

[講演]

Folk and Christian in the Calendars of the Czechs and the Slovaks: the Two Systems of Values¹

Marina Valentsova

1. Introduction

At the root of the Czech and Slovak calendars is, as with most calendars, the idea of cyclical nature of time. As N. I. Tolstoy, a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, described, this concept is universal: “It is universal, universal primarily because it has its basis outside of language, psychology and human nature—it is associated with nature, with the activity of the sun and its reflection on the earth” (Толстой 2003: 27).²

In ancient times, the Czechs and the Slovaks, like other Slavic peoples, divided the year into two periods—winter and summer, originally associated with the solar cycles. Later, with calendars development, the dates of the beginning of summer and winter were conventionally associated with different Christian holidays, in accordance with the local climates and the existing folk traditions.

Summer began at different times depending on the region: May 1, St. George’s Day (April 23, when it is said “the land opens”), Easter, or even Pentecost. A popular proverb in the mountainous regions of Slovakia is as follows: *Do Duchu nespúšťaj kožuču, a po Duchu zas v kožuču* [Before the Spirit (i.e., until Pentecost)—do not take off the fur-coat, and after the Spirit—in the fur-coat again]. The proverb jokingly relates that summer is short and cold in this region.

The beginning of winter was connected with St. Martin’s Day (*Svatý Martin*, November 11, when it is said, “St. Martin comes on a white horse,” i.e., it begins to snow) or All Saints’ Day (*Všech svatých a Všech verných dušičiek*, November 1 and 2, the days of the beginning of winter household work).

For all the Slavs (and other European peoples), the midpoints of these long periods were the days of solstice: the Day of Saint John the Baptist (June 24)—the middle of summer, after which “the sun turns for winter,” i.e., the days begin to wane—and Christmas (December 25), after which “the sun turns for summer.”

The important periods in the folk calendars include:

- Christmastide (from Christmas Eve, December 24, to Epiphany, January 6), a period considered in many Slavic traditions, east-Slavic and south-Slavic, to be

negative, “unholy,” “fearful,” “unbaptized” (Толстой 2009: 585), and as a time of raging of evil spirits;

- Shrovetide (a week before the Lent—the six and a half weeks of fasting before the Easter), the time of celebrating farewell to winter and anticipation of spring, filled with ritual actions promoting prosperity;
- Great (Easter) Lent, the period of fasting, the beginning of field work, breeding of animals and birds;
- Easter (Easter week), beginning of flora and fauna blooming and blossoming, return of the summer sun, appearance of prosperity;
- Pentecost (Pentecostal holidays), the time of abundant young greenery, the holiday of summer that has begun;
- Autumn rural harvest holidays (three days or a week within the period from September to November) marking the end of the agricultural year, the time of animal slaughtering and storing food for winter, represented by abundance and satiety.

The Czech and Slovak calendars are rather densely filled not only with holidays but also half-holidays (when, unlike during the holidays, working was allowed), saints’ days, and commemorative days. The main holidays alone constitute an impressive list and could be combined with movable feasts—holidays whose dates are dependent upon the date of Easter. Fig. 1 is a picture of one calendar page showing the density of holidays and commemorative days.

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NOVEMBER		DECEMBER	
1 d	Všech Svätých	1 f	Eligia, biskupa
2 e	Všech vern. duš.	2 g	Bibiány, p. Aurelie
3 f	Huberta, biskupa	3 A	František Xav.
4 g	Karola Boromejsk.	4 b	Barbory, panny
5 A	Imricha, vyzn.	5 c	Sabasa, opáta
6 b	Leonarda, pust.	6 d	Mikuláša, bisk.
7 c	Engelberta, bisk.	7 e	Ambróza, bisk.
8 d	Bohumira, bisk.	8 f	Nep. poč. P. M.
9 e	Teodora, muč.	9 g	Leokádie, panny
10 f	Ondreja Avel.	10 A	Melchiada, Judyty
11 g	Martina, bisk.	11 b	Damasa, pápeža
12 A	Martina, pápeža	12 c	Maxencia, Sinesia
13 b	Stanislava Kostku	13 d	Lucie, panny a m.
14 c	Jozafata, bisk. m.	14 e	Spiridiona
15 d	Leopolda IV. mk.	15 f	Leopolda, väzňa
16 e	Edmunda, arcib.	16 g	Adelajdy, cisárov.
17 f	Rehora, divotv.	17 A	Lazára
18 g	Zal. chr. sv. P. a P.	18 b	Graciana
19 A	Alžbety, vdovy	19 c	Nemesia, muč.
20 b	Felixa z Valois	20 d	Kristiny, slúžky
21 c	Obetovanie P. M.	21 e	Tomáša, apoštola
22 d	Cecilie, pan. a m.	22 f	Beaty, muč.
23 e	Klimenta, pápeža	23 g	Viktorie, panny
24 f	Chrisogona, muč.	24 A	† Adama a Evy
25 g	Katariny muč.	25 b	Narodenie K. P.
26 A	Konrada, muč.	26 c	Štefana, muč.
27 b	Virgilla, biskupa	27 d	Jána, evanjelistu
28 c	Sostena, Erbert.	28 e	Mládatók
29 d	Saturnina, muč.	29 f	Tomáša, biskupa
30 e	Ondreja, apoštola	30 g	Dávida, kráľa Silvestra, pápeža

