

Castro, Manoel Salustiano de (1918–2009)

THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Manoel Salustiano de Castro

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Manuel Salustiano de Castro was a pastor, missionary, and church administrator in Brazil and Angola.

Early Years

Manuel Salustiano de Castro was born June 8, 1918, in the city of Funchal, Madeira Islands—a region that belongs to Portugal. He was the only child of Manuel Castro and Elmina Mota Castro.¹ Born into a devout Catholic home, his parents wanted him to become a priest. However, as a child, he disliked and distrusted God, because he had learned in catechism classes that God would eternally punish those who did not obey Him. Manuel started school in the Madeira Islands.²

His family learned the teachings of the Adventist Church in 1931 when Emmanuel Mansell, the first Adventist minister officially assigned to work in the area, was sent to Madeira Island. To awaken an interest in the people of this region, he began his evangelistic activities by delivering fliers door to door.³ Through this means, Mansell contacted the Castro family. Manuel's mother had a great interest in religious subjects. She compared the tracts with her Bible and found, with her husband, that the content of the printed material was in harmony with the Word of God. It was not easy for them to publicly accept the Adventist message, for the work of Pastor Mansell had aroused strong opposition from Catholic community leaders. With threats of excommunication and burning of Bibles and Protestant books, they attempted to dissuade anyone who wished to know Adventist teachings.⁴ Nevertheless sure of what they had learned, Manuel's parents accepted the gospel and were baptized with 12 other people on July 29, 1932. The following morning, a Sabbath, the first Adventist church in Madeira Island was organized in the city of Funchal.⁵

Shortly after the baptism of his parents, the region where they lived was surprised by an intense rain of meteorites. Manuel heard his mother preach to the neighbors that this event was one of the signs of the end-times, described in chapter 24 of the gospel of Matthew. This profoundly impacted him, heightening his interest in his parents' faith. Soon he began attending a Bible class in the Adventist church. There he discovered that all that he had learned in his childhood about the eternal punishment of sinners was not true. He began to get involved with the missionary activities carried out by the church in the city, and while attending high school at the School of Arts and Crafts of Funchal, he was baptized in September 1936 by Pastor Enoch Hermanson,⁶ with whom his mother had worked since she became a Bible instructor.⁷

While attending high school, Manuel received a visit of pastors from France who invited him to study at the Campus Adventiste du Salève, the Adventist university in France. Meanwhile, Pastor Enoch Hermanson, who had graduated in Brazil, recommended that he go to Brazil College, as he would have no problem with the language, since Brazil is a Portuguese-speaking country. Manuel, at age 18, made the decision to study at the Brazilian institution. Having embarked on a ship bound for South America, he prayed the following prayer: "I'm alone now. Just me and God. If You keep me, I want to serve You wherever You call me." He arrived in Brazil in December 1936. He finished high school and then began to study theology. Because he did not have enough money to pay for his studies, he started working in Brazil College's agriculture department, and during the holiday season he canvassed.⁸

Ministry

Around 1940, Manuel's parents moved to Brazil, taking up residence a few kilometers from Brazil College. He often visited them and, on these occasions, he attended the São Paulo Central Church. During these visits he became acquainted with Ana Staroski, a young Adventist from the state of Santa Catarina, who lived with her parents in the state of São Paulo. After some months they started dating and in March 1942 they were married.

The ceremony took place at Santo Amaro Adventist Church in São Paulo. From this union, three children were born: Dolores Helda, Wesley Lutero, and Marlene.⁹ Aninha de Castro, as she was known, was a loyal companion in her husband's ministry, helping him through 60 years of marriage.¹⁰

On December 4, 1942, Manuel completed his theology degree. He was the first of his class to receive an invitation to work in the Adventist ministry. He was assigned to be the director of the Publications Department of the São Paulo Conference.¹¹ However, due to the exhausting activity of the position, he soon got sick. He asked the conference president to find a new position for him. In response, he was sent to work as an auxiliary pastor at Brás Church, in São Paulo, with Pastor Emanuel Zorub.¹² He worked there until he was transferred to the district of the city of Catanduva, and after that to the city of São João da Boa Vista, both cities in the state of São Paulo.¹³

While he worked as pastor in the city of São João da Boa Vista, Manuel received a request from the General Conference to return as a missionary to his homeland, since that had been his intent when he went to Brazil to study. Unfortunately, he couldn't accept the invitation. According to the law of his country, going back to a Portuguese territory would require him to serve in the army for two years. He explained this to the church administration and it was agreed to wait for a while. A year later he was requested by the General Conference to serve in Portugal, but this also was not practical. More time went by and he received a request to serve as a missionary among Portuguese people living in Angola—at the time a Portuguese colony. This time, despite the requirement to serve in the Portuguese military, he carefully considered the invitation. He consulted with his family and the conference president, reaching the conclusion that this was a call from God.¹⁴

