

# Castrejón González, José (1915–2015)

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## MOISÉS ESPINOZA

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José Castrejón González was a pastor, administrator, evangelist, pioneer, and leader of the Adventist Church in Mexico.

## Early Life

José Castrejón González was born November 2, 1915, in Playas de Catasajá, Hacienda El Zapatero, located between Villahermosa and Palenque. His parents were Rosendo Castrejón Sumuano and Margarita González Garrido. He was the oldest of five siblings.<sup>1</sup>

Castrejón first heard the story of Jesus at four years old. When he was 12 a Presbyterian man gave him a Bible, and he read the Pentateuch for the first time.<sup>2</sup>

Castrejón worked at a city hall from 1929-1932, but lost his job due to alcoholism. He then found employment at a coffee estate, where his employer belonged to the Baptist church. González asked his employer for a Bible, but the man did not let him borrow one; instead, he gave him a book published by Jehovah's Witnesses titled "Reconciliation," which he read three times at home, surrounded by images and saints. While he read this book, Jose Cruz, a member of the Church of the Nazarene, visited him in his house and gave him a Bible, which he read completely in three months.<sup>3</sup>

After some time, Castrejón attended a Sabbath School meeting of the Adventist church. There he was moved by a hymn sung by the pastor, Vicente Rodriguez, which captured his heart as well as his family. As he listened to the sermon he experienced a conversion. The service ended, and when he came out of the small home where the service had taken place, he felt that a path of light was opening before his feet. "We accepted Christ on that day; we went from death to life and we became Adventist Christians, even though we had not yet heard those words be pronounced."<sup>4</sup>

The next Sabbath, as he attended the small church again, Castrejón was impressed by the people he greeted, Pastor Alfred G. Parfitt, the president and secretary-treasurer of the Tehuantepec Mission, H. A. Robinson, and Pastor Paciente Trinidad. The president asked, "Do you know church history?" That day González took a two-hour course on the subject, including an explanation of the 2,300-day prophecy in Daniel 8. The next day he had

an exam, which he passed with the highest score. The mission president was so impressed that he extended an invitation for him to study to become a pastor so he could collaborate in the preaching of the gospel in Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

On November 23, 1933, Castrejón was baptized in the waters of the Texcuyuapan river by Pastor Vicente Rodriguez. Immediately he was named director of the Sabbath school program and his sister Cupertina was named secretary.<sup>6</sup>

Some weeks later Castrejón received an invitation to go canvassing. This required some explanation, and he received a brochure which detailed the steps for selling Adventist publications, and 50 copies of the missionary journal *El Centinela* which he sold for ten cents a piece. On January 15, 1934, two months after his baptism, Pastor Max Fuss, director of publishing at the Tehuantepec Mission, visited him and gave him a full introduction to canvassing. He began in the city of Tapachula, Chiapas. However, since he did not do well there, he decided to go to the coffee fields where God had given him much success.

## His Canvassing Experience

Upon his return from the coffee fields, Castrejón moved to Ixtepec, Oaxaca, where he worked in the ministry of publications with José de la Paz Matus. Together, the young men worked through the entire isthmus, visiting home after home.<sup>7</sup>

They travelled down the train tracks and arrived in Veracruz, at a community called Piedras Negras. They learned that in nearby community named Ignacio de la Llave, a man named Julio Ramon was interested in Adventist publications. The man was the father of Pastor Juan Ramón Hondal. Mr. Ramon had been the choir director of the Catholic Church, but now he was a Sabbath keeper and composer of some Christian songs, including the music for the hymn *Soy la triste oveja*, to which his daughter Josefa wrote the words.

The third Sabbath after meeting Mr. Ramon, a Sabbath school class was organized in his home. Julio's son, Pastor Juan Ramon Hondal, wrote many years later, "The Colporteurs Matus and Castrejón did good work. They taught us doctrine and many hymns. They brought to the mission news of the great interest that had awoken"<sup>8</sup>

In the city and port of Veracruz, Castrejón continued supporting the church that in those days was pastored by Luis Arriaga, originally from San Luis Potosí.

## His First Experience as a Student

Shortly after, José Castrejón returned to Tapachula. Two months after he arrived, he received a letter from Pastor Parfitt, including a money order for 45 pesos and instructions for him to go to Mexico City. This decision was very hard considering that his mother and his brothers did not want to end up alone again.

