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# The views of the clergy in the dioceses of Rožňava and Eger on Catholic book publishing in 1848

**Abstract:** In the spring of 1848, the revolutionary events did not leave the Catholic Church untouched, and the need for change was felt throughout Hungary. Consequently, a national synod was planned for September 24, 1848, the task of which was to adapt the Church to the changed situation. In connection with this, the bishops drew up and sent to the dioceses a list of topics to be discussed at the national synod, point 10 of which was the promotion and distribution of a publishing house of good cheap books. On the basis of this list of topics, in the summer of 1848 most dioceses held deanery district meetings and later diocesan consultations to discuss and comment on the various issues, including the question of the Catholic publishing company. This gives us an idea of how the clergy of the country viewed the matter in the months when the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association (later the St. Stephen Association) was founded. In our study, we examine in detail the opinions of the clergy of the dioceses of Rožňava and Eger on the issue.

**Keywords:** Catholic Church; 1848; book publishing; Good and Cheap Publishing House Association; St. Stephen Association.

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The question of Catholic literature and publishing was a very topical issue in the public life of the Church in Hungary in the first half of the 19th century. The problem of “good” and “bad” literature (i.e., the contrast between press products that exhibit proper morality and those entertaining works and press products that are anti-religious, anti-clerical, or even considered immoral and their harmful effects) was already a major concern for the preparers and participants of the 1822 Hungarian national synod. They strongly requested the strict state censorship and, if necessary, a ban on the latter, while in case of the former, although the idea of an independent Catholic publishing house in Hungary had not yet been raised, they proposed that the archclergy should ensure the writing and publication of religious ethical books with Bible stories and

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examples of saints for the young and adults as Sunday readings (Fejérdy 2018: 496–499, 511, 532).

The idea of establishing a Catholic publishing house appeared in the Hungarian Catholic press at the end of the 1830s, although it was still only in the form of a descriptions of similar organizations abroad.<sup>1</sup> Antal Notter also lists some similar foreign organizations founded in the era that had had an impact on Hungarian organizations (see Notter 1904: Chapter “*A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig*”). These examples also led to the publication of an article by Canon Mihály Fogarasy in the Catholic journal *Religio és Nevelés* (Religion and Education) of December 1, 1844, in which he discussed the proposal and possibilities of founding such a publishing house in Hungary.<sup>2</sup> His proposal was immediately received positively, and many people agreed with it.<sup>3</sup> Some people even added different ideas to his proposal. For example there was a very inventive—but difficult to implement—idea to combine the issue of a publishing house with temperance associations fighting against alcoholism, which were widespread at the time especially in the northern dioceses of the era (Sedlák 1998; Zakar 2015: 1211–1246; Zakar 2016b: 215–227) in a way that the members of the association would use the money that they had previously spent on alcohol to buy religious books.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the association was officially established on February 15, 1847, under the name Good and Cheap Publishing House Association, but this was then only known in a small circle, since its statutes could not be printed and thus widely distributed until its official authorization (See Notter 1904: Chapter “*A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig*”). The initiative became publicly known in front of the whole clergy of the country a year later, in May 1848 when the statutes were published in the pages of *Religio és Nevelés*.<sup>5</sup>

During these months, the revolutionary events did not leave the building of the Catholic Church untouched either, and the need for change burst forth with great force in the whole country. Consequently, a national synod was planned for September 24,

1 Franciaország. In *Szión*, August 9, 1838, Vol. 1, Iss. 11, p. 42.; Austria. In *Szión*, July 10, 1839, Vol. 2, Iss. 2, p. 6.

2 Fogarassy, Mihály: Eszmék egy nevelési, épületes és fölvilágosító könyvek terjesztésére alakítandó társulat szerkezetéhez. In *Religio és Nevelés*, December 1, 1844, Vol. 4, Iss. 44, pp. 345–348.

