

Ixcot Ordoñez, Albino (1934–2020)

BYRON OMAR BATZ

Byron Omar Batz, an Adventist from birth, is a church elder and works with the communication departments of several church fields in Guatemala. He was educated in Adventist schools and is married to Claudia Rodas and has two daughters.

Born on the high western plateau of Guatemala, Albino Ixcot Ordoñez was one of the most outstanding pioneers of the Adventist work in Guatemala. He traveled to and worked in many places throughout the country in his passion to share the message of the second coming of Jesus with other people, regardless of their language, beliefs, or race.

Early Years

Albino Ixcot Ordoñez was born on October 12, 1934, in Cantel, Quetzaltenango, about two hundred kilometers west of the capital city of Guatemala. He was the oldest of the seven children that Cruz Ixcot Chávez had with his wife, Jacinta Ordoñez. He attended elementary school at the local rural boys' school in Cantel and then did his secondary studies at a school in Quetzaltenango.

In May of 1947, an Adventist colporteur came through Cantel and managed to enroll the mayor, secretary, and treasurer of the town in the Adventist Radio's correspondence course, "*La Voz de la Esperanza*." This program started in Guatemala in October 1944.¹ The colporteur gave the supplies for this course to the municipal officials, who believed that the topics contained in the reading were of communist origin. At that time communism was a forbidden ideology in Guatemala, and the officials planned to throw away the reading material as soon as the colporteur left. When the colporteur left, Albino managed to acquire the supplies he had left. Albino immediately began to read the booklets and fill out the correspondence course. Soon he wrote to the office of the radio station to ask them to erase the names of the enrolled officials and replace them with the name Albino Ixcot Ordoñez. This is how he became acquainted with the Adventist message without ever having met an Adventist.

As he studied the lessons in the correspondence course, Albino learned the meaning of the Sabbath and that he should begin keeping it. He did, along with his siblings, his mother, and his grandmother. His father did not like the concept, as he thought it was an excuse for lazy people not to have to work.

Sometime later another colporteur, a very young man named Rigoberto Escalante, came through town. It was Sabbath morning, and he decided to go to the town cemetery to observe his Sabbath. At the cemetery he found almost the whole Ixcot Ordoñez family. Seeing them, he asked if he could join their group. He offered to teach

them the lesson from the Sabbath School quarterly. The group was happy to have him do so, and after the lesson, the colporteur preached a sermon. At the end of the sermon, Albino asked where and how he could get a copy of the quarterly. Rigoberto gave Albino his own copy. At the end of the quarter, Rigoberto came back to Cantel to give the family a copy of the new Sabbath School quarterly. The group received and studied the quarterly with great interest.

Sometime later Rigoberto invited the group that was meeting in Cantel—which had now grown –to go to Quetzaltenango, a town about twelve kilometers from Cantel. There they met Pastor José Aguilar Canjura and his family and the Adventist members in Quetzaltenango. They were invited to meet with them as often as they wished. But when the believers in Cantel began to go to Quetzaltenango, the group became smaller, mainly because of the cost of travel. Because of this, the Cantel members asked the Quetzaltenango members to send someone to preach to them on Sabbaths. The Cantel believers also became acquainted with other neighboring groups of believers such as those in Totonicapán, and these also sent speakers to Cantel.

At that time, even though he was not yet a baptized member of the church, Albino began to sell Adventist books and to share the message he was learning. He took books to the jail in Quetzaltenango and even went as far as Antigua Guatemala, which was about sixty-five kilometers from Guatemala City. While he was in Antigua Guatemala, he was told about a baptism that was going to take place near Cantel. He returned to Cantel and was baptized by Professor Moises Tahay on December 5, 1947.

After Albino's baptism, and because of conversations he had with lay preachers who came to Cantel, Albino's father, Cruz Ixcot Chávez, was baptized. Cruz began work as a colporteur, which resulted in the baptism of eight people by Professor Tahay.²

Education

At first the sermons in Cantel were carried out in Spanish, the language that the Ixcot family generally spoke, but as they began to invite other people to their meetings, it became necessary to preach in the *Quiche*, the native language spoken by a high percentage of the people in Cantel. In this way the preaching in Cantel in both Spanish and Quiche became a model for what is current practice in the churches in Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, and Quiché.

While he was studying in one of the highly regarded schools in Quetzaltenango, Albino heard about a small Indian Training School in Momostenango, Totonicapán, about thirty kilometers away.³ He learned that the education there was of a very high quality and decided to finish his secondary studies there. At the time, the director of the school was Professor Moises Tahay.⁴ Professor Tahay was a pioneer in Adventist education in Guatemala. Albino not only finished his studies at the secondary level there; he also received a thorough foundation in Bible principles.

This education served to make him a great help to his native town in the following years. For example, in March of 1956, Pastor M. J. Cojulún gave a series of evangelistic meetings in Cantel. Because Cruz Ixcot Chávez had been the treasurer of Cantel and was a very respected citizen of the town, Pastor Cojulún was able to hold the meetings in the Municipal Auditorium. There he had access to electricity, benches for seating people, and music provided by the Municipal Band. About two hundred people came to hear the word of God.⁵ At the same time, Brother Ixcot organized Sabbath Schools, which later became churches and groups.⁶

Together with a group of youth who were preaching in Quetzaltenango, Albino attended the Central American Vocational College (now Central American Adventist University) in Costa Rica where he studied theology. It was difficult for Albino to register to study there, as he did not have the means to pay his tuition, but he was allowed to attend because he found a job at the college print shop. During the years from 1957 to 1962 he finished the preparatory level and then theology at the college level.

