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No. 203
17 AUGUST 17

Editorializing

The Cream Separator

The majority of you readers have probably never seen a cream separator, and much less ever used one. So we explain...

Back in prehistoric times (when communications depended on the crank phones like the one below), the cream separator held a prominent place in rural America when cows were still milked by hand. Large families with eight or ten or twelve growing children consumed a lot of milk. But, depending on how many cows were fresh at a given time, a number of buckets of milk could be left over when milking was done. Cheese could be made of this excess, but the most practical solution was the cream separator.

Operationally simple, whole milk is poured into the large receptacle on the top of the separator. At the bottom there is a spigot that controls the amount of milk flowing into the separating mechanism below. A small container for the cream is positioned below the smaller spout on the left and a larger one below the spout on the right to catch the skimmed milk. The actual separating begins when the handle on the right is turned.

The quality and volume of the cream is determined by the breed of the cows and nutritional value



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of the pasture or supplement available. Additionally, the crank has to be turned slowly. Rapid cranking reduces the volume of cream separated.

Back in the days of crank phone and crank separator, it wasn't unusual for farmers to go to town only once a week and sell their produce—eggs, cream, butter, cheese—in exchange for groceries and other necessities. (For my folks this was a looked-forward-to Saturday evening ritual.)

The downside of all this was dismantling the separator after each usage and conscientiously washing all the parts, which included some 20 conical discs, open at both ends, where the actual separating took place.

Separating milk into cream and skimmed milk is one thing, but it isn't what we have on the burner today.

Modernity bombards us with information: Billboards, flyers, e-mails, electronic news, constant cellular connectivity, WhatsApp, face-to-face communication made possible by good roads and good cars.

Daily we are faced with information that needs to be run through a separator. This can result in information overload capable of provoking depression and debilitating anxiety. The receptacle on top of the separator overflows and useful information is reduced to a torrent of misinformation.

Life used to be simpler. During much of human history people lived in or around small villages. There was a cobbler, a baker, a miller, a blacksmith. And so, when a pair of shoes or boots was needed, the village cobbler was looked up. He carefully measured the feet, carved molds out of soft wood, and set to work with leather he himself had tanned. About the only option offered by the cobbler was male or female footwear.

Today we get flyers in the mail touting every imaginable (and unimaginable) kinds of shoes. In one day we can visit a dozen shoe stores, again with every imaginable (and unimaginable) styles from which to choose. We may try on two or three dozen models and strut in front of mirrors to see which is just right. It is tiring, stressful, often frustrating to choose out of hundreds of options.

Back there when land transportation was pretty much limited to *horsepower* there were no horse agencies. Some people raised their own “equine cars,” but usually they were purchased from neighbors, transient horse traders, or in liverys (overnight or long-term horse “parking lots”), that bought and sold horses on demand. There weren't hundreds of options to be considered, They all came with one horsepower, four-wheel~~foot~~ drive, and operated on grass, hay or oats. The choice came down to whether the buyer liked or didn't like the horse “as-was.”

The bottom line is that access to information has increased exponentially. Picking up an item on the supermarket shelf can result in cursory “scientific” analysis.

Will this item be detrimental to my health?

Does it contain cancerigenic substances?

Are we allergic to any of the ingredients?

How does it compare with products B, C or D?

What do consumer reports say about it?

Buy the economy version or the deluxe?

Is the economy version actually more economic?

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Our computerized brain rapidly processes this information for dozens of objects that land in our shopping cart.

Information. We have lots of information stored away on our mental hard drive. Daily we are bombarded with new information. Since so much of what we read and hear is conflicting, confusing, we are obligated to come to the obvious conclusion that information and facts are not necessarily synonymous. And so we need a separator—a personal separator—a “chip” we can imbed in our mental processor that will give us the ability to discern fact from fantasy.

Following are some operating instructions:

1) **Keep the separator clean.** We have mentioned that it was quite a task to keep the old cream separator clean. Improper washing of the separating disks would result in a residue of souring milk, a minefield for harmful bacteria.

