

13th General Meeting of the Polish Biblical Scholars Association and the 54th Polish Biblical Scholars Symposium (Rzeszow, September 19–21, 2016)

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The annual meeting of Polish Biblical scholars took place in Rzeszow in the headquarters of the St. Józef Sebastian Pelczar Theological and Pastoral Institute and the Major Seminary of the Rzeszow Diocese, which was established in 1992.

The 13th General Meeting of the Polish Biblical Scholars Association took place on the evening of September 19, 2016. After greeting all the guests, Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Henryk Witczyk, the chairman of the association, recalled the Biblical scholars who had passed away in the previous year: Rev. Wojciech Mrochen, S. T. L. († May 27, 2016); Rev. Doc. Dr. Hab. Jerzy Chmiel († August 6, 2016), and Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Jan Flis († August 26, 2016). Their accomplishments were briefly recalled, after which a prayer for their eternal salvation was said. Next, Rev. Prof. Henryk Witczyk presented the nomination of new candidacy for honorary membership of the association, the Sisters of St. Elizabeth from Jerusalem. In his accounting for this candidacy, Rev. Dr. Adam Kubiś presented the history of the presence of the sisters in the Holy City starting in 1931 in their new and old home, emphasizing the material and spiritual support that they provide to students of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (which is the Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the Pontificia Universitas Antonianum in Rome), the French Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as well as persons who travel to the Holy Land to conduct research, learn languages, or undertake pilgrimages. In a secret vote, the candidacy was almost unanimously accepted.

In his speech summing up the past year, Rev. Prof. Henryk Witczak informed the audience that the association can currently boast of 316 regular members. Apart from everyday research and teaching, they were also engaged

in World Youth Day as well as the celebrations of the 1,050th anniversary of the baptism of Poland, spreading God's Word, which gives birth to children of God and leads them to salvation. One major common effort is the continuation of work on the *Millennium Bible*, which was published fifty years ago and can be referred to as "the Bible of baptism." During its 373rd Plenary Meeting in Warsaw on June 7–8, 2016, the Polish Episcopal Conference nominated new members of its academic council, including: Rev. Prof. Henryk Witczyk (editor-in-chief); Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Waldemar Chrostowski (Old Testament); Rev. Dr. Arnold Zawadzki (Old Testament); Rev. Prof. Dr. Andrzej Gieniusz, CR (New Testament); and Rev. Dr. Marcin Kowalski (New Testament). All the Biblical scholars were invited to participate in preparing the new edition of the *Millennium Bible*. The chairman of the association presented the thirteenth volume (2016) of the *Zeszyty Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Biblistów Polskich* ("The Scientific Journal of the Polish Biblical Scholars Association"). He also mentioned the Biblical contest for seminarians that takes place each year first at the diocesan level, and then has a finale in Warsaw. The contest's patrons were: Archbishop Wojciech Polak, Primate of Poland, as well as Bishop Roman Pindel of the Bielsko-Żywiec Diocese. This year, the seminarians who came in first and second place won a trip to the Holy Land as a prize. Seminarians should be encouraged to participate in this contest, because it is an opportunity to increase one's knowledge of Sacred Scripture, which is very important especially for future priests.

Next, members of the board of the association spoke and presented five ongoing issues.

1) Rev. Prof. Andrzej Gieniusz described the nature of work on the new edition of the *Millennium Bible*. This does not encompass a new translation, but rather the correction of certain sentences, which in light of contemporary research should receive a somewhat different meaning. Meanwhile, the footnotes and introductions to the books of the Bible require changes, because the present ones were written in the 1980s. All Biblical scholars will be asked to present comments and proposals on the translation of specific verses. The academic council will evaluate them and select the best solutions. This will lead to the writing of a text whose content will be reviewed, one that will at the same time be revised in terms of language by priests with a literary bent. The aim is for the text to be beautiful and comprehensible to the average Pole. The authors of the suggested corrections will be acknowledged in the publication.

2) Rev. Dr. Hab. Roman Bogacz informed that a new *Polish-Greek New Testament* will appear soon. The Greek text will come from the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Nestle-Aland, 28th edition, from which the introduction and *Letter of Eusebius to Carpianus* about the canons (pericopes), which for years have been specially noted in the critical edition, have been translated. Meanwhile, the Polish text comes from the fifth edition of the *Millennium Bible*. Included in it are new introductions and footnotes (in a somewhat abridged version) from the *Jerusalem Bible*. This will be of major help in the Greek text of the New Testament.

3) Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Mariusz Rosik presented a list of Biblical journals that operate in Poland and provide the opportunity for scholars to publish their work. The list consists of ninety-three titles from various centers, including: *Analecta Biblica Lublinensia* (Lublin); *Biblijne Wezwania do Rozwijania Kultury* ("The Biblical Call to Develop Culture," Krakow); *Biblioteka Biblica* (Wroclaw); *Biblica et Patristica Thorunensia* (Torun); *Hermeneutica et Judaica* (Krakow); *Lingua Sacra* (Warsaw); *Materiały Pomocnicze do Wykładów z Biblistyki* ("Additional Teaching Materials for Biblical Studies Lectures," Lublin); *Prymasowska Seria Biblijna* ("The Primate's Biblical Series," Warsaw); *Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne* ("Biblical Treatises and Studies," Warsaw); *Studia Biblica* (Kielce); and *Z Badań nad Biblią* ("From the Field of Biblical Studies," Krakow). The full list will be sent to all the members of the association.

4) Dr. Hab. Anna Kuśmirek reminded the participants of the 200th anniversary of the Biblical Association, whose aim is to popularize Sacred Scripture. Concerts, conferences, and liturgical celebrations took place as part of the anniversary. The association's most important initiative in recent years was the ecumenical translation of the Bible. In 2001, the *New Testament and Psalms* were published. Presently, we also have other books of the Old Testament: the *Wisdom Literature* (2008), *Deuterocanonical Books* (2011), *Pentateuch* (2015), and the *Historical Books* (2016). The last volume, the *Prophetic Books*, is slated to appear in 2016. This translation can be a helpful tool in ecumenical work.

5) Rev. Dr. Hab. Artur Malina encouraged the participants to seek financing for research projects in contests organized by the National Science Center and the National Program for the Development of Humanities. The conditions necessary for obtaining funding are a good project as well as its author's significant academic achievements. In the case of doctoral students, the latter is not necessary; they should seek funding in the first case. When there will be more applications in the field of theology, more theologians will become

experts; so far the applications in the field of theology have been evaluated by historians and experts on literature, which is not beneficial for theologians.

After these presentations, Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Wojciech Pikor, the treasurer of the association, presented the financial report for the previous year. The balance is positive, and the revenues, which mostly come from membership fees, exceeded expenditures by approximately 1,000 PLN. The association finances itself, which is beneficial. The report was unanimously accepted in a secret vote. After it, Rev. Prof. Henryk Witczyk concluded the general meeting.

The 54th Polish Biblical Scholars Symposium began on the morning of September 20th, 2016, with a Mass celebrated in the chapel of the Major Seminary. It was led by Rev. Prof. Henryk Witczyk, and the homily was given by Rev. Prof. Waldemar Chrostowski. In it, he recalled that a Biblical scholar should come to know the holy books not only on the level of reason, but also on that of faith, and to meet and adore Christ, the center of the entire Bible, through meditation. A Biblical scholar cannot avoid the chapel, which is something like a laboratory for the theologian.

The session of the symposium was opened by Rev. Prof. Henryk Witczyk. Before the Biblical scholars presented, Waldemar Szumny from the office of the board of the Subcarpathian Region spoke. He presented the Cardinal Adam Kozłowski Museum, devoted to a missionary and bishop in Zambia, with the help of a short film. The museum was built in Huta Komorowska, the cardinal's hometown, by the Cardinal Adam Kozłowiecki "Heart without Borders" Foundation, and was opened in 2011. Meanwhile, Stanisław Sienko, an assistant to the mayor of Rzeszow, presented the city of Rzeszow, which is modernizing and dynamically developing, thus creating good living conditions for its inhabitants and newcomers, also with the help of a short film. Both gentlemen were also present at the supper. They were accompanied by Bogdan Romaniuk, Deputy Marshal of the Subcarpathian Region, who presented the genesis of the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jewish People during World War II in Markowa. Mr. Romaniuk himself was among the creators of the museum. The supper's participants also included Janusz Żuczek, chairman of the Hotel Prezydencki. Their presence attests to good relations between various milieus in Rzeszow.

The first session was led by Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Stanisław Hałas, SCJ (Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow). It consisted of two papers. The first, *Smutek i radość w Księdze Mądrości* ("Sadness and Joy in the Book of Wisdom"), was given by Rev. Dr. Marcin Zieliński of the John Paul II Catholic

University of Lublin. He demonstrated certain similarities in the expression of these emotions in the ideals of the Stoics and showed that thanks to their ties with God's wisdom and the good life the just possess true joy, even when they experience difficulties, while sinners, who chase after nothingness and are hopeless in the face of death, experience sadness. In the second presentation, *Świadectwo Ojca w czwartej Ewangelii w świetle najnowszych badań egzegetycznych* ("The Witness of the Father in the Fourth Gospel in Light of New Exegetical Research"), Rev. Dr. Dawid Ledwoń of the University of Silesia in Katowice showed that this topic had so far been only superficially dealt with in research on the Gospel of St. John, although it is very present in this work in various forms: in God's direct words, quotations from the Old Testament, works of Jesus, and the witness of John the Baptist and of the evangelist himself. This is a decisive topic in John's Gospel and one that determines its structure.

