

## LAERTE SALVADOR

### Personal Testimony

#### 1950-1980

I began my Christian life among the Brethren and in the 1960's I began to read some books in Portuguese from J. N. Darby, C. H. Mackintosh, William Kelly, H. L. Heijkoop, C. I. Scofield and G. Cutting. Eventually, in 1965 I contacted Watchman Nee's publications, reading *The Normal Christian Life* and other books that had been translated into Portuguese language and published in Portugal. In 1972, four other young brothers and I from the Brethren assemblies translated *The Normal Christian Church Life* into Portuguese. Reading this book changed our lives and our preaching among the Brethren assemblies, where we played a role in the leadership.

#### 1980-1985

Finally, in 1980 I came to the Lord's recovery and began to read Witness Lee's books in Portuguese. I read the booklets, *The God of Resurrection*, *A God Who Hides Himself*, *Man and the Two Trees*, *The Precious Blood of Christ*, *The Principle of the Nazarite* and the books, *Further Talks on the Church Life* and *The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church*. Then I read in a deep and detailed way the *Life-studies of Genesis* and *Exodus*. At that time there were only a few publications translated into the Portuguese language by Editora Arvore da Vida. Little by little the number of publications increased, which helped me to be increasingly constituted in the word of the ministry. From 1990 on, I began to acquire books in English from Living Stream Ministry and to study the truth more intensely.

#### 1985-2005

In 1986 I became a co-worker of brother Dong Yu Lan, initially serving part-time in the northeast of Brazil, mainly serving the churches in the States of Bahia and Sergipe. It was in that region that Brother Dong began his private ministry in 1985. For years I did not realized his deviation. In 1985 I had traveled with Brother Dong on several occasions as he released the first messages he would publish later that year. It began with a series of messages under general subject *As Riquezas Insondáveis de Cristo (The Unsearchable Riches of Christ)*. The second series of messages was *A Visão do Tabernáculo (The Vision of Tabernacle)*. At first, these messages were published as individual messages to replace the individual messages of the *Life-Studies of Genesis* and *Exodus*, which up until then had been used weekly by the churches in their meetings. Brother Dong decided that, from the 1985 Summer Training on, the trainings and conferences sponsored by Living Stream Ministry would no longer be published in the Portuguese language. After publishing translations of the *Life-study of Genesis* and *Exodus*, the Life-studies of the Old Testament were replaced by books by Brother Dong covering Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Daniel, Minor Prophets, etc. All these books were published, at first, in individual messages, to be used weekly by the saints in all the churches, and then, transformed into books. In 1989 or early 1990, the publishing of the *Alimento Diário (Daily Food)* began. During the first year, the messages of the *Daily Food* were taken from the Brother Lee's Life-studies. Then, in the second half of 1991, Brother Dong decided to change the content to his own spoken messages. I participated in the *Daily Food* project until 2005, attending all conferences at the Estancia Arvore da Vida, making outlines out of Brother Dong's speaking which would serve as the basis for the *Daily Food*. I also participated in its proofreading and made final corrections before publication. From the *Daily Food's* content other books were also produced.

In late 1989, I began to cooperate in the Editora Arvore da Vida as a Director with multiple functions. In that time, in a practical way, the Directors were Pedro Dong, Andrew Dong, Fernando Braga Monte Serrat and Laerte Salvador, all serving under Dong Yu Lan's Presidency. There were other directors according the Editora by-laws who in the beginning attended occasional Board meetings. David Franco was one of them. I took care of the following areas of Editora Arvore da Vida's work:

1. Book Sales for all Brazil through:
  - 1.1. Local churches.
  - 1.2. Cooperatives (distributors).
  - 1.3. Book Store Buses (Expolivro).
  - 1.4. Christian groups.
  - 1.5. Christian book stores.
  - 1.6. Secular book Stores.
  - 1.7. International book fairs.
2. Writing articles for Jornal Arvore da Vida.
3. Preparing outlines from messages released by Brother Dong in the International Conferences. These outlines served as a base for composing the *Daily Food (Alimento Diario)*.
4. Helping in the composition and revision of *Daily Food*.
5. Suggesting books to be translated and published from the Living Stream Ministry.
6. Dealing with the opposition from the Christianity (acting together with Pedro Dong and Fernando Braga Monte Serrat).

