

Ján Lajčiak: The Prophet Ezekiel to His Nation¹

Sidonia Horňanová

Abstract: This biographical study presents the life and work of Slovak Lutheran biblical scholar, theologian, and pastor, Ján Lajčiak (1875–1918), whose critical thinking led to his marginalization within the church. It interprets the personal setbacks of this remarkably gifted thinker as a form of self-identification with the focus of his professional research – the life experiences of the prophet Ezekiel.

Keywords: Ján Lajčiak; Ezekiel; prophet; Slovak theology; Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovakia

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Introduction

The fate of some thinkers is to be forgotten in their own time, with their work left unappreciated by their contemporaries. This happens for a number of reasons: it might be their personality; or their high erudition; or that their claims surpassed the thinking of the time. Hence, they became misunderstood and were disregarded. This was the case with Ján Lajčiak (1875–1918), a Slovak theologian and evangelical Lutheran pastor. Lajčiak was a polyglot who studied at prestigious European universities, and was the first Slovak to receive a doctorate in the theology of the Old Testament. However, due to disputes with conservative church leaders, he ended up as a pastor in a remote village, on the periphery of the church, after failing to obtain an academic position at the university.

Lajčiak's greatly influential work *Slovensko a kultúra* [Slovakia and Culture], compiled posthumously from his manuscripts, has now been published

1 The article represents the scientific output of a project coming from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and the Scientific Grant Agency No. 1/0698/23, carried out in the years 2023–2025 at the Department of the Old Testament at the Evangelical Lutheran Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava. Its topic is: “Lajčiak’s dissertation on Ezekiel in the contemporary context of research on prophetic writings”. The project’s principal investigator is Dávid Benka. The deputy leader of the project is the author of the article.

for the fifth time (most recently in 2020).² The fivefold publication of this work in a century demonstrates readers' great interest in it. It is this work, whose aim was to dynamize the backward and conservative life of Slovakia, which ranks Lajčiak among the promoters, or even founders of sociology in Slovakia.³

The personality of Lajčiak has begun to receive more attention only in recent decades. Lajčiak's personality and work are reflected in philosophy⁴, sociology⁵, and evangelical theology.⁶ The sociologist Borislav Petrík, who

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- 2 Ján Lajčiak, *Slovensko a kultúra*. Z rukopisu Dr. Jána Lajčiaka ev. a. v. farára na Boci sostavil Sam. Št. Osuský, theol. prof. v Bratislave. Reprint. Ed. Ján Juráš (Liptovský Mikuláš: Spolok Martina Rázusa, [1920] 2020).
 - 3 Ludovít Turčan, "Ján Lajčiak a jeho dielo v súčasnosti, odkaz a ohlasy," in Ján Juráš and Daniela Kodajová (eds.), *Sláva šlachetným III. Znalci vzdialeného Orientu a strážkyne národného ohniska* (Liptovský Mikuláš: Spolok Martina Rázusa, 2015), 11.
 - 4 Elena Várossová, "Ján Lajčiak – spurný kňaz a dvojnásobný doktor," *Filozofia* 6:30 (1975), 653–63; Elena Várossová, *Filozofia vo svete – svet filozofie u nás* (Bratislava: VEDA, Vydavateľstvo SAV, 2005), 211–28; Elena Várossová, "Ján Lajčiak and the Criticism of Cultural Conservatism," in Tibor Pichler and Jana Gašparíková (eds.), *Language, Values and The Slovak Nation: Slovak Philosophical Studies I*. (Washington: Paideia Press & The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 47–59; Elena Várossová, "Kultúra a evolúcia v poňatí Jána Lajčiaka," in Karol Kollár, Andrej Kopčok and Tibor Pichler (eds.), *Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v XX. storočí* (Bratislava: Filozofický ústav SAV, 1998), 172–79. The philosophical aspects of Ján Lajčiak were analyzed by Erika Lalíková, *Realita a filozofia na Slovensku. Ján Lajčiak, Gejza Vámoš a Svätopluk Štúr* (Bratislava: Iris, 2010).
 - 5 Ludovít Turčan, "Ján Lajčiak – osamelý bežec," *Sociológia* 5–6:27 (1995), 446–49; Ludovít Turčan, "Sociologické inšpirácie Jána Lajčiaka," *Sociológia* 3:28 (1996), 271–76; Ludovít Turčan, "Ján Lajčiak v úvahách a spomienkach," *Sociológia* 5:29 (1997), 597–99; Ludovít Turčan, "Ján Lajčiak: Slovensko a kultúra," *Sociológia* 1:40 (2008), 82–85; Ludovít Turčan, "Veda a sociológia v Lajčiakovom diele Slovensko a kultúra," in Lajčiak Ján, *Slovensko a kultúra* (Turany: P+M, 2020), 262–63; Rudolf Chmel, *Romantizmus v globalizme. Malé národy – veľké mýty* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2009), 103–107; Branislav Choma, "Na okraj druhého vydania Slovenska a kultúry," *Sociológia* 5:29 (1997), 606–10; Adela Kvasničková, "Recepcia diela Jána Lajčiaka," *Sociológia* 4:28 (1996), 353–60; Eva Laiferová, *Problematika národa v slovenskej sociológii. Formovanie prístupov k téme národa* (Bratislava: STIMUL, 2017), 19–21; Ján Pašiak, "Problematika modernizácie slovenskej spoločnosti v diele J. Lajčiaka Slovensko a kultúra," *Sociológia* 1:28 (1996), 69–81.
 - 6 Július Filo, "Spomienky na Dr. Jána Lajčiaka," *Sociológia* 5:29 (1997), 599–606; Samuel Štefan Osuský, "Životopis a literárne pôsobenie Dr. Jána Lajčiaka," in Ján Lajčiak, *Slovensko a kultúra*, 13–29; Juraj Bány, "Doktorská dizertácia Jána Lajčiaka na tému Plurálne a duálne koncovky v semitských menách," in Ján Juráš (ed.), *Sláva šlachetným III*. (Liptovský Mikuláš: Spolok Martina Rázusa, 2014), 11–12; František Ábel, "Preklad evanjelií Novej zmluvy Dr. Jána Lajčiaka z gréckej pôvodiny do slovenčiny," in Anton Baláž and Rastislav Stanček (eds.), *Evanjeliá* (Liptovský Mikuláš: Spolok Martina Rázusa, 2018), 455–75; Dávid Benka, "Ján Lajčiak and His Slovak Translation of the Book of

in 2007 compiled all the available bibliography on Ján Lajčiak, greatly contributed to the popularization of Lajčiak's life and work.⁷

