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**IV THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM
THE CHURCH, JEWS AND JUDAISM
„JESUS: LORD AND BROTHER”**

Former Christian-Jewish meetings on Jesus, if any at all, tended towards imposing one's own point of view and demonstrating how legitimate one's own religious tradition is. Once the dialogue taken up, discussions have another goal: their aim is to learn from one another, and not only about Jesus, but about ourselves and about one another as well. This constituted the agenda of the 4th theological symposium *The Church, Jews and Judaism* organised by the Polish Bishops' Commission for the Dialogue with Judaism and the Theological Faculty of the Academy of Catholic Theology (ACT) and held in Warsaw from 11th—12th May 1992. Its topic, *Jesus: Lord and Brother — Jesus in Christian and Jewish view*, shows a fundamental breakthrough in the mutual understanding of Jesus.

Rev. Professor Roman Bartnicki, the dean of Theological Faculty of ACT, opened it praying with the words of Psalm 97. For almost two thousand years the question, Jesus once asked his disciples, *Who do you say I am?* (Mathew 16:15; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20) has been sounding. Rev. Professor Jan Lach, the rector of ACT, said to welcome the guests: „This question was tried to be answered by Jesus' disciples called Apostles. This question has to be answered by those who call themselves Christians. This question is also to be answered by those who belong to the chosen nation and who, at the beginning of their existence, made a covenant with God which the New Covenant, made in Christ and with the whole mankind, has nevertheless not broken. The question asked by the Son of the First Covenant Nation requires a serious answer (...). We realize the Christian answer, even formulated with Apostles' words, is, after centuries, not always understood well enough. It is a good thing, then, that we want together with all our distinguished guests to look at Jesus — Lord and Brother and look at Him in a Christian and Jewish view”. In behalf of Archbishop Henryk Muszyński, the metropolitan of Gniezno and chairman of the Polish Bishops' Commission for the Dialogue with Judaism, the guests were welcomed by Bishop Stanisław Gądecki, the auxiliary bishop of Gniezno, who emphasized that taking up a common dialogue, Christians and Jews became one organism since they gathered as a part of one body: the mankind.

Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin, the vice-president of Spertus College of Judaism in Chicago and for many years a participant of the interreligious dialogue in Poland, opened the discussion delivering his lecture *Who do you say I am? (Mark 8:29): A Jewish Response*. He said the changes in Christians and Church's attitude towards Jews and Judaism should be accompanied by a transformation of Jewish attitude towards Jesus and Christianity. On the part of Jews many prejudices and stereotypes gathered that must be overcome if the dialogue is to be really fruitful. Also the attitude of Christians towards Jews left much to be desired. Over the centuries, mutual feelings of hate and prejudice escalated. Rabbi Sherwin asked firmly: „As the daughter religion of Judaism, has Christianity obeyed the biblical commandment to honour her parent? As the mother religion of Christianity, has Judaism loved her daughter?”

Much of classical Jewish sources considered Jesus as a Jew who slanted the teaching of Judaism, as a false Messiah. Rabbi Sherwin boldly declared Jesus was not a false Messiah, but a Messiah who, from the Jewish point of view, was a failure. A failure means He did not achieve His ultimate goal of convincing the people to repent and the obey God's will. Only the greatest individuals are always failures because their goals are so exalted. Jesus was a failure because he did not bring about the final and complete redemption of the world. If he had completely succeeded, a *parousia* — a second coming, would not be necessary. According to Jewish theology, messianic redemption is not limited to the spiritual realm, but occurs in time and space, in history, in the socio-political realm. To be complete, messianic redemption must take place in the physical as well as the spiritual realm. Until peace, justice and compassion reign. Jews will continue to view our world as unredeemed, as pre-messianic. That is why Jews cannot view Jesus as the ultimate and final Messiah. However, Rabbi Sherwin suggests they may consider Jesus as a messiah, as a part of the life of his people and their messianic hope. In texts normative for Judaism, such a messiah is named Messiah son of Joseph (or Messiah son of Ephraim). He is a preliminary messiah, coming in anticipation of and paving the way for the final messiah, the Messiah son of David. He is a messiah who dies to provide the opportunity for the final redemption to take place. For a Christian listener, the nature and function, Rabbi Sherwin associates with Jesus, make the Master of Nazareth resemble the Christian image of John the Baptist. The vital novelty of his ideas consists in giving Jesus a place within Jewish theological discourse. This may considerably contribute to give an end to the centuries-long virtual excommunication of Jesus from the Jewish faith-community. This view of Jesus provides Him not only with a role in Jewish theology, but with a messianic role as well. Just as Christianity regards Judaism as *preparatio evangelica*, Judaism could acknowledge Christianity as *preparatio messianica*. Jesus could then become a true Brother in the eyes of Jews.

Unusual fascination of many Jews with Jesus was reflected in the works of Shalom Ash (1880—1957), a Jewish writer whose book, *The Man of Nazareth*, has been translated from Yiddish into Polish and recently published by Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie. Professor Michał Friedman (Jewish Historical Institute), its translator, delivered a lecture *The Man of Nazareth: a Messiah or a Rabbi?* He said that no doubts as to the historical existence of Jesus can be seriously treated. Discussions over it belong to the past, however. Christians and Jews continuously question His identity. Responses appear not only in scholarly essays and lecture halls, but in literature as well (also in the Jewish one), which can be beneficial to the interreligious dialogue; Jesus is the only person able to truly reconcile Christians and Jews, in spite of the contrary past.

