

ies and Cooperation of European Universities”(Sunday, July 19th). Eight papers were given at the session, among them a text by J. R. Zwi Werblowski on *How does the Study of the Bible Affect the Mutual Relationship of Jews, Christians and Muslims*. The session was organized by Dr. Barbara Mękarska, of the Institute of Oriental Philology, on behalf of the Jagiellonian University in connection with the end of the EC Tempus Project. It can be expected that materials of the session will soon appear in a separate volume.

Among further additional events we should mention at least three cultural occasions: a showing of the film “The Unexpected Guest” and a concert of “The Reiner Trio” which were held on the premises of the Cracow Jewish Cultural Center in the Kazimierz district on July 19th; a photo-exhibition “Pray for Peace for Jerusalem” was available in the Institute of John Paul II (the Polish authors of the photographs: Piotr Dylík, Beata Męcel, Cezary Sękowski, Zbigniew Ważydrag).

The last event in the story of the Cracow Congress of the SBL was an evening open air banquet in the historic gardens of the Archaeological Museum in Cracow on July 22nd, 1998. The beautiful weather and the fascinating view of the surrounding park (Planty), the Wawel Castle, the Cracow Cathedral and the 19th century building of the Cracow Theological Seminary, and the very friendly atmosphere among the participants will certainly remain in everyone’s memory.

The Biblical congress in Cracow attracted the attention of the local TV station. Reporter Hubert Hudzio presented three news pieces for information programs on Saturday and Sunday. Also the local “Plus” radio station announced the congress at its beginning and had a half-hour broadcast after it ended. Dr. Z. J. Kapera and Dr. R. Obirek, S.J. talked to the reporter. Information and a brief interview with Dr. Z.J. Kapera were broadcast by the all-Poland Radio Programme 3. Dr. R. Obirek supplied the Polish Section of the Vatican Radio with general information about the SBL congress. The Catholic Information Agency prepared the basic facts for the Polish press, but the congress seems to have escaped the most journals, as in the next week only one brief item was published by the weekly, ‘Gość Niedzielny’. Listing all these minor events may be surprising. However, they are ‘historic’ for the Polish mass media (not only local). One is likely to find information about theological or other religious congresses or colloquia. But ‘Biblical colloquia’ usually go completely unmentioned. This time we could see some small progress.

MICHAŁ WOJCIECHOWSKI

BIBLE AND BIBLICAL STUDIES IN POLAND

Historical background

We are aware of the influence of the denominational, national and other background on scholars. I don’t presume it should and has to determine us; on the contrary, any serious scholarship consists largely in liberating ourselves from such an influence (an unilateral approach can bring some valuable insights, but usually lacks a full scholarly value). Nevertheless, we never free ourselves and our work from a background – and the knowledge of the background does help to understand people.

Let us begin with a more distant past, the 16th century, a key period for the reading and studying of the Bible in Europe. It was also a classical period of Polish culture; we call it the Golden Age. In Western Europe this period was heavily marked by religious struggle, in Poland it brought prosperity. The then state of Polish kings was a kind of commonwealth, including ethnic Poland, Lithuania (both Catholic), Byelorussia and Ukraine (both Orthodox, later mostly Uniate). There were important minorities - German and Jewish. The Reformation, influential during the 16th century, was divided into four main currents (Lutherans, Calvinists, Czech Brethren, antitrinitarians). The high degree of political freedom and the renaissance cultural life also favoured tolerance and finally brought about a competition between the denominations rather than a struggle. Catholicism won the competition – Poland is predominately Catholic now – but that Catholicism perhaps assimilated something from the other currents.

An interest in the Bible in the 16th century came not only from the Protestant side. Polish intellectual life and Polish Christianity as well, was strongly influenced by Erasmus, admired both by critics of the official Catholicism and by Catholic leaders like the main figure of Polish Counter-Reformation,

Cardinal Hosius. Erasmus was able to write in one of his letters, "Poland is mine!" – *Polonia mea est*.

During the hundred years after the coming of Reformation to Poland, 5 complete Bible translations into Polish were published (2 Catholic and 3 Protestant), and also some Psalters and NT's. They were accompanied by sermons, commentaries and polemical writings. Works of Polish authors written in Latin were often quoted abroad.

This production has not been equalled up to the 20th century, because the situation of Poland in this "intermediate" period did not leave much space for academic and intellectual life. Obstacles such as wars, anarchy and partitions of Poland between three powers in the end of the 18th century made it nearly impossible. Only in the end of the 19th century could Polish universities be fully restored, first in the part of Poland belonging to the Habsburg monarchy, and since 1918 in the independent Poland.