From the works about Lajčiak published so far, we can read many praise-worthy and exaggerated assessments. For example, that he was “clearly the most educated Slovak”⁸, “few members of the Slovak nation in the past had such intellectual prerequisites, professional education and a modern worldview for successful work in the field of science and culture”⁹, that he was an “outstanding” and “brilliant man”¹⁰, etc. There are also attempts to popularize Lajčiak through art – in literature,¹¹ film,¹² and radio. One recent novel by Anton Baláž, *Prehovor, Ezechiel* [Talk, Ezechiel], fictionalizes Lajčiak's life story. It is particularly significant due to its form, as well as new coming from Lajčiak's previously unknown archive sources, including his private correspondence.¹³

Biographical remarks on Lajčiak

Ján Lajčiak was born on 25 July 1875 in Pribylina. After gymnasium studies in Banská Bystrica and Prešov, he continued his theological studies in Prešov at the Theological Academy. From there, after three years, Lajčiak moved on to study theology in Erlangen. After returning from Germany and passing the closing exams at the Theological Academy in Prešov, he worked as

Psalms (1904),” in Maroš Nicák and M. Martin Tamcke (eds.), *Theologie – Dienst und Notwendigkeit* (Münster: LIT, 2021), 49–56; Sidonia Horňanová, “Osobnosť a vedecký prínos Jána Lajčiaka – slovenského intelektuála európskeho formátu,” in György Juhász (ed.), *Inovácia a kreativita vo vzdelávaní a vede: zborník z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie Univerzity J. Selyeho – 2015* (Komárno: Univerzita J. Selyeho, 2015), 49–60; Sidonia Horňanová, “Lajčiakova dizertácia o Ezechielovi,” in *Sláva šľachetným III. Znalci vzdialeného Orientu a strážkyne národného ohniska* (Liptovský Mikuláš: Spolok Martina Rázusa, 2015), 41–50; Rastislav Stanček, “Päť slov zrozumiteľných... alebo Lajčiakov slovenský preklad evanjelií,” in *Sláva šľachetným III. Znalci vzdialeného Orientu a strážkyne národného ohniska* (Liptovský Mikuláš: Spolok Martina Rázusa, 2015), 29–40.

7 Borislav Petřík, “Bibliografia Jána Lajčiaka,” in Lajčiak Ján, *Slovensko a kultúra* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Q111, 2007), 167–73.

8 Petřík, “Bibliografia Jána Lajčiaka,” *Úvod*.

9 Filo, “Spomienky na Dr. Jána Lajčiaka,” 601.

10 Várossová, “Ján Lajčiak – spurný kňaz a dvojnásobný doktor,” 211.

11 Anton Baláž, *Prehovor Ezechiel: Príbeh Jána Lajčiaka* (Bratislava: Literárne informačné centrum, 2020).

12 A documentary film about Ján Lajčiak was directed by Fedor Bartko.

13 Baláž, *Prehovor Ezechiel*, 358.

a chaplain in Pešť, still driven by the desire to work and learn scientifically. He first studied at the philosophical faculty in Leipzig, where he devoted himself to oriental philology from 1900 to 1902 and defended his dissertation on *Die Plural- und Dualendungen am semitischen Nomen* [The plural and dual endings in Semitic nouns] (1902).¹⁴ In his printed dissertation, he thanks his professors H. Zimmern and W. Geiger for their support throughout his studies.¹⁵ In his autobiography, he further states that he listened to Hauck's lectures on theology, Wundt's on philosophy, and Zimmern's on Semitic languages (Assyrian, Syrian, and Ethiopian), he also names other professors and the specific languages he studied with them.¹⁶ One can only assume that Lajčiak's doctoral advisor for the dissertation was Heinrich Zimmern, professor of Oriental languages at the Faculty of Philosophy in Leipzig. The fact is, however, that Lajčiak does not explicitly mention his doctoral advisor in either of his two dissertations.

Ján Goláň, a friend from the time of his studies in Leipzig, recalls that Lajčiak set out to obtain a doctorate in the most difficult subjects (Oriental languages, Hebrew, and Arabic) and chose an unusually difficult topic, which required him to learn French and English.¹⁷ In addition to Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, Lajčiak "knew Slovak, Hungarian, German, French, English, Italian, and learned many Oriental languages old and new, and is known to have written a Gypsy grammar, so that one marvels at how richly he was endowed by God."¹⁸ In the biographical appendix to his first dissertation, Lajčiak himself stated that he had studied Hebrew, Sanskrit, Italian, and, of the Semitic languages, Assyrian, Syriac, Ethiopic, and Arabic, as well as Egyptian, Old Persian, Sanskrit, Chinese, the Old Church Slavonic language, and Russian.¹⁹

Goláň also recalls that Lajčiak dressed modestly, ate in cheap, mainly vegetarian inns, and gave every spare penny to purchase books. He mentions

14 Johann Lajčiak, *Die Plural- und Dualendungen am semitischen Nomen, Ezechiel* (Leipzig: Druck von August Priest, 1902).

15 Ibid., 56.

16 Ibid., 55–56.

17 Ján Goláň, "Rozpomienka na dr. Jána Lajčiaka," *Slovenský denník* 3:143 (1920), 2.

18 Emil Janotka, "20 rokov od smrti Dr. J. Lajčiaka," *Tranovský evanjelický kalendár* (1938), 151.

19 Lajčiak, *Die Plural- und Dualendungen am semitischen Nomen*, 55–56. Source: https://opendata.uni-halle.de/explore?bitstream_id=6efc8a61-356f-4ef5-bac0-b2e746790acf&handle=1981185920/100043&provider=iiif-image (accessed 23. 11. 2025).

Lajčiak's strictness with himself and his strong-mindedness. He adds that he felt no such respect for any of his classmates as he did for his ingenious friend.