3 Gózon, György: Nyílt levél főtiszt. Fogarasy Mihály apát és nagyváradai d. sz. kanonok úrhoz. In *Religio és Nevelés*, December 29, 1844, Vol. 4, Iss. 51, pp. 405–409.; Sörös, I.: Vallási egyletek. In *Religio és Nevelés*, January 1, 1845, Vol. 5, Iss. 1, pp. 1–4.

4 S. I.: Józansági egyletek. In *Religio és Nevelés*, March 9, 1845, Vol. 5, Iss. 20, pp. 166–167.

5 A jó és olcsó könyvkiadó társulat programja s alapszabályai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 7, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 36, pp. 298–301; and May 11, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 37, pp. 311–312. The assembly of deanery district of Miskolc on July 18, 1848, also mentioned that the association is known from this article in *Religio és Nevelés*: Eger Archidiecese Archives, Archivum Novum, Synodus 3129 (hereinafter: EAA AN 3129) minutes of the Miskolc district assembly on July 18, 1848.

1848, with the task of adapting the Church to the changed political, social, and economic situation. In connection with this, the episcopate compiled a list of 23 points of planned topics for the national synod. (The synod theme is also known in 21-point and 25-point versions in contemporary sources.) The list was sent to every part of the country, and based on this, in the summer of 1848, at the invitation of the archclergy, the dioceses held district meetings and diocesan meetings to discuss the issues (Tamási 2014: 22–25; Tamási 2015: 35–88). A more restricted diocesan meeting was held in the Rožňava diocese on May 11, 1848, with the participation of bishop Béla Bartakovics, the members of the chaplaincy, and the deans, where they compiled their own suggestions for topics<sup>6</sup> to be discussed by the individual district deans during May.<sup>7</sup> However, once the 23 points had been reviewed, they were sent out again to the clergy of the diocese, who also commented on them during further meetings of the diocesan districts in August.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of these, a diocese meeting was held on September 5, 1848, the decisions of which were published in extracts in *Religio és Nevelés*.<sup>9</sup> In Eger, at the invitation of grand provost, Sándor Lévy, who led the diocese due to the vacancy of the archbishop's chair, the diocesan districts drew up their proposals for the synod in May and June, and then during July they commented on the 23-point syllabus, which was later discussed at the diocesan level on August 2, 1848 (Tengely 2017: 76–86; Tamási 2018: 127–138).

Point 10 of the 23-point synod syllabus discussed the question of the Catholic publishing house, together with the issue of another planned organization, the so-called Catholicum Institutum: “The establishment of the Catholicum Institutum, and the promotion and dissemination of an association for the publishing of good cheap books.”<sup>10</sup> As seen above, the clergy already knew the statute, the organization, and the aims of the publishing house from the press, so being well-informed, they could give their opinion on the matter.

There was basically unanimous support from the clergy in the whole country for the need for a publishing house, because everybody thought that “people need good books.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore the organization should be supported as it was expected to serve the

6 Megyei közlés. Rosnyó. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 25, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 41, pp. 358–359.

7 Rožňava Diocese Archives, Episcopal Office, Filed documents (hereinafter: RDA EO) 376/1848, 463/1848, 464/1848, 465/1848, 466/1848, 467/1848, 468/1848, 469/1848, 470/1848, 471/1848, 472/1848, 473/1848.

8 RDA EO 505/1848, 531/1848.

9 Megyei tanácskozmány. Rosnyó. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 19, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 35, pp. 286–287, and September 21, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 36, pp. 293–295.

10 EAA AN 3129 Sorozata azon tárgyaknak...; Published in print: Lakatos–Sarnyai 2001: 51.; Zakar 2016a: 164–166.

11 EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the Archdiocese of Eger on August 2, 1848, p. 11. Note that page 13 is wrongly stated on the document.

