

Ritter, Orlando Rubem (1924–2020)



Orlando Rubem Ritter

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THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Orlando Rubem Ritter was a pastor, teacher and administrator in Brazil.

Early Years

Orlando Rubem Ritter was born on May 2, 1924, in the city of Porto Alegre, state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil!¹ The son of Germano Guilherme Ritter (1898-1968)² and Irma Julieta Nagel (1900-),³ he had four siblings: Mário, a hematologist who worked for many years at the São Paulo Clinic and Hospital; Noemi, literacy teacher for more than 35 years in Adventist schools; Yolanda Alice, nurse and teacher in the United States; and Germano Raul, salesman.⁴

Orlando was a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist. His grandparents by father's side, Henrique Ritter and Carolina Cruzei Ritter, embraced the Adventist faith through a series of public meetings held by Pastor John Lipke in 1908, in Taquara, state of Rio Grande do Sul. Henrique had emigrated from Germany in order to volunteer in the war between Paraguay and Brazil. In Taquara he established a furniture factory where his son Germano stood out as a manager. Later Germano coursed Theology and became a pioneer pastor in South and Southeast regions of Brazil.⁵

Orlando was greatly impacted by his father's ministry, and the experiences he had in his childhood and adolescence prepared him to also become an Adventist church worker. His first travel in order to attend a call from the Church took place in October 1926, at only two years of age, when his father was appointed as secretary-treasurer of the Santa Catarina-Paraná Mission, based in Curitiba.⁶ In 1930 the family moved to the city of São Paulo, where his father would occupy this same position at the local conference.⁷ There they began to frequent the Santo Amaro Church, where Germano was a leader. In 1931 he started a campaign to build a parochial school in the back of the church. It was not an easy task, as the whole world was experiencing an economic crisis resulting from the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in 1929. This was a very significant event for Orlando, who, as a child, helped as he could in the construction. Almost all of the family's savings were used in this project.⁸ About 25 years later, Orlando would lead the Santo Amaro Church for seven years, a period in which he would help to build a new school behind the church building, just as his father did.⁹

Education

Orlando began elementary education in 1932, already a literate due to his father's good library and the access he had to magazines and newspapers. At the Santo Amaro school, he attended from first to third grades!¹⁰ In 1935, the family returned to Curitiba, state of Paraná,¹¹ where he completed the fourth grade of elementary education and the fifth complementary grade at the local parish school, an additional reinforcement program offered at most of the Adventist parish schools at the time. The experience in school was so exciting for him that at the end of the school year in 1936, at the age of 11, Orlando wrote an article on Christian Education, which was published by the magazine *Revista Adventista* the following year.¹²

In 1937, the family moved to the city of São Paulo again, where Orlando attended the sixth complementary grade at the Santo Amaro church school. In the end of 1937, he took the admission exam to middle school (called *ginásio*, in Brazil) and joined the Brazil College (now UNASP-SP), in 1938.¹³ In 1939, due to the events of the Second World War, Orlando performed his military service for one year and seven months, yet without leaving his studies. In the same year, he was baptized by Pastor Domingos Peixoto da Silva, at the Brazil College.¹⁴

Orlando completed the fifth year of middle school in 1942, as a part of the last secondary education class of Brazil College that had the duration of five years. This is because, in 1942, secondary education in Brazil was divided into four years of middle school and three years of what was known as pre-university, today called high

school. In 1943 he began the second grade of pre-university, with the aim of applying to the Theology course when completing the third grade of pre-university. However, at the end of 1943 he was invited to be part of a teacher training program idealized by the administrative board of Brazil College.¹⁵

Students with good performance and Christian commitment, among them Orlando and Nevil Gorski, were invited to enter the University of São Paulo (USP) in order to supply the institution's need for more professionals. Until then, no Adventist had joined any of USP's scientific sections.¹⁶ On accepting the call, feeling that it came from God, in 1944 he entered USP to a five-year higher education course on Advanced Mathematics and Physics.¹⁷

Marriage and Ministry

Even as a student, since 1944 Orlando began teaching mathematics and physics at Brazil College. He took his last exam at the university on December 17, 1948, on the subject of Theoretical Physics. His graduation ceremony was held some days later at the Municipal Theater of São Paulo.¹⁸

On July 14, 1949, Orlando married Edda Martinelli Balzi, after a five-year relationship. The ceremony was officiated by Pastor Moysés Nigri at the Central São Paulo Church. On August of the same year, they moved to a house inside Brazil College, where they lived for over 50 years.¹⁹ Together they had four children: Marli Elizete, who came to be a Physics teacher and, later, was a missionary in Nepal for about ten years; Marlene Lisete, who worked as a nurse at the Clinical Hospital of São Paulo and established a dermatological clinic in Campo Grande, state of Mato Grosso do Sul; Orlando Mário, who also has dedicated himself to the educational area of the Adventist Church and Marilei Eliete who also dedicated her life to the educational service.²⁰