Fig. 1. A page from the calendar, placed in the prayer book *Malé alleluja. Modlitebná a spevácka knižka pre katolícké školské dietky* / Sostavil Štefan Janovčík, farár likavský. 14. vyd. Ružomberok, 1925.

2. Folk-Christian Calendars

The calendar terminology is mostly common in both Czech and Slovak calendars. This fact is determined not only by the genetic affinity of the peoples under discussion but also by the strong influence of the Western Christian religion and its liturgical language and practice. Religion also served as a pathway for cultural and linguistic influence of the neighboring peoples. The cultural and linguistic affinity of Czech and Slovak traditions allow us to consider them together, despite their differences in details.

The Czech and Slovak calendars, like any other Slavic calendars, are a synthesis of Christian and pre-Christian (pagan) elements, both at the level of the composition and structure of the holidays, rituals, and beliefs and in its terminology.

The Christian (in this case Catholic) calendars determine the composition, order, and hierarchy of holidays, festive periods, fasts, and meat fares (when meat is allowed). Very often the calendar chrononymy—the names of holidays and periods—and the terminology of ritual characters (guisers, singers, performers of a ritual) are also Christian. The ritual actions (for example, burning fires before the Easter, on St. John's day etc, ritual plowing within the Shrove tide, prosperity actions with trees, water, fire during Christmas time) and the objects (trees and their branches, herbs, water, grains etc.) have fewer Christian features. For example, water, herbs or grains are blessed, either in the church or in the river (on the Epiphany), in the fields (cf. on Whit Monday), branches of the trees are used for the improvised "altars" during the holiday of Corpus Christi and thus believed to obtain medicinal and magic power, etc.

However, the most important points and time periods connected with the main church holidays are associated with the ancient astronomical, social, and agricultural events in a community, or more specifically a rural community. The interpretation of the holidays, rites, and rituals, the prohibitions and regulations, the division of time, and the interpretation of time as holy and unholy, good and evil (for more details see Толстая 1997) all have foundations in pre-Christian culture. It can be said that the Christian calendar structure was applied to the pre-Christian calendar.

Speaking of the Slavic folk calendars in general, N. I. Tolstoy noted that it "entirely depends on the church calendars externally and formally, the cyclical celebration of the Lord's and Virgin's holidays and the days of the most revered saints". This "certain sequence of sacred actions in many respects was an external regulation that did not abolish but rather fastened, organized in a clearer way and unified that, parallel to Christian (Orthodox or Catholic) Slavic folk (essentially pagan) calendar" (Толстой 2003: 19).

The process of shaping the folk calendars—the mutual adaptation and struggle of dissimilar elements (Christian and pagan)—took a long time. The correlation of the Christian

and pre-Christian elements by the 19th century could be briefly characterized as follows.³

A large number of holidays have parallel folk and church names, and folk names are used in speech much more often; folk names are motivated both by pagan beliefs and by Christianity. For example, Christmas, one of the main holidays of the year, is called: Cz. *Velká neděle*, *Velký den* (“the great day”), Slov. *Kračún* (obviously Balkan but the etymology is not clear), and Slov. *Polazník* (after the name of the rite “first foot”) along with the church-traditional *Boží narození / Božie (Kristovo) narodenie* (“the birth of God (Christ)”). Some chrononyms are close to folk onomastics in structure but motivated by Christianity; this motivation changed first of all the evaluation of the Christmas period, which became “holy, god’s”: Cz. *Vánoce* (< M.-Germ. *Weihnachten* “holy nights”, where the second part of the term was translated into Czech/Slovak), *Vánoční hod* (“holiday of holy nights”), *Boží den* (“God’s Day”), *Boží hod (vánoční)* (“God’s holiday”), Slov. *Vianoce* (“holy nights”), and *Ježíško* (“little Jesus”).

Pre-Christian names are mainly used to label Pentecost: Cz. *Letnice* (“summer holidays”), *Zelené svátky* (“green holidays”), Slov. *Turíce* (“tur’s holidays”), *Zelené sviatky* (“green holidays”), *Rusadlá* (< Lat. Rosalia, dies Rosae, “rose days”), *Letnice* (“summer holidays”); folk-Christian terms (the terms, which were adapted to folk, dialect terminology) are also used, Cz. *Svatodušní svátky*, *Svatodušní hod* (“Saint-Spirit holidays”), and Christian names, Slov. *Svatého Ducha*, *Svatý Duch*.

