

UPF Giessen, Germany's program: Europe: The End or the Turning Point?

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Giessen, Germany -- A program held by UPF asked the question: In what direction is human history heading?

"Europe: The End or the Turning Point?" was the title of the program on August 31, 2019, featuring Barbara Grabner, a journalist and historian who also is involved in environmental protection.

Ms. Grabner referred to many famous thinkers. One hundred years ago, she said, *The Decline of the West* was published. This visionary work, written by the German philosopher of history Oswald Spengler, attracted great international interest.

Over time, cultural spheres are replaced. It can be seen that every 2,000 years marks the start of a new era. The Roman civilization was followed by the Christian civilization, which spread from Europe to the Americas. And it is precisely this cultural sphere which is now experiencing much unrest and chaos and the decline of morals and traditional values.

But even amid these shakeups, some positive trends can be observed: intercultural and interreligious dialogue; a global way of life with regard to fashion, food and music; readiness to cooperate beyond all borders; protection of nature and the environment; international connections through the Internet and social networks.

Ms. Grabner mentioned Paul K. Chappell, the author and leader of the Institute for Peace in the Atomic Age, who in his books and presentations offers a very positive outlook for the future of the world.

Arnold J. Toynbee, an influential 20th-century philosopher of history, said that a civilization can survive only when it responds appropriately to challenges. Here religion plays a large part as a connection between the old and the new civilizations. According to Toynbee, the foundation for a generally accepted "world ethic" must contain the best elements of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

Ms. Grabner also mentioned Swiss theologian Hans Küng, who has long been engaged in dialogue between religions and is the founder of Project World Ethic.

How will history develop further?

Prognoses indicate that the Atlantic civilization will be superseded by the Pacific. Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel Prize winner for literature, attributed a leading role in this to Korea: "In the Golden Age of Asia, Korea was one of its lamp-bearers, and that lamp is waiting to be lit once again for the illumination of the East."

UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon made the following statement: "Western culture, based on economy, can reach its climax only when it unites with Eastern culture with its roots in spirituality. Both cultures must fuse with the Pacific at the center so that a mature, great and noble civilization can be established." (Faith and Reality, p.77)

From the Korean Peninsula a new cultural sphere will develop after peaceful unification has been established, Ms. Grabner said.

The presentation stimulated many interesting questions from the audience and resulted in a lively discussion after the end of the formal program.