cause of Catholicism as well.<sup>12</sup> It was considered important for three reasons. First, it was thought that the publishing house will be suitable to promote and spread religious zeal by proper publications; secondly, to raise and improve the religious literacy of the believers acquired through school and Sunday afternoon church catechism; and thirdly, to eliminate the harmful effects of the newly-established free press and of entertainment literature, often considered anti-religious and immoral. This latter was thought to be most feasible by “employing” similar means (Lakatos–Sarnyai 2001: 76, 80) as the clergy of the deanery district of Nyíregyháza graphically had put it: “Through these channels, many bad and unreligious ideas and things are infiltrated among the people: the same means must be used by the Church as well to revive religious life, to disprove errant doctrines, and to strengthen the true faith.”<sup>13</sup> However, as for the details and emphases, there were often

12 EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the Archdiocese of Eger on August 2, 1848, p. 11. Megyei közlés. Pécssett, május 23-kán. In *Religio és Nevelés*, June 1, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 43, p. 379; A Kolosvártt 1848-dik évi Szent-Mihály hava első napján, am. Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspök ur elnöklete alatt kezdődött, és ugyanazon hó 4-dik napján végződött erdélymegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 15, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 46, p. 359; Jegyzőkönyve a győri püspök-megyebeli clerus 1848-dik évi augusztus hó 22-, 23- és 24-dik napjain tartott tanácskozmányának. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 5. 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 41–42, pp. 333–334; Az esztergomi főegyházmegye hasonnevű helynökkerületének nemzeti zsinatot előkészítő tanácskozmánya... In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 15, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 33, p. 270; Megyei tanácskozmány. Rosnyó. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 19, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 35, p. 287; Szepesmegyei zsinat. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 28, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 39, p. 316; A nagyvárad i. sz. egyházmegyei, 1848-dik évi augusztus 30- és 31-kén a püspöki lakban tartott zsinat jegyzőkönyve. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 26, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 51, p. 398; Szathmár-egyházmegyei tanácskozmány jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio*, February 25, 1849, Vol. 1, Iss. 17, p. 132; A kalocsai érsekmegeyi folyóévi aug. 30-, 31- és sept. 1-sején tartott köztanácskozmány eredményének fővonásai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 10, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 43-44, p. 343. See also Gárdonyi 2016: 59 and Zakar 2003: 38-39. In addition to the Rožňava and Eger sources to be presented in detail, we also examined the following records from the deanery districts: Jureczky, János: Kerületi gyűlés Jabloncza. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 18, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 34, pp. 279–280; Mező-Eörs julius 10-én. In *Religio és Nevelés*, July 25, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 11, p. 87; Megyei közlés. Az erdödi kerületi tudósítás vége. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 3, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 28, p. 229; Kassai megyéből. Péchujfalván, September utólján. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 22, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 49, p. 380; Kerületi gyűlés. Málcza, september hó 19-dikén. In *Religio és Nevelés* 26. 10. 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 51, p. 398.; Kerületi gyűlés. Sziget, sept. hó 14-én. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 26, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 51, p. 399.; A mohácsi al-esperesi kerületnek... In *Nemzeti*, August 13, 1848, Vol. 42, Iss. 81, p. 320.; Nyílt levelezés XIV. Faigel Pál boconádi plébános véleménye. In *Religio és Nevelés*, August 22, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 23, p. 189. Also Lakatos-Sarnyai 2001: 76, 80; Zakar 2016a: 171, 178, 181; Kelemen 2015: 41–42; Tamási 2013: 81–83.

13 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848; EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the Archdiocese of Eger on August 2, 1848, p. 11.; Megyei közlés. Mező-Eörs julius 10-én. In *Religio és Nevelés*, July 25, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 11, p. 87.

differences of opinion, with each deanery district and diocese considering different aspects to be important and worth highlighting, so we can see a wide range of ideas.