Some holidays have folk rather than church names (often formed from the appellatives), e.g., Shrovetide—Slov. *fašiangy*, *fašank*, *fašengi*, (probably < Germ. “booze”), *masopust*, *mäsopust* (“the fast of meat”), *ostatky*, *končiny* (“last days,” “the endings” of Shrovetide), Cz. *voráčky* (“ploughing,” according to the ritual ploughing, performed on Shrovetide). Cz. and Slov. *Hody*, *hodky* “holidays” are the common harvest holidays associated with communal food and entertainment (they slaughtered a fat bull, brewed beer made from the products, collected from all homesteads of the village, sing and dance). The church adapted this holiday partially, connecting it with the celebration in honor of the consecration of the local church or the memory of the patron of the church.

Christian chrononyms were reinterpreted according to the people’s worldview and filled with the new contents. For example, on the Holy Wednesday, the beginning of Lent—Slov. *Popelečná streda*, *Popolcová streda*, *Popolec*, *Popelec* “Ashen (Wednesday)” —according to the church tradition, the priest draws a cross on the forehead of a parishioner with ashes, reminding him of the biblical saying: “you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). The people’s understanding of this day’s name changed from its original meaning to the meaning of the day for household sweeping of soot from the stove as preparation for the Great

Lent, which was marked by asceticism and restraint, including food restrictions. Afterwards a new folk term appeared—a pseudo-synonym, *Sazometná streda* (“Wednesday for sweeping out soot”).

The church calendars incorporated people’s attitudes to time, the natural rhythm, and the harmony of man and nature, adapting its doctrine to those. Thus, the fourth Sunday of Lent—its church name Cz. *Neděle Laetare*, Slov. *Letárna (laetárna) nedel’a* “Joyful Sunday” (from Latin *laetare* ‘feel joy’) —marks the middle of Lent. Judging from the church doctrine, the difficulty of explaining the joy in the middle of Lent is not assessed logically but with a simple statement of the fact that this day is a break in fasting that symbolizes the joy of the upcoming Easter holiday. There is some reason to believe that the optimistic interpretation of the second part of the Lent until Easter and the summer following was originally inherent in the folk tradition. The joy in the folk calendars is more explainable by the approaching summer and even reflected in the archaic ritual of driving the winter away so that the summer came faster: The ritual of destroying the straw scarecrow (dummy), called *Marena* or *Death*, *Death-maiden*—Slov. *Marena*, *Marmuriena*, Cz. *Mařena*, *Smrtka*, *Smrtholka*—the symbol of winter and death, which the village youth made with rituals, was carried around the village, surrounded by singing people, and then taken to the river and drowned (torn to pieces, dumped on the rocks or burned).

Pagan rites were moved by the church onto the eves of the main Christian holidays as well as onto the days following them. For example, Christmas (December 25) and Epiphany (January 6) are almost exclusive church holidays, and all the rites are performed on the Christmas Eve, December 24, and even the eve of the Christmas Eve (December 23), the eve of Epiphany (January 5) and the days of Christmastide, from Christmas to Epiphany, especially St. Stephen’s Day (December 26), St. John’s day (December 27), and the Holy Innocents’ Day (December 28). Numerous pagan rituals were performed in these days. Thus, on Christmas Eve, they held rituals of feeding trees, wind, water, and fire from the oven; feeding livestock with festive meals; commemorative rites; fortune telling about life and death or marriage; and numerous prosperity actions. Throughout the whole period, groups of carol singers with good wishes (*vinšovačka*, *vinš*) kept going around, singing carols (*koleda*). The names of the eves of holidays are mainly pre-Christian, e.g., Christmas Eve: Cz. *Babí večer* (“women’s evening”), Slov. *Štedrý deň / večer* (“generous evening”), *Godi* (“holidays”), *Kračún* (“Crachun”), *Polazník* (“the day when the “first foot” comes), *Polazný deň* (“the day of the ‘first foot’ rite”). In the East and in the North of Middle Slovakia, however, the church term *Vilija*, *vigilie* is used (a borrowing from Latin *vigilia* “vigil, night worship”) (Дворецкий 1986: 1079). The eve of Epiphany in Slovak is *Babí večer*, *Babin večer* (“Women’s evening”) or *Druhi svaty večer*

(“Second Holy evening”). The distribution of Christmas Eve names in Slovakia are shown in Fig. 2.

