

Rossi, João Baptista Clayton (1930–1993)

THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

The Brazilian White Center – UNASP is a team of teachers and students at the Brazilian Ellen G. White Research Center – UNASP at the Brazilian Adventist University, Campus Engenheiro, Coelho, SP. The team was supervised by Drs. Adolfo Semo Suárez, Renato Stencil, and Carlos Flávio Teixeira. Bruno Sales Gomes Ferreira provided technical support. The following names are of team members: Adriane Ferrari Silva, Alan Gracioto Alexandre, Allen Jair Urcia Santa Cruz, Camila Chede Amaral Lucena, Camilla Rodrigues Seixas, Daniel Fernandes Teodoro, Danillo Alfredo Rios Junior, Danilo Fauster de Souza, Débora Arana Mayer, Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Felipe Cardoso do Nascimento, Fernanda Nascimento Oliveira, Gabriel Pilon Galvani, Giovana de Castro Vaz, Guilherme Cardoso Ricardo Martins, Gustavo Costa Vieira Novaes, Ingrid Stéfane Santos Andrade, Isabela Pimenta Gravina, Ivo Ribeiro de Carvalho, Jhoseyr Davison Voos dos Santos, João Lucas Moraes Pereira, Kalline Meira Rocha Santos, Larissa Menegazzo Nunes, Letícia Miola Figueiredo, Luan Alves Cota Mól, Lucas Almeida dos Santos, Lucas Arteaga Aquino, Lucas Dias de Melo, Matheus Brabo Peres, Mayla Magaieski Graepp, Milena Guimarães Silva, Natália Padilha Corrêa, Rafaela Lima Gouvêa, Rogel Maio Nogueira Tavares Filho, Ryan Matheus do Ouro Medeiros, Samara Souza Santos, Sergio Henrique Micael Santos, Suelen Alves de Almeida, Talita Paim Veloso de Castro, Thais Cristina Benedetti, Thais Caroline de Almeida Lima, Vanessa Stehling Belgd, Victor Alves Pereira, Vinicius Fernandes Alencar, Vinicius Pereira Nascimento, Vitória Regina Boita da Silva, William Edward Timm, Julio Cesar Ribeiro, Ellen Deó Bortolotte, Maria Júlia dos Santos Galvani, Giovana Souto Pereira, Victor Hugo Vaz Storch, and Dinely Luana Pereira.



João Baptista Clayton Rossi
Photo courtesy of Brazilian White Center - UNASP.

João Baptista Clayton Rossi was a federal attorney, president of the Bible Society of Brazil, lawyer, legal adviser to the Ministry of Education, and founding elder of the Central Church of Brasília.

João Baptista Clayton Rossi was born on August 31, 1930, in the city of Pouso Alegre, Minas Gerais. The son of Maria do Carmo Pereira Rossi (1906-1998) and Benedicto Rossi, he had four other brothers: Maria Aparecida Rossi, Newton Egídio Rossi, Valter Rossi, and Wilson Jorge Rossi.¹

His family, traditionally Catholic, was very involved with the activities of that denomination. However, contact with Adventism led their mother, Maria do Carmo, to reconsider her beliefs and accept its message. With this decision, Wilson Rossi soon followed, becoming the first Sabbath-keepers of the family.² João's first contact with Adventism happened while he attended high school in Campinas. His mother used to send him letters talking about the Seventh-day Adventist Church and keeping of the Sabbath. He decided to visit the church a few times and then never stopped attending, receiving, at that moment, support from Pastor Geraldo de Oliveira.³

In the meantime, João Clayton was a football player, already being requested to join a professional team. For this reason, he did not decide to follow the message preached by his mother since most games were held on Saturdays. In a certain soccer match, when he was about 18 years old, Rossi was seriously hit by a ball to his head, falling unconscious. Then, he was quickly referred to a hospital where he was diagnosed with polio that had been previously contracted and also with semi-paralysis from the knee down due to the accident in the game. Rossi remained hospitalized in recovery and after being discharged, decided to accept the Adventist message.

