



Pedro Kalbermatter, standing in second row, first on left, Peru. Titicaca workers from Argentine school.

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Kalbermatter, Pedro (1886–1968)

EUGENIO DI DIONISIO

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Pedro Kalbermatter was a canvasser, nurse, and pastor in Argentina and Peru. He served as a missionary for nearly two decades among the indigenous population of the Peruvian highlands.

Early Years in Argentina (1886-1919)

Pedro Kalbermatter was born in Pilar, Santa Fe Province, Argentina, on May 25, 1886. His parents, Luis Kalbermatter (1851-1922) and Ana María Stoffel (1856-1933), had 15 children: Juan, Ignacio, Angelberto, José, Pedro, Félix, Luis, Vicente, Roque, Paulina, Josefina, Emilio, and three others who died as children (Alejandro, María, and Romualdo).¹ His brother, Pastor Ignacio Kalbermatter (1877-1951) and the second of the children, is

well-known in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1895 the family heard the Adventist message through the book *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White. His father and four older brothers were baptized by Pastor Frank H. Westphal (1858-1944) in 1897, in Colonia Portuguesa, Santa Fe Province.²

He began his missionary service as a canvasser, in the north of Santa Fe Province, from 1904 to 1906.³ Pedro attended the sixth annual meeting of the Argentina Conference held in Alberdi, Rosario, Santa Fe, from October 25 to November 2, 1906, when the physician and Pastor Robert Habenicht invited them to study at the school located in Entre Ríos.⁴

On August 15, 1907, three months after arriving at the Adventist school located in Entre Ríos (Diamante School), he entered mandatory military service and was assigned to the Third Artillery Regiment based in the city of Diamante, Entre Ríos. By staying firm to his religious convictions regarding the observance of Saturday as a day of rest he was imprisoned in Diamante, then in the small Martín García Island in the middle of Río de la Plata, and finally in Campo de Mayo Regiment, in the province of Buenos Aires.⁵ From January 28 to February 7, 1909, newly released from the service, he participated in the General Meeting held in Colonia, Uruguay.⁶

In 1910 he enrolled as a student at the nursing school of River Plate Sanitarium, Entre Ríos and was part of the first group of nursing graduates in 1912.⁷ He later worked as a missionary nurse under the direction of the Argentine Association, in the city of Rosario, Santa Fe Province.⁸ For seven years he developed vast experience in nursing, which contributed greatly to his training.

On December 20, 1915 he married Guillermina Deggeller (1892-1989), in Rosario, Santa Fe. Guillermina was born on January 8, 1892, in Águila, Soriano district, Uruguay Republic. Her father, Guillermo Deggeller (1844-1934), Schaffhausen province, Switzerland, immigrated to Uruguay. Her mother, Berta Künzle (1860-1941), was born in Sankt Gallen, Switzerland, and immigrated to Uruguay with her parents and siblings. Guillermina was the fifth daughter. Her older sister Cecilia Deggeller (1880-1973) married Pastor Ignacio Kalbermatter (1879-1952), Pedro's brother. Another sister, Elvira Deggeller (1885-1958), was a canvasser and Bible instructor.⁹

In 1890 the Deggeller's moved from Uruguay to Paraguay because of a drought. They heard Bible truth through a canvasser from the Bible Society.¹⁰ In 1903 they were visited by a missionary, Robert Habenicht, who instructed them and baptized mother Berta and daughters Cecilia, Fanny, Luisa, and Guillermina. At age 18, Guillermina canvassed with Elvira in Rosario, Santa Fe Province, Argentina. From 1912 to 1915 she worked and studied at River Plate Academy, graduating as a nurse.

Guillermina and Pedro Kalbermatter's children, Pedro and Orlando, were born in Rosario, Santa Fe Province. Haydée, Héctor, and Alfredo were born in the Laro Mission, Peru, Arcely in Huancayo, and Elena in Andahuaylas.

¹¹ Six of the seven children have worked in Adventist institutions and many of their grandchildren and other descendants became professionals willing to serve God and others.¹²

Missionary Service Among the Indigenous People of Peru (1919-1937)

In April 1919, Pedro moved to Peru to work with Pastor Fernando A. Stahl, a missionary among the Incas for the previous 10 years.¹³ The Kalbermatter's first destination was Silverware Mission Station, where they spent a year getting acquainted with Stahl's work system. He worked with literacy, evangelization, and the fight against addiction. Kalbermatter was the first missionary in the vast Quechua region of the Peruvian highlands. In 1920, in extremely difficult circumstances, he founded the Central Mission of Laro, in the province of Azángaro, district of Puno, with a school and a church.¹⁴ There he accomplished his work in the midst of strong opposition from sectors that did not want the natives to be educated.

