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JERZY CHMIEL
Pontifical Theological Academy
Cracow

OPENING ADDRESS

Mr President, Mr Executive Director
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear and distinguished Guests and Friends,

On behalf of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow as its vice-rector and on behalf of the Oriental Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences - Cracow Branch as its chairman, I have pleasure in welcoming all of you in Cracow, a city full of historical monuments and relics and at the same time, aspiring to keep up with contemporary times and merge the past with the 21st century.

Let me emphasise the fact that the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature 1998 in Cracow is not a coincidence.

Cracow University, now for many years called the Jagiellonian University, one of the oldest European universities, was established in 1364. Last year we celebrated the sexcentenary of the foundation of the Faculty of Theology at the University. In 1397 the young Queen of Poland, Saint Hedvig (Jadwiga, 25), wife of King Władysław Jagiełło, sensing her own death, donated all her jewellery for the purpose of re-founding the Cracow University. With this act a new academic year was officially opened. The Faculty of Theology ranked highest in the University's hierarchy. It was to serve the work of evangelization of the vast Lithuanian-Russian lands.

Next year, 1999, will mark the quatercentenary of the publication of, not the first but the best, Polish translation of the Bible by Jakub Wujek, a Jesuit theologian and translator.

Cracow will greet the year 2000 as a "European City of Culture". The history of the Jagiellonian University forms an essential part of Polish history. It is also part of the European cultural heritage. Cracow and the Wawel

Hill, the seat of Polish kings, the cathedral, the coronation church of Polish kings and their burial site; Cracow, the city of Pope John Paul II and of two laureates of the Nobel Prize in literature who live in our city at present; Cracow, the city that is registered on the UNESCO list of world cultural heritage, welcomes you.

Mr. President and our eminent guests, I express the hope that your deliberations will contribute to the stimulation of critical study of the Bible, together with other related literatures.

Wisdom is better than strength (...)
The words of the wise spoken quietly
are heeded more than the cry of a prince
among fools (Qoheleth 9: 16,17).

As a sign of peace and friendship, Mr. President, please receive this Medal, commemorating the Sixcentenary of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow, which is presented to the distinguished Society of Biblical Literature.

Thank you very much.



A MERENTIBUS ACADEMIAE Medal
presented to Professor Kent Richards.

ZDZISŁAW J. KAPERA

SBL IN CRACOW

The Sixteenth International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature
Cracow, July 18 - 22, 1998

The Sixteenth International Meeting¹ of the Society of Biblical Literature² was held in Cracow in July 1998³. It was an expected and an unex-

¹ The SBL organizes two congresses every year. One in its home country, the USA, regularly at the beginning of the third decade of November. For example, the annual convention for 1998 will be held on November 21-24 in Orlando, Florida. Recently about 8,000 (!) participants are usually attended, despite the fact that the SBL has now only 7,000 registered members. The success of the enterprise is obvious. The second Biblical congress is regularly organized outside the USA, usually in Europe, as the Society has 1,200-1,600 members from Europe. This congress usually starts just after 20 July. The date coincides with the beginning of the summer holidays in most of American universities. It is regrettable that the annual convention is now held without the American Schools of Oriental Research, i.e. without archaeological sessions, as the Directors of ASOR have decided convene their meeting separately, before the SBL convention. In fact, the congresses were organized jointly by the Society of Biblical Literature, the American Academy of Religion and ASOR for many years.

² The SBL was created in 1880. Its first president was Daniel Raynes Goodwin. In 1998 the President is Professor Patrick D. Miller, Princeton Theological Seminary. The SBL is one of the oldest learned societies (the fourth or fifth oldest) in the USA. It has members on every continent, but very few in Poland. Its membership includes researchers, educators, students and other people interested in Biblical studies, in the philology, history and archaeology of the Biblical countries. According to the handbook of the Society, its purpose is 'to stimulate the critical investigation of biblical literature, together with other related literature, by the exchange of scholarly research both in published form and in public forum'. Cf. *SBL. Society of Biblical Literature. Membership Directory and Handbook 1994*, SBL, Decatur, GA 1994, p. 191.