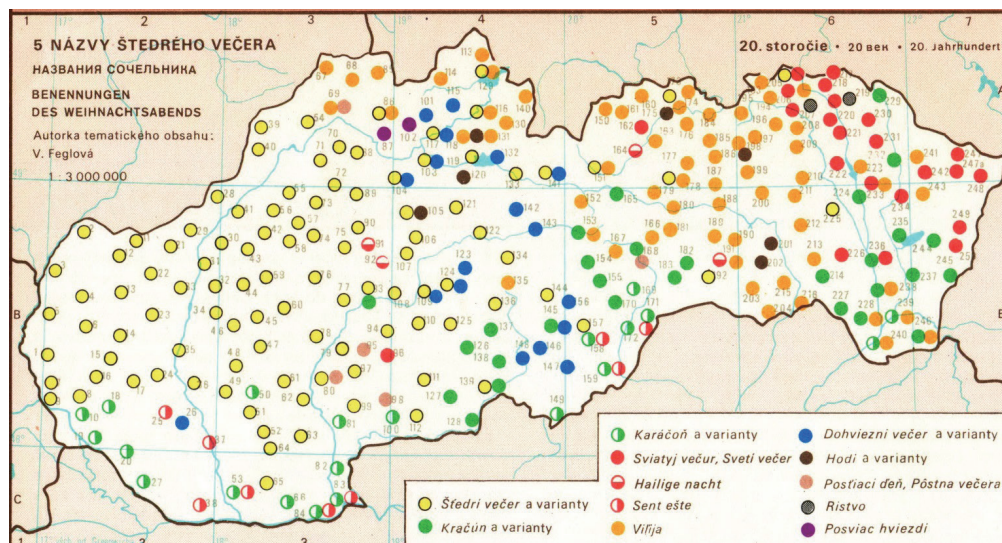


Fig. 2. Names of Christmas Eve (copied from *Etnografický atlas Slovenska*, Bratislava, 1990, 78).

Christian objects (crosses, consecrated candles etc.) and Christian saints as well as church officials (priest and other clergymen) were incorporated into the folk mythological system. Due to the fact that before Christmas, the days become shorter and the nights longer, the people’s worldview interpreted the whole period as dangerous, unholy, and witchy (Slov. *stridžie dni*). That belief led to the appearance of negative connotations for all the holidays of the autumnal and winter period, named after the saints, as well as for the saints themselves: St. Martin (November 11), St. Catherine (November 25), St. Andrew (November 30), St. Barbara (December 4), St. Nicholas (December 6), St. Ambrose (December 7), St. Lucia (December 13), and St. Thomas (December 21). On those days, people used to protect themselves from evil spirits and witches and performed the apotropaic rites of “walking with a fire steel”⁴ and dressing up in “terrible” masks, which sometimes received the names of the saints, whose day was celebrated: *Barborky* (St. Barbara’s day) or *Lucky* (St. Lucia’s day) and so on.

The priest himself became closer in his functions to the folk healer; holy objects and substances were used as magical objects (a willow and a Candlemas candle—granting protection from a thunderstorm, the sound of a bell—granting safety from hail, holy water—granting freedom from diseases).

Conversely, the Christian ritual and belief system incorporated objects and substances significant in the folk culture (straw, herbs, spices and grains, garlic, salt) and rites (walking

around the fields, congratulations, bringing greenery into the house, making noise, burning bonfires). For example, on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15) (Slov. *Matka Božia zelená* “Green Holy Mother of God”—here, green means “herbal”) in the church, they sanctified the latest reaped ears of wheat and other grains, and herbs, which therefore were attributed with healing and magical power; they were burned during a thunder and hail storm, put in a coffin, used for fumigation in case of a disease (Subatran region), and the blessed grain was added to the sowing grain.

As we have seen, the calendars of the Czechs and the Slovaks are a complex intertwining of Christian elements and pagan ones in faith, beliefs, mythology, rituality, and terminology. Christian saints replaced pagan deities: St. Elijah replaced Perun, the Mother of God replaced Mokosh, and St. Vlas replaced Veles. The synthesis of Christian and pagan elements proved to be so complicated that a special study is needed to find out the original meaning of each of the components in the calendars rituals (Толстая 1993; Frolcová and Večerková 2010 etc.).

Obviously, the selection of the elements—pagan or Christian—was not spontaneous, but it was accompanied by the competition of the two axiological systems.

In this aspect in the folk calendars of the Czechs and the Slovaks, a blend of two separate and unequal systems of values exists: on the one hand, a folk system, including national, social, collective, ancestral, family, and personal value systems, is material, vital, and spiritual. On the other hand, a Christian system, which is a religious system of spiritual (transcendental) values. It tended to replace or supplement the spiritual values of the folk system with its own ones.

Based on the results of the study of ancient Slavic culture (Толстой 1995–2012), some of the folk values detected include:

- a) Public: collectivism, ownership, freedom, loyalty, mutual help, mutual support, personal non-conflict, benevolence
- b) Tribal: continuity, memory, tradition, others/one’s own;
- c) Family values: respect for elders, hierarchy, continuation of the family, well-being (rich harvest, high animal yield)
- d) Personal: health, youth, strength, speed, beauty, love, harmony
- e) Religious: gods, sacrifice, spirituality of nature, tolerance, etc.