In 1990, the opposition from Christianity against the Lord's recovery was used as a great pretext by Brother Dong, Peter Dong and Andrew Dong for Brother Dong to expand his private ministry and to put Witness Lee's ministry in a secondary position in our publishing. According to them, since Witness Lee's name was not so welcomed among the pastors, we had to become known under Dong Yu Lan's name in order "to open the Christianity door". I believed in this strategy and helped to promote it. Books were written using many of Witness Lee's words under Dong Yu Lan's name. Peter Dong, who was in charge of all the editors, added many of Witness Lee's words to books published under the name of Brother Dong. One example of this kind of "editing" by Peter Dong is found in the book *The Seven Seals of Revelation*. We were told that this would help to open doors to Witness Lee's books. Dong Yu Lan's books also began to be published and spread widely in the Spanish language. Thus, Brother Dong's work stole the hearts of the saints of the Lord's recovery in South America (2 Sam. 15:6).

I promoted this strategy, but loved the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. I understood that the final goal would be to promote the books of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. However, later I began to realize Brother Dong's open opposition against Witness Lee's books in the EAV Board meetings, especially after Witness Lee passed away. During that time, Fernando Monte Serrat and I got some of Brother Nee's and Brother Witness Lee's titles published, including some from the high peak ministry, without seeking Brother Dong's approval.

In early 2004, because Fernando Monte-Serrat had asked to see Editora Arvore da Vida's financial statement, Brother Dong became very annoyed with Fernando. Brother Dong spoke strongly in an EAV Board meeting that: "Editora is mine, the money is mine and Editora exists just to publish my books." Finally, my eyes were open. I got alarmed and I had a fellowship about Brother Dong's words with another co-worker in whom I trusted, Reinaldo Rodrigues

from Belo Horizonte. Reinaldo notified Pedro Dong and Solomon Ma concerning my reaction and immediately they promoted the transfer of the coworker Ildeu Rodrigues to Sao Paulo from Brasilia as a new Director of Editora and as an elder in the church in Sao Paulo.

During this timeframe, Pedro (Peter) Dong frequently said that in the blended brothers meeting, when an issue is raised or a decision must be made, the blended brothers normally say, "Let's hear what Brother Lee says." Then one of the brothers would check Brother Lee's books. Peter said that nothing was decided without checking what Brother Lee had spoken on the subject. Peter Dong also often referred to a fellowship he had with Joe Davis at Big Bear. Concerning a certain matter, Joe Davis told Peter Dong, "I need to be faithful to Brother Lee, because otherwise how would I face Brother Lee?" According to Peter Dong, Joe Davis gave the impression that Brother Lee is observing the blended brothers today and that at the judgment seat of Christ they would have to give an account to Brother Lee.

In 2004, Brother Ildeu was brought to Sao Paulo. With Brother Ildeu's arrival in Sao Paulo began the process: 1) to annul my functions in Editora and in the church; 2) to strengthen even more the primacy of Brother Dong's ministry, making oneness with Brother Dong the unique base for the fellowship and service in EAV and in the church in Sao Paulo; 3) to intensify the attack against the blending coworkers in USA, which reach its climax in the International Conference of February 2005.

## **2005**

In one of the co-workers' meetings at the February 2005 International Conference in Estancia Arvore da Vida, Peter Dong used the illustration of the movie Ben Hur to accuse the North American co-workers of practicing idolatry toward Brother Lee. In the movie, after Ben Hur was killed in a battle, his dead body was propped up in his war chariot in the front of the army to give the impression that he was still alive in order to inspire the soldiers to fight. Pedro Dong said that the blended brothers use Brother Lee in the same way. Brother Lee had already passed away to be with the Lord, but even though Brother Lee has already died, the blended brothers speak as though he was still alive.

There was also a Service Meeting with co-workers and serving ones from almost all of the churches in South America on February 12th, a Saturday, in midst of the same February 5-13, 2005, International Conference in Estancia Arvore da Vida. The content of this meeting was an open attack against the blending coworkers. The preparations for this Service Meeting were in meetings with Brother Dong and his coworkers, including three from Canada. I felt very uncomfortable participating in this preparation "fellowship" and so I decided do not to attend the Service Meeting but to instead have a personal fellowship with brother Dong the next day to resign from his work.

