

Revista Adventista (Adventist Review, Brazil)

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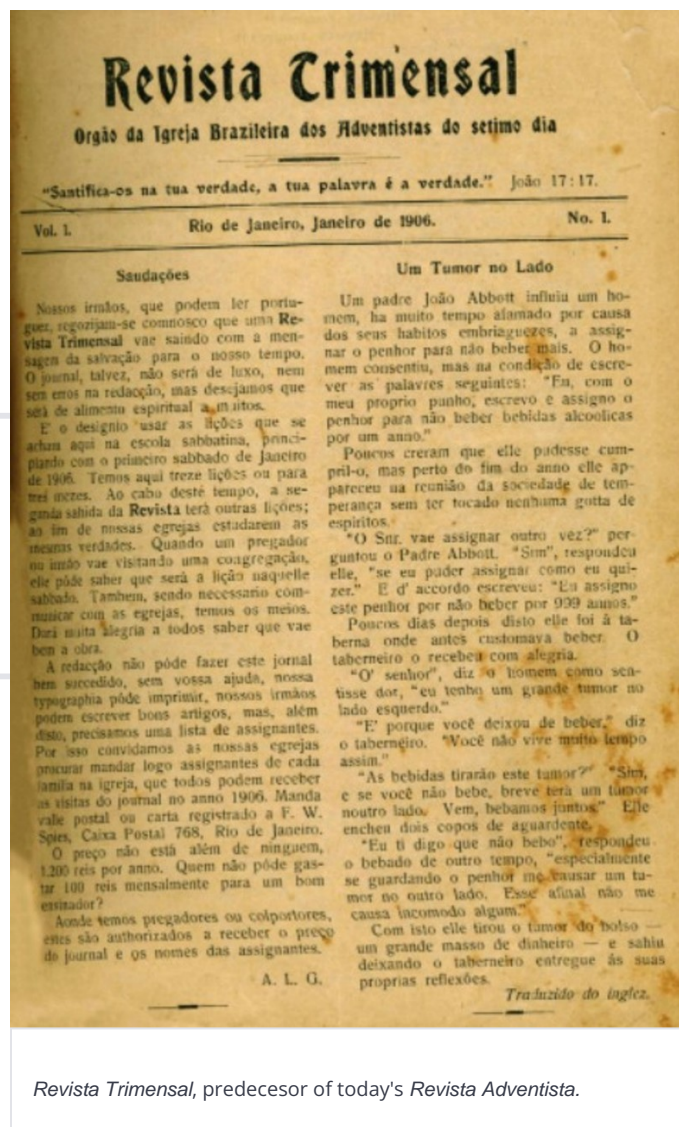
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Revista Adventista (Brazilian Adventist Review) is a monthly magazine of the Brazil Publishing House of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil. The publishing house is located in Sao Paulo State where there are more than 265,000 Adventists, more than 2,000 churches, one hospital, two clinics, and a large number of schools with more than 78,000 students.

The story of the magazine merges with the story of the publishing house. The origin of the publishing house dates back more than 110 years when there were no Adventist church periodicals published regularly in the country. Since then, its role has been to provide information of interest to various church segments, as well as relevant news and articles to members of the denomination in Brazil.

Context

The year 1906 is not among the most celebrated of the twentieth century. However, the chronology of the main events recorded in the period does not fail to include great achievements. For example, in that year, Alberto Santos-Dumont, considered the "father of aviation," made his first public flight with an aircraft heavier-than-air at the Bagatelle Field in Paris (France).¹ In the world of communication, the first radio broadcast was also recorded in Massachusetts, United States.² An equally important fact marked the history of Adventist communication in Brazil. That year, the official printed review of the Adventist church in Portuguese was created.



Revista Trimensal, predecessor of today's Revista Adventista.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Brazil was a country with less than twenty million inhabitants.³ The city of Rio de Janeiro, which was still the federal capital, had approximately 811,000 residents.⁴ In turn, the population of São Paulo, today the largest Brazilian metropolis, did not exceed three hundred thousand people.⁵

At that time, the number of Adventists in the country was also far less than it is today. In 1906, there were approximately 1,200 members distributed in 21 churches (equivalent to 0.006 percent of the population at the time; today the number of members represents approximately 0.8 percent of the inhabitants in the country)⁶ As the number of believers was not substantial, church leadership concluded that the Brazilian Adventist community needed a vehicle to express itself.⁷

As J. W. Westphal reported to W. A. Spicer in 1903, until then, Adventism in the country had seen "few accomplishments among Brazilians who spoke Portuguese."⁸ That was mainly due to the scarcity of literature production in the local language.

