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A postscript to the conference: Is a dialogue always possible?

The academic conference “The Nicolaus Copernicus’s grave mystery. A dialogue of experts” (Kraków, 22–23 February 2010) has so far been the first when not only supporters of the claim that the remains of Nicolaus Copernicus had been found in the Frombork Cathedral but also critics thereof could speak in public on equal terms.

During the conference, all invited speakers took the opportunity to freely choose their topics and their interpretation. For this reason the conference, in the organizers’ intention was to be an opportunity to conduct an open and rational dispute over the sometimes contradictory interpretations of the same facts, and the term “dialogue”, used in the name of the conference, was to encourage the speakers to look for a common ground for agreement.

In response to these desiderata the authors of papers presented a large scope of these proclaimed, styles of argument used, means of interpretation applied, etc., and this was true equally for the researchers believing that the grave of Copernicus had been found, as well as for those who had serious doubts about that, and for the authors who neither spoke openly in favour nor against this claim.

A common ground for agreement for all the speakers of the Kraków conference was a conviction that Nicolaus Copernicus greatly contributed to the world’s culture, and, consequently, the need to formulate particularly thorough argumentation on any matter relating to him.

Unfortunately, during the conference it turned out with great clarity that generally there is no possibility of dialogue regarding the finding mentioned, because, according to its supporters, everything has already been proven, which however did consistently defied by the critics, who point to many gaps in the presented evidence and chosen arguments.

Which of the parties to the dispute about the alleged discovery of the remains of the most famous Canon of Warmia is right? What are the main arguments for

or against? Who of the authors formulated them for the first time? In my view, these and similar issues can only be decided about in a competent, detailed, interdisciplinary discussion between a narrow group of experts, and not by the general public's findings of questionable quality.

The reader interested in understanding the detailed arguments of both parties of the controversy is referred to a careful study of their publications. As a criticism of the findings of Jerzy Gąssowski's team predominates on the pages of this volume (which is connected with the fact that several researchers involved in the search rejected the invitation to participate in the conference), for the balance I would like to recommend reading carefully the texts defending the theses propounded by the representatives of this team — see bibliography attached, especially: Gąssowski 2005, 2010a, 2010b, Piasecki 2005, 2008, 2009.

At the same time, I would like to express hope that the problem of the grave and the remains of Nicolaus Copernicus will be a subject of further careful interdisciplinary research and that the authors of the new publications will competently refer to the issues addressed in the texts presented in this volume.

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