Similarly, the very first and most important rule for separating truth from untruth, fact from fiction, reliable conversation from gossip, healing words from cancerous words, is a clean heart. Any other efforts made will prove ineffective if the separator is contaminated.

2) **Turn the handle slowly.** Remember that we said that for a cream separator to work properly the handle has to be turned slowly. The same is true in fact separating. Inestimable damage has been wrought and misunderstandings perpetuated by snap analyses of facts—indeed at times, by a total absence of logical analysis. This brings us to the next point.

3) **Are facts really facts?** Many of us grew up believing that a fact is an absolute truth. This, of course, continues to be true. However, recently a new term was coined: *alternate facts*. In a word, this means that facts are flexible, that we can make them do for us what we want them to do.

Facts today are much more complex than 50 years ago. Medical researchers come up with facts resulting from tens of thousands of hours of research involving so many patients. We store away these facts on our mental hard drive as reliable. Five, or 10, or 20 years later an equally impressive scientific probe into the same pathology, tells us just the opposite. Our hard drive crashes.

Daily press and electronic media releases on an identical situation leave us reeling. What one decries as harmful or destructive the other extols as virtuous or positive progress. With this comes the temptation to peremptorily accept or reject facts without running them through a separator. And so we pick our facts to build a pedestal to support our version of truth.

4) **Consequences.** After a major disaster, helicopters are seen flying overhead to evaluate the damage. When individual separators are ignored, overloaded, or contaminated, and cease to function properly, the results are often disastrous. If we could board a helicopter and overfly the disaster area, we would be horrified. Our minds would flash back to the smoldering remains of crashed airplanes, to earthquake scenes, to nuclear tragedies...and expressions of: “Oh my! How terrible! Those poor people!” fail to articulate the depth of our shattered emotions.

One of the tragic ironies of modern life is that we overfly—indeed, walk through disaster zones brought on by our insensibility, by our “unseparated” words and actions, and fail to recognize our own fingerprints.

For those who are possibly a bit bewildered by repeated references to a moral separator,

who wonder if we are going to propose a modern solution for an electronic age problem, we quote an old adage:

Loose lips sink ships.

And ponderous words spoken by a man of God two thousand years ago:

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, [talk about] these things. ▶

Wisdom from the Bench

Perhaps the greatest words of wisdom ever spoken by an American president were uttered by Abraham Lincoln—before the time of speech writers. While Ronald Reagan used a speech writer for major speeches, a treasure trove of spontaneous words of wisdom have been recorded.

Alas, those days seem to be past. More and more, public figures gaze at a teleprompter and parrot the words of their speech writers. So when we come across a speech that obviously was both spontaneous and wise, we pay attention. Recently Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, speaking at his son's middle-school graduation, made a truly memorable speech. I suggest that it be copied, framed, and placed on the dresser of your teenage son or daughter.

From time to time in the years to come, I hope you will be treated unfairly, so that you will come to know the value of justice. I hope that you will suffer betrayal because that will teach you the importance of loyalty. Sorry to say, but I hope you will be lonely from time to time so that you don't take friends for granted. I wish you bad luck, again, from time to time so that you will be conscious of the role of chance in life and understand that your success is not completely deserved and that the failure of others is not completely deserved either. And when you lose, as you will from time to time, I hope every now and then, your opponent will gloat over your failure. It is a way for you to understand the importance of sportsmanship. I hope you'll be ignored so you know the importance of listening to others, and I hope you will have just enough pain to learn compassion. Whether I wish these things or not, they're going to happen. And whether you benefit from them or not will depend upon your ability to see the message in your misfortunes. ▶

Thinking Out Loud

Life in Brazil

For a Brazilian life in Brazil is quite normal; it's the only life they know. For those of us who have lived here as adults for nearly a half century, life is pretty much normal too. Yet, when folks from N America visit us, they are full of questions. That is also normal.

When traveling in N America I am occasionally asked to give a "report" on Brazil.

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After a few disastrous attempts, I have vowed to never again fall into that trap. After all, how do you report on what is normal?