After a six-month vacation period (the first one) in 1926 he moved to the Huanta and Andahuaylas region. Once in Huanta, he began the mission at Ayacucho.¹⁵ He worked in Huancayo in 1927¹⁶ and was later transferred to Andahuaylas.¹⁷ His final destination in Peru was Cusco, the ancient capital of the Incas. Due to financial difficulties in the Church he carried out his mission for seven years as a support worker in Andahuaylas and Cusco. In Andahuaylas he was a province sanitary inspector. For two years he served in Cuzco, where he was head nurse at the local hospital and created a nursing school.¹⁸

On March 1, 1930, he was ordained to the pastoral ministry in Lima, Peru, in a ceremony directed by Pastors Arthur Daniells, Carlyle B. Haynes, and Joseph W. Westphal.¹⁹

Final Years and Legacy

In 1937, after about twenty years, he returned to Argentina, along with the family. He settled on a 100-hectare farm in Jacobi Village, a region near the city of Crespo, Entre Ríos. During the 1940s and 1950s, many people who needed first aid came to him. His fame transcended beyond his neighborhood and he was known for his selflessness and service, attending to people's needs without requesting any payment.²⁰

Pedro Kalbermatter died on March 13, 1968 and was buried in Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos. Guillermina moved to the United States with her daughter Elena in 1972. She died on March 19, 1989, in Glendale, California at the age of 97.

Pedro Kalbermatter was a prominent missionary who faced great challenges and obstacles in the work of God. In Peru there are several educational institutions that bear his name.

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NOTES

1. Luis Kalbermatter and Ana María Stoffel were swiss immigrants who arrived in Argentina between 1869 and 1868, respectively.
2. David Pio Gullón, "Necrología" [Obituary], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 68, n° 10, October 1968, 19. Eugenio Di Dionisio, Kalbermatter-Stoffel family tree, October 3, 2005. Ignacio Kalbermatter, "El principio de la Iglesia Adventista en Portugalete y San Cristóbal" [The beginning of the Adventist Church in Portugalete and San Cristóbal], unpublished manuscript, undated, available at White Research Center, River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina. Pastor Frank H. Westphal tells the story of the Kalbermatter's conversion in his book *Pionero en Sudamérica* (Pioneer in South America) (Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: White Center Research, 1997), 44-57. Daniel Oscar Plenc, Silvia Scholtus, Eugenio Di Dionisio, Sergio Becerra, *Misioneros fundacionales del adventismo sudamericano* [Pioneer missionaries of South American Adventism], 3rd ed. (Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: Editorial River Plate Adventist University, 2016), 177-192. Daniel Oscar Plenc, *Misioneros en Sudamérica: Pioneros del Adventismo en Latinoamérica* [Missionaries in South America: Pioneers of Adventism in Latin America], 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 2008), 98-106. Barbara Westphal, *A Man Called Pedro* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1975). Pedro Kalbermatter, "Incidentes en mi vida" [Incidents in my life], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], March 1928, 15. Pedro Kalbermatter, "Incidentes en mi vida" [Incidents in my life], *La Revista Adventista*, June 1928, 14. Pedro Kalbermatter, "Incidentes en mi vida" [Incidents in my life], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], July 1928, 13, 14.
3. Pedro Kalbermatter, *20 Años como misionero entre los indios del Perú: Apuntes autobiográficos* [20 years as a missionary among the Indians of Peru: Autobiographical notes] (Paraná, Entre Ríos: Nueva Impresora, 1950), 24-28.
4. N. Z. Town, "La reunión general en Alberdi" [The general meeting in Alberdi], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 6, n° 12, December 1906, 5, 6.; F. H. Westphal, *Pionero en Sudamérica* [Pioneer in South America], trad. Silvia C. Scholtus de Roscher (Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, White Center Research, 1997), 48-49.
5. Pedro Kalbermatter, *La constancia y fidelidad del soldado adventista Pedro Kalbermatter* [The constancy and faithfulness of the Adventist soldier Pedro Kalbermatter] (Rosario, Santa Fe: Imprenta Romanos Hnos., s/f).
6. Matilda Erickson, "Word from South America," *The Youth's Instructor*, vol. 56, n° 42, October 20, 1908, 13. Pedro Kalbermatter, "My Experiences in the Argentine Army," *The Youth's Instructor*, vol. 64, n° 27, July 4, 1916, 10. *Boletín Militar* (1° parte), n° 60, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 13 March 1908, 184, 185. M. Kern, "From South America," *The Youth's Instructor*, vol. 57, n° 18, March 5, 1909, 12, 13. C. Knight, "Uruguay, La Reunión de Colonia" [Uruguay, The Meeting of Cologne], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], vol. 9, n° 3, March 1909, 14.
7. Egil H. Wensell, *El poder de una esperanza que educa y sana* [The power of a hope that educates and heals] (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1993), 138-139. Pedro Kalbermatter, "River Plate Adventist Sanitarium," *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], June 1911, 14, 15.

8. Pedro Kalbermatter, "Rosario de Santa Fe," *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], March 1915, 14. Pedro Kalbermatter, "Rosario, Sta. Fe, Rep. Argentina," *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 13, n° 4, April 1913, 12.