Christian values are defined approximately as follows: Almighty God in three persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), faith, doctrine (the Bible and the Gospels, etc.), church rites and sacraments, original sin, the soul, mercy, obedience, divine (absolute) love, afterlife retribution, martyrdom, and asceticism.

As we can see, the lists of values vary considerably. In order for Christianity not only to dominate but also to become assimilated in the pagan environment, it was necessary to rely on common values. These were, apparently: own (in opposition to others), loyalty, truth, respect for parents, and family. For example, the human model of the family in the Christian doctrine includes God the Father, God the Son, and the Mother of God (Зайковский 1994: 61). It certainly met the values of the laity and drew a new religion nearer to it.

The Church had to eradicate values incompatible with the new doctrine (for example, pagan polytheism and magic) and to introduce its own axiological categories (for example, absolute God, humility, soul salvation).

This process of gradual replacement of understandable and familiar values by abstract, ideal, and unclear ones without interpretation (e.g., the pursuance of similarity with the Father's heavenly image, self-improvement, self-sacrifice, love for everyone, including enemies)—in other words, the replacement by “a much higher hierarchy of values” according to N.I. Tolstoy (Толстой 2003: 11)—was time consuming and difficult.

This purpose was served first by the introduction of knowledge of Christian doctrine, Bible study, sermons, the personal example of priests, and second by the introduction of the church calendars, which reminded people of different moments of Christian doctrine and the deeds of saints, martyrs, and prophets every day.

The folk calendars contained and reflected gospel stories about the life of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, Christian names (for example, Bethlehem in the Christmas folk performance, Slov. *Betlehem*, *Betlem*; Jordan—in the name of the water blessed on Epiphany, Morav. *jordánka*, Christian anthroponimicon—in the names of the holidays, Slov. *Mikuláš*, *Martin*, etc. or of the Easter fires, Slov. *Juda*, Cz. *Oběť Abraháмова* or *Izákova*). Also the calendars retain the symbolism of the heroic deeds or the miracles of the saints in the holidays in their honor. For example, on St. Blaise's Day, February 3, two candles blessed on that day were applied to the throat—to guard against sore throat—in accordance with the life of a saint, a bishop and a martyr, who prayed and helped a boy who had a fish bone stuck in his throat. On St. Nicholas's Day, December 6, children put their shoes on the windowsill. The church legend goes, that: St. Nicholas left bags of gold on the window of a bankrupt man, who had three daughters so that he could marry them off and give them a dowry instead of selling them to a brothel.

During the introduction of Christian values, the Church led a struggle—with both educational and prohibitive or punitive methods—against paganism, and especially against wizardry and magic as a means of influencing people (treatment, love spells, wasting spells, etc.), and nature (weather, harvest), as well as against soothsayers and mediums. In the

eradication of paganism in the second millennium AD, Catholicism has achieved much greater results than Orthodoxy (Толстой 2003: 19). A number of magical functions were replicated by the Church (healing, mainly spiritual; prayer for health, harvest, protection from hail, and so on). For example, during the celebration of Pentecost (the Holy Spirit), everyone who could, including the priest, with the “Body of Christ” in a pouch around his neck, came together on horses and went around all the rural fields, singing. They asked the Lord to bless them and protect them from all kinds of bad weather, including hail. The things (realia) blessed in the church acquired the status of magical.

Since the first and main value in Christianity acquired at first by the nobles was the Holy Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) as well as the Blessed Virgin Mary, the church calendars considered the following feasts as the primary holidays (the list of holidays is not completed):

A) The feasts of the Lord

- Christmas: *Boží narození / Božie Narodenie*⁵
- Epiphany: *Tří králů / Traja králi, Tri králi*
- Presentation of Christ in the Temple (February 2): *Uvedení Páně do chrámu, Hromnice / Obetovanie Pána, Hromnice*
- Resurrection (Easter): *Velikonoce / Velká noc*
- Ascension, Corpus Christi: *Slavnost Božího Těla / Najsvätejšie Kristovo Telo a Krv, Božie Telo*
- Exaltation of the Holy Cross: *Svátek Povýšení sv. kříže / Povýšenie svätého Kríža*
- Annunciation (March 25)⁶: *Zvěstování Panny Marie, Panenka Maria / Zvestovanie Panny Márie, Panna Mária*
- Transfiguration: *Proměnění Páně / Sviatok Premenenia Pána* (August 6).

