

# Schwantes, Siegfried Júlio (1915–2008)

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## THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Siegfried Júlio Schwantes

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Siegfried Júlio Schwantes was a pastor, professor, archaeologist, and writer from Brazil. As a theology and sciences professor, he taught in ten institutions across five continents. He worked in Brazil, Perú, United States, Lebanon, France, Espanha, Mexico, Australia, and Rwanda.

## Early Years

Siegfried Júlio Schwantes was born on July 24, 1915, in the city of Poços de Caldas, Minas Gerais state, Brazil! His father, Arnaldo Pedro Schwantes (born 1881), was of German heritage and his mother, Estanislava Laura

Goroczna, had Polish ancestry.<sup>2</sup> His grandfather on father's side, Ernest Julius Theodor Schwantes, emigrated from Germany to Brazil around the 1870s. He lived in the Rio Grande do Sul state, where in 1874, he married Elizabeth Magdalena Adamy. From that union were born seven children, of which Arnaldo, Siegfried's father, was the youngest. Originally Lutheran, the family first came in contact with Adventism while living in the city of Taquari where they met German missionaries, including pioneer pastors Huldreich Graf and Frank Westphal. The first family members who became Adventists were baptized in 1898. Afterwards, Arnaldo studied nursing at Friedensau Adventist University, Germany. In 1908, he started working at the Instituto Paulista de Enfermagem [São Paulo Nursing Institute] in São Paulo. There he met Estanislava, and they married in September of 1911<sup>3</sup>

Siegfried spent his childhood in his hometown together with his four siblings – Willy, Érica, Carlos, and Arnaldo. At five years of age, he started primary education at the Dona Amazile Ramos school in Poços de Caldas. At the age of eleven, he went to a Lutheran German boarding school in the city of Rio Claro, São Paulo state, where he studied for two years. After that, he moved to the capital city of São Paulo. In 1931, at the age of sixteen, he was baptized at the São Paulo SDA Central Church located at Liberdade district in the city of São Paulo. In 1932, he concluded his secondary education in Escola Estadual Pedro II [Pedro II State School]. Simultaneously, he obtained a degree in Pedagogy at the Escola Normal Caetano de Campos.<sup>4</sup>

In the following year, he entered the Theology course at Brazil College (now referred to as UNASP-SP). At that time, Brazil College required only two years of studies from students who had concluded their high school education. Siegfried graduated in the 13<sup>th</sup> Theology class in 1934.<sup>5</sup> The college had plans to open a secondary course at the institution so Adventists could access higher education without having to study at non-Christian schools.

Siegfried was only 19 years old, and his academic talent already was evident. Since he intended to become a teacher, the South American Division invited him to study physics and chemistry at Emmanuel Missionary College (today Andrews University) in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He travelled to the United States in December 1934. Afterwards, he asked to be transferred to the Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, which he felt had a better structure for the study of sciences. There he received in 1938 his bachelor's degree in physics and chemistry.<sup>6</sup>

## Life and Ministry

His career as a teacher began in January of 1939 at Brazil Adventist College where he taught physics, chemistry and mathematics for five years.<sup>7</sup> On March 4, 1941, he married Maria Nogueira Dias (1922-2015), and the ceremony was officiated by Pastor Wandyr Arouca at the SDA Central Church of São Paulo. From their union were born Keila, Telma (1944-1953) and Ingrid.<sup>8</sup> Mariinha, as she was known, was born in São Paulo and was raised in a Presbyterian family, having studied at named Mackenzie Presbyterian University. The well-known João Dias Avenue that crosses over the Pinheiros River, bears the name of her grandfather. She studied

pedagogy at Brazil College, where she became an Adventist and met Siegfried. In the 1970s, she worked at the Brazilian consulate in Beirut, Lebanon, where she had the opportunity to help the refugees from the Lebanese Civil War.<sup>9</sup>