9. Samuel Schmidt, "Necrología" [Obituary], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 90, n° 7, July 1990, 31. Daniel Plenc, Silvia Scholtus, Eugenio Di Dionisio, Sergio Becerra, *Misioneros fundacionales del adventismo Sudamericano* [Pioneer missionaries of South American Adventism], 3rd ed. (Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: Editorial River Plate Adventist University, 2016), 193-214.

10. Cecilia Deggeller de Kalbermatter, "Los comienzos de la obra en el Paraguay" [The beginning of the work in Paraguay], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 58, n° 8, August 1958, 13. E. W. Snyder, "Progress in Paraguay," *Review and Herald*, vol. 80, n° 7, February 17, 1903, 13. John McCarthy, "Notes from the Argentina Republic," *ARH*, November 5, 1903, 17.

11. Registro Civil de la Provincia de Santa Fe [Civil Registry of the Province of Santa Fe], Segunda Categoría, Familia D. Pedro Kalbermatter, Rosario, year 1915.

12. Pedro Kalbermatter's and Guillermina Deggeller's children were: (a) Pedro Kalbermatter (1916-2007), born in Rosario, Santa Fe; lay member and leader of the church of Felicia, Santa Fe. Married to Elena Wöhr. (b) Ciro Orlando Kalbermatter (1919-2014), born in Rosario, Santa Fe, missionary nurse in Argentina and Paraguay, married to Elida Tantin. (c) Haydee Dora Kalbermatter (1921-1980), born in Laro, Perú, missionary nurse in Argentina, Perú, Uruguay and Paraguay; married to Noel Mangold. (d) Héctor Armando Kalbermatter (1923-1963), born in Laro, Perú, teacher missionary and accountant in Argentina, married to Ada Pili. (e) Alfredo César Kalbermatter, born in Laro, Peru, missionary nurse in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and United States, married to Flora Bergoglio. (f) Arcely Luzmila Kalbermatter (1927-2016), born in Huancayo, Peru, nurse, teacher, bible instructor in Argentina and Paraguay, married to Montrose Stuart Vanderoef. (g) Elena Carmen Kalbermatter, born in Andahuaylas, Peru, missionary nurse in Argentina, Bolivia and United States, married to Hans Martin.

13. See chapter "En el altiplano del Perú" [In the highlands of Peru], del libro de Héctor J. Peverini, *En las huellas de la Providencia* [In the footsteps of Providence] (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1988), 157-180. Floyd Greenleaf, *Tierra de esperanza: El crecimiento de la Iglesia Adventista Sudamericana* [Land of Hope: The growth of the SDA Church in South America], trad. Claudia Blath (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 2011), 248, 251, 326, 355. Jorge P. Maquera Sosa, *Operación Andes libres: construyendo la "Utopía"* [Operation Free Andes: building the "Utopia"] (Ñaña, Lima, Perú: Ediciones Peruvian Union University, 2014). Pedro Kalbermatter, "De Buenos Aires hasta La Paz, Bolivia" [From Buenos Aires to La Paz, Bolivia], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], 14 August 1919, 7, 9. Pedro Kalbermatter, "Nuestra obra en el Perú" [Our work in Peru], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], 23 July 1928, 11.

14. Oliver Montgomery, "The Indians in our Lake Titicaca Mission Field," *ARH*, October 5, 1922, 2. E. H. Wilcox, "Schools Among the Quechuas," *ARH*, October 20, 1921, 12. The president of the school was Julián Yanque. M. S. Nigri, "Sudamérica-Tierra de Hoy" [South America-Today's Land], *South American Bulletin*, vol. 42, n° 3, July-September 1964, 3. W. H. Williams, "Lake Titicaca Mission Field," *ARH*, December 27, 1923, 14. Pedro Kalbermatter, "La obra médica en el Perú" [The Medical Work in Peru], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], December 1923, 7, 8. Pedro Kalbermatter, "Un viaje difícil y peligroso por las sierras del sudeste del Perú" [A difficult and dangerous journey through the mountains

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15. P. C. Varney, "Opening the Work in Ayacucho," *South American Bulletin*, vol. 3, n° 12, December 1927. Carlyle B. Haynes, "The South American Division," *ARH*, May 9, 1929, 15.
16. V. E. Peugh, "Another Needy Field Entry," *South American Bulletin*, vol. 3, n° 8, August 1927, 5.
17. J. T. Thompson, "The Peruvian Mission," *ARH*, March 12, 1931, 21. L. A. Minner, "Progress in the Interior of Perú," *South American Bulletin*, vol. 8, n° 1, January 1932, 7.
18. Pedro Kalbermatter, *20 Años como misionero entre los indios del Perú*, 244, 245.
19. R. R. Breitigan, "Ministerial Institutes-Inca Union," *South American Bulletin*, vol. 6, n° 7, July 1930, 23. Barbara Westphal, *A Man Called Pedro* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1975), 3.
20. Orlando Britos, "En memoria de Don Pedro Kalbermatter" [In memory of Don Pedro Kalbermatter], *Paralelo 32*, Crespo, Entre Ríos, March 25, 2000.

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