The second session was led by Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Krzysztof Bardski of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. In the first paper, Rev. Łukasz Daworowski, SDS, S. T. L., of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin presented *Narracyjny model odkrywania tożsamości Jezusa w J 1, 35–51* ("The Narrative Model of the Discovery of Jesus' Identity in John 1: 35–51"). The purpose of the Gospel of St. John is to bring the reader to faith in Jesus. This is achieved at several levels: witness, encounter with Jesus, and the discovery of His identity. This is clearly seen in the pericope under discussion: the witness of Jesus' pupil helps others to become interested in Jesus, seek an encounter with Him, and discover in Him the Messiah and God, and then become a witness for more people. The second paper, *Kim są „umarli” w Apokalipsie Janowej? Propozycja interpretacji terminu hoi nekroi* ("Who Are the 'Dead' in the Books of Revelation? A Suggestion for an Interpretation of the Term Hoi Nekroi"), was presented by Rev. Dr. Tomasz Siemieniec of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. He rather convincingly tried to demonstrate that understanding this term, which appears in the Book of Revelation five times, in a literal sense physically does not fit well into the surrounding context. Instead, it is better to give it existential meaning, which is also present in the Gospel of St. John.

After the morning session, several communiqués were presented. Rev. Prof. Andrzej Gieniusz presented some information about the journal *Biblica*, which he has helped to edit for fifteen years, first as a secretary and presently as the New Testament editor. The journal has been published for 100 years and is available online. Polish Biblical scholars collaborate with it as reviewers; few

of them are authors, however. Rev. Prof. Gieniusz encouraged those present to submit articles, underlining that the basic criteria for the acceptance of a text is a new contribution to the understanding of Biblical texts. He also recommended the BibleWorks 10 program and mentioned those elements that have been added to this version. He said that it is possible to purchase the program at a lower price when it is bought in groups and for students. The John Paul II Biblical Work led by Prof. Henryk Witczyk intends to purchase this program. Rev. Prof. Andrzej Gieniusz also mentioned the possibility of adding a Polish translation of the *Paulists' Bible* to BibleWorks, and that there will soon be an option to do so for the fifth edition of *Millennium Bible*. Next, the representatives of several publishers (Vocatio from Warsaw, Petrus from Krakow, and St. Wojciech from Poznan) discussed their most recent and upcoming publications. Along with Enigma Press from Krakow, these publishers had their booths, where one could purchase newly published and older books. The last part of the morning session was a photograph of everyone in the auditorium and in front of the institute's building.

After lunch, the participants of the symposium visited the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa, which was opened in 2016 as a branch of the Castle Museum in Lancut. This was a pilgrimage to a place commemorating the martyrdom of Poles who aided Jews during the Holocaust, and particularly the Ulma family, killed in 1944: Wiktoria (age 32) and Józef (44), as well as their seven children (Stanisława, Barbara, Władysław, Franciszek, Antoni, Maria, and a child in the mother's womb), the oldest of whom was eight years old. Along with the eight Jews the Ulmas were hiding, all of them were shot by German occupiers assisted by the Polish Blue Police. The Biblical scholars also visited the memorial commemorating the Ulmas, which was unveiled in 2004, and their tomb at the local parish cemetery.

The third session featured the paper titled: *Polacy-Żydzi: perspektywa biblijna* ("Poles and Jews: A Biblical Perspective"), presented by Rev. Prof. Waldemar Chrostowski of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. The reflection, which was related to the pilgrimage, the speaker presented the coexistence of Poles and Jews on the territory of Poland beginning with the sixteenth century. Thrown out of Western countries, Jews found peace in Poland, which they called *paradisus Iudaeorum* ("the Jewish paradise"). Along with the emergence of the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century, whose aim was the return of the Jews to Palestine, Poland began to appear as a foreign country. Through the Holocaust of the Jews, which was planned and

undertaken by German Nazis (on the Ulmas' tomb, they are called "Hitler's thugs"), our country has become for them a cemetery without tombs, an unclean land. From peaceful coexistence (difficulties and tensions notwithstanding), Polish-Jewish relations have become analogous to the situation of a marriage after a divorce. It will be difficult to change the Jews' negative memories of Poland, but efforts in this direction must be undertaken.