Work Among Indigenous People

Because of his knowledge of the indigenous areas of Guatemala, in 1960, while he was still studying at the vocational college, Albino was sent to the Cordillera de Talamanca in Costa Rica. At that time this was an area of conflict among the Boruca, Teribe, and Cabecares tribes who were fighting over the Chirripó area. At times these tribes would even poison the local waters in order to cause damage to their enemies. Albino was sent there to preach the Adventist message and to start one of the 14 church schools that were operating in Costa Rica at that time.⁷ In spite of all the difficulties, when he left, he left behind a group of believers in that area, as well as a school in full operation.

Work Among the Youth

In 1963 Albino returned to Guatemala and was assigned the Guatemala Central Church as his first work assignment. His focus was on the youth, and an "Operation Fireside" program was started. This program took Bible studies to the homes of youth who were interested in the message. Several young people were baptized as a result.⁸

On January 6, 1966, Albino married Irma Imelda Gramajo Ochoa in Guatemala City. He was also ordained as an Adventist minister in September of that same year. He and Irma were to have two children: Flor Elena and Jairo Arturo.

Work Among Local Churches

In 1971, Pastor Ixcot was given the title of "Centurion" for the baptism of 168 people.⁹ The Adventist Church grants the title of "Centurion" to those who make possible the baptism of 100 people in a year. In 1972 Pastor

Ixcot baptized 323 people and was given the title of “Champion Soul Winner” of Central American Union Mission.

¹⁰ Because of this, he was known as a double centurion.¹¹ In 1977 he achieved the title of “Centurion” once again.
¹²

The baptisms were achieved through Pastor Ixcot’s training of church members for missionary activities without holding any large evangelistic campaigns.¹³ Pastor Albino wrote several training manuals with outlines for the lay members so they could learn how to make altar calls after their sermons. They also learned how to visit interested people and give Bible studies. Out of this work came the creation of a Bible Institute set up in Guatemala, which functioned for several years. The institute provided 12 classes over the span of three months, after which those who graduated would be ready for missionary work. Albino used this model for a time when he worked in El Salvador, and then he used it in Guatemala, where eventually eight groups of students graduated. Many of those students who graduated from these courses are now missionary leaders in the churches where they attend.

Work Among Other Denominations

Albino then began to work with about forty members in the south of Guatemala. He used the same method he had developed for the Bible Institute, and in three months they were ready to preach. They chose a location near their own church and proposed that each one of the forty would prepare and then take one person to the series of meetings that would be held in the chosen location. Pastor Albino set as his own goal to take 20 persons. At the beginning of the meetings there were very few attending, but one day a large Catholic procession went by the building where the meetings were being held. It was one of the processions in which Catholic believers express their beliefs and show their faith. With great respect Pastor Albino asked that the persons who were gathered at the meeting remain silent while the procession went by. Some of the people who were part of the procession stayed back to see what was going on in the meeting. So, Pastor Albino asked the congregation to sing, and then he preached. The people from the procession who had stayed back that night came the following nights for as long as the meetings lasted. As a result of those meetings, 142 people were baptized.

Work Through Radio Waves

Another means of carrying out missionary work in Guatemala according to Pastor Ixcot was through the Adventist radio station *Unión Radio*, “the Voice of the Adventist Church in Guatemala.” As a result of the radio broadcasts, a group of native Sabbath keepers in the village of El Pato in the dense jungle area of the Petén district in the northernmost part of Guatemala was discovered. Pastor René Martínez, who had learned of this group, visited the village and found the group. He was surprised to learn that these people already knew and lived by the health standards of the Bible, much more so to learn that they had fair knowledge of Bible doctrines. The reason for this was the small battery-operated radio that received the broadcasts of *Unión Radio*

for four years, which the group was hearing. In the evenings, and especially on Sabbaths, they would gather to hear the Adventist programs. When Pastor Martínez had to return, he was presented an amount of Quetzales equivalent to \$500 USD of the time. The members of the group had been saving their tithes up to that point.¹⁴

The radio programs that Pastor Ixcot was responsible for were: *Tribuna Bíblica* (Bible Tribune), a program in which he discussed Jewish culture and the Bible. This program came about as a result of Pastor Ixcot's relationship with the Minister of the Exterior from Israel, Moshé Dayán. Another program, *Teléfono Bíblico*, was started because the listeners of *Tribuna Bíblica* had so many questions, and Pastor Albino Ixcot was widely respected for his knowledge of the Bible since he was able to answer the questions on the spot, not having prepared in advance.¹⁵

Author of Books

Albino's great dedication to the work of God led him to write several books with focus on the study of the Bible, of which his most well known are *Año 2000: Especulaciones y Verdades* ("The Year 2000: Speculations and Truths") and *Contexto Histórico de la Biblia* ("Historical Context of the Bible"). He also created an encyclopedia of prophecies—*Enciclopedia de Profecías*—as a result of the radio programs mentioned before and the presentations he gave on Bible prophecies.¹⁶ However, this work was never published.

Later Years and Death

After 50 years of missionary work, Albino continued to give Bible studies and hold evangelistic meetings in the area around the Génova Costa Cuca, about two hundred fifty kilometers south of Guatemala City, where he lived and worked until his death. In addition, he worked in the western area of the country. He did this without having any goals set for him other than doing the best he could to help people know God. He also was active on non-Adventist community radio programs.

His routine started at four in the morning, when he would study the Bible on his computer, where he had 24 different versions for comparison, study, and continue learning about God's Word. He lived his last years thanking God for the time that was given him and doing what he loved best— sharing the Eternal Gospel.

Pastor Albino Ixcot Ordóñez died on September 6, 2020, and he sleeps in the sure hope of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

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