In 1944, Siegfried accepted the call to lead the recently inaugurated East Brazil Academy (today IPAE) in Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, where he served until 1947.<sup>10</sup> Among with his administrative functions, he also taught all the Theology courses. Desiring to improve academically, in August of 1947, he moved with his family to the United States. There he worked as administrator of the warehouse and algebra teacher at Madison College, Tennessee, until September of 1948, when he entered the Master's program in systematic theology at Potomac University (today Andrews University). After receiving his Master's degree in 1949, he accepted Pastor Leon Replogle's call to teach at the Spanish-American Seminary in New Mexico. In addition to teaching Bible and geometry, he also served as the local church's pastor.<sup>11</sup> In mid-1950, Siegfried returned to Brazil in response to Dario Garcia's call to teach at the theology department of Brazil College. There he taught archeology, prophets, Daniel, and Revelation besides also being the director and science teacher of secondary education.<sup>12</sup>

During his 1951 and 1952 vacations, he traveled along with Professor Orlando Ritter to Rio Grande do Sul, and they held evangelistic meetings in the city of Não-Me-Toque and visited families at Ijuí, Santa Maria, and Porto Alegre. One of the fruits of their ministry was the decision of talented young man named Wilson Endruveit to study at Brazil College. Endruveit would later become an important leader in the Theology Department.<sup>13</sup> After fourteen years of service to the Adventist Church, in January 1953, Siegfried was ordained to the pastoral ministry at the College's chapel by Pastor R. Figuhr.<sup>14</sup>

Now an ordained pastor, Siegfried was called on to assume greater responsibilities. From 1954 to 1956, he was the pastor of Brazil College's church. In addition, in 1954, he temporarily taught their theology course, replacing Prof. Siegfried Kümpel. Siegfried also contributed to the construction of the Musical Conservatory, using the financial inheritance received by the death of his father-in-law.<sup>15</sup> At the end of 1957, after serving for seven years as a theology teacher and director of the secondary school, he felt it was necessary to obtain better academic specialization. In February 1958, he journeyed to Italy to become better acquainted with many of the historical places in Europe. In April of that year, he traveled to the United States, where he applied to and was approved to enter the doctorate program in two prestigious universities: Harvard and John Hopkins. Choosing the second one, in 1962, he obtained his Ph.D. degree in biblical languages and Old Testament with a thesis named "Um Estudo Crítico do Texto de Miquéias" [A Critical Study on Micah]. In the meantime, he worked at the Baltimore College's Chemistry Lab.<sup>16</sup>

Later, he accepted the call to serve at Andrews University, where from 1963 to 1966 he taught the following disciplines: ancient history, prophets, Daniel, Revelation and spirit of prophecy.<sup>17</sup> In 1966, he was invited by the Middle East Division to serve as the director of the Middle East College's Theology Department in Lebanon. Although he already had a promising position at Andrews and with his wife working at the Brazilian consulate in

Chicago, he accepted the call with the conviction that it came from God.<sup>18</sup> There he led the Theology Department for five years, from 1966 to 1971.<sup>19</sup> In that country, he also had the opportunity to participate as an archeologist at a site in Jordan along with Siegfried H. Horne, his colleague from Andrews University.<sup>20</sup>

After that, following the retirement of Alfred Vaucher from the French Adventist University in Collonges, Siegfried accepted the call to serve there as a theology teacher, and he worked there from 1972 to 1978.<sup>21</sup> On February 9, 1978, he received from São Paulo's City Council the title of "São Paulo citizen" in recognition of his relevant contributions to the Adventist community in the city.<sup>22</sup> Next from 1979 to 1980, he taught theology at the Montemorelos University in Mexico.<sup>23</sup>

## Last Years

Siegfried retired in 1980 after 40 years of service dedicated to the Adventist Church.<sup>24</sup> After the reunions of the Euro-African Division's Administrative Board, he was invited to return to the French Adventist University as professor and director of the Theology Department, which at that time was in need of an experienced leader. Therefore, he assumed these activities in 1981, serving at that position until 1982.<sup>25</sup>

Following that, he returned with his wife to the United States. Although retired, he still remained interested in and capable of serving in the Adventist work, so he contacted the director of the Brazil College (today UNASP-SP) Walter Boger, who agreed with Siegfried that he would teach at the theology course during 1983. Besides teaching Hebrew, Isaiah, and archeology, he also taught Jeremiah to the Master's vacation program. Also, in that year, he finished writing a Hebrew-Portuguese dictionary of the Old Testament, which was an unprecedented accomplishment in that language.<sup>26</sup>