The clergy of the deanery districts of Nyíregyháza and Mohács, for example, considered the promotion of the Christian Calendar, a folk Catholic calendar that had been published a few weeks earlier by the association, as the most urgent and at that moment the most important task of the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association, since “it is the only one reading material of the lower class people had so far.”<sup>14</sup> They suggested that it should be distributed as quickly and widely as possible—“we are in the middle of the year!”—preventing people from buying another calendar, since if they had already bought one that year, they would not spend money on another one, but instead they would like this one and buy it year after year. Thus the financial support of the publishing house would be partly solved.<sup>15</sup> In the diocese of Rožňava, the Upper Gemer deanery district opinion, as well as the decisions of the Transylvanian diocese, considered the cheap, native-language edition of the Bible, especially the New Testament with explanatory notes, as the priority task of the publisher, which had been a hectic point of Hungarian Catholic literature for decades.<sup>16</sup> The Novohrad Mountain district of the Rožňava diocese highlighted the publication of multilingual Catholic elementary school textbooks and prayer books.<sup>17</sup> The Nyíregyháza district in the Eger archdiocese also stressed the importance of supporting local priests who write as an important task of the publishing house,<sup>18</sup> while the clergy of the Central Heves district, on the contrary, emphasized the advantages of translating “good and useful works” from abroad rather than original, domestic works, adding that the translators should charge a moderate price for their work so that as many people as possible buy the publications.<sup>19</sup>

The question of the publishing house was also linked to the issue of the Catholic press—although this was asked about in the next point of the synod syllabus<sup>20</sup>—and some of the association’s activities were also intended to include publishing. For exam-

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14 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848.

15 A mohácsi al-esperesi kerületnek... In *Nemzeti*, August 13, 1848, vol. 42, iss. 81, p. 320.; EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848; The clergy of the Vác Diocese strongly advocated the distribution of the Christian Calendar: Lénár 2017: 176.

16 RDA EO 470/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Upper-Gemer deanery district; A Kolosvártt 1848-dik évi Szent-Mihály hava első napján, am. Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspök ur elnöklete alatt kezdődött, és ugyanazon hó 4-dik napján végződött erdélymegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 15, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 46, p. 359.

17 RDA EO 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Novohrad Mountain deanery district.

18 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848.

19 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Central-Heves district assembly on July 18, 1848.

20 Point 11 of the 23-point synod theme: “Provision of a church newspaper.” EAA AN 3129 Sorozata azon tárgyaknak...; In our study, we do not want to deal with the question of the church press, only if it affects the book publisher.

ple, the decisions of the Spiš diocese stated that the publishing house should “turn its attention” to political newsletters as well.<sup>21</sup> A meeting of the clergy of the Szécsény deanery district,<sup>22</sup> the Novohrad Mountain district of the Rožňava diocese,<sup>23</sup> and the Nyíregyháza deanery district on June 6, 1848, proposed that the publishing house publish a Catholic public newspaper suitable for the general literacy of the people,<sup>24</sup> but in fact the doors were already wide open, as the desired newspaper was launched by the association exactly a month later under the title *Katholikus Néplap* (Catholic Public Paper; see Notter 1904: Chapter “A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig”).

It is interesting to note the demands that the lower clergy made on the works to be published. As for the nature of the publications, the Nyíregyháza district was the most accurate in formulating the clergy’s vision, which was that the publishing house should meet the literary needs of all layers of the Catholic society: “It should work in three directions: towards the educated (scientifically); towards those who like novels (as literary fiction); towards the people (popularly).”<sup>25</sup> The stylistic requirements also reflected this idea. It was emphasized in many places that both more simple publications for the taste and literacy levels of the less educated and more “sophisticated” works for the more educated classes should be produced (Kelemen 2015: 41–42). In accordance with the name of the association, the need to make publications available at low cost was also emphasized in some places.<sup>26</sup>

From a linguistic point of view, for the part of the priests of mixed nationality areas the need arose for the books to be published not only in Hungarian but also in the languages of the Catholic nationalities (i.e., Slovakian, Croatian, and German) too. This was requested in the Upper Gemer and Novohrad Mountain districts of the Rožňava diocese as well as<sup>27</sup> in several districts of the Győr diocese having a significant number of native German- and Croatian-speaking believers, and in the decisions of the Győr diocese.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, at the first meeting of the election board of the association it had been already decided to publish the relevant publications in the Slovak and Romanian

21 Szepesmegyei zsinat. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 28, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 39, p. 316.