From 1902 to 1905 Lajčiak studied at the Protestant Independent School of Theology of Paris where he received another doctorate – this time in theology, after defending his dissertation *Ézéchiel: Sa Personne et son Enseignement* [Ezekiel: His Person and Teachings] (1905).

The French manuscript of the dissertation is located in the Central Archive of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Slovakia in Bratislava. The manuscript states the names of the members of the examination committee: M. Lods as its chairman, and J. Ménégos and J. Ehrhardt as examiners, but there is no mention of the doctoral advisor. The aim of the dissertation is stated as “to penetrate the soul of the prophet and understand the characteristic ideas of his teaching.”²⁰ He seeks to “provide a more accurate portrait of Ezekiel than those we have of his person and his teaching so far”.²¹ In the bibliography, Lajčiak lists 32 commentaries and monographs, most of which refer to Alfred Bertholet.²² He notes that, apart from Lucien Gautier's monograph, the work of “Ezekiel as a whole has not yet been the subject of research”. According to Lajčiak, Gautier also failed to understand the prophet's teachings because he examined the prophet's ideas separately, without their interconnections. Lajčiak attempts to prove that Ezekiel is “the first systematic theologian” who created a comprehensive theological system.²³ The unifying idea of Ezekiel's teachings is the fall of Israel and its restoration. Lajčiak further analyzes other sub-themes such as the sin of Israel, punishment and the manner of punishment, a new nation, a new cult, and a new land. In the third, last part of the book, he critically discusses Ezekiel's character and teachings.

Lajčiak's second dissertation was published in French the same year.²⁴ After his return home, however, he came into conflict with the Hungarian

20 Lajčiak, “Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie,” *Cirkevné listy* 22:9 (1908), 282.

21 *Ibid.*, 282.

22 Alfred Bertholet, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Hesekeel in seiner religionsgeschichtlichen Bedeutung* (Freiburg und Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr, 1896). The bibliography includes references to the commentaries of Kraetzschmar, Orelli, and Smend. Surprisingly, Lajčiak refers only once to Bernard Duhm, namely to his work *Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Religion* (Bonn: Marcus, 1875).

23 Lajčiak, “Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie,” *Cirkevné listy* 22:9 (1908), 281–85.

24 As far I know, as Samuel Štefan Osuský states, there were two reviews of this work in France. One of them was presented by the faculty where the dissertation was defended, and the second by Charles Piepenbring in *Revue de Théologie et des Questions religieuses*.

authorities and, because of his liberal attitudes, also with the Slovak conservative national and church leaders.

Lajčiak's correspondence shows that during his studies abroad, he was in constant financial struggles and therefore repeatedly appealed to all parties for financial support. To become a Doctor of Philosophy, his first dissertation, *Die Plural- und Dualendungen am semitischen Nomen*, had to be published. He therefore appealed for help to the administrator of the student scholarship fund in Martin, but with no success. His friends from Budapest finally helped him financially. He also had financial problems during his studies at the Sorbonne University in Paris, and he again asked for support from the administrator of the Student Scholarship Fund in Martin.

Lajčiak's intense focus and the strain accompanying his studies took a toll on his health, as evidenced by his private correspondence, specifically a letter dated October 6, 1904, from Miloš Ruppeltdt, Lajčiak's classmate from his studies in Leipzig. Before Lajčiak departed for Paris, Ruppeltdt expressed concern for Lajčiak's health because of his physical strain:

You are of weak physical constitution. Mentally, you are a titan, but a great spirit also needs a healthy body. You must now have peace, healthy, countryside or village air, rest from work, but no more studying in the stifling, almost foul air of the big city while yearning incessantly, continually after that beautiful – oh, beautiful! – science, you will be gobbling in yourself even the seed of temporal destruction!²⁵

As for Lajčiak's priestly vocation, he was ordained a Lutheran pastor in 1899. He first worked as a chaplain, under the supervision of Priest Daniel Bachát at the so-called "Luther's Court", an important center of the national, cultural, and religious life of Slovak Evangelical Lutherans in Budapest. At that time, Lajčiak began translating the Hebrew Book of Psalms into Slovak. Bachát accepted Lajčiak's decision to study in Leipzig with understanding and, after receiving his doctorate, took him back as chaplain. Having obtained a second doctorate at Sorbonne University, his place in "Luther's Court" was filled by someone else. Since he was not successful in filling either the associate

The former was a rather positive review, while the latter was a long and harsh critique of Lajčiak's view of Ezekiel as a brilliant man and of this assumed brilliancy as concluded even in times of Ezekiel's mental tension – catalepsy. Samuel Štefan Osuský, "Životopis a literárne pôsobenie Dr. Jána Lajčiaka," in Ján Lajčiak, *Slovensko a kultúra*, 23–24.

25 Baláž, *Prehovor Ezechiel*, 288–89.

professorship at the University of Jurjev²⁶ (in what is now Estonia), where he would have lectured on Semitic languages, or the post at the Theological Academy in Bratislava, he applied for the vacant post of pastor in the remote village of Vyšná Boca.²⁷ He was appointed, and transferred his whole library from Budapest, in order to continue his scientific work. Around this time, he was also preparing a new journal, *Viera a veda* [Faith and Science], which he was due to edit. He never became its editor-in-chief, however Lajčiak was active in Boca for more than 13 years, until his death on 28 October 1918.

Lajčiak as a pioneer of Bible translation into Slovak

The question of translating liturgical forms of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovakia was raised at the end of the 19th century. Slovak became a language of worship among Lutherans only gradually. The liturgical books used in Lutheran worship were originally published in the Biblical Czech Language, under the influence of the *Bible of Kralice*, which was published in three editions (1579–1594, 1596, 1613). As far as the use of the Biblical Czech Language, linguistic expressions from the Slovak dialects were incorporated into it. Requests for translating the Bible into Slovak and for preaching in Slovak were increasing, but Slovak Evangelical Lutherans were not united on this fundamental issue. In the journal *Cirkevné listy* [Church Letters], an extensive debate on the translation of the Bible into Slovak developed, arguing both for and against the Slovak translation of the Bible.²⁸ The Slovak translation of the Bible was justified both by the tradition of the Biblical Czech Language, regarded as one of the most important symbols of Slovak Lutheran

²⁶ The university was founded in 1632 by King Gustav II Adolf of Sweden and is now known as the University of Tartu.

