

Ampuero Matta, Víctor Enrique

(1910–1982)

JUAN CARLOS PRIORA

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Víctor Enrique Ampuero Matta was a pastor, educator, educational manager, mentor of Adventist youth, editor, writer, lecturer, and leading scholar in South American Adventism.¹

Early Years

Victor was born in Oruro, Bolivia, an ancient and important city of the Bolivian Altiplano, on October 5, 1910. He was the youngest of ten brothers.² He was the son of Luis Pascual Ampuero, Bolivian lawyer, bank manager, and diplomat, and Adela Matta, of a Chilean aristocratic family. Víctor spent his childhood in Arica, Chile, where his father was Bolivia's consul. From Chile the family moved to the port city of Mollendo, Arequipa department, Peru. At the Islay National Academy, Mollendo, he attended secondary school (1923–1927). Before working for the Adventist denomination, he did administrative work in a Mollendo trading house and was a cashier at the Italian Bank (1928, 1931).

He learned the biblical doctrines preached by the Seventh-day Adventist Church through Luis Alfredo Bellido (1900–2003), the husband of his sister, Adela Ampuero Matta, and by reading *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White. To be faithful to God, he quit his job at the bank. He continued his studies at Lima Training School, Lima, Peru (1931–1932). He was baptized into the Adventist Church on November 28, 1931, by Enrique Westphal³

Marriage, Higher Education, and Career

On June 17, 1935, he married Otilia Peverini (1912–2001), a graduate nurse and faithful collaborator in the service.⁴ Otilia, daughter of Juan Daniel Peverini and Amalia Lorenza Mazza, was born on March 10, 1912, in Villa Ocampo, Santa Fe, Argentina. Otilia had seven siblings: Roberto, Héctor, Esther, Angélica, Celia, Elvira and Abel. She was baptized in Villa Ángela, Chaco, Argentina, in 1926, by Pedro M. Brouchy. She graduated from the River Plate Sanitarium and Hospital, Entre Ríos, Argentina, and the Argentina Red Cross, as a nurse. Among other responsibilities, she was a nurse and director of the Nursing Department of the River Plate Sanitarium and Hospital, as well as a teacher and writer.⁵

Ampuero Matta graduated with a master's degree in education and the teaching course (1934) at the River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina. He became an education professor at the Philosophy and Letters College of the Buenos Aires National University (1942). He studied Hebrew, classical Greek, and Latin for two years in the same university (1945–1946). A few years later he obtained a Master of Arts with a specialization in systematic theology and ecclesiastical history on June 4, 1959, at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C., United States.

He began his working life in the Adventist organization as an office assistant in the Inca Union Mission, based in Lima, Peru (1931–1932). He then acted as a cashier, accountant, and teacher at the Colegio Adventista del Titicaca [Titicaca Adventist Academy], in Chullunquiani, Peru, and at the Juliaca American Hospital, Peru (1933). In Chullunquiani he associated with the Quichua and Aymara and tried to learn their languages. He did office work in the Lake Titicaca Mission (1934). From the following year he was a translator and editorial assistant of the South American Spanish Publishing House, in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1935–1936) and director of the *Juventud* [Youth's Paper] (1937–1939). He served as a teacher (1940–1943) and as deputy director (1944) at the River Plate Junior College, Entre Ríos, Argentina. He was subsequently appointed Director of the Florida Adventist Academy, Buenos Aires, Argentina (1945–1946). He worked for a year as a pastor and evangelist in the Buenos Aires Conference (1947). He led the Department of Education of the Buenos Aires Conference (1948) and returned to acting as a teacher at the River Plate College (1949–1955).⁶ He received ordination to the pastoral ministry on November 18, 1950, in Puiggari, Entre Ríos. He was appointed deputy director of River Plate College and director of education and the teaching course (1956–1959). He returned to Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he served as an advisor to Adventist university students of the Austral Union Conference (1960). From there he returned to editorial duties, this time as editor in chief of the South American Spanish Publishing House and director of *Vida Feliz* [Happy Life] and *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review] (1961–1972).

His literary production was abundant. His works published by the South American Spanish Publishing House, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, were: *El príncipe árabe y otros relatos* [The Arab Prince and Other Stories] (1941); *Certeza de un futuro mejor* [Certainty of a Better Future] (1960); *Esta era maravillosa y nuestro destino* [This Was Wonderful and Our Destiny] (1964); *Esta hora decisiva de la historia* [This Crucial Hour of History] (1966).⁷ He also published academic materials for teaching work, on ecclesiastical history, of the New Testament epistles and biblical eschatology.⁸ Other minor publications can be mentioned: *El libro más leído del mundo* [The Most Read Book in the World] (1965); *La iglesia y sus fundamentos* [The Church and Its Fundamentals] (1964); *Los libros apócrifos* [The Apocryphal Books] (1978). About 115 feature articles and another hundred shorter articles in *Vida Feliz* [Happy Life] were published. He published 220 editorial notes or articles in *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review] and many others in *El ministerio adventista* [Adventist Ministry] and *Juventud* [Youth's Paper]. The doctrinal articles published in the *El ministerio adventista* [Adventist Ministry] were sources of information and inspiration for the ministers. His writings on biblical sources, the organization and government of the early Christian church, were a great guidance for teachers, ministers, and the congregation in general.