22 Az esztergomi főmegyének szécsényi alesperesi kerületéből. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 25, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 41, p. 360.

23 RDA EO 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Novohrad Mountain deanery district.

24 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848.

25 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848.

26 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848, Minutes of the Central-Heves district assembly on July 18, 1848.

27 RDA EO 470/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinions of the Novohrad Mountain and Upper-Gemer deanery districts.

28 Jegyzőkönyve a győri püspök-megyebeli clerus 1848-dik évi augustus hó 22-, 23- és 24-dik napjain tartott tanácskozmányának. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 5, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 41–42, pp. 333–334.; Kelemen 2015: 41–42.

languages, especially the Christian Calendar (see Notter 1904: Chapter “A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig”). As for the also multinational clergy, the Moson deanery district in the Győr diocese suggested that to counterbalance this, works should also be published in Latin—obviously mainly theological and various religious studies (Kelemen 2015: 41–42).

As mentioned above, the organizational framework of the association was already known to the clergy, as the *Religio és Nevelés* had already published the statutes of the publishing house a few weeks earlier, in May 1848.<sup>29</sup> The syllabus of the synod, however, took the opinion of the association and another association, the so-called Catholicum Institutum under one point. Following the termination of the Catholic Church’s status as a state church—as proclaimed by the XX provision of 1848—this was intended to be a national Catholic organization on an English model, with ecclesiastical and lay members, a broad task list, central management, and a budget.<sup>30</sup> The fact that the two organizations appeared in one point gives the impression that in the long run the high clergy imagined the functioning of the publishing house under the aegis of the latter. In spite of this, both in the deanery district and in the diocese decisions the two organizations were considered separately and opinions were given independently of each other, from which we can conclude that the clergy did not want to incorporate the publishing house into this institution with uncertain framework and future, and they considered the already existing organizational framework more suitable, though the Lower Heves deanery district in the Eger archdiocese proposed a review at the planned national synod.<sup>31</sup> Only in a few places, for example in the decisions of the Mezőkövesd deanery district, do we hear that the publishing house was to be incorporated “without any suspicion” into the Catholicum Institutum to be established.<sup>32</sup>

The most divergent opinions emerged on the issue of the financial sustainability of the publishing house and, in this context, the question of membership. The two issues were related, as according to the statutes the association financed its operational costs and the publications from the annual 18 pengő forint payment of the so-called founding members and the annual 3 pengő forint payment of participating mem-

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29 A jó és olcsó könyvkiadó társulat programja s alapszabályai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 7, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 36, pp. 298–301; and 11. 5. 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 37, pp. 311–312.

30 „D”: Egy magyar kath. institutum mintája s föllállítás módjáról. In *Religio és Nevelés*, April 20, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 32, pp. 253–255.

31 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Lower-Heves (Hun. Alsó-Heves esperesi kerület) district assembly on July 20, 1848.

32 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Mezőkövesd district assembly on July 20, 1848; Szathmár-egyházmegyei tanácskozmány jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio*, February 25, 1849, Vol. 1, Iss. 17, pp. 132; A mohácsi al-esperesi kerületnek... In *Nemzeti*, August 13, 1848, Vol. 42, Iss. 81, p. 320.

bers.<sup>33</sup> It was proudly announced in many places that even in a few weeks many members had already joined the association.<sup>34</sup> The Rožňava diocese boasted 76 members,<sup>35</sup> mainly from the Plešivec,<sup>36</sup> Lučenec,<sup>37</sup> and Rimavská Seč<sup>38</sup> districts. Many people from the Polgár district of the Eger archdiocese also joined the association,<sup>39</sup> and in the Apátfalva deanery district all priests committed themselves to paying the membership fee, thus setting an example for the other districts to follow.<sup>40</sup>

