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45 years of Qumranology : 32-nd
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WALDEMAR CHROSTOWSKI, WARSAW

**45 YEARS OF QUMRANOLOGY.
32-nd SYMPOSIUM OF POLISH BIBLICAL SCHOLARS
CZĘSTOCHOWA, SEPTEMBER 15-16, 1994**

In February 1947 a Bedouin boy quite accidentally initiated one of the most sensational discoveries of Biblical archeology. In a cave on the western bank of the Dead Sea, near the ruins of Qumran, he found fragments of scrolls which first were conveyed to Bethlehem, then to Jerusalem. The scholars who examined them estimated that they went back to more or less the time of Jesus. Soon an intensive search began of all the nearby caves and of Qumran itself, which had been inhabited from the middle of the second century B. C. to 68 A. D. The manuscripts and objects discovered there shed new light on Jewish spiritual and religious life toward the end of the pre-Christian and beginning of the Christian era. A flood of publications started from 1949, and a new field of scholarship was born - Qumranology. The 1994 year marks its 45th anniversary, and its achievements are enormous.

The discoveries in Qumran and neighboring regions of the Judean Desert are of enormous importance for study of the nature and history of Judaism, for describing the historical background and context of the life and message of Jesus, as well as for a better understanding of the beginnings of the Church and parting of the ways of the followers of Judaism and Christians. It is believed that for two centuries Qumran was inhabited by the community of Essenes, who in the middle of the second century B. C. separated from official Judaism concentrated in Jerusalem. Suggestions have been made that on account of the singular life style and views of this community it may be called „pre-Christian Christianity”. This viewpoint made Qumran an object of interest not only to scholars and specialists but also to sensation-seeking journalists and pseudo-scholars and even politicians. In recent years especially, we have seen a wave of scandalous manipulations that have placed a question mark over the credibility of scholarship and the objectivity of scholars. This wave of insinuations and misunderstandings has also reached Poland. Fortunately, there are many

solid scholars and good studies. The Qumran discoveries and qumranology also was the subject-matter of 32nd Symposium of Polish Biblical Scholars, which under the motto „45 Years of Qumranology” deliberated on 15 and 16 September, 1994, in metropolitan theological seminary in Częstochowa.

The meeting of more than 80 Biblical Scholars from all over the country began with a Holy Mass. The joint worship was celebrated by Ryszard Karpiński, auxiliary bishop of Lublin, the homily was preached by Fr. prof. Hugolin Langkammeler (KUL - Catholic University of Lublin). On the second day of the symposium, the Mass at Jasna Góra was celebrated by Archbishop Stanisław Nowak, metropolitan of Częstochowa, who also delivered the homily. The symposium was opened by Rev. prof. Ryszard Rubinkiewicz (KUL), chairman of the Section of Polish Biblical Scholars. The three sessions were chaired respectively by Rev. prof. Tomasz Jelonek (PAT - Cracow), Rev. prof. Julian Warchacha (ATK), and Rev. prof. Stanisław Pisarek (WSD - Katowice).

The introductory paper was delivered by dr Zdzisław J. Kapera (Cracow). In broad outlines he sketched the history of the Dead Sea scrolls and the misunderstandings and abuses connected with the postponement of their full publication and interpretation. Without the personal involvement of some scholars (e. g. R. Eisenmann, P.R. Davies, N. Golob) calling for rapid publication of photographs of the discovered texts, there would not have been any real progress in the research. Hershel Shanks, editor of the American *Biblical Archaeology Review*, and his press lobby played a positive role in breaking the conspiracy of silence over the scrolls. Poles also have had an important part in the real battle waged since around 1985 to „release the scrolls”, access to which was restricted to a narrow group of scholars. It is especially worthy to be mentioned the biennial qumranology colloquy held since 1987 in Mogilany and Cracow. During the first meeting in Mogilany, prof. Norman Golob of Chicago presented in detail a hypothesis on the Jerusalem origin of the Qumran manuscripts, questioning the widely held view that they originated in the local Essene community. Although this hypothesis has not been accepted, it did undermine the Essene hypothesis and weaken the positions of the group responsible for publication of all of the Cave-4 manuscripts, which was constantly being postponed. The resolution accepted in 1989 at the meeting in Mogilany set in motion another chain of events, revealing the dissatisfaction of scholars from all over the world with the continuing

failure to publish a considerable part of the Qumran writings. Today Polish qumranology can boast of *The Qumran Chronicle*, which has appeared since 1980 in English, and the scholarly series *Qumranica Mogilanensia*, 6 volumes of which have already been published and with another 9 in preparation. Dr Z. J. K a p e r a presented a review of the book *Jesus, Qumran and the Vatican* written by O. B e t z and R. R i e s n e r, which summarizes our knowledge about Qumran and confrontes various press sensations with the facts.

Rev. dr Gabriel W i t a s z e k (KUL) in his report *Separatism of the Qumran Community* asserted that we have to do with an example of the religion-creating trends which existed in Judaism from the second century B. C. to the first century A. D. in various organizational forms. The regulations governing the life of this group enjoined concealing its teaching from „strangers”, physical separation from them, and moving to the desert to prepare the way for God’s work. Such radical measures were underpinned by a specific system of views and beliefs, among which the most important was breaking away from the priests and religion practiced in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem priests were accused of failing to observe rules concerning ritual purity and prayers, of a harmful modification of the calendar, and of introducing numerous other errors. The people’s traditional vision of Yahweh, who gathered around Him the nations of the world, was reduced by the priests to a circle of the elect. Yet another reason for separation from official Judaism was the intensive eschatological expectation. All religious requirements were treated very strictly.