The story is told of a young man who was considering making a career of well drilling. Consequently, he consulted an older gentleman who had been a well driller all his life. Courteously he explained that because of the old well driller's extensive experience, he hoped he could give him some good advice.

The old well driller replied, "Son, if you want to talk to someone who has all the answers, talk to a man who has been in the business for only a year or two."

So my nearly 50 years in Brazil pretty well disqualify me to give any insight on what it is like to live in Brazil. But, based on the time I've been here, I can make a few observations in the form of questions and answers.

Would you do it again—move to Brazil?

Without a doubt.

And why?

Basically there were three reasons for this move:

1) **Cheap land.** Mennonites are (at least used to be) creatures of the soil. It was possible to sell one acre in N America and purchase maybe 20 or 30 acres in Brazil. For families wishing to have land for themselves, their children and grandchildren, this was a green light.

2) **Schools.** Back in the 80s and 90s, there was a lot of concern in N America about the rapid deterioration of environment in public schools. The church school system had not yet taken flight. The possibility of conscience-friendly schools under our control played a definite parte in the move.

3) **Evangelization.** Even during the initial period of getting settled, which included building temporary lodging, clearing land and everything that goes with this type of project, efforts were made to leave a good witness with both neighbors and businessmen. Right from he beginning we had sporadic visitors in our church services and an effort was made to sing Portuguese songs and interpret the sermon, as well as conduct a Sunday School class in Portuguese.

And how did it turn out?

Cheap land. Land was cheap because there was no mechanized agriculture in central Goiás (our state) and was considered worthless. Virtually the only farming was minuscule plots of cut-and-slash plots. Enormous plots of land could have been purchased for a song. Hundreds of families could have settled for a song. . . a song that unfortunately wasn't sung.

The Americanos firmly believed that with adequate amounts of lime and proper fertilization the land could become productive. They were right. The first yields of soybeans the Colony got national attention. Major magazines (Manchete, VEJA) did articles on what has happening in central Brazil, as well as the Goiás daily (O Popular) and the Brazilian version of National Geographic.

Word spread fast and soon there was a torrent of farmers of German and Italian descent from southern Brazil purchasing hundreds of thousands of acres of land. And the price of land went up and up and up...

It went up until today, according to calculations made here, it would be impossible for a young man to borrow money and expect to make a living off the land and pay it off in

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his lifetime. This means that when land comes up for sale on the Colony, it is snapped up by investors. The going price is far beyond what farmers can pay. So, slowly but surely the land we purchased and made our living on for decades is being chipped away.

For decades the road to success was through the soil. This will go down in history as the financial foundation of the Colony. However, it created a mentality that success was rooted in the soil. Being a farmer meant a middle class lifestyle, including trips to N America, for some almost yearly, for others less frequently.

What about renting ground? It is possible to rent ground? Yes, different ones do and generally speaking it's been a good deal. The downside to this is that the rent contracts are usually very short-term. Since the land that is rented has often been neglected, the renter must invest in additional lime and fertilizer to bring it up to par.

Then it can happen that the owner's son, who was never interested in the farm, seeing the good yields, tells his dad he wants to try his hand at farming. He may be successful, but often as not, coasts along on the improvement made by the renter and yields decrease. Then, he may put the land up for rent again. Needless to say, this uncertainty does not create an ideal situation.

For those who have the land and the equipment, farming continues to be an excellent source of income. There is arguably no other place in the world with a better climate for farming than here. When we have hail, it is extremely localized. Some years it rains too much and others not enough, but usually enough grain is harvested to at least cover most of the costs—especially for those who don't depend on financing. And so, farmers find it difficult to set their boys up in farming simply because land isn't readily available like it used to be.

There are two apparent solutions to this problem: The first is to start new settlements in areas where land is still a lot cheaper or engage in non-agricultural activities. This has already been happening for some time. We have a number of brethren who have purchased trucks and are involved in local hauling. From a small truck they advance to larger models and today are making a good living (albeit, not the kind that permits them to indulge in regular international travel).