With the exception of *O Arauto da Verdade* (The Herald of Truth), the first publication printed by the denomination in Portuguese was in 1900, in Rio de Janeiro. The periodicals circulating in Brazil were basically limited to magazines in German. According to historian Edegar Link, the periodicals *Missionsarbeiter* (Missionary Worker), *Der Adventisten Rundschau* (The Adventist Panorama), and *Rundschau der Adventisten* (Panorama of Adventists) were among the periodicals published in German on Brazilian soil.⁹ At the time, the South region, populated by Europeans, still dominated the map of Adventism in the country.¹⁰

The insertion of Adventism in Brazil notably occurred in the late nineteenth century through the German communities,¹¹ where the church also established its first churches and institutions.¹² The SDA Church in Brazil was a German-speaking church for almost ten years. According to Hosokawa and Schunemann, the growth of the denomination in the first two decades was slow and difficult, despite the fact that the movement received several German Adventist immigrants, who helped to strengthen Adventism in the country.¹³ The authors state that, in part, the fact that the SDA Church was very strong among the Germans made the doctrine even more difficult to understand because several Adventist churches of that period conducted their worship in German and repeated a liturgical form of German Protestant communities.

According to historian Edegar Link, the first Adventist church among Brazilians was *Não-Me-Toque*, in Rio Grande do Sul, organized by Pastor Huldreich F. Graf on October 27, 1898, with 48 members, of whom 40 were Brazilian converts baptized by him. This community emerged as a result of the work of the Kämpel family and the three-week Harvest Evangelism led by Pastor Graf. The Adventist Church in *Não-Me-Toque* marked the transition from the German to the Portuguese Adventist message.¹⁴

However, although there were already Brazilian converts before the turn of the century, Adventism only gained strength outside the German colonies a few years later. After the initial need to form a group of members,¹⁵ Adventist pioneers in Brazil realized the importance of diversification of the work and institution building, as well as the organization of economically independent administrative bodies, in order to finance such ventures and

advances in evangelization.¹⁶ In 1906, the year of the magazine's origin, the following conferences and missions were organized in Brazil: *Sul-Riograndense Conference*, composed of six churches and 444 members; *Paraná-Santa Catarina Conference*, with 12 churches and 427 members; *Paulista Mission*, with only one church and 23 members and the North Mission, with three churches and 176 members.¹⁷

This administrative structure, which also included a publishing house, the International Treaty Society in Brazil, contributed to bringing the Adventist message to the Brazilians. In the book, *A Chegada do Adventismo ao Brasil* (Adventism's Arrival in Brazil), Michelson Borges states that the publication of *O Arauto da Verdade* (The Herald of Truth) played a decisive role in the beginning of the movement to reach this new community.¹⁸ E. H. Meyers came to regard this as "a new era for our work in the Portuguese-speaking region of South America."¹⁹ Similarly, the creation of a magazine in Portuguese, the first with regular publication in the country, represented a breakthrough toward Brazilian communities, marking a phase of multiplication of Portuguese language literature.²⁰

Foundation

The first copy of the periodical was printed in January 1906 by the International Society of Treaties in Brazil,²¹ in Taquari, Rio Grande do Sul, with only 12 pages, in black and white and without any image, measuring approximately 17 by 24.5 centimeters, with the title *Revista Trimensal*. It came to give voice to the Brazilian Adventist community, chronicle events, and nurture faith.²² Initially identified on the cover as "Organ of the Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church" (a designation that later changed to "official body" and finally to "general body"), the magazine thus addressed readers on the opening page: "Our brethren, who can read Portuguese, rejoice with us that the *Revista Trimensal* is coming out with the message of salvation for our time. The Review, perhaps, will not be deluxe, not without errors in the wording, but we hope it will be spiritual food to many."²³

Admittedly, it was not free from "writing errors." The name should have been *Revista Trimestral* (Quarterly Magazine), not *Revista Trimensal* (three times a month), considering that it was published every three months, not three times a month. But "the idea was right."²⁴

Where the idea of a periodical originated from is unknown. But, like any pioneering initiative, it was idealized by visionary people. The list of collaborators of the first edition include surnames such as Graf, Gregory, Lipke, Pages, Spies, and Schwantes, among others. In the early years of circulation of the Review, the participation of missionaries was well represented. The content largely signed by largely unknown writers (or their descendants) was based on personal accounts of missionary journeys, exhortations, and church news. However, the first copies also included Sabbath School lessons. In the first edition, half of the 12 pages were dedicated to the Bible study guide.