In September of 1984, he accepted the call from Director Arthur Ferch to teach at Avondale College's Theology Department, where he served from 1984 to 1987.<sup>27</sup> At the end of the third year, he left the country to return to the United States. Not long after that, in 1988, he was teacher for one semester at the Central African Adventist University in Kigali, Ruanda, where he taught Revelation, Isaiah, and Hebrew. In addition, in agreement with the Brazil College's direction, Siegfried taught during every first semester of each academic year he was able to,<sup>28</sup> finally stopping in 1995.<sup>29</sup> Also worthy of emphasis is the fact that he knew 23 languages, including dialects and dead languages.<sup>30</sup>

One his great contributions to the SDA Church around the globe were his literary materials. Siegfried is author of: *A Short History of the Ancient Near East*; *The Biblical Meaning of History*; *The Final Battle: Armageddon*; *Tio Sam na Intimidade [Uncle Sam for Real]*; *Colunas do Caráter [Character Columns]*; *Pequeno Dicionário Hebraico-Português do Velho Testamento [Small Hebrew-Portuguese Dictionary of the Old Testament]*; *O Significado Bíblico da História [The Biblical Meaning of History]*; *O Despontar de Uma Nova Era [The Emerge of a New Era]*; *Breve Comentário sobre o livro do Profeta Ezequiel [A Brief Comment of Prophet Ezekiel's Book]*; *Uma Breve História do Antigo Próximo Oriente [A Short History of the Old Near East]*; *Arqueologia [Archeology]*; *Professor Toda Vida*

[Teacher for All My Life]; *Mais Perto de Vida* [Closer to Life]; *O Profeta do Evangelho* [The Prophet of the Gospel]; *Jeremias* [Jeremiah]; *Ezequiel* [Ezekiel]; *Daniel* [Daniel]; *Hebreus* [Hebrews]; *Romanos* [Romans]; *Mais Perto de Deus* (*meditação CPB 1991*) [Closer to God – CPB meditation of 1991]. He also translated two books: *Parábolas de Jesus*, by Ellen G. White and *Milton Afonso: vida e obras* [Life and Works of Milton Afonso].<sup>31</sup>

Siegfried Schwantes died on July 1, 2008, at the age of 92, in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.<sup>32</sup> He was buried at the Campo Grande Cemetery, São Paulo, Brazil. The funeral service was officiated by Pastor Wilson H. Endruveit.<sup>33</sup>

## Contributions

Siegfried Júlio Schwantes left an important legacy to the Seventh-day Adventist Church which he served for more than 50 years. As a theology and sciences professor, he taught in ten institutions across five continents. He mostly worked in Brazil, Perú, United States, Lebanon, France, Espanha, Mexico, Australia, and Rwanda. His dedication to archeological themes contributed to the advancement of the archeological studies done by Adventists. He also left a relevant academic contribution to the Church for his many books and articles published.

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### NOTES

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2. Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 451; Siegfried J. Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida: uma autobiografia de Siegfried J. Schwantes*, first edition (São Paulo, SP: Instituto Adventista de Ensino, n.d.), 8.
3. Rossi Junior, 5-6; Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 8-10.
4. Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 11-19; Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 451.
5. Renato Stencil and William Timm, "Histórico da Faculdade Adventista de Teologia no Brasil," *Seminário Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia*, Março, 2014, 36.; Rossi Junior, 15; Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 20.
6. Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 452; Rossi Junior, 16; Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 20-30.
7. Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 452; Rossi Junior, 16; Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 39-43.
8. Rossi Junior, 18-19; Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 457; Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 39, 40, 43.
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12. Rossi Junior, 23; Minha Vida de Pastor, 453; Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 51-52.
13. Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 52.
14. *Ibid.*, 53; Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 453.
15. Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 56.; Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 453; Torres et al., 32.
16. Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 61-69; Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 453.
17. Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 55-56.; Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 456.
18. Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 80-82.
19. Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 456.

20. Torres et al., 28.
21. Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 97-107, 456.
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25. Schwantes, *Professor toda a vida*, 125-131; Schwantes, "Breve Relato da Minha Vida," 456.
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33. Torres et al., 32.

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