Other activities include a cabinet shop, a concrete business specialized in floors, a number of dairies, hay baling which has progressed to the large round bales, raising cattle (which still requires a certain amount of land) and of course, quite a few chicken barns.

All this has had a positive effect on Colony economics and there are still a lot of new areas waiting to be tapped. With some Mennonite entrepreneurship I believe the transition will be made and new activities implemented that can provide a middle class living.

Schools. All our congregations have functional schools in operation. A number of the teachers are Brazilians who are doing an excellent job of fitting into our methodology. The curriculum is Portuguese with English as a subject. Even so, Brazilian students whose native language is Portuguese graduate with a very workable knowledge of English. In a word, our schools have been a success.

Evangelization. It is often debated whether evangelization by missionaries or colonization is more successful. Both have their pros and cons. One thing that seems to be a constant in both cases is an eventual time of sifting, of separating. This may come five years, ten years, or more after the work is begun. But it seems that like death and taxes, it happens.

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We here in Brazil certainly have not been exempt. In fact, we suffered lamentable losses. That said, today we are seeing concrete results of both our evangelism and local witnessing. Two cultures have blended to where many of our homes are made up of two nationalities. The success rate has not been one hundred percent, but then neither is it in single-nationality marriages. This homogenization has created a situation in which each culture has borrowed from the other, creating a stronger, rather than weaker, society.

In a word, it has been a priceless privilege being part of this movement... But it is something no human being should have to go through twice in one lifetime. ▶

Additional benefits

Adoptions, fostering and short-term live-ins.

128 children and youth were adopted, fostered or given a temporary home by both American and Brazilian families, of which 23 now live in N America.

9 were fostered until adulthood.

27 were given a home for varying lengths of time, three of which now live in N America.

A number of them have married and they are now the parents of at least 75 children and grandchildren. To say that they have enriched our lives would be the understatement of the year. ▶

The Cold War

(A reprint from nearly 20 years ago)

The Cold War was “a constant non-violent hostility (as opposed to a “hot,” or shooting, war) in the last half of the twentieth century between the United States and the Soviet Union” (AHD).

The Cold War is said to have started after the Second World War. Actually, it started during the war and is a curious chapter in world history.

The three national leaders who conducted the Allied war effort were strange bedfellows indeed. Let's notice:

Joseph Stalin, Supreme Commander of the Eastern Front, was the disciple and hand picked successor of Vladimir Ilich, alias Lenin. A ruthless, despotic leader, he had but one ambition in life: to sow the seeds of communism wherever and however possible. In an incredible act of gullibility, he signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler at the onset of the war and furnished him with raw materials and weapons that later would be used against his own nation.

Franklin Roosevelt, assumed the presidency of the United States during the worst of the Great Depression, after defeating Herbert Hoover at the polls. With the agony of the First World War still fresh in his mind, together with the heavy burden of domestic woes which now rested on his shoulders, he was determined to avoid foreign conflict at all costs. This approach may have made good sense domestically, but it proved to be very myopic as he looked across the Atlantic. When Germany invaded Poland he made sure the world

knew that America would remain neutral. If instead he would have joined Great Britain and France in their effort to aid Poland, the Second World War might have been averted.

Winston Churchill is the true hero of the Second World War. Only he recognized Hitler for what he was and many times was a lonely voice crying in the wilderness. With a lesser leader Great Britain would have surely succumbed to the swarms of bombers that nightly crossed the Channel and dropped their fiery payloads on London.

It was these three men who during the heat of the conflict carried the destiny of the world on their shoulders. Though Roosevelt was a latecomer in the European theater, he received a double dose by having to fight a second war in the Pacific.

Hitler's attack on Russia was welcome news to Churchill, for it meant that part of the enemy forces would be diverted to a second front. Stalin, on the other hand, found no comfort in seeing his country overrun by Panzer units. America entered the war and it soon became evident that unless England, Russia and America joined hands, fascism would be the new world order.