He faced difficulties in keeping the Sabbath during his study period and the working day. The first trial was still in the admission examination for the University of Law due to the assessment that was scheduled for a Saturday, which prevented him attending. He decided to go to church and witness to that fact, waiting for the next few days to take the remaining tests. These were enough for Rossi to be classified among the 45 students who were admitted.⁴

While studying law, in 1953, he was frequently mocked, sometimes by classmates and others by teachers, because of his decision to not take exams on Saturdays. However, he remained firm in his decision, and it did not prevent him from graduating from the *Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais* in Belo Horizonte. At this University, he also completed his master's and doctoral degrees.⁵

In 1960, as a member of the Central Church of Belo Horizonte, Rossi helped that congregation by teaching the Portuguese language in weekly classes. He taught on Sundays, intending to improve the language skills of others so

they could spread the Adventist message in the best way. Voluntarily, Rossi transmitted practical knowledge of how to speak in public, pronunciation tips, punctuation, and synonyms, among other teachings. During this period, he made a great contribution to the growth of this church.⁶

On January 24, 1958, on the engagement of his brother Wilson Rossi, he met Dejanira Mendes, whom he married on January 24, 1961. The daughter of Alfredo Pereira Mendes, who served in the Brazil Publishing House (CPB) for 45 years, Dejanira worked as a translator at CPB, but after the wedding, she moved to Brasília with her husband. From this union were born: Nayra Rossi, born in São Paulo on November 23, 1967, and Neysa Rossi, also born in São Paulo, this time on November 26, 1970.⁷

In Brasília, Rossi served as an attorney at the National Social Security Institute (INSS)⁸ He spent time establishing himself and gaining political influence. In 1967, Dr. Clayton Rossi, through his prestige in public offices, helped to extend the deadline to start the construction of the pilot plant of the Adventist Church in the city of Brasília in the Federal District. The land had been donated by the Brazilian government to the South Brazil Union Conference (USB), and it would be forfeited if the work did not start within the established time limit. At the end of its construction in March 1969, its instruments were also donated by João Rossi.⁹ In 1968, along with other colleagues, he founded the *Centro Universitário de Brasília* (UniCEUB).¹⁰ Around this period, he was appointed as a federal attorney.¹¹

From 1972 to 1974, because there was no pastor at the Central Adventist Church of Brasília, Rossi assumed the church's responsibilities as the first local elder.¹² In May 1976, the federal attorney and elder of the Adventist church in Brasília, Dr. João Rossi worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that pastors Henrique Berg and Geraldo Clajus were released from captivity in Mozambique and could return to Brazil with their families. They were in prison for 182 days, victimized by the religious intolerance existing in the country at that time.¹³ On the 21st of that month, João Rossi, Pastor Walter Streithorst, and the two pastors who returned from the African country were at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil (Itamarati) and in other government offices located in Brasília to thank the efforts of the Brazilian authorities for his release.¹⁴

At the 9th General Conference of the Biblical Society of Brazil (SBB) held from July 26 to 28, 1976, João Rossi was elected Vice President of SBB.¹⁵ In March 1977, he was the representative of Brazil at the World Congress on the Freedom of Religious Consciousness, which took place in the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Between October 21 and 23 of the same year, Dr. Rossi participated in the Great Congress of Volunteer Missionaries (MV) in the city of Taguatinga in the Federal District. There, he presented the panel "If I Were Young" alongside Dr. Ruy Vieira, professors Isolda Losso and Moisés Prates, and Pastor R. Gorski.¹⁶

In 1978, Rossi used his influence so the church, through the Adventist Hospital Group of Brazil (GHAB), USB, and the Central Brazil Mission (MBC), was able to buy a land of about 100,000 square meters in Brasília, Federal District, for a price much lower than its estimated value so that a hospital could be built there.¹⁷

In Brasília, on November 19, 1978, Dr. Rossi was decorated by the Armed Forces with the Peacemaker Medal, a commendation that is given to the highest figures in the country once a year. A year later, on November 21, 1979, he also participated in a visit by Adventist leaders to the president of the Republic, General João Batista Figueiredo, in his office at the Planalto Palace.¹⁸

In July 1980, Dr. Rossi received the Medal of Merit Santos Dumont (patron of aeronautics) in the courtyard of the military airport of Brasília along with Dr. Eurides Brito da Silva, secretary of Education and Culture of the Federal District and a member from the Federal Council of Education, who also was a Seventh-day Adventist.¹⁹ Due to the resignation of the president of SBB, Dr. Aldo da Silva Fagundes, on August 12, 1980, Dr. Rossi assumed the presidency of the organization. At the 10th SBB General Conference held on August 25, 1982, Rossi was elected to be the entity's fifth president for the period from 1982 to 1985. During this term, the organization held Bible exhibitions, created the "Personalized Bible", launched the Evangelizing Assistant project, and started the production of Bibles in Spanish.²⁰