B) Virgin Mary’s days

- Nativity of Mary: *Narození Panny Marie, Panenka Maria / Narodenie Panny Márie, Panna Maria*
- Assumption of the Virgin Mary: *Nebevzetí panny Marie, Matička Boží / Nanebozvatie Panny Márie, Malá Mara*
- Visitation of St. Mary (July 2): *Cz. Návšteva Panny Márie*
- The Name Day of Virgin Mary (September 12): *Slov. Meno Panny Márie*
- Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15): *Slov. Sedembolestná Panna Mária, etc.*

C) Holidays of Saint Spirit

- Pentecost: *Svatodušní svátky, Svatodušní hod / Zoslania Ducha Svätého, Svatodušné sviatky*

- Partly Annunciation

Not all these holidays were equally accepted by the folk tradition. Some of them are filled with many rituals and beliefs and received folk names (for example, Pentecost is more often known as Cz. *Letnice*, *Zelené svátky*, Slov. *Turíce*, *Rusadlá*, *Letnice*), while others have remained church holidays as such, marked only by visiting the church and a prohibition on work. Apparently, the reason for this can be found in the axiology of time, when these holidays are celebrated. We will see these reasons in detail below.

The greatest support was given to the Christian holidays that coincided with the pre-Christian ones. They contained—or embodied—the basic pagan values associated with the movement and activity of the sun, ensuring life in all its manifestations. These values were not only adapted to the new calendars, but also integrated into the ideological and religious context of Christianity. Thus, the birth of Jesus Christ was established (only in the 4th century AD) close to the date of winter solstice, which was celebrated by pagans (whose rituals were meant to help the sun turn for the summer: for example, people lit bonfires, made noise, and shouted, driving away evil forces that could impede the movement of the sun). The grounds for the establishment of the holiday on that date was the convergence of the symbolism of the sun and Christ, called “the Sun of Truth.” As a source of the Christmas holiday, we can consider European pagan cults and winter calendar holidays, such as the Roman Saturnalia and the holiday of the “birth of the invincible Sun” (*Natale Solis Invicti*), established in AD 274 by Emperor Aurelian and scheduled for December 25. Therefore, even today in some areas, there is an idea of the pre-Christian Christmas as a holiday of winter solstice, even if the dates do not coincide precisely. Although there is no ancient evidence of Christmas celebrations, we can talk about the possible preservation of relics of solstice celebration and solar cult in the contemporary Christmas holiday (Frolcová and Večerková 2010: 15).

The church doctrine explained ancient, traditionally used ritual symbols, only correcting their motivations in accordance with the Christian dogmas, e.g., worshiping the sun was motivated by the fact that it was the symbol of Christ; the water was revered because Christ was baptized with it, the straw—because Christ was born on it; the sheep, bulls, cows, and other domestic animals were blessed because they “bowed” to the born God, etc.

The days following Christmas were characterized by a gradual increase of the day—“by a chicken hop,” “by a hare hop,” etc.; it is said, “the day is rejuvenating”—*den se omlazuje* (Cz.). The folk concept of “youth” was actualized, as well as concepts of “children,” “youngsters,” which symbolically correlated with the Christian holiday of the Holy Innocents or the Holy Martyrs in memory of the 14,000 babies that were massacred in Bethlehem by the order of Herod, December 28. This day was named Cz. *Mládátka betlémská*, *Nevíňátka*,

Slov. *Mlád'átek den*, *Mlád'átka*, which, thanks to the word *mlad'atká* (“babies, children”) derived from the adjective “young,” fit into the overall concept of renewing time. Naturally, therefore, the main “recipients” of ceremonial actions on that day were *children* and *youth*. In the morning of that day, parents woke children up and slightly whipped them with fresh twigs for health or to have them remember the cruelty of King Herod. Later, in Slovakia, husbands started whipping their wives, and on the next day, December 29, the wives whipped husbands, “rejuvenating” each other; boys whipped girls for the sake of health (in Hrušov, Sebechleby, Krupina region, Central Slovakia), which was called Slov. *mladenkovani* (*mladzenkovani*), or they said that the girls are *mladenkujú* “rejuvenating” (in Liptov, Spiš regions—Central and Western Slovakia). Prohibitions were also observed for the sake of children; in the Trenčín region (Western Slovakia), people did not work, and sewing was strictly forbidden. It is believed that otherwise, children would die. Mothers did not wash children’s things so that children would not die (in Čičmany, Žilina region, Western Slovakia), although these actions are difficult to attribute to the memory of the cruelty of King Herod.

The second great folk-Christian holiday was and is Easter. The reason for its value is the coincidence (or purposeful correlation) of the holiday dedicated to the main dogma of Christianity—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—with the folk celebration of the renewal and revival of nature and “youth” and “renewal” as its values.

In the Slavic folk tradition, Easter holidays preserved the meaning of the “spring new year”⁷ with its “magic of the first day”; the folk customs were performed several weeks before Easter, even during the Holy Week.