Finally, in 1936, Castrejón journeyed to Mexico City to enroll in first class of twelve students at the *Instituto Comercial Prosperidad*, the Mexican seminary.<sup>9</sup> There he studied his first year, with a strict work program. At the end of that year's classes, he went to work at the ministry of publications in the state of Tabasco. The journey was a train from Mexico City to the port of Veracruz, and from Veracruz to Villahermosa, Tabasco through Puerto de Frontera via raft. Due to the rainy and windy season he had to wait a month in Veracruz. While he waited, he received a letter from Pastor Max Fuss, asking that Castrejón come to work as an associate to the pastor overseeing the district that incorporated the current states of Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo. After initially resisting the invitation, Castrejón accepted, and went to Villahermosa to present himself as associate pastor of that district.<sup>10</sup>

## First Experiences in Ministry

His first district brought a wide variety of adventures, from a less than warm welcome to life-threatening experiences while traveling to visit church members and new contacts.

Some time afterwards, Castrejón went to Campeche, and then to Champotón and Teapa. He gathered the members who had dispersed, he organized Sabbath schools, and he did evangelism. The next year he continued his studies at the *Instituto Comercial Prosperidad*, finishing in 1939 and returning to Tabasco as a pastor of the Cardenas district.

## Marriage

On January 15, 1940, Castrejón married Dalia Sánchez in the community El Triunfo.<sup>11</sup> This marriage produced eight children: Abdiel, who died at three months; Jaime, who became president of Montemorelos University and later president of the Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary (SETAI); Elena Adly, a nurse and evangelist in many countries, wife of pastor José Luis Campos; Elba Daisy, Bible worker, secretary and private accountant, wife to Dr. Benjamín Rodríguez Patiño, and missionary to Nicaragua and Zambia; Eduardo Arturo, a physician and lay pastor; Carlos Alberto, soldier in the U.S. army; Dora Ethel, secretary of the school of nursing in Loma Linda; and Dalia Yaret, a teacher to special needs students, and a social worker in the United States.

## Ministry

From the district of Cardenas, Castrejon was moved to Veracruz, where he was ordained into the ministry in 1942. Afterwards he was called to serve as pastor of the Church of Tacubaya in Mexico City. He was there only four months before being named departmental director of lay activities, Sabbath school, and Y.P.M.V. of the Tehuantepec Mission.<sup>12</sup>

By 1946, Castrejón had been named as president of the old Central Mission, which included the states of Guerrero, Morelos, Hidalgo, North Veracruz, Mexico state, Mexico City, Queretaro, Michoacán, and Jalisco.<sup>13</sup>

In 1947, Pastor Enrique J. Westphal became president of the Mexican Union. Under his leadership, and with the guidance of Pastor Javier Ponce, the Mexican Union was reorganized. The reorganization included a change in designation of the missions. Now they would be called “corporaciones”, as the name “misiones” was not widely accepted by the laws of Mexico at the time. Thus the Mexican Union was made up of the following corporations: North, Central, Pacific, Interoceanic, South, and Southeastern. In the midst of this reorganizing, Pastor Castrejón was named president of the Southeastern corporation.<sup>14</sup>

## Later Life

In 1949 Castrejón received a call to serve in Puerto Rico. There he was pastor in the districts of Fajardo, Río Piedras, and the city of Ponce. Afterwards, he was named departmental director of Sabbath school, lay activities, and radio, a responsibility he held until 1958, when he returned to Mexico to be president of the Pacific Corporation, which in those days occupied the states of Sonora, Sinaloa, the state of Baja California, and the territory of Baja California Sur.<sup>15</sup>

Castrejón was also president of the Central Mexican Mission for a second time,<sup>16</sup> and after that pastor of various churches in California, United States, where he retired in 1980 after 46 years of uninterrupted service.

## Legacy

In retirement he continued to support the church by giving conferences, giving Bible studies, and collaborating in evangelistic schools. He died of cancer at age 99 on March 6, 2015. His wife died July 7, 2007. They were buried in Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

Pastor Jose Castrejón leaves an example of service, loyalty to God, prayer, submission, and tireless work in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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## NOTES

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