Besides religious themes, there were also textbooks, philosophical, historical and biographical works, theatre plays, but also calendars. At the top of its business, the printer had 6 presses and employed 10 typesetters, 10 printers and other specialist staff. The academic printing press in Košice (1673-1774) was of similar importance [2]. The history of the printing industry in Slovakia was lagging behind the development in comparison with other countries, but looking at a representative such as the Spolok sv. Vojtecha can be said that the efforts of church leaders succeeded in building an institution with deep cultural, social and religious significance. The Christian media are also supported in Slovakia in this period. This is mainly because they indicate the value direction of the company. Value is a property of social or natural phenomena in which their certain (positive or negative) significance for man and society is manifested. Today, we are more concerned with the problem of lack of values, because values have nothing to do with today. Media reality is not real reality. The new media began to build relationships through the television screen. People no longer socialize in person, but in the form of a virtual connection. Traditional contexts seem to be distorted [3]. Publishing is a meritorious activity, especially in terms of maintaining the values and spreading the evangelistic function of the general population. It is implemented in several directions and in several forms. In Slovakia, there are media that focus on the activities of Christian enlightenment, including publishing houses, television and radio. Their task is to bring God closer to their recipients and to convey the gospel and the word of God to them through the mass communication channels. If we talk about publishing houses, one of the most

important Christian publishing houses is *Spolok sv. Vojtecha*, which is also analysed in this article.

2. Operational goals and methods

The object of our research is the Spolok sv. Vojtecha (SSV), which was founded as a religious association and publishing house in the second half of the 19th century. In addition to publishing religious newspapers, it was devoted to educational and cultural activities and sought to promote the dissemination of spiritual, especially Slovak Roman Catholic literature. At present, besides the above activities, it is also engaged in the operation of stores with Christian music, literature and spiritual objects. In the next part of our text we will describe the historical context in which it was founded and at the same time analyse selected titles of periodical or non-periodical print.

3. Publishing house - definition of basic terms and application to SSV specifics

In the generally applicable definition, we mean a publisher or a publishing house a legal entity, but also a natural person (institution, group of individuals, company or individual) who is authorized to publish periodicals. The basic task of the publishing entity is to provide the financial, material, technical and production means necessary for the production of prints of newspapers, magazines or other types of non-periodical printed matter. At the same time, the publishing subject is responsible for the printing of prints and their distribution, determines the principles and conditions of advertising publication, supervises the optimality of overhead costs, adherence to wage and fee rates. The publishing entity is responsible for establishing and maintaining contractual obligations and business relationships with the external environment, as well as the business strategy and philosophy [4]. In view of the above definition and the period of existence of *Spolok sv. Vojtecha* can be said that despite the circumstances that were not always favourable to it, this theoretical definition fulfils. The idea of establishing the first Slovak Catholic Society was not born accidentally. They came with it and at the same time it was implemented by several Slovak nationals at the end of the 18th century. Anton Bernolák's attempt was successful, but his death was the cause of his initial organizational efforts. Later, Martin Hamuliak builds on the ideas of Anton Bernolák and, together with his partners; he founded the Slovak Language and Literature Lovers Association. The association also survived the political coup in 1848-1849, but in 1850 it was dissolved. In 1850, *Cyrill and Method* magazine, which was a church magazine, was initiated by Andrej Radlinský in Banská Štiavnica, through which Radlinský made the first realization of the idea of establishing a national Slovak association. Radlinský wanted primarily a literary Catholic association, which was supposed to publish not only the *Cyrill and Method* - Association Magazine, but also other magazines and books intended for intelligence, schools, but also for the popular strata, and

