

Clouzet, Juan Gastón (1917–2006)

JUAN CARLOS PRIORA

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Juan Gastón Clouzet Jenkins was a pastor, journalist, writer, director, publisher, teacher, lecturer, and administrator in the Chile Union Mission and in the South American Division.¹

Early Years and Conversion

Clouzet was born on September 29, 1917, in Oruro, Bolivia, but a few months later his parents moved to the city of La Serena, northern Chile, and he was a registered Chilean national there, as he was born on September 29, 1918 (as there was no civil registry in Oruro at the time). His father, Juan Francisco

Clouzet, of French origin, was working as an accounting manager of a mine in Oruro. His mother, Amanda Lía Jenkins, was Welsh.² Juan Gastón was the eldest of four children; the others were Alberto, Nora, and Germán.

A few months after Gastón was born, his parents and a German uncle moved to Chile, near the city of La Serena, where they established a copper refinery that was prosperous until the Great Depression (1929–1930), which affected both families dramatically. His German uncle recovered, but Clouzet's family didn't. So they settled in a small town in the countryside, but Juan Gastón stayed in the city, living with his aunt and uncle, to continue his education. He received his primary education in a public school in the city of La Serena, Chile, and Middle School in the Lyceum for men in La Serena (1930–1935), where he got his bachelor's degree in Spanish, philosophy and science, graduating on December 15, 1935.



Juan Gastón Clouzet

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

In the following years Clouzet worked as a mechanic (1936), got involved in journalism as editor of *'El Diario'* (1936–1937), and was an assistant in a German pharmacy (1937–1939). Clouzet was an avid reader and restless thinker; he was captivated by politics, militating in the Socialist Party. He declared himself an atheist. One day a kindly gentleman came to the pharmacy, speaking with a French accent. This aroused Juan Gastón's interest, meeting someone who spoke the language of his grandparents and with whom he could practice it. As the days went by, they became friends. The occasional client, and now friend, was the Adventist pastor Samuel Fayard, who promptly gave him a copy of *The Great Controversy*, which the atheist reader started to read with such growing interest, to the point that he finished the 750-page book in three days. While he devoured the book, the Holy Spirit was working in his sincere heart, and he was fascinated to discover that this God, whom he denied, was not only the history's Sovereign but also the loving Father of His children. He received Bible studies and was baptized. Then a life with meaning started for him.³ He was baptized on November 9, 1940, in Coquimbo, Chile, by Samuel Fayard.

Higher Education, Family and Work in Chile (1941–1947)

After being baptized, Clouzet went to study at Chile Adventist University, based in Chillán, where he graduated in teaching on November 11, 1942. When he was in the Chile Adventist University, he met Elena Ana Rojas Ernst, whom he married on December 28, 1944. Elena was born on April 8, 1920, in Buenos Aires, daughter of Luis Antonio Rojas Ayala and Elena Vicenta Ernst. She was baptized on November 19, 1936. She also graduated in teaching at the same Adventist university. She worked in the South American Spanish Publishing House and in the Argentina Food Factory, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and died in Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina, on October 5, 2006. Gastón and Elena Clouzet had three children: Roberto Haroldo Juan Clouzet (born in Pitrufquén, Chile),⁴ a pastor who married Nora Ethel Ramos; Marcelo Clouzet (1952), who lived only a few months; and (Margarita Susana Clouzet (born in San Carlos, Santa Fe, Argentina), who married Ricardo Schropp and took loving care of her parents until their death.

Gastón Clouzet started his long and fruitful ministry in the Chile Conference, first as a canvasser (1939–1940), and later as a denominational worker on February 1, 1943. He was a teacher and director of the Pitrufquén Adventist Academy, Chile (1943, 1945), and simultaneously he was a pastor to the local church. He went on to be a dean (1944) and a professor (1946–1947) in the Chile Adventist University. From there he went on to be a Bible worker (1948).

Diverse Service (1948–1984)

In 1948, known for his vocation and experience in journalism, Clouzet was called to be the editor at the South American Spanish Publishing House in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he remained until 1956⁵ He was ordained as a pastor on November 11, 1955. From 1956 to 1965 he was the radio director of the Chile Union

Mission, and as of 1963 he also became the Youth Volunteer Missionaries Department leader. In 1963 he replaced Elbio Pereyra as chair of applied theology at River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina. From 1965 to 1967 he was president of the Uruguayan Mission and Youth and Education Department leader.⁶ From 1967 to 1969 he was lay activities leader at the South American Division. Between 1969 and 1972 he was president of the Chile Union Mission. From 1972 to 1981 he returned to the South American Spanish Publishing House as chief editor. At that time he was also secretary for the executive committee of the Argentine Bible Society. He served his last four years of active service (1981–1984) as counsellor secretary for the president and director of Missionary Action and Sabbath School of Chile Union Mission.

Gastón Clouzet's bibliographic production was very abundant, mostly in published articles in *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], *El Atalaya* [The Watchtower], *Vida Feliz* [Happy Life], *El Ministerio Adventista* [The Adventist Ministry], of which he was director, and other smaller publications. He wrote two books: *De las tinieblas a la luz* [From Darkness to Light] (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1948) with a second edition (1952), in which he tells of his conversion, and *Hacia dónde vamos?* [Where Are We Going?] (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1975).

Last Years and Legacy

Clouzet retired at the age of 65, on March 31, 1984, with 41 years of work. Withdrawn from active service, he focused on the translation of books and articles, first in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and then in Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina, from 1994 until his death, on July 1, 2006. He was also the speaker, for many years, of a program on the local cable TV channel, dedicated to the study of the Sabbath School lessons.

J. Gastón Clouzet is remembered as a tireless reader, with a vast knowledge of general culture (mostly acquired by self-teaching), for his prodigious memory, good command of the Castilian language, who handled English and French fluently. He was known as “little big man,” short in height but great in his knowledge, dedication, and hard work.⁷

SOURCES

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Wasiuk, Oscar N. *Reseña histórica de la Iglesia Adventista del 7° Día en el Uruguay* [Brief History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uruguay]. 1st ed. Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1996.

NOTES

1. The author appreciates the cooperation provided to Rosita Friedrich de Ciuffardi, from Argentina Union Conference; Clouzet's children; Susana and Roberto, as well as the contribution of Ms. Esther Luorno de Fayard and Mr. Néstor Alberro. Information corroborated with the records of the ex-Chile Union Mission, available in the files of the Argentina Union Conference, accessed on April 9, 2018.
2. About the life of Amanda Jenkins de Clouzet, see Gastón Clouzet, "Necrología" [Obituary], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], June 1989.
3. As it was told by Clouzet in his book *From Darkness to Light*, 1st ed. (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1948).
4. Roberto Haroldo Clouzet, degree in theology (1969), by the River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina; pastor, chaplain, founder of Vida Sana Community Center, in the River Plate Sanitarium and Hospital, Entre Ríos, Argentina, and, at the time of the writing of this biography, main pastor in Chesapeake Conference, Columbia, Maryland, United States.
5. Marcelo Fayard was editor in chief and Fernando Chajj and Pastor Lorenzo Justiniano Baum were partners in the editorial work.
6. Oscar N. Wasiuk, *Reseña histórica de la Iglesia Adventista del 7° Día en el Uruguay* [Brief history of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Uruguay], 1st ed. (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1996), 44, 45.
7. Best regards from the author and Dr. Néstor Alberro, who worked with Clouzet at the South American Spanish Publishing House.

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