²⁷ To better illustrate Lajčiak's exile in his relocation to the village of Vyšná Boca, one can look at how professor Samuel Štefan Osuský characterized this village: "the most remote, forgotten, pitiful Slovak Tatra village". Osuský, "Životopis a literárne pôsobenie Dr. Jána Lajčiaka," 8.

²⁸ Igor Branko Štefánik, "Ako ďaleko siahajú práva materčiny v cirkvi?" *Cirkevné listy* 14:1 (1900), 17–19; Igor Branko Štefánik, "Ako ďaleko siahajú práva materčiny v cirkvi?" *Cirkevné listy* 14:2 (1900), 51–52; Igor Branko Štefánik, "Ako ďaleko siahajú práva materčiny v cirkvi?" *Cirkevné listy* 14:3 (1900), 79–80; Igor Branko Štefánik, "Ako ďaleko siahajú práva materčiny v cirkvi?" *Cirkevné listy* 14:4 (1900), 118–20; V. "Ešte niečo o právach materčiny v cirkvi," *Cirkevné listy* 14:6 (1900), 173–174; S. Daxner, "Slovo k slovenskému prekladu Biblie," *Cirkevné listy* 15:4 (1901), 98–102; "Ako preddunajský dištrikt maďarskú literatúru napomáha," *Cirkevné listy* 15:6 (1901), 162–165.

identity, and by the principle of the so-called "Czech-Slovak mutuality". New attempts to translate the Bible into Slovak were questioned and criticized. Although some pastors were preaching in Slovak, supporters of the *Bible of Kralice* insisted that Scripture should be quoted from that text. Another argument against the Slovak Bible was that codified Slovak was considered insufficiently rich, lacking adequate verbal expressions, and that its use in the church should not be forced. On the other hand, the argument against Biblical Czech Language was that people no longer understood this "dead" language, as well as that every cultured nation should have its own national language. The use of the Slovak language in the Church was also impeded by persecution, particularly Hungarianization pressures in schools.²⁹ Among the first brave pioneers to undertake the translation of the Bible into Slovak was the scholar Ján Lajčiak. But he never participated in the discussion on that issue in *Cirkevné listy* [Church Letters].

During the period when the debate on the Slovak Bible was taking place, Dr. Lajčiak was noticed by the British and Foreign Bible Society. He was approached as an expert in Semitic languages to translate the Book of Psalms into Slovak. This most likely occurred in June 1903.³⁰ The Slovak translation of the Book of Psalms was published in Budapest in December 1904.³¹ Lajčiak's new translation is a remarkably literal, modern, poetic, and linguistically innovative attempt to convey the biblical psalms into the living Slovak language at the expense of traditional expressions established in people's minds from the *Bible of Kralice*. Lajčiak did not merely superficially Slovakize the *Bible of Kralice*. He argued relentlessly for the necessity of using the original text when translating. He followed the so-called *Textus Receptus*, which is the result of a text-critical comparison of various biblical manuscripts: "[...] where criticism has proven: here, or there is an error, the critically corrected text has priority."³² Lajčiak's approach was presented by the translator himself in *Cirkevné listy* [Church Letters]:

29 There was a case of students being expelled from the Evangelical Lutheran College in Prešov for signing their private photographs with Slovak names (in 1900). Baláž, "Evanjeliá," 469; *Cirkevné listy* 15:6 (1901), 162.

30 Ján Lajčiak, "Niekoľko slov o slovenskom preklade žalmov," *Cirkevné listy* 18:12 (1904), 373.

31 Ján Lajčiak, *Knihla žalmov* (Budapešť: Kníhtlačiareň Samuela Markusa, 1904).

32 Ján Lajčiak, "Niekoľko slov o slovenskom preklade žalmov," *Cirkevné listy* 18:12 (1904), 373.

The translation aims to be a faithful translation of the original Hebrew outline and not a completely Slovak transcription of the Czech translation. That is why anyone who wants to judge this translation must compare it with the original. Therefore, anyone who would like to judge the accuracy of the translation based on whether or to what extent it compares with the Czech translation is on the wrong path [...]. I treated the translation conservatively, with restraint, as much as possible [...].³³

Lajčiak was also open to criticism of his translation:

I further note that with the translation of the Psalms, a test is to be made of how the people will behave towards the Slovak text of the Bible, and after that, one should proceed to translate other books, or the whole matter should be postponed [...]. For my part, I only ask for a reasoned, fair opinion, and criticism, and I ask everyone who has and wants to say something about the translation to do so now.³⁴

In addition to outlining his approach to the issue of translation, he also included examples of the translation of several biblical Psalms (Ps 1, Ps 2, Ps 8, Ps 90, and Ps 100). Even before its publication, he sought an assessment of the translation of the Psalms and the blessings of socially prominent individuals (Juraj Janoška and Jozef Škultéty) to ensure general recognition of the translation. However, he never received their approval.

Reactions to Lajčiak's translation of The Psalms published in the magazines *Cirkevné listy* [Church Letters] or *Stráž na Sione* [Guard on Zion] were negative. Either they advocated Czechoslovak unity and considered the translation into Slovak to be useless, or they accused Lajčiak of liberalism. For example, he was reproached for translating the so-called messianic psalms in such a way that no one would look for or find prophecies about Christ as the Messiah in them: "The biggest mistake we consider the submitter's overly liberal negative attitude, which was directed towards messianic references and other concepts and expressions of Christian doctrine, such as hell. Lajčiak is apparently not sufficiently aware of the messianic texts in the Psalms."³⁵

33 Ján Lajčiak, "Niekolko slov o slovenskom preklade žalmov," *Cirkevné listy* 18:12 (1904), 373.

34 Ibid.

35 V. Č., "Slovenský preklad Biblie," *Cirkevné listy* 19:5 (1905), 153. The author of the article signed only with his initials V. Č. He can be identified with Dr. Vladimír Čobrda, a later bishop and also a translator of the Book of Psalms. His extensive critique of Lajčiak's translation of the biblical psalms was published in serial form in *Cirkevné listy* [Church Letters]: "Slovenský preklad Biblie," *Cirkevné listy* 19:5 (1905), 150–54; *Cirkevné listy* 19:6 (1905), 180–83; *Cirkevné listy* 19:7 (1905), 210–13; *Cirkevné listy* 19:8 (1905), 246–49; *Cirkevné listy* 19:9 (1905), 266–71; *Cirkevné listy* 19:10 (1905), 297–300; *Cirkevné listy* 19:11 (1905), 343–46; *Cirkevné listy* 19:12 (1905), 376–78; V. Č., *Cirkevné listy* 20:1