therefore conditioned the realization of his intention by working with priests and teachers. The Founding General Assembly of the *Spolok sv. Vojtecha* was summoned to Trnava on September 13, 1870, while on September 14, 1870 Trnava became the destination of the SSV, but the city of all who enjoyed every success that has seen the support and revival of the Slovak national spirit. Thanks to the fact that in the preparatory period the basic goal of the SSV was set, which was specified mainly in the establishment of three branches: for the Holy Scripture, for the nationwide hymn book and for the textbooks of the Slovak Catholic People's Schools, the first meetings could be devoted to the ideas of further publications and periodicals. In the following years, the SSV develops its ideas and intensifies cooperation with domestic intelligence. It also focuses on Slovaks living abroad and building the foundations for scientific activities. Till World War II, its activities are quite successful, not only at home but also abroad. War events, however, gradually reduced the activities of the SSV in 1953. SSV completely lost its legal personality. However, the editorial activity did not stop but was reduced to a tenth compared to the previous period. In 1949, 25 books were published, 51 books were published in 1950, and only 165 titles (over 17 years) were published until 1969, in the years 1969-1970. In addition to books, the publishing house also published prayer books, catechisms, religious textbooks, university textbooks, etc. During the most difficult period of its existence, the SSV helped mainly Slovaks living in exile, which significantly helped to restore their legal and uncensored activity after 1990 [5]. *Spolok sv. Vojtecha* had to adapt to current market conditions and is still an active player in the publishing segment, especially in relation to the publishing of religious literature but also religious periodical press [6].

3.1. *Spolok sv. Vojtecha and publishing*

In 2020, 2 publications were published under the SSV, in 2019 20 titles were issued by the *Spolok sv. Vojtecha* and in 2018 it was 10 titles. Through publications, the publishing house thematically frames the ecclesiastical year, but also includes the biographies of the saints, re-editions of the Bible, books for children and youth or motivational literature. Among the flagships of the SSV publishing house, however, we clearly include the periodically published weekly *Katolícke noviny* (Catholic Newspapers) and the yearbook/calendar - *Pútnik svätovojtešský* (Pilgrim of Saint Adalbert), which have the longest tradition.

3.1.1. *Katolícke noviny*

Depending on the focus, *Katolícke noviny* (KN) can be defined as a periodical whose content is religious and catholic. They are distributed throughout Slovakia. *Katolícke noviny* are published once a week - every Tuesday with the date of the following Sunday. Their average printed circulation in 2018 was on average 66500 prints. The content of newspapers is approved by the Archbishop's Office in Trnava. KN has 32 pages, in the case of double numbers (summer

holidays, Christmas) they have 64 pages. On the title page there is always a reference to two articles, which the reader subsequently finds in its entirety inside the relevant heading. All issues have a fixed content, which consists of individual sections, which we find in the following order: From home; From the world; Vatican City; Spiritual renewal; An interview; Topic; Listáreň (Letters); Reportage (or photo report; theme of the week); Young; Culture; Children; Relax; Thematic section devoted to literature such as Autumn Harvest of Good Reading, Winter Evenings with a Book or Advent Wandering Literature; Interview or Theme; Program (broadcast of worship or church services, Christian magazines on RTVS, program Radio Lumen and Television LUX), Book window (current publications of the *Spolok sv. Vojtecha*), Advertising, Missions. The headlines Home, World and Vatican are generally news-oriented. In the other sections there is journalism (or art) and the texts are oriented towards the knowledge of the biblical context, the application of basic Christian starting points to the life of the believer and society. The respondents in the interview section are people who actively participate in the development of religious, cultural, educational level (priests, teachers, artists, doctors or representatives of other professions) of our society. In the articles of the Spiritual Renewal section, the reader encounters high-quality philosophical-reflective reflections based on the words of the Gospel and Christian values. In the crises and situations brought about by the present time, the *Katolícke Noviny* also help in this way to find solutions or to navigate in (often) confusing events through the Topic section. Each KN number shall include the Annex to the Day of the Lord, printed on separate coated paper on four A5 pages. It contains the liturgy of the Sunday, with the date of which is given by the relevant KN number, and the last page also includes the liturgy of the following week (memories, holidays, festivities). Based on the characteristics and brief analysis of the content of the Catholic Newspaper, it can be stated that they offer a broad portfolio of information from religious life, as well as spiritual reflections, which allow broadening the horizons and strengthening the pillars of the Catholic faith [7].

