

# Off The Shelf Episode 82

## Part 1 of the Interview with Arthur Antunes, author of “O SEGREDO DO SÉTIMO ANJO: A DERROCADA DO BRANHAMISMO” (The Mystery of the Seven Seals: The Downfall of Branhamism)

**Rod Bergen:** On today's episode, we are pleased to have Arthur Antunes, the author of the recently published book, the secret of the seventh angel, the downfall of Branhamism. Unfortunately this book is only available in Portuguese. It was published online in July, in Brazil, Arthur Antunes is a pseudonym, a pen name for the author.

**Rod Bergen:** Arthur agreed to be interviewed today on the basis that we will be disguising his voice, as many that he knows, including family members are not aware that he is the author of the newly published book. Arthur was born in the message and is a third generation, or was a third generation, message believer.

**Rod Bergen:** His grandparents and parents are followers of William Branham. Arthur is a young man who lives in the state of Sao Paulo in Brazil. He has spent significant time in north America, including extensive visits to churches in both the U.S. And Canada. He's also made the pilgrimage to Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Arthur.

**Rod Bergen:** Welcome to the Off The Shelf podcast.

**Arthur Antunes:** Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. I've heard so many episodes and being here today is a real pleasure.

**Rod Bergen:** It's good to have you. I have been in Brazil only once. I was there... it was one of my last trips before the pandemic struck. I was in Porto Alegre.

**Rod Bergen:** I think I landed in the Sao Paulo airport. Never got to see any of the city itself, but went down to Porto Alegre in February 2020. Over a year ago. I love the country of Brazil and are happy to have you with us so we can talk about what's going on in the message in Brazil.

**Rod Bergen:** So Arthur, the first question I wanted to ask you is, you grew up in the message, what was it like for you growing up in the message of William Branham?

**Arthur Antunes:** : Yes, I was born in the message. Most part of my family were born in the message. So it's a very message family. If I can say that. And growing up in the message here in Brazil was a little bit difficult.

**Arthur Antunes:** I had a hard time making friends at school. If I had to summarize my experience growing up, it was a very lonely. I had some friends at school, but for the most part, they were friends just in the period of classes. So outside of the school, I was not able to hang out with them because I believed... because the church taught me... My family taught me that people from outside the message could be a bad influence. So I was friends with them at school, but outside of the school, we were not friends. So I had that constant fear. Because I was talking to people outside of the message, and I had some hard time with sports as well, because for example, when we had sports at school, I couldn't play soccer, because I was not allowed to wear shorts.

**Arthur Antunes:** So I had to play with pants. Some pastors here in Brazil, they teach that you cannot play sports, any kind of sports. So when I was at school playing soccer, I had this fear that I was committing a sin.

**Rod Bergen:** And that is really what the message is about, it produces fear in people.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. And I have just learned that because before I believed that going to heaven was about obeying a lot of rules and it's not about that.

**Rod Bergen:** Yeah, that's absolutely correct. You mentioned that pastors say that you can't play sports. That is not a North American thing for the most part. We certainly played sports, at our church camps. Kids could play some sports. , My kids were involved in baseball and soccer and some other sports, but we didn't want them to play on Sunday because that interfered with church and going to church was the most important thing that you could do.

**Rod Bergen:** So tell us about, a little bit about the message in Brazil, Arthur. I assume that the various sub cults of the message, like the Deity movement, who believe William Branham was equal to Christ. The seven thunders, Joseph Coleman. Then you have the Perousia, who were followers of Lee Vale, and many others. Do these kinds of groups, which exist in north America,

**Rod Bergen:** and we know outside of north America, do they also exist in Brazil?

**Arthur Antunes:** So I know that the Deity movement is growing here in Brazil. Faster since I think 2005, when a very famous pastor here, from the state of San Paolo, he started this movement in Brazil. So it's not something very old, but it has a lot of followers, the Deity movement. The seven thunders movement, although they have a lot of followers in the U S and in Canada, we don't have this kind of church here in Brazil.

**Arthur Antunes:** I had never heard about Joseph Coleman before I started my own research into the message. I had never heard about the seven thunder inspiration. We don't have it in Brazil. The followers of Lee Vale, I know, just steal members of other message churches. But it's also not very big here in Brazil. Another sub-cult that is very famous here in Brazil, is the cloud movement that pastor Vin Dayal is part of. It's very big here in Brazil.

**Rod Bergen:** And for those who might not have heard Vin Dayal is from Trinidad and was recently I understand he's been charged with money laundering, as a result of having 28 boxes of cash, a million dollars Trinidadian money in each box and some 28 million plus I think another 2 million the police found after they did a search of his place.