During the last bell ringing on Thursday of Holy Week (after that the bells were kept silent for three days, because they “flew to Rome”), house mistresses shook the trees in the garden so that they gave abundant harvests (in Horácko region, Western Moravia), and in Luhačovské Zálesí in Moravia, they did not call God, but as in old times, they called the sun: *Slunečko, tento rok obrot', obrot'* [Sun, give harvest this year, give harvest] (Eastern Moravia).

A very ancient custom of lighting a bonfire is associated with the Easter period close to the vernal equinox. The fire symbolized the reborn sun, and in fact, it was supposed to help the sun get beyond another boundary, that is, between winter and summer. In this bonfire (judging from the comparative material from other Slavic regions, it was lit in every yard), they burned the last year’s straw and old things. In accordance with the understanding that everything in the world is spiritualized, the home fire was also considered old, so it also had to be renewed, as the sun and all nature were renewed. A new fire in the stove was lit from the bonfire.

This folk tradition was also assimilated by the Christian church. The bonfire made in front of the church on the Saturday before Easter (Cz. *Bíla sobota* / Slov. *Biela sobota*) was

called the “burning of Judas” (Cz. *pálení Jidášů* / Slov. *pálenie Judáša*), although, according to the Gospel, Judas hanged himself. Additionally, the priest burned old lamp oil in that bonfire and lit an “eternal” lamp and an Easter candle from it. That bonfire was considered blessed.

In the Czech and Slovak traditions, fires were not made in front of the houses, so coal from a bonfire in front of the church was brought home. Coals and other objects burned in the bonfire had an apotropaic function: the coal that was put under the roof protected the house from lightning and fire; in the stable, it guarded cattle from snake bites or diseases; and in the field, it guarded the harvest from hail. Ignition of the earthly fire as a guard against the heavenly fire (lightning) is confirmed by the practice of putting coals from a bonfire under the roof of the house, as people used to say, “from lightning” (in Klenčí, Domažlice region, Western Bohemia).

Other church holidays and half-holidays were interpreted in a similar manner. In the folk axiological system, time could be good or bad, kind or evil. When the folk tradition assimilated the idea of participation of the saints in earthly affairs, the Christian saints themselves began to be treated in accordance with the calendar day dedicated to their memory. Autumn and winter saints (Lucia, Barbara, Nicholas, Ambrose) were demonized; they were portrayed in the form of masks, who controlled the implementation of prohibitions (spinning, observing fasting, etc.). They punished and only occasionally checked children’s knowledge of prayers or observance of fasting.

For example, St. Lucia’s Day (in the folk calendars *Lucia*, *Lucka*, *Luca*), which occurs on December 13, the shortest day of the year (before the reform of the calendars) with the longest night (and the night, as is known, is the time of raging of evil spirits), determined the attitude to the saint and her functions in the folk tradition. Lucia was portrayed by mummers in a demonic image, dressed in a white shirt, with her face covered by her loose hair or sprinkled with flour, silent, with a bell and a bundle of goose feathers in her hands—she swept houses and masters’ eyes with these feathers. The name Lucia, etymologically related to Lat. *lux* (light), in the Czech and Slovak folk traditions was only marginally associated with light and vision; rather, the consonance of her name with the name of Lucifer reinforced her image as a witch.

Other saints whose names are used to denominate holidays relevant for the agricultural works “took part” in the ripening of the harvest, “making” the weather, and so on, e.g., St. Peter and St. Paul (*Petr a Pavel*, June 29) break the roots of the bread wheat and the grain ripens; when thunder rumbles, they say that St. Peter plays skittles or that he sneezes, and in a spring rain, that St. Peter sprinkles from the watering can. In the pre-Easter song performed on Palm Sunday, it is sung that St. George (April 24) “opens the earth”: Slov. dial. “*Lésola*,

lésola, Kvjetňi ňedzela, / de s' kvjet podzeua, / daua sem ho svatému Juru, / svatí Jur stau, pole odmikau, / abi tráva rústua, tráva zelená..." [Lesola, lesola, Palm Sunday, where did you put the blossom? I gave it to St. George, St. George stood up, unlocked the field so the grass grows, the green grass].

In addition to time, the people's worldview had other important vital values—first of all, soil fertility, which affects health, fecundity, and continuation of the bloodline or family line. The rites associated particularly with these values, despite the prohibitions of the church, still continue to be performed.

In Moravia and Bohemia, for example, on Pentecostal holidays, despite the prohibitions, they continued cutting down "May" trees in the forest, peeling bark from them, and leaving only the green tops because people believed that they drove away hail clouds. The church suggested its own ways of protection from hail—prayers, the sound of church bells, lighting a Candlemas candle, burning blessed herbs. However, people still considered bell ringing to be a weaker means than the installation of "May": in the old days, in the suburbs of Písek (Southern Bohemia), the clouds were driven away by bell ringing, but when people were afraid of hail, the owners encouraged men to install "Mays" and helped them with it themselves (Zíbrt 1950: 280). In southern Moravia, on Pentecostal Monday, "May" was set up outside the village under the tree they laid out a fire from juniper, around which they danced till morning; and when leaving, they always "brought May down." They believed that if that celebration was not arranged, hail would beat the fields (in Valašská Polanka, Vsetín region).⁸ The custom survived to our days, as it symbolized the vital folk value.