Manuel accepted the invitation and by the end of 1946 he left Brazil on the Serpa Pinto ship bound for Portugal. After a voyage of 21 days, in order to resolve his issue with the Portuguese army, he disembarked on Madeira Island.¹⁵ He stayed there for two months and still couldn't solve the issue. Then he went to Lisboa, Portugal. He explained his situation to the pastor of the Central Adventist Church. The pastor introduced him to a female friend of the family of the commander of the Portuguese headquarters who obtained his exemption from compulsory military service.¹⁶ Once his case with the military was solved, he moved with his family to Angola. He began his activities in September 1947 as a licensed minister in the Angola Union Mission,¹⁷ which at the time had about 300 members of European origin, divided among the six existing missions.¹⁸

Initially, his activities were concentrated in the city of Benguela, supervised at that time by the Bongo Mission. As he had acquired evangelistic experience in Brazil, he was assigned to work among Europeans living in this city. He couldn't rent a space for public evangelistic meetings because of the small number of people interested. So he organized a Sabbath School class and worked with it until it aroused the interest of a reasonable number of people. When this happened, he rented a hall on one of the city's main avenues, and held the first series of Adventist meetings in the city of Benguela.¹⁹ He worked in this city for two years until he was transferred, around 1949, to Luz Mission. He had been invited by Pastor Enoch Hermansson, president of that field. This was

the most isolated mission the Adventist Church had in Angola. It was 26 miles into the middle of the jungle and 102 miles from the nearest town, Luena. It was a region inhabited by the tribe of the Quiocos, one of the ethnic groups of Angola.²⁰

While he was at this mission, he engaged in evangelism and humanitarian work. He worked as a Portuguese teacher at the mission school and, with a nurse who served the Adventist church, he offered health treatments to natives, especially those suffering from scabies. They treated about a thousand cases per month. This created greater openness to gospel preaching among the people. Those who accepted the Adventist message were invited to live in a village organized by missionaries where they would be able to work and also go to a school operated by the church. This was necessary because the contrast between the new converts and the native fetishists of their former villages made life too difficult for the new believers.²¹

In 1951 Manuel was appointed president of Luz Mission and he was ordained to pastoral ministry in 1952.²² After working for five years in Angola, he received a six-month leave to go to Brazil on furlough in 1952. This was a benefit granted to missionaries every five years so they could visit their families and rest. When he returned to Angola he resumed his activities as head of the mission.²³ He was president of this field until 1954.²⁴

In 1955 Manuel was appointed as Bongo Mission Training School director. He worked there for about a year.²⁵ After completing another five years, he returned to Brazil again in 1957, thus concluding his activities in Angola. In 1958 he was invited to teach religion and business education at Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy, located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. He stayed there for about two years.²⁶ After this he worked for some time as an evangelist in the Rio Grande do Sul Conference, in Novo Hamburgo, assisting Pastor Enoch de Oliveira. Beginning in 1960 he took over the district of Floresta, in the city of Porto Alegre, the state capital. As pastor of this church he held several evangelistic series in the cities of Rio Grande do Sul, such as Santa Maria, Santo Ângelo, Sarandi, Pasto Feijó, and Matias Velho. He stayed there until the end of 1964.²⁷

From 1965 to 1970 Manuel served in the district of the city of Santos, state of São Paulo. In 1970 he accepted an invitation from the General Conference to return to Angola as a missionary.²⁸ He went back there with his wife and youngest daughter, Marlene, in November 1970, to pastor a church made up of Europeans in Luanda.²⁹ There he coordinated the construction of an evangelistic center focused on the work with Angolans, who at the time didn't mingle with white people. This center included a big church, in which Manuel worked as pastor, an educational center, homes, and a medical dispensary to serve the population.³⁰ He and his wife went through a tough experience in 1972 when his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. Fortunately, the surgery to remove the tumor was successfully carried out by Dr. Roy Burlew Parsons, one of the first Adventist missionaries to work in the country and, at the time, considered to be the greatest surgeon in Angola.³¹

In 1973 the political instability in Angola, caused by the rebellion of the natives against the rule of Portuguese colonizers, paralyzed many of the formal activities of the Adventist Church. Most of the properties were

confiscated or destroyed, both Luz Mission and Namba Mission were completely demolished, and some pastors were abducted and killed. Given the situation, the General Conference voted to evacuate all of the Adventist missionaries from the country. By the time the vote was taken, Manuel was on furlough in Brazil. The General Conference notified the South American Division that Manuel couldn't return to Angola, so he was invited to pastor the Santo Amaro Church. This was his final employment in the Adventist Church. He retired in 1981.³²

Last Years and Contribution

After retiring, Manuel moved to Curitiba, state of Paraná. He lived there until he died of cancer at the age of 90 in 2009.³³ His wife Ana died in the same city in 2011 at the age of 91.

Manuel Salustiano de Castro made a significant contribution to the Adventist Church in Brazil and as a missionary to Angola. In Angola, the evangelistic compound and medical dispensary he helped to build in Luanda is currently one of the largest Adventist centers.³⁴

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8. Ibid., 29-31; Geisler, 5-7.
9. Lindquist,, 36-37; Geisler, 8.
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12. Geisler, 9-10; Lindquist, 39-42.
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