One might conclude that the clergy were enthusiastic about joining the association, but the picture was in fact not so positive. Namely, many people were deterred by the financial sacrifice: “In the following days the county government circulated the signature sheet of the Good and Cheap Catholic books. How many of us signed our names, as it is easy to count, and who were those who did not? Perhaps the wealthiest?”—Lajos Márkus, parish priest of Hajós complained.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, for example in many districts of the Eger archdiocese, the clergy only provided its support in principle to the publishing house and covertly avoided financial support on the grounds of their poverty, or instead of the present they promised to pay in the properly distant and uncertain future.<sup>42</sup> There were even those who wished to shift the financial maintenance of the publishing house from the lower clergy to the richly remunerated archclergy and canons having a rich income.<sup>43</sup>

33 A jó és olcsó könyvkiadó társulat programja s alapszabályai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 7, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 36, pp. 298–301; and 11. 5. 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 37, pp. 311–312.

34 In addition to the dioceses we examined, similar statements were made in the dioceses of Spiš, Szatmár, Transylvania, Pécs and Kalocsa, as well as in the deanery district of Sopron: Szepesmegyei zsinat. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 28, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 39, p. 316; Szathmár-egyházmegyei tanácskozmány jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio*, February 25, 1849, Vol. 1, Iss. 17, p. 132; A Kolosvártt 1848-dik évi Szent-Mihály hava első napján, ami Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspök ur elnöklete alatt kezdődött, és ugyanazon hó 4-dik napján végződött erdélymegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 15, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 46, p. 359; A kalocsai érsekmegyei folyóévi aug. 30-, 31- és sept. 1-sején tartott köztanácskozmány eredményének fővonásai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 10, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 43-44, p. 343; also Kelemen 2015: 41–42.

35 Megyei tanácskozmány Rosnyó. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 19, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 35, p. 287.

36 RDA EO 376/1848, 473/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Plešivec deanery district.

37 RDA EO 472/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Lučenec deanery district.

38 RDA EO 471/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Rimavská Seč deanery district.

39 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Polgár district assembly on July 18, 1848.

40 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Apátfalva district assembly on July 18, 1848.

41 The opinion of Lajos Márkus, parish priest of Hajós. Lakatos-Sarnyai 2001: 80.

42 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Eger district assembly on July 11, 1848, minutes of Jászberény district assembly on 15th July 1848. The clergy made a similar statement too in the Central-Torontál deanery district in the diocese of Csanád, see Zakar 2016a: 178.

43 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Upper-Pata district assembly on July 17, 1848, minutes of Szolnok-Heves district assembly on July 18, 1848.

Therefore, it was obvious to many that providing the financial basis of the publishing house could be considered questionable only from membership fees. Therefore many deanery districts and dioceses made various proposals to increase the income of the association. Lajos Márkus, parish priest of Hajós, for example, proposed that the membership fee should be levied on all priests as an annual tax, pointing out that at times even wealthy priests were reluctant to join.<sup>44</sup> In the decisions of the Eger archdiocese, it was suggested that the publishing house should be maintained from central church support,<sup>45</sup> but it is not clear exactly how it was envisaged: whether they had in mind a diocesan fund to be set up from the contributions of the diocesan clergy, similar to the priests' pension funds, or whether they had expected the central subsidiary promised by the state to all established denominations in Article 3 of Act XX of 1848.<sup>46</sup> The Malčice district in the Košice diocese thought somewhat similarly, too: it was proposed that all church incomes be placed under the administration of a committee of clergy and laity to finance the printing presses that would produce the publishing house's books.<sup>47</sup>

Another suggested solution to increase the income of the publishing house was to involve more lay believers into the association in addition to the clergy. This was in accordance with the ideas of Canon Fogarasy, who was thinking only in terms of a clergy association in the first half of the 1840s, but by 1848 he also wanted to build on lay members (see Notter 1904: Chapter "A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig"). For example, in the Spiš diocese it was thought that better-off parishes should be obliged to pay the membership fee from their coffers,<sup>48</sup> while others found a voluntary way of doing so feasible and recommended that local priests should try to involve laymen in promoting the publishing house by training the most enthusiastic ones who could recruit additional members in their own parishes. The Upper Tisza district suggested that poorer laymen who can only pay a lower membership fee should also be allowed to join the association.<sup>49</sup>

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44 The opinion of Lajos Márkus, parish priest of Hajós. Lakatos-Sarnyai 2001: 80.