Between September 6 and 8, 1991, Dr. Rossi spoke along with Dr. Belisário Marques and pastors Ronaldo de Oliveira and Neumoel Stina at the I Congress of University Adventists in São Carlos, following the theme of "Testimony Always!" Dr. Rossi also contributed in 1992, together with ex-senator Eunice Michiles, Pastor Walter Streithorst, brother Oscar Raurenberg, and others, to intervene so that the Brazilian elections did not happen on Saturday.²¹

Among the positions he held, in addition to be a university professor in the city of Brasília, Federal District, he was a legal advisor to the Ministry of Education, working with Minister Marco Antônio Maciel. He was also a member of the Superior Censorship Council. After retirement, he continued teaching at UniCEUB besides maintaining a law office with the former Brazilian minister of justice Bernardo Cabral and deputy attorney general of the Republic Degrazia. He was also awarded the Military Judicial Merit Order Medal.²²

Dr. João Clayton Rossi died on December 22, 1993, after fighting for one year against cancer. He died in the city of Brasília at the age of 63. He was buried in the Campo da Esperança cemetery in the same city in which he died.²³

João Baptista Clayton Rossi made a remarkable contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church through his wide political influence. He served for 30 years as a federal attorney, accumulating functions as vice president and president of SBB, legal advisor to the Ministry of Education, university professor, and deputy attorney general of the Republic. He helped to implement laws that protect religious freedom in Brazil. His contribution to the Brazilian homeland and the Church was of great importance, representing Adventist principles in the country's legal-political environment.

SOURCES

- "Adventistas são Condecorados em Brasília." *Revista Adventista* 75, no. 9 (September 1980).
- "Agradecimento ao governo brasileiro." *Revista Adventista* 71, no. 7 (July 1976).
- "Alfredo Pereira Mendes (1891 – 1984)." *Revista Adventista* 79, no. 11 (November 1984).
- Bechara, Assad. "As eleições no Sábado." *Revista Adventista* 88, no. 9 (September 1992).
- "Câmara dos Deputados - Ata da 119ª Sessão em 30 de maio de 2008." House of Representatives (online), May 30, 2008.
- "Divisão Sul-Americana – Comunicação." *Revista Adventista* 72, no. 5 (May 1977).
- "Divisão Sul-Americana – Comunicação." *Revista Adventista* 73, no. 11 (November 1978).
- "Dr. João Batista Clayton Rossi." *Revista Adventista* 90, no. 3 (March 1994).
- "Evangelismo na União Incaica." *Revista Adventista* 77, no. 8 (August 1982).
- Geraldi, Luiz Antônio. *História da Bíblia no Brasil*. 1ª edição, Barueri, SP: Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil, 2008.
- Gonsioroski, Josias. Igreja Adventista Central de Brasília: 40º Aniversário, 1ª edição, Brasília, DF: Gráfica e Editora Reproart, 2008.
- Lessa, Rubens. "Juntos, apesar das vaias." *Revista Adventista* 90, no. 12 (December 1994).
- Mendes, Alfredo. "Curso de Colportagem da Missão Mineira." *Revista Adventista* 53, no. 7 (July 1958).
- "Relatórios, Planos e Metas. Visita a Figueiredo e Mudança da CPB. Destaques da Comissão Diretiva da DSA." *Revista Adventista* 75, no. 13 (January 1980).
- Report of the Events Involved in the Detention of Pastors Henrique Berg, Gerhad Clajus, and Bernardino Pene Mabote of the Mozambique Union of S. D. A. Church, Occurred by October 24, 1975, at Lourenço Marques (Maputo, today), Mozambique. In Acervo do Centro Nacional da Memória Adventista/Centro de Pesquisas Ellen G. White: UNASP-EC, Engenheiro Coelho, SP. Rack: 2. Shelf: 13. File: "Berg, Henrique."
- Sarli, Wilson. "Já Inaugurado o Templo e Centro Evangelístico de Brasília." *Revista Adventista* 64, no. 4 (April 1969).
- "Sem medo de conviver e se desviar." *Revista Adventista* 87, no. 12 (December 1991).
- Silveira, Deícola. "Primeiro Congresso Sul-Americano da Juventude Adventista." *Revista Adventista* 21, no. 12 (December 1956).
- "Terreno do Plano Piloto." *Revista Adventista* 62, no. 11 (November 1967).
- "Universitários promovem encontro." *Revista Adventista* 87, no. 10 (October 1991).
- Valle, Arthur S. "Agradecimento ao Governo Brasileiro." *Revista Adventista* 71, no. 7 (July 1976).
- Veloso, Mário. "Porque Minha Igreja Cresce." *Revista Adventista* 86, no. 5 (May 1990).