Making this material accessible to church families has always been a concern. In the first year of circulation, the annual subscription could be made at the cost of 1,200 réis, less than half the value of the annual subscription of *O Arauto da Verdade* (The Herald of Truth), which cost 4,000 réis.²⁵ "The price is at anyone's reach [...]. Who cannot afford to spend 100 réis a month for a good teacher? argued Abel L. Gregory on the front page of the inaugural edition, a U.S. missionary who was elected vice president of *Rio Grande do Sul Conference* that same year. As evidenced in the last issue of that year, the magazine worked on the subscription system and was sent through the postal service. At the end of the first year of circulation, the newspaper urged, "None of the brothers who are familiar with the Portuguese language should be without the periodical. Therefore, brethren, send the assignments for the new year soon so as not to lose a single number." It also reinforced, "We hope that the brothers who have not yet subscribed for this review, will do so soon, because it is of great importance, due to the lessons. The subscription price is only 1,200 réis for the year, which we believe to be within reach of all."²⁶

Story

In January 1908, the Review began to be published monthly, receiving, consequently, a name compatible with the periodicity (*Revista Mensal*) [Monthly Magazine]. The current name, *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review), came in 1931. Changes in name and periodicity were accompanied by changes in review size. Two years after it was released, the number of pages dropped to eight. However, it jumped to 16 in 1918, and then to 32 in 1931, reaching 48 in 1977, and remained within 40 pages until December 2014. By January of the following year it reached 52 pages.

Regarding graphic transformations, the Review began to publish photos and illustrations beginning in 1918. However, it was only from January 1955 that some editions had a cover in two colors. This represented a double advance. In addition to gaining color, the Review gained cover, as until this period, articles began on the first page, below the heading. It was only after the 1950s that the text was replaced by images on the front page, which began to value illustrations and photos on topics related to the family, church, and events that showed the growth of Adventism in Brazil, temple façades, and portraits of Adventist personalities.

However, from 1977 to 1996, the transition phase of CPB from Santo André in São Paulo ABC to Tatuí, in the interior of the state of São Paulo, the magazine resumed using shades of black and white. Successive economic crises throughout the 1980s and early 1990s²⁷ limited investment in the Adventist publishing industry. But, with the recovery of the economy, the Adventist publishing house began a phase of technological modernization.²⁸ As a result, as of 1997, the Adventist magazine began printing in full color and on couche paper.

In order to serve the various segments of the church and the demands of each era, the history of the periodical was also marked by adjustments in its editorial project. In 1940 (about a year after the *Rundschau der Adventisten* review was no longer published in German), the *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review) included a section in German. Although by this time the church in Brazil, with approximately 13,000 members,²⁹

was not so "European" anymore, there were still German-speaking Adventist strongholds, especially in the states of Espírito Santo, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina. Some immigrants who lived in more interior regions never learned Portuguese, which justified the publication of a supplement in that language.³⁰

While this section lasted only about a year, due to the intensification of the Getúlio Vargas nationalization campaign, after Brazil entered World War II other issues were perpetuated on the pages of the periodical, such as the Question Box and the Youth Office, which continue to this day with other names (Good Question and Compass).³¹ The space for letters (now called Open Channel) has always been highly valued and continues to present opinions and suggestions from readers.³²

At each stage, the editors' personal styles showed in the magazine.³³ In more than a century, the function of the editor has not been occupied by many, given the record of seven editors (see list at the end of the article). However, it must be highlighted that the post only began to appear in the pages of the periodical from January 1923, when the publication gained record. Thus, the previous period was unregistered in the pages of the magazine. As the Yearbook data from 1907 to 1922 indicates, before 1923, the Review was commanded by Abel Landers Gregory, Emilio Hölzle, Guilherme Stein Junior, F. W. Spies, and E. C. Ehlers.