**Rod Bergen:** And he's now being arraigned, I understand, on charges of money laundering which certainly... and they relate to income tax because certainly, he treated this money as his own and never reported it for income tax purposes. Lots of interesting stuff going on in the country of Trinidad with respect to the message being prosecuted by the government.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. Trinidad and Tobago is not a very big country. They were they were trying to prevent money laundering and tax evasion, so they changed their currency to try to stop it and find out how much they were losing. So that's how they found Vin Dayal with all that money, because he had to go to a bank to exchange his currency.

**Arthur Antunes:** And when they found that he had a lot of money that he had never showed to the government, he had never reported for taxes, they seized it.

**Rod Bergen:** Yeah. And you're very right, Arthur. The issue was that the government of Trinidad to fight against money laundering actually changed the hundred dollar bills from paper to a kind of plastic, which is used in a lot of countries.

**Rod Bergen:** We use plastic money here in Canada, plastic bills and they converted it and required everyone to come in before December the 31st of

2019, I believe it was, to hand in their money and get new money. And he showed up with 28 boxes of 100 Trinidadian dollars. As I said, about 28 million, which was somewhere in the range of three and a half to \$4 million of us dollars.

**Rod Bergen:** From what I can remember, obviously he didn't trust the banks, had this money sitting at home in boxes, very strange.

**Arthur Antunes:** Exactly. And another sub-cult that is very famous here in Brazil. And this is something very recent, as I remember it is started here in Brazil in 2017, and it's the cult of Kacou Philippe.

**Arthur Antunes:** I don't know if this name is very common in the U.S. or Canada in the message circle, but here in Brazil, it's growing very fast as a separate movement, a sub cult of the message. Have you ever heard about Kacou Philippe?

**Rod Bergen:** Yeah. Kacou Philippe is from Africa. I believe he's the from the country of Cote d'Ivoire, which is the ivory coast, as we would say it in English.

**Rod Bergen:** And yes, we have certainly heard about it. His followers are very evident on the internet, on Facebook, and are constantly promoting him as the new prophet, someone who succeeded William Branham. Yes. Yes.

**Arthur Antunes:** They believe that you cannot follow a dead prophet like William Branham. They follow Kacou Philippe, because they say that he is the living prophet for this age.

**Arthur Antunes:** Whenever a prophet dies, another prophet has to come along to replace him, because every age has to have a living prophet.

**Rod Bergen:** Yeah. So it, that does exist. I don't know if it's significant here , in north America. Certainly it probably is within the immigrant community. There are a lot of African immigrants in north America.

**Rod Bergen:** And so that would likely be the place that it would start, but I'm not aware because I'm not in those circles anymore.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. Yes. Here in Brazil it's very common and growing very fast.

**Rod Bergen:** Arthur, which group were you associated with?

**Arthur Antunes:** To talk about it, I have to talk about the history of the message in Brazil.

**Arthur Antunes:** In 1958 William Branham sent a man to Brazil and his name is Archie Russel Martins. And this man was a friend with Pastor Collins. And he went to Brazil here in the state of São Paulo and he started spreading the message of William Branham using Portuguese copies of the book of the Seven Seals.

**Arthur Antunes:** At this time they hadn't used the books of William Branham outside of North America. After 1965, the message started growing very fast in Brazil because of the Portuguese version of the seven seals book. The first Portuguese version of a message was the seven seals book, in English, you refer to it as C A B. The church age book.

**Rod Bergen:** The Church Age Book... There's a group of sermons that are put together, which are the seven seals, but the church age book... the revelation of the seven church ages is a book which Lee Vayle helped William Branham edit to put out... which was published... you're right... slightly after William Branham death in 1965.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. Here in Brazil, in Portuguese, I don't know if in English you have this, but we also have another book, very similar to the church age book on the subject of the seven seals. But the Church Age Book was the first one in Portuguese here in Brazil and a pastor named Jowakeem. He was a Pentecostal pastor here in Brazil. He started believing in William Branham and he developed a very large crowd of people believing the message in the city of Goiania, which is a very big city here in Brazil.

**Arthur Antunes:** And so I was in the group of pastors with pastor Joe-wakeem in the beginning of his church.

**Rod Bergen:** What's his last name? .

**Arthur Antunes:** Jo-wa-keem Gon-sal-vays.

**Rod Bergen:** Okay. Joaquim Gonsalves...

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes, he's the most famous pastor in Brazil. He has just died of Co-vid-19, I think, a couple of weeks ago. And so I was part of that group and it was a very traditional message group here in Brazil.