He was criticized for translating the Psalms in a way that prevents readers from seeking and finding the prophecies concerning Christ in them.³⁶ For example, in verse 17 of Psalm 22, which has been understood in the church tradition as a prophecy of Christ's crucifixion, Lajčiak translates *ka'arí* without reference to piercing – apparently influenced by Duhm – “my hands and feet are disfigured”³⁷ (“entstellt sind meine Hände und Füße”³⁸).

Also, the Hebrew term *sh'eol* was not translated by Lajčiak in a traditional way of the *Bible of Kralice* as “hell,” but as “the otherworld.” E.g.: “Let the wicked return to the otherworld [...]” (Ps 9:18). “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the otherworld [...]” (Ps 49:16). “For you will not abandon my soul to the otherworld [...]” (Ps 16:10) etc.³⁹ Lajčiak sought to avoid the word “hell”. The term “otherworld” is a neutral word in Slovak language in the sense that it does not evoke the idea of hell, as it is in the case of the alternative translations such as “underworld” or “netherworld” etc. Lajčiak sought to avoid the word “hell” because this word was invented by medieval scholasticism.⁴⁰ He also fought against superstitions and folk beliefs within the Slovak nation, especially in the church.⁴¹ Lajčiak rejected the idea of hell as a physical place of eternal torment and believed that a person's moral behavior should not be out of fear of punishment.

The fact that Lajčiak translated the biblical psalms into Slovak was widely known. The existence of Lajčiak's manuscript translation of the Gospels into Slovak was only recently revealed by Anton Baláž in his book *Prehovor, Ezekiel* [Talk, Ezekiel]. The manuscript contains complete translations of the three Synoptic Gospels and an incomplete translation of the fourth Gospel according to John, which is deposited in the Central Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia. The first in-depth

(1906), 14–18. Anton Baláž incorrectly names Jozef Maliak, biblical scholar and teacher, as the author of the critique of the translation. Baláž, *Prehovor Ezechiel*, 295–96.

36 V. Č., “Slovenský preklad Bible,” *Cirkevné listy* 19:5 (1905), 153.

37 Lajčiak, *Kniha žalmov*, 22.

38 Bernhard Duhm, *Die Psalmen* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1899), 70.

39 Slovak expression for “otherworld” is “druhý svet” or “záhrobie,” which is close to the meaning of “realm of the dead” (*she'ol*) but without connotation of hell.

40 “Slovenský preklad Bible,” *Cirkevné listy* 19:5 (1905), 153.

41 “The mayor threatens with a stick and the priest with hell.” Ján Lajčiak, *Slovensko a kultúra*, 180.

scholarly evaluations of Lajčiak's translation of the Gospels were carried out by Rastislav Stanček and František Ábel.⁴²

Lajčiak was not aware of the criticism of his translation of the Psalms in *Cirkevné listy* in 1905, as he was abroad preparing to obtain a doctorate in theology on the Book of Ezekiel at the time.

Lajčiak's dissertation on the prophet Ezekiel

The interpretation of the Book of Ezekiel is extremely challenging, even nowadays. It remains one of the most debated texts in biblical scholarship, as has been evidenced recently by a collection of 27 essays⁴³ from two international symposia in St. Andrews (2013) and Vienna (2014), as well as by the current Oxford Handbook of Ezekiel, which highlights ongoing issues in the redaction of the book, its legal language, Mesopotamian resonances, and gender imagery.⁴⁴ The introductory chapter of the Oxford Handbook, written by the editor, provides an overview of major trends in scholarly engagement with the book of Ezekiel in the past fifty years.⁴⁵

As has already been shown, Lajčiak, as a polyglot, had an excellent linguistic background to be successful with this work. He was aware of the difficulty of the topic of the dissertation, stating Ezekiel is "one of the most peculiar personalities in the whole Old Testament."⁴⁶

Lajčiak's dissertation was published in French.⁴⁷ It was also published in parts between 1908 and 1910 in the magazine *Cirkevné listy* [Church

42 Ábel, "Preklad evanjelií Novej zmluvy Dr. Jána Lajčiaka z gréckej pôvodiny do slovenčiny," 455–75.

43 William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter (eds.), *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, FZAT 112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

44 Corrine Carvalho (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ezekiel* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2023).

45 Corrine Carvalho, "Ezekiel Scholarship in the Twenty-first Century," in Corrine Carvalho (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ezekiel* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2023), 1–17.

46 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:9 (1908), 284.

47 Ján Lajčiak, *Ezékiel, sa personne et son enseignement* (Paris et Cahors: A Coueslant, 1905).

Letters].⁴⁸ The published text was translated literally from the French original into Slovak by Lajčiak himself.⁴⁹

Lajčiak's dissertation on Ezekiel is divided into three main sections. 1. The person of Ezekiel. 2. The teachings of Ezekiel. 3. The critical assessment of the person and teachings of the prophet.

The author examines Ezekiel's prophetic writings as a compact whole. He seeks to prove that Ezekiel was the one who developed a coherent theological system.⁵⁰ Ezekiel's message is organized around the following themes: Israel's sin, punishment, and the method and goal of punishment. In the third section, in which Lajčiak subjects the prophet and his teachings to criticism, he praises him not only as a prophet but also as a "shepherd, priest, philosopher, and apocalyptic writer."⁵¹

An attempt at psychoanalysis of the prophet

In the introduction of the dissertation, Lajčiak characterizes the prophet Ezekiel:

He is kind, sympathetic, even when he appears extravagant. There is something enigmatic (mysterious) and mystical in his person that will perhaps never be sufficiently deciphered. He lived during the most critical period in the history of the nation of Israel, during a time that required a man endowed with all the qualities necessary to overcome the challenges he faced.⁵²

48 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:9 (1908), 281–85; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:10 (1908), 302–06; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:11 (1908), 339–43; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:12 (1908), 372–77; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:1 (1909), 18–21; Lajčiak "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:5 (1909), 143–48; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:7 (1909), 190–94; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:8 (1909), 223–30; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:9 (1909), 277–79; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:11 (1909), 332–40; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Kritika učenia Ezechielovho," *Cirkevné listy* 24:3 (1910), 80–86; Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Kritika učenia Ezechielovho," *Cirkevné listy* 24:5 (1910), 146–52.

