Rojas Ayala, Luis Antonio (1884–1963)

DORIS NILA SAMOJLUK ROJAS
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Luis Antonio Rojas Ayala was a pioneering pastor, public evangelist, and administrator in Argentina, Paraguay and Chile.
Early Years, Training, and Marriage

Luis Antonio Rojas Ayala was born in Valparaíso, Chile, on January 11, 1884, the son of Froilán Rojas and Antonia Ayala.1

Converted to Christianity in his early youth, Luis was forced to leave his home due to opposition from his family. At the age of 18, he moved to Argentina, where he worked in several provinces as a Bible salesman for the Biblical Society. He heard about the Adventist beliefs through Daniel Peverini (1876–1967), accepted them, and was baptized.2

Encouraged by Robert H. Habenicht (1866–1925), founder of the River Plate Sanitarium, Rojas enrolled at the recently opened Camarero College (now River Plate Adventist University), in Entre Ríos, Argentina, to prepare for ministry.3 He was one of the first students of the institution along with Luis F. Ernst (1874–1952), Gottfried Block (1889–1978), and Julio Ernst (1877–1967).4 During his student years, Rojas was very active in evangelistic work and canvassing (selling Christian books to pay for his tuition).5

At Camarero College, Rojas met Elena Vicenta Ernst, and they got married in 1906.6 They had seven children: Esther Rojas, Roberto N. Rojas, Noberto E. Rojas, Aurora E. Rojas, Carlos Rojas, Rubén C. Rojas, and Elena Ana Rojas.8

Ministry in Argentina, Paraguay, and Chile

Rojas started evangelistic work in 1906,9 visiting and preaching in different places of the province of Entre Ríos.10 He also helped to establish an Adventist presence in Alberdi, near Rosario, Santa Fe, and in San Nicolás, Buenos Aires.11

His ordination to the ministry took place on March 12, 1910, as part of the second biennial session of the South American Union Conference, held at River Plate Academy (formerly Camarero College) in Entre Ríos.12

Pastor Rojas was one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Paraguay and northeast Argentina, known at the time as Alto Paraná Mission, from 1910 to 1926, being appointed to the first mission committee in 1912.13 He served particularly in Villa Rica and Luque, Paraguay.14 He and his family experienced considerable hardship and persecution because the country was going through a revolutionary period.15 He also served in the city of Posadas, Misiones, Argentina.16

He worked in Argentina from 1917 to 1934,17 where he served as a church pastor, an evangelist, the vice president of the Buenos Aires Conference, and the superintendent of the Cuyo Mission.18 He was instrumental in the conversion of several families and individuals who later served the church in key roles, including Braulio Perez Marcio (1904–1974), the originator of La Voz de la Esperanza, the Spanish language version of The Voice of Prophecy.19 Pastor Rojas was a successful public evangelist; it was reported that during 1924 he baptized 46 people, an unusual number at the time.20

After the death of his wife, Elena, in 1932,21 Rojas married Lilia Ana Marsollier, a nurse trained at the River Plate Sanitarium. They had three children born in Chile:22 René Luis Rojas, Rosa Nélida Rojas, and Eduardo Aquiles Rojas.23

From 1935 until his retirement in 1954, he worked in Chile as a church pastor, a public evangelist, and the president of the Chile Conference as well as in other administrative positions.24 His ministry lasted for 48 years.

Luis Antonio Rojas Ayala died in Entre Ríos, Argentina, on January 6, 1963.25

Sources


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———. “Viaje por las Islas” [Travel through the islands]. La Revista Adventista [Adventist review], April 1910, 15.


NOTES


3. Ibid.


6. Utz Goltz and Potes Maschmann, La Iglesia Adventista en el Paraguay, 33.


8.
Worker Family Records, June 18, 1933. In February 1952 Rojas states that seven children were left from his first marriage, six of them were in Argentina. Four of these six children were working for the Adventist Church. Elena Vicenta Ernst, Luis Rojas’s first wife, died in Mendoza, Argentina.


23. René Luís Rojas married Ruth Aeschlimann, Pastor Victor Aeschlimann’s daughter. They lived in Florida, in Buenos Aires, and later in the United States. Ruth was a music teacher at Buenos Aires Academy, Buenos Aires, and a choir director.