Also Rev. Professor Stanisław Pisarek (Katowice) deliberated on the image of Jesus in Shalom Ash's works and reminded that the novel about Jesus is a part of a triple set concerning also Virgin Mary and Paul the Apostle.

Professor Peter J. Tomson (Amsterdam), publisher of the series *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, presented a paper *Jesus Traditions and Christology in Paul's Letters*. It is often said Paul did not attach great importance to the earthly Jesus and focused on Christ or faith, on Christ resurrected and anticipated by His disciples, and announced Him as the Son of God. Such opinions broaden and widen the gap between „the Jesus of history” and „the Christ of faith” who is professed especially in Protestant communities, whereas, these both views are absolutely inseparable. The oldest canonical Christian texts, the Letters of Paul, show a close relationship between the earthly Jesus and the heavenly Christ. In authentic Paul's Letters there are several undisputable allusions to Jezus' words espe-

cially recognisable in cases of practical life rules, so-called *halacha* in Hebrew. Then, not what Paul had himself to say is valid, but the deliberations arising from the teaching of Jesus. Paul's practical recommendations base on Jewish customs, views and laws, which matters inasmuch as the Apostle's world was permeated with elements of pagan thinking and acting. Also in Paul's Christology, the decisive factor is the personage and teaching of Jesus, whom the Apostle always perceives in the view of Resurrection. In his practical proposals, the lecturer suggested to finally relinquish the radical and illegitimate distinguishing between Jesus and Christ. We, Christians, have to study the Jesus history as well as acknowledge His resurrection and permanent presence, i. e., celebrate the Eucharist. Paul insisting on the heavenly Christ does not mean Judaism or the Law is rejected. The Jewish law is still valid for Jews and Christians of Jewish descent. Paul is not a Christian Hellenist, but the first witness of Jesus the Jew who brought Him closer to the pagan world and won His new non-Jewish followers.

Rev. Dr Waldemar Chrostowski (ACT) delivered the lecture *The Jewishness of Jesus*. Jesus divided Jews and Christians, but believers of each denomination agreed in one thing — they did not want to admit in public that Jesus had been a Jew. Repudiating the Jewishness of Jesus, which was undesired by both parts, they only broadened the existing gap. Not only doctrinal but also historical factors were involved, and first of all enormous mutual mistrust and reciprocally bad image which made the view of Jesus as a Jew „improper“. The consequences of ignoring or even denying the Jewishness of Jesus were lamentable. Jews increased the stereotypical prejudices and things untold, which reflected in classical Jewish literature and consciousness. Christians were tempted to dehumanise Jesus, to dematerialise Him, that is to mythicize Him. If Jesus was not a Jew, so who was he? The ignorance of Jesus' Jewishness was accompanied by a lack of understanding of the true nature of God's actions, as this Jewishness constitutes a part of a definite reality of the Redemption History. The son of God became not a „universal“ human, or the more a „superman“, but a human who in his body accomplished the Covenant between God and Abraham, between Isaac and James, and who is a fulfilment of his Covenant.

The Jews talk only about a history Jesus, and not about Christ, i.e. about a Lord exalted to the God's right. Christology, thus, is not a subject for Jewish theology. The response to the question of who Jesus is for Christians reflects well who He is not for Jews. Considering the basic Christian elements of Jesus image let us see how these two sister religions part, and distinguish what each of them finds specific. When thinking over the Jewishness of Jesus, we should not overlook two things: His self-consciousness and His place in Judaism of His days. The question, „Are you a Jew?“, if asked the earthly Jesus, would be absolutely obscure. Jesus was a Jew in the ethnic sense (was born from a Jewish mother, of David's house and in the bosom of Israel) as well as in the religious sense, which His life, teaching, solidarity with His own nation's fate and prophetic criticism of Israel's sins „from the inside“ reflect. The self-consciousness of Jesus was typically Jewish. The dialogue on Jesus has its advantage for the Christians in the Jews helping us reach the historic Jesus and His true earthly circumstances, without that Christians face the danger of perverting the Gospel. However, to reach the earthly Jesus does not cover the whole Christian message as Jesus is also an object of faith. As far as Jesus's place in Judaism of His days is concerned, He was the nearest to, contrary to popular Christian views, the teaching of the Pharisees and a position of a rabbi. These deliberations concluded with a suggestion that Jewish and Christian contemplation of Jesus are reciprocally necessary. In order to be a good Jew it is necessary to know Jesus as seen by the Christians: on the other hand, the Christian understanding of Jesus requires a knowledge of Judaism, and even a certain liking for it. If Christians refuse the Jewishness

of Jesus, they lose touch with their true roots. Taking his Jewishness into account might be an effective *antidote* to the lately demonstrated anti-Semite attitudes.

Dr Michał Wojciechowski (ACT) talked on *The New Testament Texts on Jews in Polish Biblical Translations*. He examined 11 Polish translations of the New Testament, paying attention to the translation itself, preface, annotations and subheadings. He noticed that in each translation there are expressions either weakening the friendly to Jews tone of the original or strengthening wordings which criticize them. Although these cases are not numerous, they can consolidate existing clichés unfair to Jews and Judaism.

Bishop St. Gądecki presented at the symposium the report on the 14th session of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ICJLC), which took part in Baltimore, USA, from 4th—7th May 1992. Also, the book *Jews and Christians in Dialogue* was promoted, which contains papers of the first in Poland Catholic-Jewish theological colloquium that took part in Cracow and Tyniec in April 1992. This book is the third volume of the series *The Church, Jews and Judaism*.

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