**Arthur Antunes:** We were not taught that William Branham was infallible. So we didn't believe that everything in the sermons was the truth, as for example, the Branham tabernacle teaches. We didn't believe that. So in the beginning, in the seventies and eighties my family knew of the message because of the radio preaching of this Pastor Jo-wa-keem.

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**Arthur Antunes:** In the beginning, the message in Brazil was very legalistic. For example, we couldn't play sports. We couldn't have television. But nowadays in Brazil, while they are not allowed technically, everyone ignores them, everyone has a television. Everyone plays sports. But in the beginning, it was very hard.

**Arthur Antunes:** But nowadays it's becoming very easy to not follow the rules. I was part of that group, the group with Pastor Jo-wa-keem.

**Rod Bergen:** So you said that this group didn't teach that William Branham was infallible, but were there any significant issues where the ministry disagreed with William Branham and said, okay, this where he taught here, the Bible teaches this, but William Branham taught this and we believe the Bible as opposed to William Branham.

**Arthur Antunes:** What I discovered after starting to do my own research was that the pastors, they didn't teach that William Branham was infallible, but they believe he was, even if they don't teach that. Do you understand?

**Rod Bergen:** Yeah. They would never disagree with William Branham, which means if you, if William Branham says something to disagrees with the Bible, you're going to say, okay, we're going to go with what William Branham says.

**Rod Bergen:** We believe that he has the true revelation of what scripture means, and therefore they'll go with him, which effectively means they're putting William Branham at least on par with the Bible.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. A clear example of that is when I started my research, I was on Believe The Sign, reading about women cutting their hair.

**Arthur Antunes:** And I had a friend in the message and I asked him where in the Bible does it say that a woman cannot cut her hair.

**Arthur Antunes:** And he used First Corinthians 11:6 which says, “For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. Shorn, right? Is that the English word? Okay. And I said to him, okay, but this is not cut. Shorn is when you cut very near to the skin. And he said to me, okay, but brother Branham has the revelation and we have to keep with his view of the scripture, even though it's not the correct view, but we have to keep with his view.

**Rod Bergen:** So effectively they exalt William Branham's word above the Bible.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. For example, when a pastor here in Brazil is instructing a person on how to be more spiritual, they always say you have to read more messages. And after that he says, oh, and you also have to read the Bible. So the message always before the Bible.

**Rod Bergen:** Yeah, exactly. How did you view the differences between your flavor of the message? So as Joaquim Goncalves, what he taught, as opposed to the other subjects within the message, the Deity movement, the followers of Lee Vayle, the Trinidadians... Vin Dayal, and these others...

**Rod Bergen:** How did you view these other people that said they followed William branham?

**Arthur Antunes:** I think that growing up in this movement, the more traditional and easy to follow movement was better, because we didn't have a lot of rules. And as I said, it was easier to not follow the rules.

**Rod Bergen:** You had a lot of rules, but your rules were different than other people's rules.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. We're less strict. And my flavor was less strict and it was better for children. But I remember when I was in Canada a couple of years ago, and the first time that I went to a church in Canada, And I saw all those girls with very long skirts... very long, like to their feet. And here in Brazil, this is not very common. Women use skirts, but not very long, just in the middle of the legs.

**Rod Bergen:** Below their knees, but not to the ground.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes, exactly. And it was very strange to me when I saw it first and when I was in Branham Tabernacle, I thought they were very strange as well because they just played the tapes. And this was very strange to me the first time that I saw it.

**Rod Bergen:** Interesting. I remember a time when I had someone come to me, I was a song leader at the church and a woman came to me and said, this person we're going to have her sing, but we don't think she should sing because she has a slit in her dress.

**Rod Bergen:** And I go, okay. How big a slit? I said, if you took the slit and cut it, cut the dress off where the slit ends, would it still be a modest dress? And she looked at me like really strange. So I said, so where would, how far does a slit go? It's only six inches. So I said, she has a dress going down to the floor, but she has a six inch slit.

**Rod Bergen:** And you have a problem with that? It's a slit in the dress and that's wrong. I couldn't believe it.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. here in Brazil, we had something very similar to that. For example I don't know if you know a pastor. He is a Canadian pastor. His name is Gerald. Have you ever heard of him?

**Rod Bergen:** Gerald? What's his last name?

**Rod Bergen:** Is he from new Brunswick? Gerald Lush probably.

**Arthur Antunes:** : I don't remember his last name, but about four or five years ago, he started meeting with some Brazilian pastors here in Brazil, in the city of Goiania and the first time that he was here he was preaching about women wearing shoe that were showing their toes.