The most durable fruit of the 16th century in the field of the Bible was the translation published in 1593-99 by the Jesuit priest Jakub Wujek. It was based on the Vulgate, but took into account the texts in the original languages (Wujek thought, quite correctly, that the Vulgate, although a translation, was text-critically better than Greek and Hebrew manuscripts accessible in the 16th century). The Wujek version was both faithful and very well written; therefore it remained the classical one for more than 300 years.

Recent past

The II World War and the following German and Soviet occupation (1939) interrupted the academic life in Poland once more. In the Stalinist Communist Poland in 1945-1956 theological studies were strictly limited by the authorities. Later, however, the situation improved steadily; after 1970 Polish communists tended to avoid an open confrontation with religion, both because they were already weakened from inside and because they hoped that the Catholic church after the II Vatican Council would offer less resistance to the Marxist ideology (as a matter of fact, the documents of the Council didn't make any mention of Communism – that could raise suspicions!).

On the other hand, this difficult period was favourable for the internal life of the Church. The traditional faith remained well rooted in society and was even strengthened by persecutions. It permitted the Church leaders to introduce the conciliar reforms safely; the religious movements greatly increased (now, with the door opened to the influence of Western laicism and the predominantly leftist media, the situation becomes worse). The opposition to

the Communist system made the Catholic church the leading independent institution, widely popular and influential. If we mention only Catholicism, that is because Protestant and Orthodox Christians are few, less than 2% of the population of Poland.

After 1956 the opportunities for studies had improved, becoming considerably better than in other Communist countries. Books could be imported, it became possible to get a permission to study abroad, more scholarly or popular books on religion could be published and the censorship became less strict. The number of students of theological faculties increased steadily, although the Communist authorities limited the number of lay students and blocked opening of new centers. (There were perhaps 400 lay students of theology in Poland 25 years ago – including former seminarists; in the seminarians there were 4,000 students).

Teaching of theology and biblical studies

Since the fall of the direct Communist rule in 1989 (I've said *direct* – please be aware that they are still largely in control of the sphere of money and of the media) new Catholic faculties, seminaries, colleges and centers of extra-mural studies have come into being. Many more lay people study theology, preparing to teach religion at school. The opportunities for biblical studies have similarly increased. (I haven't singled them out, because biblical studies have always been integrated into theological faculties). At present there are about 200 biblical scholars in Poland holding academic posts in faculties and seminaria. The three main centers are Lublin in the eastern part of Poland, with a Catholic University founded 1918, Warsaw, with a Catholic university under the name of the Academy of Catholic Theology, and Cracow with the Pontifical Theological Academy.

The average age of scholars is not high, although priest usually begin scholarly work after a period of pastoral activity. Degrees in biblical studies are now conferred more often than 30, 20 or even 10 years ago. Most of us have spent a part of their studies abroad – most often at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, but also in Germany and France. Good knowledge of foreign languages is a rule. It is also important that most of us belong to the "second generation". Older scholars were busy rebuilding the academic institutions from the very foundations, having little or no opportunity to participate in the world research. We are already in a better position.

The relative high interest in studying theology brings prospective disciples, but also means, that our teaching load is considerable; the place of the Bible

in the curricula of theological studies tends to improve. Double employment is quite frequent: in a faculty and in a seminary or with extra-mural studies. Being usually priests, the biblical scholars also do some pastoral work. Many write popular articles regularly. That keeps us near real life, but does not leave much time for research. It is most often done during sabbatical years and especially with scholarships abroad.

The next major obstacle for advanced studies is financial order. The GNP per capita in Poland is 5-10 times lower than in the developed countries. As everywhere, the local prices reduce the difference to some extent, but buying foreign books or travelling abroad remains extremely costly. For the same reason the collections of our libraries are full of gaps. Most books in them are gifts from abroad; recent scholarly books are most often lacking. Since the 1970s we have been better supplied with periodicals, mainly because university publishers kindly accept our periodicals for exchange. As for the new possibilities given by computers, many of us are just beginners.

Published work

In the 1960 and 1970-ties three new complete Bible translations appeared (one of them Protestant), recently a fourth one come out; two others are in preparation (ecumenical; pastoral). The most popular one, read in churches, is called *Biblia Tysiąclecia* («Millennium Bible» – published 1966 for the millennium of Christianity in Poland). There are also some new NT translations (recently an interlinear one and a new synopsis) and poetic translations.

Scholarly commentaries are represented by one series, started in the 1950s and near completion. It is called *Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu* (OT) and *Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu* (NT). Some basic works, like concordances and dictionaries, have been published only in the last decade. Monographs, some hundred in number, were more often than not published separately, not in series. The main publishers in the biblical field are Catholic universities (KUL and ATK), Pallotinum, recently also Vocatio, a private publisher, and The Enigma Press (Cracow) in the Qumran area. Some advanced students of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome were published their dissertations there.

