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Academics, Pastors Unite in Chile for Theological Symposium

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For Giuliani, however, the impact of these meetings is more personal: the sessions, he said, are “very interesting. After all, coming here always is really motivating. It gives you the feeling that Adventists all over the world are accomplishing a lot. At home I tend to see difficulties rather than opportunities, problems rather than successes.”

And not without reason: Austria, like the rest of Western Europe, is struggling to find faith after decades of secularism. While the Roman Catholic Church is the “traditional” religion in Austria, Giuliani—who said he’s unaware of any family relationship to the former New York City mayor of the same last name—says his peers view religious activity as something alien to their daily lives.

“They don’t know what to do with religion,” he explained. “It’s meaningless to them; they have no point of reference” from which they can discuss it.

At an age when most young adults contemplate their future and the hope of rising through executive ranks in a commercial enterprise, Giuliani said that the corner office isn’t his goal. Though he hopes to complete his dual degrees in business administration and political economics and have a career as an accountant or company comptroller, he doesn’t dream of corporate success.

Professionally, “it would be great to be able to serve the [Adventist] Church, but there are few opportunities to do that,” he said. He is active in the 160-member Graz Seventh-day Adventist Church and leads its youth group, where 20 to 25 young adults attend weekly. He also helps the union’s youth department.

“I wouldn’t care for working in top management,” he added, since that

would require “60 to 70 hours a week, with no time left for family, let alone church. I want time to be active to serve people.”

—reported by Mark A. Kellner, news editor

Academics, Pastors Unite in Chile for Theological Symposium

■ More than 400 participants spent five days in August at Chile Adventist University in Chillán, in intense Bible study and discussion about the book of Revelation, which presents the gospel message for the end times.

The meeting marked the tenth edition of an academic symposium uniting university professors, administrators, pastors, and theology students in South America. During the inaugural session, Joel Leiva, Chile Adventist University professor and event organizing-committee secretary, reminded participants that South America’s contributions to global Adventism not only included explosive growth and innovative evangelism, but also profound biblical and theological reflection.

In 20 plenary sessions, presented by specialists and invited speakers from different regions of the world church, participants were reminded that the book of Revelation is not only a book of prophetic symbols and eschatological perspective, but is truly the gospel, given for a decisive moment in history. More than 70 parallel sessions showcased current research into the apocalypse in South America and stimulated hearty discussions. Gluder Quispe, professor at the Peruvian Union University in Lima, Peru, provided in his plenary presen-

tation a panoramic view about how Adventists have interpreted this crucial biblical book throughout the history of the movement. Quispe noted the transition from a mostly historical perspective to a more theological and exegetical approach.

Other plenary sessions focused upon the structure of the book of Revelation, by Ranko Stevanovic, professor of New Testament, Andrews University; the historicist approach to the interpretation of the apocalypse, by Richard Sabuin, dean of the Theological Seminary of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines; the important hermeneutic principle of recapitulation by Ekkehardt Müller, deputy director, Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference; Ellen White’s significant contribution to the study of the apocalypse, by Alberto Timm, associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate and former rector of Seminario Adventista Latino-Americano de Teología (SALT); and the use of Old Testament texts, particularly of the book of Numbers, in the apocalypse by Gerald A. Klingbeil, Adventist World associate editor.

During the Sabbath worship service Erton Köhler, South American Division president, preached a sermon highlighting the need for Adventist universities to prepare pastors who are profound thinkers with a pastoral vision. Noting the close links between Genesis 1 and 2 and Revelation 21 and 22, Köhler asserted that re-creation and a new Jerusalem without belief in God’s original creation would not make any sense. He encouraged those present to “use the book of Revelation to bring hope” to a world that is increasingly more hopeless. Besides an

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intense program of quality research presentations and challenging devotionals, participants enjoyed moments of fellowship throughout the days, helped by the hospitable environment provided by Chile Adventist University.

On Sabbath evening four former rectors of SALT received plaques recognizing their contribution to Adventist education in South America. Amid heartfelt applause Mario Veloso, Enrique Becerra, Wilson Endruweit, and Alberto Timm were honored for their leadership in developing the theological program of the South American Division. Following that, Chile Adventist University gave honorary doctorates to

Mario Veloso and Sergio Olivares for their theological contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America.

Prior to the final plenary session focusing upon the eternal gospel contained in the apocalypse, the participants voted a consensus statement, affirming 10 crucial elements related to the interpretation and proclamation of the book of Revelation. Reinaldo Siqueira, current rector of SALT, announced the next symposium to be held in Brazil at Brazil Adventist University (Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo) in 2015 that will focus upon the life, work, and mission of Ellen G. White.

Miguel Ángel Núñez, a pastor in northern Chile, enjoyed the spirit of the symposium. “As always, it was a wonderful opportunity to renew old friendships and get up-to-date on Adventist scholarship about Revelation.”

Segundo Correa, dean of the theology faculty of Bolivia Adventist University, felt that the symposia awakened and promoted stronger biblical-theological research in South America. Carlos Steger, dean of the theology faculty of River Plate Adventist University in Argentina, appreciated the quality and the sheer breadth of the presentations. “I am returning home intellectually enriched and spiritually inspired,” he said. Participants left Chillán not only enriched and inspired—they also departed ready to share the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Web site containing the papers presented at the seminar will be available online before the end of 2013.

—Gerald A. Klingbeil, associate editor, Adventist World



STRUCTURAL PRESENTATION: Ranko Stevanovic, professor of New Testament at Andrews University spoke on the structure of the Book of Revelation during the Tenth South American Theological Symposium at the Adventist University of Chile.

AUC PHOTO

Annual Council Suggested 28 Fund

Annual Council delegates approved on October 16, 2013, the next step in a five-year process to better articulate the church’s core beliefs, using clearer—and frequently more inclusive—language.

Adventist theologians led delegates through an edited draft of all 28 fundamental beliefs, as prepared by the church’s Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee. The group was appointed in 2011 to follow up on a decision during the 2010 General Conference session to strengthen the church’s interpretation of origins.

It came as no surprise, then, that fundamental belief number 6 received the most attention. One recommended change to the church’s belief on Creation replaces “In six days, the Lord made” with “In a recent, six-day creation, the Lord made.” Another suggested change specifies that the Creation took place within the span of “six literal days.”

The word “literal” closes what some Adventists have claimed is an interpretive loophole that could allow theistic evolution to explain the Genesis origins account.

The edited draft also replaces the document’s citation of the first verse of Genesis, which states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” with a passage from Exodus 20, which says God created “the heavens and the earth, the sea,