**Arthur Antunes:** I had never heard this before and no one in the church had never heard like it because the sermon where William Branham talks about women's toes were not translated to Portuguese.

**Rod Bergen:** What's really bizarre is back in Bible days they wore sandals, which means everyone's toes were showing. It's bizarre, the personal feelings that people have... that ministers have... that get turned into doctrines such as this.

**Rod Bergen:** I remember we had someone who preached that men wearing suspenders was wrong and if women wore a skirt with a fly in the front that was masculine. They had to have the fly in the side or the back in order to be a garment that wasn't pertaining to a man... as if a man would wear a dress that had a fly in the front.

**Rod Bergen:** It was just bizarre.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yeah, it makes no sense. So after he preached about this kind of shoes, every time that he would come back to Brazil to preach, every women in the church would make sure they wore the correct kind of shoe when he was there. So he taught something new to us because... for example, do you know how many messages you have in English?

**Rod Bergen:** There's more than 1100.

**Arthur Antunes:** Okay. So we just have 300 sermons translated into Portuguese. And I don't know if it's a coincidence, but I don't think so... In those messages, where William Branham talks about beating women and things like that, they were never translated into Portuguese.

**Rod Bergen:** Okay. Interesting.

**Arthur Antunes:** Another interesting fact is that the Voice of God in Brazil just translates two or three new messages a year. This is bizarre because I know English and I know that you can translate two or three sermons in a month. So why do they just translate two or three a year? I have no idea.

**Rod Bergen:** If they actually really believed that William Branham was the answer to all of our spiritual problems, you'd think they would translate all of them as fast as they can, particularly because they have over \$110 million in the bank.

**Rod Bergen:** So money is not an object. They could go out and get someone to translate all of them.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yeah. The first time that I questioned about it, they said to me that the money was the problem. But after I discovered how much money they have, I knew that this was not the problem.

**Rod Bergen:** Yeah. So Arthur, when did you realize that what you believed was different from most other churches?

**Rod Bergen:** It sounds like when you were at a quite early age.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. So when I was a kid, I think I was 10. I remember that I had a friend in school and he was a Catholic. And I remember that I heard in church every Sunday that the Catholics were from the devil, they were the false church, and things like that.

**Arthur Antunes:** So I thought that would be a good idea to teach the correct thing to my friend. So just imagine, a 10 year old boy trying to teach the message to his young Catholic friend. But what I discovered was that he knew way more about the Bible than I did. So I was just embarrassed because he had a lot of answers to my questions and I knew nothing about the Bible.

**Arthur Antunes:** If you asked me anything about the message, probably I would know, but about the Bible, I had no chance because we in Brazil, we were not taught to read the Bible.... just the messages, the sermons of William Branham.

**Rod Bergen:** That's pretty common.

**Arthur Antunes:** Yeah. They don't say to not read the Bible, They don't say, "Don't read the Bible". But they always say read the messages, the message, the Bible is always put to the side. It wasn't the important thing.

**Rod Bergen:** So you've talked about fear and certainly fear is an underlying theme in all of the various sub cults in the message. How did you, and this was William Branham's God was a God who, if you messed up, would kill your wife and your daughter. Jesus carried this big stick and would hit you over the head, if you did something wrong. How did fear play out in your church?

**Arthur Antunes:** I know that it's very common here in our church. When someone makes a mistake or sins, and they are in the message, the pastor would take this person in the front of everyone. They do this during their Sunday sermons, because the church is very crowded.

**Arthur Antunes:** So they take this person in front of everyone and tell everyone about the sin of this person and...

**Rod Bergen:** Seriously?

**Arthur Antunes:** It's very humiliating. Yeah.

**Rod Bergen:** Wow.

**Arthur Antunes:** And I had a friend, I think he was 17 or 18. And when he got married, his wife was already pregnant, but no one knew about it. So probably he told this to the pastor. This marriage was not in the church because the boy knew that he was wrong.

**Arthur Antunes:** So he didn't get married in the church. But about three or four months after his marriage, the pastor took him and his wife in the front of everyone, and told his sin. And he used to work in our church and he was taken out of his position in the church. And humiliated.

**Rod Bergen:** So he was fired from his job?

**Arthur Antunes:** Yes. And everyone knew about his mistakes. It was very humiliating and it was not the first time that I saw it. It happened like once or twice a year. And it's very common. So this is how they make you fear every kind of sin. So you have to keep the rules. But it's very interesting because if you have some position in the church, and if your relatives are important in the church, they don't subject you to that.