Articles are also rather dispersed. A biblical periodical has been launched only recently (*Scriptura Sacra*), and articles are published in theological reviews like *Collectanea Theologica*, *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia*,

Roczniki Teologiczne, *Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny*. There are also yearbooks published by dioceses, etc.

This production, even if limited in number, would be quite often of use to foreign scholars if it were not for the language barrier. For us, too, it is frustrating that our work has a limited influence. However, I do not feel it is justified to omit works in rare languages in bibliographies, which is often the case (a fairly complete presentation is found in *Elenchus of Biblica*). I should be stressed that many scholarly works published in Polish are accompanied by summaries in foreign languages.

Some articles are published directly in foreign languages, namely in the special issues of *Collectanea Theologica* and in the annuals *Analecta Cracoviensia* and *Folia Orientalia*. Some of us manage to publish abroad, but without a direct contact with the editors it seems rather difficult.

It isn't easy to estimate the value of our research work. It is sometimes eclectic. On the other hand, there are a number of original contributions, probably more than in Italian, Dutch or Spanish. I think that in the world biblical research as a whole we could play a modest, but visible part.

Let us quote as examples some important contributions from recent years: L. Stachowiak has published a major commentary on Isa; W. Chrostowski has written on the importance of an early Assyrian diaspora for the birth of the Old Testament books; S. Mędala on the Qumran community (Alcimus as the Teacher of Righteousness); R. Rubinkiewicz on the Old Testament pseudepigrapha; R. Bartnicki on the synoptic problem; M. Wojciechowski on Jesus and Christology (symbolic acts; holiness); M. Starowieyski on the apocryphal New Testament.

General features of Polish biblical scholarship

It is the last and the most difficult question. In the Catholic countries direct use of the Bible in Christian life has often been limited. It does not necessarily apply to Poland where the Bible was read and was culturally influential throughout the centuries. Biblical studies are therefore expected and appreciated, both because of their role for Christian theology and because of their wider interest.

Another factor from the Polish background: in the field of humanities as a whole we have been less fruitful in philosophy, but strong in history and literature (Erasmus once more?). Therefore the modern form of biblical studies did not come to us as a surprise, and certainly not as a troublesome alter-

native to a conservative scholasticism. We can hardly find a fundamentalistic current, although we meet many loose naive or old-fashioned opinions.

The past of our country favored an interest in others, we lived for centuries in a multinational and multiconfessional environment. Polish culture willingly adopted foreign ideas (and the language, foreign words). Nevertheless, no single source of inspiration was preferred. We tend to select, take something from France, something from Germany, something from the Eastern Churches, something from the Jews. The attitude towards new methods and proposals is therefore positive, if only a good and practical use should be made of them. Sound, critical scholarship always serves the Christian faith well. This attitude follows from a practical approach resulting from the experience in teaching and pastoral work.

We often find a very similar look in the British and American biblical studies; more often than in Germany or France; although the contact of our scholars with the English-speaking world is certainly weaker. Let us hope that we will know one another better in future.

As for areas of study, it seems that the biblical theology prevails over exegesis itself and history. Among the problems related to the Bible, the interest in the Jewish background of the New Testament is worth mentioning, with a considerable number of studies on Qumran.

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PATRISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURE AND MODERN BIBLICAL STUDIES. METHODOLOGICAL SUGGESTIONS

In the last twenty years we observe a significant shift in the field of biblical studies. The historical-critical method of textual analysis yields the priority to a varied group of so-called synchronic methods. This shift is not merely a change of the instruments of research in the academic context but seems to affect deeply the hermeneutical approach to the Scripture itself. The topic is too extensive to discuss it in the frames of this paper, nevertheless it seems useful to stress some characteristic points common to the synchronic methods:

1. First - as Kenneth Craig in his book *A Poetics of Jonah* says - *the changes that have come from looking at (instead of behind) the Bible are producing an important new discourse*¹. It means the concern is focused in the *intention of the text* - using an expression drawn from Paul Ricoeur's *Le conflit des interprétations*² - instead of the traditional notion of the *intention of the author*, that is considered as an unattainable, hypothetically constructed idea.

2. Second, in an interesting paper published some month ago in by Stephen Farris in *Interpretation* we find a statement that in a certain way derives from the former and pulls the question even farther: *meaning is not only found in or behind the text; it is created in front of the text in the interaction of the interpreter with the text*³. Further we will discuss the expression *it is created*, now however it is important to emphasize the part of the relationship between text and reader, unimportant from the historical-critical perspective.

¹ *A Poetics of Jonah. Art in the service of Ideology*, Columbia 1993, 1.

² *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique*, Paris 1969, 7.

³ "Limping Away with a Blessing. Biblical Studies and Preaching at the End of the Second Millennium", *Interpretation* 51/4 (1997) 365.