3.1.2. Pútnik svätovojtešský

The folk picture calendar *Pútnik svätovojtešský* has been published in Slovakia - with one exception - without interruption since 1871. Only once did it not come out in 1919 due to the lack of paper and the difficult financial conditions, which was a consequence of the World War I. The first *Pútnik svätovojtešský* was published in 1871 and it was intended for 1872. As it was a calendar and the number of members increased, it always came out at the end of the previous year so that all readers had it in their hands before the new year begins.

Some of them have also published plays and scripts. Since the first decades of publishing, the *Pútnik svätovojtešský* has not forgotten even the smallest readers. The children regularly found instructive articles, puzzles, children's stories and children's games, and the youngest generation has in mind the latest

editions of the *Pútnik svätovoješský*. Since the *Pútnik svätovoješský* also cooperated with the artists from the beginning, it had a very high graphic level for the time then and we can boldly state that the history of the *Pútnik svätovoješský* also maps the history of Slovak book culture. This fact is remarkable, because on the title, which has been published for more than 140 years, with a very similar structure, range of topics or format, we study the chronological development of the typographic and graphic aspects of books. We can also follow the development of Slovak language, journalism, beautiful literature, sociology, historiography and other disciplines in the history of this yearbook. *Pútnik svätovoješský* has been published in the new graphic design for the last three years, which combines history and present. The old issues, for example, were taken the title letter announcing: *Pútnik svätovoješský*. A Catholic calendar issued by the *Spolok sv. Vojtecha* for 365 days, having a year after the birth of Christ the Lord, using the historical seal of the *Spolok sv. Vojtecha* depicting Saint Adalbert as bishop. The art side of the *Pútnik svätovoješský* was entrusted to one illustrator in each year. In addition to line drawings, the publication is also accompanied by eye-catching colour photographs. Authors from many fields - poets and translators - were invited to collaborate in the compilation of the *Pútnik svätovoješský*. It still retains its folk character, but it does not lack a whole range of quality texts from the field of literature, culture, history, sport or missions, but not even valuable poetry [*História Pútnika svätovoješského*, <https://www.ssv.sk/putnik-svatovojtesky.xhtml>].

4. Conclusions

Other types of media need to be mentioned when talking about the forms of media outputs for Christian audiences. In Slovakia, there are three electronic media outlets dedicated to Christian mission. These are Radio LUMEN, Radio 7, and TV LUX. Radio LUMEN and TV LUX are Catholic and Radio 7 is Lutheran. Their history is connected with the establishment of a dual TV and Radio system after 1989. Churches in Slovakia were unprepared and moreover in the 1990s, there was a boom of commercial radios with entertainment and musical programming, and the Christian media started to emerge only later. The first was Radio LUMEN that started to broadcast in 1993. Its first name was Radio MARIA and a year later, it was given its current name - Radio LUMEN. Its impact was poor because of the number of transmitters as well as the broadcast output [8]. It is important to mention that Radio MARIA broadcasts even today, but only as Internet radio. Their goal is to offer the listener a program that can open the heart and mind to the light of Christ. Listeners can engage in all activities related to the administration, production and broadcasting of radio programs, as well as websites, social media and information messages designed to accompany the listener on his spiritual journey in all aspects of human relationships and activities, from prayers for family and social life [*O nás*, <https://www.radiomaria.sk/>]. The Lutheran Augsburg Confession Radio 7 dates back only to 2006. It is affiliated with the Czech branch of the Trans World Radio

and broadcasts through weak terrestrial transmitters in several cities in Slovakia. The only Christian TV station in Slovak republic is TV LUX. It started to broadcast in 2008 because of division the original Czech and Slovak project TV NOE. After that, they established their own Catholic-only television. It is financed mostly by the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia and from the funding of supporters from a number of spectators [8]. This type of funding is called community media. They are part of the life of communities connected with the Christian world. It is a platform for sharing specific content, ideas and opinions of the community that are important to them. The importance of this information lies in the fact that the regulatory system in Slovakia does not specifically recognize the existence of electronic community media. The reason is that Slovak media legislation and specific normative acts regulate the Slovak media as private media organizations or public media services. It is still not an effective way to insert a non-profit type of television or radio that serves only community needs and reflects their views into a commercial media system operating under the necessary state-issued license [9].