The threat was so dire that these three leaders, each so different from the other, began thinking, planning and working together. During the time in which Hitler's armies were running wild, adding conquest to conquest, country to country, carving an empire out of neighboring nations—including Russia, Stalin proved himself a valuable ally, at times appearing almost lamb-like in his dealings with Roosevelt and Churchill. Protocols were signed that allowed for conquered nations, once liberated by the Allies, to determine their own political future, which was supposed to mean that neither communism nor capitalism would be forced upon them.

As the tide of the war began to turn and the question wasn't *if* Germany would be defeated, but *when*, a definite change was noted in Stalin. As countries were liberated by the Allies, he brazenly imposed his form of government—communism—on the liberated peoples. By the time the war was over, it was evident he didn't have the slightest intention of keeping one single item of the agreements signed at Yalta.

This was the beginning of the Cold War, "a constant nonviolent hostility" that was to continue for more than 40 years.

Expressing his feelings for "a new unity in Europe", Churchill summed up his appraisal of the Soviet aim. "I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. *What they desire is the fruits of war* and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines."

Today, over 50 years since the end of World War II, we must tip our hats to Sir Winston Churchill. The Russians did *not* desire war. They wanted to indoctrinate, to proselytize, to convert the world to communism. But they did not want war.

The missiles? All the thousands of nuclear warheads pointed toward the free world, what were they all about? They were meant to threaten, not to kill (although they certainly would have used them, had they been forced into a corner). The Russians are not a fanatical people, they're not a dumb people. They knew all the time that there would be no winners in a Third World War. No, a nuclear war would have been a "hot" war in the most literal sense of the word. They wanted a "cold" war—a "non-war" that would get them what they wanted without an open fight. The Russians didn't want war any more than the Americans did.

Many of you readers have vivid recollections of the Cold War. You remember the bomb

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shelter days, when people would build shelters in their back yard and stock them with non-perishable foods. You remember the public buildings with designated areas in which to take shelter in case of nuclear attack. You remember the uneasy feeling that permeated the air during times of international crisis.

In another of the ironies of life, it took an actor from Hollywood to see through the Russian mentality and implode communism, thus bringing an end to the Cold War. This man, President Ronald Reagan, understood that for communism to spread there couldn't be a nuclear war, but only the *threat* of war. So why not play their game? In his so-called Star Wars defense system, Reagan proposed building a space based defense system that would destroy enemy missiles shortly after launch. Or put differently, he proposed a system that would destroy their *threat*. With their economic system in tatters after years of communistic rule, Russia realized that to build a deterrent to the Star Wars defense system would do to their economy what the first atomic bomb did to Hiroshima. They threw in the towel.

Perhaps we are being nationalistic if we place the blame of the Cold War on the Soviet bloc, on what President Reagan called the Evil Empire. And yet the passing of time vindicates that judgment. After the Berlin Wall fell, how many capitalist countries turned communist? How many communist countries turned capitalist? Communism didn't need to be destroyed. All it took was a little coaxing from President Ronald Reagan and it auto-destructed.

So what was gained through the Cold War? Absolutely nothing. What was lost? Many lives, half a century of progress in communist nations, deprivation and untold heartaches, not to mention the Gulag and millions of brutal deaths.

All of that is history, including the Cold War. At least we hope so. But lessons can be learned.

We Mennonites are a non-resistant people. If asked what that means, we tend to explain, "Well, we don't believe in going to war." The answer is correct, but superficial. More correct would be, "We don't believe in using force." Even more correct would be, "We believe that as citizens of the Kingdom of Peace, we should love everyone, which precludes the use of force or of going to war."

We aren't non-resistant because we don't believe in going to war. We don't go to war because we're non-resistant. There is a world of difference between the two. There are atheists who refuse to go to war, but are anything but non-resistant. Hippies refuse to go to war. Woodstock is full of people who are totally opposed to war.

If being opposed to war isn't proof of non-resistance, then what kind of proof do we need?

Non-resistance, true non-resistance, in a nutshell, is a "non-warring" will, a peaceful will, a submitted will. Such a will is proof of true non-resistance. Man can make himself willing to not go to war, or even to give his life for another, but no man is able to bring his own will into subjection without divine help.