45 EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the archdiocese of Eger on August 2, 1848, p. 11.

46 Article 3 of Act XX of 1848. In *Laws of 1000 years*. <<https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=84800020.TV&searchUrl=/ezer-ev-torvenyei%3Fpagenum%3D27>>. [September 18, 2023].

47 Kerületi gyűlés. Málcza, september hó 19-dikén. In *Religió és Nevelés*, October 26, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 51, p. 398.

48 Szepesmegyei zsinat. In *Religió és Nevelés*, September 28, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 39, p. 316. This was also suggested by Tivadar Zerich, theology teacher in Gyulafehérvár in Transylvania. Tamási 2013: 83.

49 A mohácsi al-esperesi kerületnek... In *Nemzeti*, August 13, 1848, Vol. 42, Iss. 81, p. 320. Kelemen 2015: 41–42; Lakatos-Sarnyai 2001: 76.

In the Transylvanian diocese, however, there were opposing views on the payment of such financial support from the church or the believers: some deanery districts suggested that the publishing house should be transformed into a real joint stock company, probably with the aim of becoming a profit-oriented company that could sustain itself from its incomes and did not need additional financial support (Tamási 2013: 83).

At the Eger archdiocese meeting on August 2, 1848, another specific viewpoint came up in connection with the publishing house, which reflected the strong presence of the diocese particularism in the local clergy. Namely, the Eger decisions stated that the diocese wished to reserve the right to be able to publish books outside the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association, if it is justified by local needs, and to warn the people in the diocese of harmful books and press products and give a recommendation for suitable ones.<sup>50</sup> It is questionable what was the reason of this unique insertion. Presumably, in spite of all the principled advocacy, the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association was seen as a competitor to the diocesan-owned Printing House of the Lyceum of Eger (founded in 1766), which had been the dominant institution of Catholic book publishing in the whole of northeastern Hungary for almost a century (Mizera – Nagy – Verók 2017: 9–54). It may well be that the synod fathers wanted to ensure the continued operation and turnover of the local church press and publishing house in the coming decades, even after the expected expansion of the large national Catholic publishing house association.<sup>51</sup>

In connection with the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association and the promotion of Catholic literature, the idea to establish local Catholic libraries came up in the Szendrő district of the Eger archdiocese, where those who could not afford books could also benefit from the blessings of national Catholic publications.<sup>52</sup> This was a very forward-looking initiative since the widespread establishment of Catholic reading circles and public libraries did not occur until the first half of the 20th century (Tengely 2022: 101–102).

Overall, it can be said that the clergy of the Rožňava and Eger dioceses were in principle unanimous in their support for the establishment and operation of the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association, similarly to other dioceses. However, the situation was not nearly so clear as regards the financial backing of the publishing house and the contribution to it: many people were already strongly reluctant to make any a

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50 EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the archdiocese of Eger on 2nd August 1848, p. 11.

51 There was a time when the situation had a favorable effect on the cooperation between the two organizations: between 1859 and 1865 the St. Stephan Association rented the Liceum Printing House and produced its publications there until its own printing house was established (Notter 1904: Chapter “Az abszolútizmus évtizedében”).

52 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Szendrő district assembly on July 13, 1848; the same was recommended at the diocesan meeting of Vác on August 24: Lénár 2017: 176.

financial sacrifice for the sake of Catholic book publishing and preferred to propose various “alternative” solutions: for example that the operation of the publishing house should be funded by the church magnates or the believers or that the association should be transformed into a profit-making company. However, beside this, in connection with the publishing house, many well-intentioned and forward-looking proposals were born in the deanery district and diocese meetings, such as the inclusion of secular elements in the association, which had hitherto been primarily a clerical organization, or the idea of setting up local Catholic libraries, which could make it possible for every layer of the society, even for the poorest ones, to gain access to the products of Catholic literature and the publications of the association.

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