During the Service Meeting, I worked in a room at Estancia where I could hear all of the meeting taking place. At times I walked out of the room I was in to view the meeting from an entryway. This Service Meeting was led mainly by Ezra Ma. It was filled with attacks against the blended brothers. Ezra distributed 1,000 copies of the text in Portuguese of the Living Stream Ministry publication *Remaining in the Unique New Testament Ministry of God's Economy Under the Proper Leadership in His Move* to which a additional "apocryphal" chapter had been added as a last chapter. This additional chapter, which was not in the original edition published by Living Stream, gave the impression that all the foregoing text was leading up to promoting the work in Brazil and Brother Dong's work in particular. This booklet was used to manipulate the serving brothers to believe brother Dong's ministry and work was the preeminent pattern in the Lord's present recovery. The content of the meeting came to the

attention of the blended coworkers and, according to my personal fellowship with Miguel Ma, he said that he apologized to certain co-workers. However, the damage to the churches throughout South America had already been done and has never been remedied.

On the Lord's Day, February 13, 200<sup>th</sup> 5, at 9:00 am, I met with Brother Dong, Peter Dong, Andrew Dong and Ezra Ma, who I had asked to translate for me. I thanked Brother Dong for his confidence in entrusting me with a portion in his work in South America for 20 years. I told him I recognized him as a brother who has been used by the Lord. But, I said, at this time I could not continue to cooperate with him in his work. I did not give any specific reason or make any accusation but simply stated that my conscience would not allow me to continue. I could not agree with some things which violated my conscience. It was a heavy, emotional atmosphere for him and for me. There had built up an intimate fellowship with him and with his sons also. I told him that I intended to leave Sao Paulo and to move to another city in order not to create any problems in the church or in the work, because otherwise many people would want to know why I left the work. At first Brother Dong did not accept my decision and Peter Dong and Ezra Ma tried to convince me to remain in the work. Brother Dong said that I was being negatively influenced by Fernando Monte-Serrat. They agreed that I should move to another city, saying that this would get me away from Fernando Monte-Serrat's influence. Brother Dong offered me to work in the North and Mid-west of Brazil, saying I could live in Brasilia or Goiania and make that the center of my operations, but I was firm in my decision to leave Brother Dong's work. Brother Dong had to go to the conference meeting, so they asked Helcio Almeida to continue the fellowship with me. I said I did not want to move for the work and was going to leave Brother Dong's work. We agreed to pray about this and to decide later.

I sold my apartment in Estancia the same day, and while I waited for my second apartment to sell, I met with the church in hall 7, the main hall, on Lord's Day for the Lord's table and in hall 4, which was in my neighborhood, during the week. The only table meeting took place at hall 7. During this time, the elders considered the church, the work and my relationship with the brothers in Sao Paulo. They were afraid I would poison the saints, so they began to poison the saints about me. Through private fellowship with the brothers, the elders warned them not to have fellowship with me. They held secret Service Meetings in Sao Paulo, one of which included about 200 leading and serving brothers from the State of Sao Paulo, when we were removed from church's administration by brother Dong. In these meetings they made many accusations and attacks against Fernando Monte-Serrat, David Franco and me. I found out about these meetings and their contents because brothers who were in the meetings shared their notes with me.

One Lord's Day, I took a visiting brother, Alberto Jesus Gandia, from Puerto Rico who was staying with me to the Lord's Table meeting at hall 7. The table meeting had changed in nature. It had become a meeting in which accusations were being made against the blending brothers and against the "three rebellious brothers." They did not mention our names but everyone knew they were speaking about Fernando Monte-Serrat, David Franco and me. The meetings were very hard for me to be in and uncomfortable. After this meeting I realized I could no longer consider that the Lord's Table, but some other table, and that I had been attending a divisive table meeting. That was my last meeting in that hall.

I continued to go to hall 4 in my neighborhood on Saturdays. There was a certain freedom in those meetings. Fernando Monte-Serrat attended that meeting and Brother Marcio Rodrigues Silveira was a leading one there. But the elders began to go to hall 4 to give messages and to warn the saints against us.

Finally, my second apartment was sold and I moved to Praia Grande. The church in Praia Grande had a normal church life. It was the first church in Brazil at that time that chose to follow the ministry.

Laerte Salvador

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