49 The quotations from Lajčiak's dissertation in this study are taken from his Slovak translation. The French version is available online on the website of Evangelical Lutheran Theological Faculty of Comenius University. Source: https://fevth.uniba.sk/fileadmin/ebf/Kniznica_EBF_UK/e-kniznica/Lajciak.pdf (accessed 30. 10. 2025).

50 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:9 (1908), 282–83.

51 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:8 (1909), 227.

52 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:1 (1909), 19.

Lajčiak guides the reader through the complexities of the rather enigmatic prophet, who behaved and acted like a mentally ill individual. One can think of the prophet's staggering imagination, temporary dumbness (Ezek 3:25–27; 33:21–22), or the symbolic actions of the prophet, e. g. the poses he struck as he represented the siege of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Ezek 4:1–4), or when he lay on his left side for 390 days (Ezek 4:5–8), followed by 40 days of lying on his right side. In addition to Ezekiel's bodily paralysis, Lajčiak also considered groaning, stamping, or handclapping to be features of the prophet's mental illness (Ezek 6:11; 21:19). Referring to Klostermann, Lajčiak states: "It is generally accepted that he was not a completely normal person [...]. The reasons Klostermann provides to support his claim are so evident that we can unequivocally regard Ezekiel as being ill, suffering from catalepsy⁵³."⁵⁴

Decades after Klostermann and Lajčiak, Broome referred to Ezekiel's mental illness, could not sufficiently be described as catalepsy. According to Broome, reflecting Freudian categories, Ezekiel was "a true psychotic, capable of great religious insight but exhibiting a series of diagnostic characteristics: catatonia, narcissistic-masochistic conflict, schizophrenic withdrawal, delusions of grandeur, and persecution. In short, he suffered from a paranoid condition common in many great spiritual leaders."⁵⁵

Even more than half a century after Lajčiak's death, there was still an ongoing debate about whether Ezekiel's peculiarities could be seen as symptoms of pathology or not. While Walter Zimmerli and Ellen F. Davis distance themselves from the psychoanalytic approach, it is supported by David J. Halperin.

Both Zimmerli and Davis avoided applying modern psychoanalytic categories (schizophrenia or neurosis) to the prophet. To interpret the personality of the prophet and his mental structure, Zimmerli takes into consideration

53 Catalepsy is a nonuniform disorder characterized by immobility, muscle stiffness, and reduced sensitivity to pain.

54 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:9 (1908), 284–85. August Klostermann, "Ezechiel: Ein Beitrag zu besserer Würdigung seiner Person und seiner Schrift," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 50 (1877), 391–439. Klostermann identified the prophet's catalepsy based on three medical reports from the years 1850 to 1875 that described a nervous illness with two prominent symptoms: paralysis and loss of speech. The symptoms set in mysteriously and, after some hours, weeks, or months, just as mysteriously went away. Klostermann, "Ezechiel," 424–31.

55 Edwin C. Broome, "Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65:3 (1946), 291–92.

a long process of transmission and redaction of the book: “the book of Ezekiel has undergone considerable editing and, in its present form, cannot simply be derived from the figure of the prophet himself.”⁵⁶ “[...] the basic text of the visions and symbolic actions shows a strongly stylized form. It is certainly not appropriate to regard and read it as a description of a biographical situation [...]. Ezekiel’s personality is hidden by stylized forms and traditions more deeply than any other of the great prophetic figures.”⁵⁷ Davis, on the other hand, sees the prophet as a literary innovator, as “the creator of a new idiom of prophecy, one in which the text itself becomes the primary medium of divine discourse.”⁵⁸ His act of “swallowing the scroll” symbolizes the shift from oral proclamation to textual mediation of prophecy. She refuses the “case study” by Broom and is sarcastic about his “confidence in the exegetical power of medical science,”⁵⁹ but she offers no argument why Broome is wrong in using medical science.

Halperin’s psychoanalytic approach attributes the extraordinary features of Ezekiel’s prophecy to an unconscious but overwhelming rage against female persons, whom he perceives as cruel and powerful, seductive and treacherous, and a more deeply buried rage against male figures because of some abuse experienced as a child.⁶⁰ He maintains that Ezekiel “was surely unique in the severity of his sickness, and in the power of the images he found to express it. But his sickness must have been rooted in a more general cultural pathology” that affected the elders of the exiles as well.⁶¹

Recently, Daniel L. Smith-Cristopher has been treating Ezekiel’s peculiarities as the post-traumatic reactions of an exile, a refugee.⁶²

In addressing the issue of the prophet’s unusual behavior, one must consider the rhetorical function of prophecy and the control that God took over

56 Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 18. Translated from the German (1969) by Ronald E. Clements.

57 Ibid.

58 Ellen F. Davies, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel’s Prophecy* (Sheffield, U.K.: Almond Press, 1989), 83.

59 Davies, *Swallowing the Scroll*, 66.

60 David J. Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel. Text and psychology* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 207–09, et passim.

61 Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel*, 135.

62 Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington, Ind.: Meyer Stone, 1989), 49–92.

the prophet, namely, over his thoughts and actions. Israel's prophets often acted and spoke erratically for rhetorical reasons.⁶³

As it has already been mentioned, Lajčiak adopted Klostermann's interpretation that Ezekiel suffered from a mental illness, specifically catalepsy of the highest degree. According to Lajčiak, it may have been to some extent conditioned by the attitudes of the Israelites who rejected Ezekiel because of his harsh words and mocked him, even when his prophecies were fulfilled. The prophet was confronted with the loss of kingship and national independence, the threat of assimilation of Israeli captives in Babylon, as well as with the defiance and indifference of the exiles to the prophet's message, visible in their apparent unbelief and mockery. Trust in God was a strength for the prophet, as indicated by the prophet's name, which means "God will strengthen or confirm".

