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# What Do Boston and Huambo Have in Common? (The President's Desk)

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Ron E. M. Clouzet

The Adventist Theological Society (ATS) has grown considerably over the past 25 years. From a small group of scholars from Berrien Springs and Collegedale to a worldwide membership involving many local chapters, dozens of institutions, and thousands of Bible students at every level, the Lord has opened the doors wide for the society's expansion.

The society's constitution calls for an executive board to run its interests led by the president, four vice-presidents (Communications, General, Global Outreach, and Publications), an executive secretary, a treasurer, and a president-elect. The board meets every November, in conjunction with yearly international scholarly meetings, and, whenever possible, in the spring. The board's membership, aside from the officers mentioned, is made up of scholars and leaders from North America, Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa, including young scholars fin-

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ishing their terminal degrees.

Each year, ATS meets for an entire day in conjunction with the Evangelical Theological Society's (ETS) annual conference to read and discuss papers

that are heard by Adventist as well as interested evangelical scholars. This often leads to further interest by evangelical thought leaders in the areas of research that Adventists pursue, and in some cases, to collegial relationships that have led scholars to a better understanding, and even acceptance, of Adventist theological positions. A Bible symposium is also planned every year and conducted in an Adventist church in the area where ETS and ATS scholars meet. Symposium attendance consists of ATS members and is open for any Seventh-day Adventist pastor, leader, or lay person interested in the subjects.

In 2008, these meetings will take place in the Boston area. On November 20, the ATS section of the ETS

yearly conference will meet in Providence, Rhode Island, dealing with the subject of "Text and Canon." Presenters will come from the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University and from Wheaton College's Graduate School. The papers will address issues in the books of Genesis, Numbers, Daniel, Ezekiel, 1 Corinthians, and Revelation, as well as one on the role of the community in determining the canon.

The Bible symposium will take place on Sabbath, November 22, in the Stoneham Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church, just outside of Boston. The theme for the presentations will be "The Spirit of Prophecy in Scripture and Adventist History." The schedule of speakers includes Gary Swanson, from the General Conference (GC), Isaac Olatunji, from Oakwood University, Gerhard Pfandl, from the GC's Biblical Research Institute, Merlin Burt, from Center for Adventist Research at the Seminary, and Jon Paulien, from Loma Linda University.

Presenters will answer questions from the audience in a panel discussion at the end of the program.

The mission of ATS is to be a theological resource for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Perhaps one of the most significant services rendered by members of ATS, then, has to do with the many Bible conferences and ministerial councils organized and conducted all over the

world. In 2008 alone, ATS led in no less than a dozen symposia in eight world divisions, including meetings in the Dutch Antilles, Bangladesh, Zambia, the Czech Republic, Russia, Angola, Madagascar, Kenya, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico.

In most cases, local divisions and unions team up to bring as many pastors, theology professors, and theology students from a designated union as is feasible, to meet for three or four days of theological meetings. Many presentations are followed with a time for questions, and a longer Q & A period is held on the last day. Pastors and church administrators often express deep thanks for the work ATS does, in bringing clarity, depth, and conviction to biblical and theological issues relevant to the Adventist Church.

As an example, a recent Bible conference was held in Huambo, Angola. Angola is a large country in southwest Africa with a comparatively small population, in part, due to a 30-year civil war that raged until 2002. The church there, however, is healthy and growing, with some 400,000 current members.

Drs. Moskala, Mueller, and Pfandl and I made the ATS team that traveled from the United States, via South Africa, to Luanda, the capital. After spending one night at Dr. Benjamin Paiva's home, third vice-president of the National Assembly and a committed Adventist lay leader, the

team flew to the interior. Huambo is the nation's second city, and near the area where the first missionaries brought the three angels' messages to Angola in the early 1920s. There, the team met with leaders from the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, as well as about 200 pastors, local leaders, and seminary professors.

Subjects included biblical hermeneutics, Spirit of Prophecy, the Book of Revelation, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and exegesis of the Old Testament. The schedule is demanding and the travel, at times, can be grueling. After spending three days traveling to Huambo, for example, before we boarded the return

flight, my luggage was misplaced. Due to miscommunication and other mishaps, I could not get it back for another week, only on my return to the U.S. In the meantime, we had gone to Madagascar for another Bible conference. So, I had to wash clothes every day and lacked some essentials most of us are used to. In addition, at one airport, authorities confiscated all my currency, appealing to some questionable law.

But the setbacks are all worth it when one sees the impact these presentations have on local pastoral leadership and students. God is at work, and it is the privilege of ATS members to put their resources to work for God.