The years showed that Orlando's decision to become a teacher at Brazil College was as much blessed as if he had become a pastor. He taught mathematics and physics at a high school level for more than 30 years, from 1944 to 1976,²¹ thus contributing to the training of thousands of students both academically and spiritually. He is kindly remembered by his scholars as an excellent teacher and a devoted Christian. In addition, from 1950 to 1992, he taught science and religion, and Christian philosophy and education for the Theology school.²² In all, more than 1,000 church leaders and pastors took lessons from him while they were students at Brazil College.²³ As a teacher, Orlando was one of the first to approach the subject of creationism; he was a supporter of this cause by writing articles and attending academic conferences. He contributed to the establishment of the Brazilian Creationist Society, founded by Professor Ruy Carlos de Camargo Vieira.²⁴

After ten years of teaching, Orlando was called to be part of the managing board of Brazil College, being appointed alongside Nevil Gorski to direct the middle and high school levels, a position held from 1954 to 1964. Within that period, Orlando was also involved in the leadership of the Santo Amaro Church from 1955 to 1962, and contributed to the spreading of the Adventist message through evangelistic efforts in the region.²⁵ He and his friend Nevil helped in the establishment of many Adventist groups that came to be pastoral districts, such as

Campo Grande, Cidade Dutra, Cidade Ademar, Jardim São Luiz and others. In addition, Orlando expanded the Santo Amaro Church school building, the same that was constructed by his father many years ago. In 1961, he completed a Pastoral Psychology course as part of an extension program offered by Andrews University, at Brazil College. Due to his relevant contributions within the pastoral area, Orlando was ordained to the ministry in 1962.²⁶

After this, Orlando continued occupying administrative positions at Brazil College, in addition to teaching. He was the students' development director for three years 1963, 1964 and 1967, and vice-president for academic affairs in 1962, 1969 and 1976.²⁷ During 1965 and 1966, at the request of the Church, he completed a master's degree in education at Andrews University. Ritter was also the director of the Theology Seminary between 1969 and 1970. From 1973 on, he began teaching the subjects of School Administration and School Supervision at the recently opened Pedagogy course. In 1977, he was appointed as the program's director, a position he occupied until 1994.²⁸

As the leader of the Pedagogy program, Orlando desired to establish a primary school for practical training, with the aim of providing a proper environment for the students to experience in practice the theories they were learning in classroom. Assisted by Golden Cross, in the person of Dr. Milton Afonso, the school was inaugurated on February 19, 1989, under the title *Escola Modelo* (Model School). Later, it came to be named *Escola Modelo Prof. Orlando R. Ritter*, in his honor. It had a unique architecture project; the spaces, shapes, floors, walls, colors, equipment and playgrounds were carefully planned. It comprised a little library in each classroom, a vegetable garden, an orchidarium and an apiary, in addition to observation spaces for the trainees to observe the children without being seen. This school came to be an attraction point for the Brazil College and became a reference in Adventist education at that time.²⁹

In 1994, the Pedagogy program of Brazil College campus São Paulo was transferred to the campus in Engenheiro Coelho, countryside of São Paulo. However, due to the lack of such a course in São Paulo and in order to avoid competition with the other campus, there was made a negotiation with the Santo Amaro University, which opened a Pedagogy class at the Adventist campus in 1997.³⁰ However, two years later, the Faculty of Pedagogy was reopened at Brazil College in 1999, offering an evening course of three years' duration. It was up to Ritter to take charge of this responsibility, and he coordinated the course until 2003.³¹

Last Years

In 2003, with the graduation of the first Pedagogy class of campus São Paulo in the second moment of its history, Ritter formally performed his last role at Brazil College,³² retiring in 2004. After this he moved from his house in the campus to the city of Campo Grande, state of Mato Grosso do Sul, where he attended the Central Church of Campo Grande³³ and lived until his death in June 27, 2020, at 95 years of age.³⁴

Orlando wrote several handouts. At first, he prepared booklets on Creationist Geology and Astronomy, aimed to the Theology course students. Later, these two disciplines became one, originating the discipline of Science and Religion. In order to meet this demand, he wrote a workbook of two volumes, totaling 350 pages, entitled *Studies in Science and Religion*. In addition, Orlando wrote many articles for the magazine *Revista Adventista*³⁵ and an autobiographical book entitled *O Professor*, published in 2014 by Brazil Publishing House.³⁶

Orlando Rubem Ritter left a significant contribution of 60 years to the Adventist Church in Brazil. He developed most of his ministry at Brazil College, where he contributed to providing a high-quality education both academically and spiritually. Orlando is a part of the Adventist education history, and his life inspires the new generation of Adventist teachers to keep up the true purpose of our education, which is to educate students for eternity.

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NOTES

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2. Henrique Berg, "Ritter," *Revista Adventista*, year 64, no. 03, March, 1969, 42.
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4. Orlando Rubem Ritter, *O professor* (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2014), 47.
5. Julio Cesar Coimbra Gaya and Sandro Roberto Affonso, "Vida e obras do Pr. Germano Ritter" (Monography, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1989), 5-8.
6. Orlando Rubem Ritter, *O professor* (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2014), 11; Ritter, "Breve Relato de Minha vida," 347.
7. *Ibid.*, 14; Ritter, "Breve Relato de Minha vida," 347-348.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Ritter, *O professor*, 21.
10. *Ibid.*, 22.
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16. *Ibid.*, 51.
17. Ritter, "Breve Relato de Minha vida," 350.
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