Lajčiak highlighted the close relationship between Ezekiel's psychology and the prophet's theology – between imagery and reason. An enigmatic aspect of Ezekiel's character – his complex state of mind – seems to have attracted Lajčiak's attention. He returns to it repeatedly, analyzing it to the point that the reader thinks that the work, in its scope, extends beyond theology into psychology.

According to Lajčiak, Ezekiel's personality was affected not only by mental illness but also by pessimism. Ezekiel categorically condemns Israel. He inclines to anger, which is manifested in the harshest expressions. The prophet was affected not only by external historical circumstances, but his soul was also predisposed to pathological phenomena.⁶⁴

To sum up, the way Lajčiak grasped Ezekiel's personality is not merely a description of the biographical events of the prophet's life, but an attempt at psychoanalysis. From Lajčiak's perspective, one can at least partially understand Ezekiel's complex personality only if one accepts that the prophet was somewhat mentally ill.⁶⁵

63 Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel. Chapters 1-24. New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 10.

64 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:11 (1908), 342-43.

65 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 22:9 (1908), 284.

Emphasis on individual conversion

Lajčiak presents Ezekiel as speaking of Israel's fall, which is caused by Israel's sins. He classified them as (1) religious sins and (2) the moral (or ethical) sins of the people, especially social sins – violence and bloodshed, oppression of the poor, fornication, incest, theft, etc. They stretch like an unbroken chain since the time of God's election of Israel and the exodus from Egypt.

Ezekiel does not spare the highest classes in society – oppression and selfish exploitation by kings. He compares the dignitaries to wolves that scatter the flock of Israel and criticizes the unfaithful prophets and priests.

Lajčiak sees the contribution of Ezekiel as “the first who formulated a systematic conception of the history of his nation.”⁶⁶ The prophet presents history as a drama in which two principles struggle: human ingratitude and God's benevolence. In this struggle, God's justice triumphs over human wickedness.

Lajčiak not only superficially describes Israel's sins but also analyzes the relationship of guilt and punishment and reflects on the end goal or purpose of God's punishment of Israel. “Captivity is the trial in which the nation comes to understand the full gravity of the punishments with which it is afflicted.”⁶⁷ Through punishment, the captive nation is to realize the seriousness of sin and to awaken from its moral stupor and be born to new life (cf. Ezek 6:9–10).

Lajčiak highlighted an innovative idea in Ezekiel's teaching on individual responsibility, namely personal guilt and personal punishment for sins. If Ezekiel had not developed the doctrine of responsibility, he would have driven the remnants of the nation in captivity to moral ruin. Ezekiel proclaimed that “the object of God's love is the individual”⁶⁸ – an argument of Lajčiak's dissertation is specifically highlighted by the different typeface (*italics*). An individual can avoid or reverse God's punishment by acting responsibly and morally. In this respect, the prophet was called by God to be the “watchman” of the nation (Ezek 3:17), to warn the people of their wrongdoing and to call out to them to turn from their wicked ways and return to God (cf. Ezek 33).

Even though Israel fell under God's wrath and punishment because of their iniquities, God did not cease to love His people. If they repented, they

66 Lajčiak, “Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie,” *Cirkevné listy* 22:12 (1908), 377.

67 Lajčiak, “Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie,” *Cirkevné listy* 23:7 (1909), 193.

68 *Ibid.*, 191.

could be restored. Lajčiak sought the answer to the question: What happens to a nation that has either perished after a catastrophe or been scattered?⁶⁹

Despite Ezekiel's strictness toward Israel, he harbors a great love for his nation. "The thought of seeing his nation devastated was dreadful to Ezekiel."⁷⁰ God will not destroy His nation. There will be a remnant of the nation that will survive the calamity (cf. Ezek 5:3). The vision of a restored nation – in Lajčiak's poetic language – "[...] bursts like a seed in verses 34–44 ch. 20: the gathering of the nation, the separation of the rebels, the new alliance, the new cult, the new land."⁷¹

The final part of Lajčiak's dissertation is a critical evaluation of the person and teachings of Ezekiel as a prophet, shepherd, priest, philosopher, and apocalyptic writer. Because Ezekiel emphasized the responsibility of the individual, pastoral care of the prophet came to the fore; as a pastor, he was interested not only in the nation as a whole (*unitas*) but in individuals. Ezekiel's pastoral activity was focused on turning the sinner from his wicked ways. "In his person, we do not find the slightest trace of egotism. He does not seek his glory but the glory of Yahweh God [...]. He was indeed the spiritual father of his exiled countrymen in Babylon."⁷²

Lajčiak concludes his dissertation with a critical assessment of Ezekiel and his teachings, whose influence was "enormous not only on the development of Judaism but also on the development of Christianity."⁷³ He addresses the relationship between Ezekiel and Christ. Ezekiel had an influence on Jesus, as can be seen in Jesus' imagery of the sheep and the shepherd, which represents the relationship between humanity and God (Ezek 33; cf. John 10; Matt 18:12–14; 25:32–33; Luke 25:4–6). Other parallels can also be drawn between the relationship of Ezekiel and Christ – images which Jesus may have adopted in form, but to which he gave an entirely new dimension.

69 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:8 (1909), 223.

70 Ibid., 226.

71 Ibid.

72 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:11 (1909), 334–35.

73 Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 24:5 (1910), 150.

Lajčiak's spiritual closeness with Ezekiel

The reader of Lajčiak's dissertation naturally compares Lajčiak with the literary portrayal of the prophet Ezekiel. There are some affinities between Lajčiak and Ezekiel in terms of their careers.

The beginning of the prophetic vocation of the biblical Ezekiel and his particular prophecies could be precisely dated thanks to the detailed chronology in his writings. Ezekiel began his ministry at the age of 30 (cf. Ezek 1:1),⁷⁴ the age of initiation to the priesthood (cf. Lev 4:3; Chr 23:3). Ezekiel's calling to be a prophet was a form of compensation for the impossibility of serving as a priest during the exile.⁷⁵ Ján Lajčiak defended his dissertation on Ezekiel on November 7, 1905, at the age of thirty.