The first day of the symposium ended with a dinner, which became a social meeting, which was an opportunity for direct contact and exchange of ideas.

September 21, 2016, the second day of the symposium, also began with a Mass, which was celebrated by Bishop Jan Wątroba of Rzeszów. In his sermon, the bishop recalled the figure of St. Matthew, a tax collector who unexpectedly was called to become an apostle in order to bring others to Christ and with them form the Church, the community of faith. He left us valuable witness about Christ in the form of the Gospel, of which we can make use. Biblical scholars receive the charism of good understanding of Sacred Scripture and are to use it to serve the community of the Church, bringing everyone to Christ and making them into His followers.

The fourth session was led by Rev. Dr. Hab. Rajmund Pietkiewicz of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław. In the first paper, *Motyw pychy jako element jednoczący Proto-Izajasza* ("The Theme of Pride as a Unifying Element of Proto-Isaiah"), Rev. Dr. Bartłomiej Sobierajski of Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem noted that pride was the dominant theme of Isaiah 1–39. It is noticeable both in the rulers of Israel and Judah and in neighboring countries, as well as in individual people. Such an attitude is opposed to God's plans, precludes trust in Him, and usurps the capacity of forming reality in a divine way. Isaiah wants to turn people away from such behavior. Meanwhile, Rev. Dr. Piotr Nyk, OCD, presented a paper on *Tradycja o Jonaszu, synu wdowy z Sarepty, w starożytności, średniowieczu oraz w historiografii karmelitańskiej* ("Tradition on Jonah, Son of the Widow of Zarephath, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and in Carmelite Historiography"). In it, he presented the tradition that identified the prophet Jonah with the widow of Zarephath resurrected by Elijah. Since antiquity, this tradition has been known to both rabbis and to Christian writers. It has been adopted by Carmelite historians, because it served their tying of the beginning of their order to Elijah, whose pupils included Jonah.

The fifth session was led by Rev. Dr. Hab. Józef Kozyra (Silesian University in Katowice). Rev. Krzysztof Kinowski, S. T. L., of the Pontifical Biblical Institute

in Rome presented the paper *Występek króla Manassesesa w 2 Krl 21, 16 a (po)kapłańska interpretacja zniszczenia Judy przez Nabuchodonozora w 2 Krl 24, 1–4* (“The Crime of King Manasseh in 2 Kings 21 : 16 and the [Post] Priestly Interpretation of the Destruction of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar in 2 Kings 24 : 1–4”). In it, he noted that the authors of 2 Kings saw the crime of King Manasseh, which led to the spilling of an enormous amount of innocent blood in Jerusalem, as the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. This is striking because this act took place half a century earlier and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem was an even bigger sin on the part of the king. The speaker sees the influence of the priests in the ultimate draft of the Books of Kings in this interpretation. In the communiqué *Wybrane zagadnienia z ornitologii biblijnej na warsztacie tłumacza i egzegety* (“Selected Topics Related to Biblical Ornithology in the Work of the Translator and Exegete”), Dr. Anna Wajda of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow emphasized that hagiographers are sharp observers and often refer to birds (there are approximately 500 species of them in Israel), although they sometimes imagine things in a way that conflicts with reality. For them, the appearance and behavior of birds serves to visualize the attitudes of God and man: for them, the eagle is a symbol of care; the hen is the image of gathering and protecting; and the turtle dove is a sign of spring, the time of love and life. Zoological knowledge is helpful in correctly identifying the birds that appear in the Bible and in understanding their metaphorical significance.

In addition to Rev. Prof. Waldemar Chrostowski's reflections, this year's papers were presented by doctors and scholars with licentiate in sacred theology on the verge of defending their doctoral theses. They frequently presented their doctoral dissertations or dealt with problems that appeared during their research. The presentations were supplemented by interesting discussions that followed after each discussion. They specified and broadened what the speakers said. The presented topics and the method in which they were presented as well as common meetings and prayers were certainly enriching for the approximately 150 participants of this year's symposium.

It was concluded by Rev. Prof. Henryk Witczyk, who thanked the presenters, session leaders, and all the participants, and especially the hosts for their hospitality and efforts. He also noted that the Fourteenth General Meeting of the Polish Biblical Scholars Association and the Fifty-Fifth Polish Biblical Scholars Symposium would take place in September 2017 in the Major Diocesan Seminary in Legnica.