NOTES

1. "Sem medo de conviver e se desviar," *Revista Adventista* 87, no. 12 (December 1991): 5; Neysa Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, September 12, 2019; Wilson Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, October 2, 2019.?
2. Neysa Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, September 12, 2019.?
3. "Sem medo de conviver e se desviar," *Revista Adventista* 87, no. 12 (December 1991): 5.?
4. Ibid.?
- 5.

Ibid.?

6. Felipe F. Alves. "Arte de Falar em Público," *Revista Adventista* 55, no. 6 (June 1960): 39.?
7. Neysa Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, September 12, 2019; Wilson Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, October 2, 2019; "Alfredo Pereira Mendes (1891 – 1984)," *Revista Adventista* 79, no. 11 (November 1984): 25.?
8. Neysa Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, September 12, 2019.?
9. "Terreno do Plano Piloto," *Revista Adventista* 62, no. 11 (November 1967): 30; Wilson Sarli, "Já Inaugurado o Templo e Centro Evangelístico de Brasília," *Revista Adventista* 64, no. 4 (April 1969); Neysa Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, September 12, 2019; Wilson Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, October 2, 2019.?
10. "Câmara dos Deputados - Ata da 119ª Sessão em 30 de maio de 2008," House of Representatives, May 30, 2008. Accessed January 6, 2020, <https://www.camara.leg.br/internet/plenario/notas/solene/2008/5/HV300508.pdf>.?
11. Neysa Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, September 12, 2019.?
12. Josias Gonsioroski, *Igreja Adventista Central de Brasília: 40º Aniversário* (Brasília, DF: Gráfica e Editora Reproart, 2008), 21.?
13. Arthur S. Valle, "Agradecimento ao Governo Brasileiro," *Revista Adventista* 71, no. 7 (July 1976): 13; Report of the Events Involved in the Detention of Pastors Henrique Berg, Gerhad Clajus, and Bernardino Pene Mabote of the Mozambique Union of S. D. A. Church, Occurred by October 24, 1975, at Lourenço Marques (Maputo, today), Mozambique (Acervo do Centro Nacional da Memória Adventista/Centro de Pesquisas Ellen G. White: UNASP-EC, Engenheiro Coelho, SP), 17; "Evangelismo na União Incaica," *Revista Adventista* 77, no. 8 (August 1982): 9.?
14. "Agradecimento ao governo brasileiro," *Revista Adventista* 71, no. 7 (July 1976): 13.?
15. Luiz Antônio Geraldi, *História da Bíblia no Brasil* (Barueri, SP: Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil, 2008), 146.?
16. "Divisão Sul-Americana – Comunicação," *Revista Adventista* 72, no. 5 (May 1977): 25; "Primeiro Deus," *Revista Adventista* 72, no. 10 (December 1977): 35.?
17. "Divisão Sul-Americana – Comunicação," *Revista Adventista* 73, no. 11 (November 1978): 37.?
18. "Divisão Sul-Americana – Comunicação," *Revista Adventista* 74, no. 2 (February 1979): 25; "Relatórios, Planos e Metas. Visita a Figueiredo e Mudança da CPB. Destaques da Comissão Diretiva da DSA," *Revista Adventista* 75, no. 13 (January 1980): 28.?
19. "Adventistas são Condecorados em Brasília," *Revista Adventista* 75, no. 9 (September 1980): 32.?
20. Luiz Antônio Geraldi, *História da Bíblia no Brasil* (Barueri, SP: Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil, 2008), 146-147.?
21. Assad Bechara, "As eleições no Sábado," *Revista Adventista* 88, no. 9 (September 1992): 35; "Universitários promovem encontro," *Revista Adventista* 87, no. 10 (October 1991): 46; Mário Veloso, "Porque Minha Igreja Cresce," *Revista Adventista* 86, no. 5 (May 1990): 2.?
22. Neysa Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, September 12, 2019; "Dr. João Baptista Clayton Rossi," *Revista Adventista* 90, no. 3 (March 1994): 27.?
23. Neysa Rossi, email message to Elvis Eli Martins Filho, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, September 12, 2019; "Dr. João Baptista Clayton Rossi," *Revista Adventista* 90, no. 3 (March 1994): 27.?