The prophet Ezekiel has at times been regarded by some as an extravagant and abnormal person. Lajčiak was also considered by some of his contemporaries as a "weirdo" because of his single-minded immersion in scientific research and less concern about physical health.

Ezekiel's message was characterized by strong pessimism. As Lajčiak mentions, none of the Israelite prophets fought against iniquity as resolutely as Ezekiel, who did not spare even religious leaders from criticism. Also, Lajčiak uncompromisingly revealed the mental and material miseries of the Slovak nation, which had been romanticised in Slovak literature. He called for disclosure of the nation's wounds, namely alcoholism, which he describes as "the hereditary wound of the nation," and pointed out other sins, such as theft, etc. Lajčiak's contemporaries reproached him for his pessimism and his critique of the cultural environment of the nation he sought to elevate to European standards. Moreover, Lajčiak advocated for honest scientific research. Through his criticism, he targeted the church, specifically its "petrified conservatism," which he viewed as the cause of the hindrance of free theological thought, and the insufficient theological and scientific training of priests. Because of Lajčiak's critical views of the clergy and traditional church structures, he found himself in opposition to the church authorities. His criticism of clericalism, formalism, and national conservatism brought him into conflict with influential church leaders and national representatives, who accused him of liberalism.

74 Some interpreters refer to the thirtieth year of the exile as the year of the compilation of the book or apply it to the thirtieth year of the exile.

75 Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (New York; London: T&T Clark, 2007, 2009), 65.

When Lajčiak criticized, he was seeking solutions for what needed to be done to effect change. He offered the prospect of a spiritual renewal of the nation. On the one hand, he felt a sense of inadequacy in fulfilling the prophetic mission. On the other hand, God's inspiration endowed him with boldness in confronting stiff-necked contemporaries, perseverance in the face of difficulties, and the strength to carry out the mission: "And you, son of man, fear them not..." (cf. Ezek 2:6; 3:8–9).

Lajčiak found himself as "a watchman" after the pattern of Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 3:17). He saw his prophetic role as being called by God to call people to become aware of their sins and to change their lives. Ezekiel's critique of the nation's wrongdoings, along with the prophet's moral stance and strictness – which greatly impressed the scholar Lajčiak – corresponds with the scholar's uncompromising moral attitude. In our view, the identification with Ezekiel was an important hermeneutical framework of Lajčiak's theological reasoning: "He struggled as every great man struggles before he would undertake any difficult task."⁷⁶

Lajčiak also embraced Ezekiel's teachings on personal responsibility, holding each individual responsible for the state of society. Lajčiak's follower, Hamaliar, after the scholar's death, said: "For every misery and imperfection, I am chiefly to blame myself, and no one else but me, neither fate nor misfortune."⁷⁷

References to the similarity between Ezekiel and Lajčiak can also be found in other works. The author of a fictional novel about Lajčiak's life story wrote in connection with his dissertation on Ezekiel:

It is as if Janko projected something of his own life struggles onto the character of Ezekiel [...]. When describing the tragic fate of Israel in his Ezekiel, he also had in mind the cruel fate of the Slovak nation. The Israelites suffered by the willows of Babylon, the Slovaks by the spruces of the Tatras.⁷⁸

Július Filo, Lutheran pastor in Vyšná Boca, recalled in his memoirs that Lajčiak "'touch somebody on the raw.' He was apparently accompanied by the prophetic pathos of the prophet Ezekiel, to whom he devoted attention in his dissertation [...]. His sermons had a profound socio-ethical impact; their

⁷⁶ Lajčiak, "Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie," *Cirkevné listy* 23:11 (1909), 339.

⁷⁷ Igor Hamaliar, "Zabudnutý slovenský učenc a jeho životná a vedecká tragika," 7 (1928), 366.

⁷⁸ Baláž, *Prehovor Ezechiel*, 276.

ultimate goal was the correction and spiritual renewal of individuals, families, the church, society, and the nation.”⁷⁹ Another Lutheran pastor, Lantaj noted that Lajčiak “‘prophetically perceived, judged, reflected, and sought a path to correction,’ more precisely, he expressed ‘an effort to correct the conditions in the church at that time.’”⁸⁰ Sociologist Choma stated that the prophet Ezekiel “was so close to the dissatisfied Lajčiak.”⁸¹ However, none of the authors mentioned above developed this similarity further than the author of this study.

Osuský describes Lajčiak’s transition from Paris to Vyšná Boca in a negative way:

So. Here comes our Lajčiak. From Paris to Boca! How to characterize it? A two-time doctor who should have shone like a scientific star for the nation at a university in some big city has to close himself off to the world in a hole in Boca! Such a tragedy. [...] One of our highly educated ladies characterized it this way: a palm tree among potatoes.⁸²

Did Lajčiak himself perceive his stay in Boca so negatively? We believe not. Lajčiak did not resign himself, but steadfastly continued his scholarly work in Boca, collecting books for its library and preparing a journal, *Viera a veda* [Faith and Science] (though he never became its editor).

The controversial figure of Ján Lajčiak challenged society by confronting entrenched norms and traditions. His bold endeavor to reinterpret religious thought through the prisms of science, philosophy, and cultural development continues to inspire contemporary discourse. Lajčiak’s enduring legacy demonstrates that theology, when deprived of its prophetic dimension, risks stagnation and the loss of its transformative potential.

Sidonia Horňanová

Evangelical Lutheran Theological Faculty of Comenius University Bratislava
Bartókova 8, 811 02 Bratislava, Slovak Republic
hornanova@fevth.uniba.sk

⁷⁹ Filo, “Spomienky,” 604–05.

⁸⁰ Michal Lantaj, “Ezechiel. Jeho osoba a jeho učenie,” *Cirkevné listy* 23:7 (1909), 193.

⁸¹ Choma, “Na okraj druhého vydania,” 610.

⁸² Quotation from a lecture that Osuský gave on June 6, 1920, and subsequently published as an introduction to Lajčiak’s book *Slovakia and Culture: Samuel Štefan Osuský, “Životopis a literárne pôsobenie Dr. Jána Lajčiaka,”* in Ján Lajčiak, *Slovensko a kultúra*, 8–9.