3. Conclusions

Though quite a few works have already been devoted to the analysis of folk and Christian in the calendars of Slavic peoples, this is the first analysis which was related to the system of values of Christianity and paganism (if we understand under this notion broad scope of pre-Christian worldviews). It was shown on the material of the Czech and Slovak calendar rites and their terminology that the changes in the calendars, both in form and in content, were connected primarily with the axiological systems of Christianity and the system preceding it.

The folk calendars of the Czechs and Slovaks reflect the struggle of two ideologies and their interaction, including competition, accommodation, and combination. The formation of the folk calendars is the history of the imposition and penetration of the elements of Christian doctrine into pagan conceptions on time, space, nature and man. It can be seen that these old conceptions have been preserved in rituals and beliefs even when their names or motivations were changed.

The selection and preservation of these elements in the folk calendars are mainly determined by the hierarchy of values in the Christian and pre-Christian worldviews.

Abbreviations

Cz.	Czech
Germ.	German
Lat.	Latin
M.-Germ.	Mid-German
Morav.	Moravian dialect of Czech language
Slov.	Slovakian

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Notes

- ¹ The research is financially supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, grant “Linguistic and ethnocultural dynamics of traditional and non-traditional values in the Slavic world” №18-512-76003, led by Dr. Hab. I. A. Sedakova (Programme ERA.Net.RUS Call 2018, # 472-LED-SW)
- ² All quotations are translated by the author of this article.
- ³ The terms and other data used in this article were taken from: Валенцова (2016).
- ⁴ “Walking with a firesteel” or “with steel” (Slov. *ocel'ovanie* (<ocel' ‘steel, firesteel’)—a ritual action aimed at protection from evil forces and adverse natural phenomena. Performed on some holidays of the autumn and winter period (St. Catherine, November 25; St. Lucia, December 13; St. Thomas, December 21; Christmas Eve, December 24; New Year’s Day, January 1) and on the day of St. John the Baptist (June 24) in the Central and adjacent mountainous areas of Eastern Slovakia. Boys brought “steel” (some iron object) or a stone to the house with goodwill (e.g., “so that the dishes do not break”, “so that the cattle breeds well”, etc.).
- ⁵ The first term is Czech, the second—Slovak.
- ⁶ Until the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), it was celebrated as Virgin Mary’s holiday.
- ⁷ In Slavic ethnolinguistics widely used term (*vesenneye novogodye*) which means that the rituals and their symbolics and semantics are very much the same as those of Christmas and New Year period. In Slavic folk calendar in general the new year naturally comes with the spring and the beginning of the agricultural works. Much about this is said in the book: Агапкина (2002: 135), where the author among other matters writes: “The beginning of spring (which is matched in different Slavic traditions to numerous dates of February, March and April) is understood as the most important sacral point of the annual circle, typologically equal in its meaning to the boundary

of the old and new years. In that context it seems appropriate to take a closer look at the early spring calendar beliefs, signs and customs, included in semantics of the “new-year”. Significant part of them, being timed to the dates of early spring, intrinsically repeats signs and rituals, in other traditions attached to the Christmas and New Year cycle. Such parallelism of the Christmas and spring motives gives reasonable grounds to consider the early spring period as a new year par excellence”.

⁸ See: Bartoš (1892: 54).

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**Народное и христианское в календаре чехов и словаков:
две системы ценностей.**

Марина. М. Валенцова.

В статье дается краткая характеристика основных признаков народного календаря чехов и словаков: его циклического характера, сезонных циклов и связей с солнечным и лунарным временем. Охарактеризована также христианская составляющая народного календаря, заметная, в первую очередь, в составе главных праздников (Господские, Богородичные и Духовские), в хрононимах преимущественно на основе католических святцев (дни святых, мучеников, апостолов и т.п.), в мотивировках обрядов и обрядовых действий (с привлечением церковной доктрины, житий святых и т.п.). Взаимодействие и переплетение христианской и дохристианской (народной, языческой) традиций в календарной обрядности чехов и словаков анализируется в статье в аксиологическом аспекте и рассматривается как встреча, сравнение, сопоставление, взаимное приспособление, объединение или замещение ценностей (духовных, витальных, социальных и др.) этих двух разных систем. Заключение и выводы иллюстрируются примерами из календарной обрядности рассматриваемых традиций, зафиксированных преимущественно в XIX и XX вв. в крестьянской народной среде.