In the paper *The Jewish and Christian Interpretation of the First Verses of Genesis - from Qumran to the New Testament*, Rev. prof. Marian G o ł ę b i e w s k i (ATK) started from an analysis of those Qumran texts which praise God the Creator. In the opposition between the light and darkness, which is related at the beginning of Genesis, their autors perceived the foundations of an insurmountable breach between the „elect” and the „rejected”. Other Jewish books from this period also present in pairs the concepts found in Genesis 1, 1-3, thereby laying the foundations for later gnostic speculations. The lecturer discussed the thought of the eminent philosopher P h i l o o f A l e x a n d r i a. According to the latter, the events of the „beginning” did not unfold in a chronological sequence but in the order of their importance: first the world of ideas was created, followed by the material world. Then G o ł ę b i e w s k i went on to discuss the Prologue to The Gospel of John, which sets the History of Salvation on

the narration of the beginning and joins the person of the Son as Word with the act of Father as Creator. Luke as well, author of the third Gospel and Acts of the Apostles, also gives the subject-matter of the beginning a profound theological meaning. In Luke both the beginning of Jesus's work and the beginning of the testimony of the Apostles is permeated with the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who came to rest on the Apostles is the One who at the beginning of creation „floated over the waters”. Hence in the perspective of the new creation Luke described two beginnings - of Jesus Christ and of Christianity.

Rev. prof. Stanisław Mędala (ATK) discussed *The Key Problems in Present Studies of the Qumran Writings*. Among the remnants of around 800 works found in the Qumran caves, some texts are Essenian, others are only loosely connected with the Essenes. Some are constitutional, others - occasional. Due to the fact that most Qumran documents have been preserved in residual form, many matters still remain unexplained. Prof. Mędala presented six problems which scholars are still discussing. These are: 1. drawing the lines between the Biblical and non-Biblical texts found, 2. the question of the relation of the Essene texts to Jewish apocalyptic writings, 3. the beginnings and nature of the Essene movement, 4. the question of the degree to which the letter to the High-Priest from the fourth cave (4QMMT) sheds new light on identification of the Teacher of Justice and his opponents, 5. showing the directions of development of the Essene movement on the basis of internal evidence (the idea of God, ethics, cult, language, literary genre, key theological and social concepts), 6. the origin of the organizational regulations of the Essenes (result of internal development or acceptance of Hellenistic models). Mędala put forth his own hypothesis on identification of the Qumran Teacher of Justice, namely, that this was the High-Priest Alcimoos appointed by Antiochus V who in the middle of the second century B. C. fell into conflict with the Pharisees and was forced to leave Jerusalem.

From the Christian point of view, the most important questions concern the possible relationships between the Qumran community and its writings on the one hand and Jesus Christ and The New Testament on the other. Some aspects of the relationship of Christianity to Qumran were taken up by Rev. prof. Jerzy Chmielewski (PAT - Cracow). He concentrated on two problems: Jesus vis-a-vis the Essenes and the so-called intertextual hermeneutics. Albert Schweitzer had detected connections between Jesus and the Essene movement, which in his day was known solely from

the writings of J o s e p h F l a v i u s and a few other Roman and Jewish writers. The discovery in Qumran of a settlement inhabited most probably by the Essens confirmed his intuitions. But describing the contacts and possible connections and influences in detail still remains a subject-matter for discussions and research. In the second part of his paper, Prof. C h m i e l presented the criteria for a proper explanation of the texts found in the vicinity of the Qumran settlement. On the one hand, he warned against falling into the trap of „parallelomania”, that is, searching for and multiplying to exaggeration real and possible parallels, which hardly prove the common origin of the texts; on the other - against slighting the richness of the Qumran discoveries. He highlighted the theological principle of syncatabasis, that is, lowering the word of God to human speech, which Christian reflection on The New Testament and its historical bacground cannot avoid.

The two other reports did not concern the Qumran subject-matter. On the example of Acts of the Apostles, Rev. dr Waldemar R a k o c y CM (KUL) discussed the advantages of using the narrative method in exegesis of the Bible. Rev. dr Stanisław H a r ę z g a, lecturer at the Theological Institute in Przemyśl and rector of the local theological seminary, presented a raport entitled *World Initiatives of Biblical Apostleship* on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Catholic Biblical Federation celebrated in 1994.

During the symposium further progress was made in establishing the Association of Polish Catholic Biblical Scholars. The Association will have the aim of accomplishing the goals set forth by the conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum*: increasing knowledge of the Bible among the faithful, distributing editions of the Holy Scriptures prepared in accordance with the instructions of the Church, teaching about the Bible in every respect and organizing special weeks, exhibitions, trips and retreats, publishing and book-selling activities as well as missionary activity in countries which need it. A draft charter of the Association was presented and a board was appointed which in the near future will apply for approval of its activities by the Conference of Polish Bishops.

The next meeting of the Polish Catholic Biblical Scholars will be held in September 1995 in Szczecin. The subject-matter will be new methods of interpretation of the Bible in light of the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission published in the autumn of 1993.

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