With rare exceptions, the editor-in-chief of the Brazilian Publishing House has been the editor-in-chief of the Review.³⁴ The one who remained for the longest in the function was from April 1985 to May 2014, for 36 years. Another record breaker was Luiz Waldvogel, Uncle Luiz, in charge of the publication from 1934 to 1965 (31 years).

Regarding the magazine editors as referred to by the Review, "Luiz Waldvogel, for example, was the cordial and friendly man, concerned with the mental hygiene of young people. Arnaldo Christianini, perhaps the most intellectual, was controversial and liked to quote biblical words in the original Greek or Hebrew. Rubem Scheffel gave some opening to slightly more controversial themes. Rubens Lessa ensured proper balance and avoided matters that could cause controversy."³⁵ In turn, Marcos De Benedicto, current editor, values theological depth and offers solid answers to current church dilemmas.

Balancing theological and inspirational emphases has been one of the major challenges and objectives of the Church Review in Brazil, as well as a pursuit of journalistic quality. For Rubem Scheffel, who served as publisher of the publication from 1982 to 1985, after the 1970s the Brazilian *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review) became a Review with "genuine journalistic quality."³⁶

One of the contributing factors to this quality was likely the regulation of the journalist profession at the end of 1969.³⁷ Editors with journalistic training resulted in changes in the treatment of news, more objective language, and greater reader accessibility. As the January 2006 commemorative issue mentioned on page 11, "since its inception, one of the goals of *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review) has been to inform about the growth of the Church and the advancement of the Adventist message in Brazil." However, "in the first three decades the news consisted primarily of personal reports sent by the missionaries scattered throughout the

country." There was also no specific section for the news until the mid-1970s with the creation of the "National Newsletter" (formerly called "*Nossa Seara*" [Our harvest] which was renamed in 1975 to "*Jornal*" [Newspaper]).

Ivo Santos Cardoso, the first certified journalist in the publishing house,³⁸ considered that the 1970s marked a new era for the Editorial Office of the Brazilian Publishing House: "A wholly-renovated staff of editors, most of them with a background in communication, exerted natural pressure for change."³⁹ Another remarkable change in the period was the shortening of the closing period, which gave more dynamism and relevance to the magazine.

Accompanying the cultural and religious transformations, the *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review) has always sought to update its graphic and editorial design, but without compromising its message and purpose. The change made at the end of 2014, considered one of the biggest in the history of the Review, followed the same criteria.⁴⁰ In addition to the more modern visual style, seeking to make it lighter, a study was done to renew the editorial profile of the magazine. New sections were added such as Understand, Guide, Bookshelf and Profile, among others, as well as aggregate more in-depth reports on the reality of the Church. The changes aimed to "make it more relevant and attractive to today's demanding reader, who has many options for information and lives in a rapidly changing world."⁴¹ Despite adding more content and increasing the number of pages (from 44 to 52), there was a significant reduction in the subscription price, which went from 42.10 to 24 reais and a year later to 32 reais.

Another major transformation came shortly thereafter as a result of a partnership with the Adventist World Review, a periodical maintained by the General Conference. Given that both magazines have the same purpose, the same target audience, and a similar editorial line, the idea of uniting them had already been discussed for some time, as reported by the editorial signed by Marcos De Benedicto in the first edition published with the new format. However, the decision to incorporate Adventist World content into *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review) graphic design sought to maintain the identity of the traditional Brazilian magazine.⁴²

In addition to the more modern design, there was an increase in the number of sections and better balancing theological and inspirational themes. The new project also made provision for fixed sections aimed at young audiences and children. On the other hand, the number of subjects was fewer.

A new distribution system was also adopted. Sponsored by the Brazilian Publishing House, unions and associations, the magazine was handed over to the churches. As a result of the partnership, in January 2018 the circulation rose to more than 160 thousand copies, surpassing the already historic mark reached in December 2015 (87,500 copies). Of this total, 100,000 magazines have been distributed free of charge each month throughout the country⁴³ (although the subscription system continues to exist for those who wish to receive the review at home). As Ellen G. White stated in the book *O Outro Poder (Counsels to Writers and Editors)* in relation to the periodical of her day, every family in the Church should have this material.⁴⁴ With this in view, the Church in Brazil has sought to make it increasingly accessible.