Twice a year, between 1967 and 1974, Ampuero Matta gave lectures for the community of the city of Florida, Buenos Aires, Argentina, and, particularly for students' parents of the Florida Adventist Academy. He also gave seminars and presented topics in councils, conferences, and ministerial assemblies throughout Latin America. Thanks to the excellent education he received in his childhood and adolescence, especially in such languages like English, French, Italian, and German, he was an excellent interpreter and translator. In addition, as mentioned, he knew Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

Ampuero Matta attended—as an observer—the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM), which was held in Medellin, Colombia (August 26 to September 6, 1968). When he returned, he presented a meticulous 37-page report. He was a member and secretary of the directors' board of the Argentina Bible Society for many periods, where he was respected and consulted. For ten years (1963–1973) he reviewed the drafts of the new Castilian versions of the Bible.

Late Years

At the request of the South American Division and the General Conference, he led a team that translated, adapted, and updated *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* to Castilian, a massive work in seven volumes, with more than eight thousand pages of two columns, with dozens of maps, charts, and illustrations, a task that he carried out, with thoroughness and dedication, between 1972 and 1981.⁹ Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, recognized V. E. Ampuero Matta's journey as an educator, writer, and preacher, granting him the title of Doctor of Divinity *honoris causa*, June 1, 1980. The precariousness of his health meant that he was granted the honorary title *in absentia*. In homage to Victor E. Ampuero Matta, the Mendoza Adventist Academy, Argentina, bears his name.

Although in his last years his health was precarious, Víctor Enrique Ampuero Matta never failed to fulfill his responsibilities. While directing the Spanish edition of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, he asked God to give him the strength to finish that work. In fact, he completed the task in 1981 and died in Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina, on January 19, 1982, at age 71, with the satisfaction of accomplishment.¹⁰ His wife Otilia left the following testimony that summarizes his life and work:

Víctor dedicated his talents to the cause of God that we both loved. His delicate sensibility, brilliant intelligence, and loving heart, together with other virtues, made him a promising missionary in the area of teaching and writing. Over the years we were complementing each other more and better. We experienced joy and satisfaction by helping those in need, visiting the sick, helping the struggling students to obtain their education.¹¹

SOURCES

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1. Daniel Oscar Plenc, *Missionaries in South America: Pioneros del Adventismo en Latinoamérica* [Missionaries in South America: Adventist Pioneers in Latin America], 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 2008), 147, 148; Daniel Oscar Plenc, *25 Historias de misioneros* [25 Missionary Stories] (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 2013), 114–117; Humberto Raúl Treiyer, “Que los tengáis en mucha estima y amor por causa de su obra” [May You Have Them in Great Esteem and Love Because of Their Work], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], January 1981, 12, 13; “In Memoriam,” *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], April 1982, 13. The author thanks Professor Amalia Bellido de Steger and Raquel Bellido for the documents provided referring to the life and work of their uncle, Víctor Enrique Ampuero Matta. See *Academy’s Voice* (Villa Libertador General San Martín, Entre Ríos: November 1982), published in memory of Ampuero Matta. Information corroborated with file 2063 of the former Austral Union Conference, existing in the archives of the Argentina Union Conference, accessed April 9, 2018.
2. Among the children are Amalia Ampuero Matta de Bellido (married to Alfredo Bellido), Manuel Vicente Ampuero Matta (married to Celia Peverini) and María Teresa Ampuero Matta (married to Guillermo Rubato).
3. Enrique J. Westphal (1903–1983), son of Joseph Westphal, was a pastor in Peru, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Mexico, in the Inter-American Division and in the United States.
4. Plenc, *25 Historias de misioneros* [25 Missionary Stories], 118–122; Daniel Oscar Plenc, “Un sábado muy bendecido” [A Very Blessed Sabbath], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], January 2005, 16, 17; Otilia Peverini de Ampuero, *Delantales blancos* [White Aprons] (author’s edition, undated).
5. He wrote a series of articles for children in *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], in addition to such books as *White Aprons*, *The Patent Leather Shoe*, and *Norma’s Confession*.
6. Between 1947 and 1948 he had to retire temporarily for health reasons.
7. Víctor Enrique Ampuero Matta, *Certeza de un futuro mejor* [Certainty of a Better Future], 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1960) had a new edition: *En los umbrales de un luminoso futuro* [On the Threshold of a Bright Future] (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1976).
8. Ampuero Matta, *Historia eclesiástica* [Ecclesiastical History] (Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: Editorial Society of Missionary Students, undated); Ampuero Matta, *Estudios sobre las epístolas del Nuevo Testamento* [Studies on the New Testament Epistles] (Lima, Perú: Publications Department of the Higher Studies Center Union, undated); Ampuero Matta, *Documentos y comentarios relativos a los libros de Daniel y Apocalipsis* [Documents and Comments Related to the Books of Daniel and Revelation] (Villa Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: S.E.M. Editorial, 1961).
9. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, trans. V. E. Ampuero Matta (Boise, Idaho: Inter-American Publishings, 1978–1990). See Víctor Enrique Ampuero Matta, “La edición castellana del Comentario Bíblico Adventista, en marcha” [Castilian Edition of the

Adventist Bible Commentary, under way], *El ministerio adventista* [Adventist Ministry], March-April 1976, 26; “*El Comentario Bíblico: realización monumental*” [Bible Commentary: Monumental Realization], *El ministerio adventista* [Adventist Ministry], January-February 1981, 26–28.

10. See Huberto R. Treiyer, “*Necrología*” [Obituary], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], April 1982, 19.

11. Personal diary of Mrs. Otilia Peverini de Ampuero.

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