Book printing and publishing for the Christian community has long been maintained at a high level and, in addition to the *Spolok sv. Vojtecha*, others also deal with this topic. *Dobrá kniha* publishing house was established in 1970 in Canada. It was founded by Slovak Jesuits who were in forced emigration to Canada. The mission of the publishing house was a press apostolate for Slovaks all over the world. After the change of political regime in 1989, the publishing house moved to Slovakia. It expanded its publishing activities and by the end of 2019 had published more than 1,220 book titles of various specializations. They publish the magazine *Posol*, a monthly magazine of Slovak Catholics. After *Katolícke noviny*, it is the second most widespread Christian periodical in Slovakia. They also publish the bimonthly *Viera a život*, which deals with issues of theology, history, ethics, morality, writes about Christian personalities, publishes Christian poetry and book reviews, and provides a selection of information from internationally renowned Christian magazines [*Z histórie*, <https://www.dobrakniha.sk/>]. *Zachej* Publishing has been operating since 2012 and aims to bring Christian literature, the reading of which brings it closer to God. The books they include in the menu select and focus on titles that do not conflict with the teachings of the Church. These are books in the fields of Christian life, biblical studies, psychology, social sciences, history, art, personality development, relationships and communication, children's literature, gift, creative books, biographies of personalities, stories and novels [*O nás*, <https://www.zachej.sk/o-nas/>]. The *LÚČ* publishing house publishes books in the spirit of the Catholic faith, ie religious books and books of a non-religious nature, in which the Catholic faith is fully respected. It was established on December 29, 1989, shortly after the regime change. We can divide the publishing activity into three areas: publishing original Slovak works, books for children and youth and translation works [*Vydavateľstvo*, <https://www.luc.sk/vydavatelstvo/>]. The history of the *Tranoscius* publishing house dates back to 1845. Since 1896, it has been associated with the town of Ružomberok, where they founded an association of

internal missions that would help the religious and moral life of the people. It was named after the pastor and religious writer Juraj Tranovský. In history, due to the political conditions of the time, its activities have stopped several times, e.g. in 1953, they could only publish a calendar and worship books. *Tranoscius* has been reopened since 1991 and is a publishing house of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession [*O nás*, <http://www.tranoscius.sk/>].

If we mentioned the community media and their financing from the donations of club members, then *Spolok sv. Vojtecha* has its own system of registering for a member club, which has various advantages. For each year, the offer and benefit of membership is different and interestingly, it is not exclusively associated with the publishing activities of the publishing house. They also offer discounts on spa and spiritual stays. It is also worth mentioning that foreign believers can also apply. But of course, the priority part of the association's activities is focused on publishing activities. *Spolok sv. Vojtecha* currently has a rich publishing activity. It publishes periodicals, non-periodical publications and strives to saturate the interests of almost all ages of believers. Its portfolio can include titles of world as well as domestic authors and supports events in other religious activities. In 2020, we will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of this important ecclesiastical, cultural and educational institution, and also in view of the period of the *Spolok sv. Vojtecha*. We believe that it will continue to succeed in fulfilling its eternal motto '*Fidei et scientiae - Faith and Science*'.

Acknowledgement

The study was elaborated within a national research project supported by the Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences (VEGA) No. 1/0283/20, titled 'Synergy of the Media Industry Segments in the Context of Critical Political Economy of Media'.

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