The new phase of *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review) has been marked not only by changes in the print version, but also by its entry into the virtual environment. After making available the historical collection for research on the Internet,⁴⁵ in 2010, in search of more agility and interaction with the readers, the magazine launched the website revistaadventista.com.br and became permanently present in online social networks at the beginning of 2015. On digital platforms, the Review has published articles, news, videos, and other "fast consumption" materials, leaving the material more in-depth for the printed version. However, on special occasions wider coverage has also been made on the web. In November 2015, the site published the report titled "Between Two Seas," which addressed the insertion of Adventism into Japanese communities in the country, in view of the 120 years of the treaty that opened the doors to Japanese immigration.⁴⁶ The publication was awarded the Roberto Azevedo prize during the 2016 edition of the Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN), in the category of best written news article online. Also in 2015, the magazine created a hotspot⁴⁷ that brought audio, video, and text content to the Church's 60th World Assembly in San Antonio, Texas, United States, July 2-11. In addition to news, daily newsletters, and interviews, the page offered users an opinion and analysis about the meaning of the meeting and the outcome of the decisions taken there. Another similar initiative was the special website on the 500 years of the Protestant Reformation, which was celebrated in 2017. Published in October, as a follow-up to the printed issue that touched on the same theme, the page titled *Reforma 500*⁴⁸ (Reform 500) brought articles, info graphics, interviews, special reports, and profiles of leading leaders of the movement that changed the history of Christianity. Through the "RA +" section, the Review also seeks to explore themes in greater depth that are more adapted to web language. The partnership made with *Rede Novo Tempo de Comunicação* (Adventist Media Center) has also enabled the publication of a monthly framework with the participation of the editors in the program *Revista Novo Tempo* (Adventist Media Center Review), an initiative that has contributed to broaden its influence and reach.

As Rubens Lessa wrote in the January 2006 editorial, there is an abyss between the modest seed thrown to the ground over a century ago and the modern Adventist Review. However, "the spirit of the editors of that time continues to inspire those of today."⁴⁹ Similarly, the main publication objectives are to: "report the most relevant events in the Adventist world and in the religious universe in general, record the history of the Church, interpret the signs of the times, proclaim biblical faith as taught by the Adventist Church, and to nourish the spiritual life of readers."⁵⁰ Similar to the outset, with the dissemination of Sabbath School lessons, the Review also continues to promote church ministries with articles published monthly or bimonthly by South American department leaders in the section titled Institutional.

Its "Editorial Philosophy," published in the official website of the Adventist Review, summarizes the principles that should continue to guide the Review as follows: (1) publish quality, not vanity; (2) focus on truth, not on error; (3) defend solidified theology, but be open to new light; (4) not be dazzled by passing fads; (5) not blindly follow the thought of other publications; (6) combine what is relevant with what is important; (7) interpret

cultural, religious, and spiritual phenomena with clear and solid arguments; (8) speak the truth with love and never be rude; (9) exalt God/Christ, not celebrities; and (10) defend and spread the Christian worldview.

Perspectives

The growing interest of academics in analyzing how *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review) has positioned itself on topics such as the contextualization of the apocalyptic message,⁵¹ female gender representation,⁵² the relationship of the Church with the media,⁵³ and Adventism in the internet age,⁵⁴ among other current issues, reflects its relevance and role as an opinion-maker in the national Adventist scenario.

For more than a century, *Revista Adventista* (Brazilian Adventist Review) has exerted a unifying influence,⁵⁵ played a key role in strengthening readers' spirituality, expanded doctrinal and theological knowledge of the members, and alerted the Church against distortions that could compromise its prophetic vision and mission. Its editorial philosophy states that "in the midst of a multitude of voices demanding the attention of the public, in a chaos of information, the magazine seeks to filter what is important and seeks to organize ideas, becoming a reliable source." The review has also contributed to the preservation of the memory of Adventism in the country.⁵⁶

However, while it has achieved a well-defined space in the Church, it has been challenged to renew itself, seeking to be more relevant, especially to new generations of Adventists. Likewise, faced with rapid changes in communication, it needs to find ways to increase its influence in the digital environment and promote a more effective integration between paper and virtual communication.

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