We refuse to enlist in the Army. We refuse to defend ourselves against intruders. We refuse to go to law. Can we do all that—and more—and not be non-resistant?

Indeed we can.

All we need is a cold war of wills, which means that we don't actually go to war, but desire the fruits of war.

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Back in the war days some C.O.s were investigated by federal officers or were asked to testify in court as to their faith. (*The Diary of Noah Leatherman* relates such an experience—and should be read by all, especially the youth.)

That experience, and others, were the result of refusing to take part in a “hot” war. So far as I know, no one has ever been arraigned in court for refusal to take part in a cold war, or more specifically, for rejecting war, but desiring its fruits.

So let’s just imagine what it might be like. Remember that we are in the year of 1999 and that authorities have at their disposal very sophisticated surveillance equipment. The king of Syria was told by a servant that “Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed chamber.” This is an apt description of modern intelligence.

We’ll call the brother on the stand Menno Nite. Court is in session and he is being questioned by the District Attorney.

D.A.: Mr. Nite, you claim to be non-resistant. Is that correct?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A.: Could you tell this court just what that means?

Nite: Yes Sir. It means that we...

D.A. (interrupting): “We” who?

Nite: We, the Mennonite people.

D.A.: And you feel your belief accurately represents that of the Mennonite people?

Nite: Yes sir.

D.A.: Please continue with your answer—in the first person singular.

Nite: Yes sir. It means that I feel it is contrary to Christ’s teaching to use force, either to defend myself or demand my rights.

D.A.: Could you give this court an example of how this works?

Nite: Yes Sir. Let’s say that someone accuses me of something I didn’t do and takes me to law. Christ says that if someone sues us at law and takes our coat, we should give him our cloak also. On the other hand, let’s suppose that someone injures me or does me damage, I feel it is wrong to use to the law to gain my rights. In fact, I feel like I have no rights.

D.A.: You take Christ’s teachings literally, is that correct?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A.: Would you like for everyone to believe and live as you do?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A.: Would you like for everyone to know how you believe and live, even your enemies?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A. Are their exceptions to your belief? Do you feel that there are occasions in which you could set your belief aside?

Nite: No Sir.

D.A.: At the beginning of this session you affirmed that you would tell only the truth and acknowledged that failure to do so would subject you to the laws and penalties of perjury. Do you at this point wish to retract anything you have said?

Nite: No Sir.

D.A.: Very well. We shall proceed. During the last six months, have you been defrauded by anyone?

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Nite (a surprised look on his face): Well, not really.

D.A.: A yes or no answer, please.

Nite: No Sir.

D.A.: Did anyone try?

Nite: Well, I suppose you could say...

D.A. (sharply): Yes or no, please.

Nite (looking down): Yes Sir.

D.A.: Please tell this court about it.

Nite: Well...ah...a fellow came into the neighborhood sometime ago...

D.A. (interrupting): How long ago?

Nite: During the first week of December.

D.A.: Please continue.

Nite: This fellow came into our neighborhood and said he was buying used machinery. We trusted him because he said he had bought machinery from a number of Mennonites in a neighboring state and told us their names. So some of us sold to him and we got paid with checks. It happens that he loaded after banking hours so we didn't find out until the next day that the checks were hot.

D.A.: Please continue.

Nite (flushing): Well...uh...a half dozen of us decided to go see him...and see if he would make the checks good... or return the machinery. So that is what we did and he agreed to return the machinery.

D.A.: It was as simple as that?

Nite (squirming): Well, naturally we had to find out where he was taking the machinery...

D.A. (interrupting): Just for the record, what piece of machinery did you sell to the man?

Nite: A fairly old tractor.

D.A.: I see, so this man bought your old tractor with a hot check—shall we say, he stole it—and when you found out what had happened, you went after him, is that correct?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A. (turning to the stenographer): Miss Hill, please read Mr. Nite's testimony where he tells what he would do if someone injured or did him damage.

Stenographer (reading): "...let's suppose that someone injures me or does me damage, I feel it is wrong to use the law to gain my rights. In fact, I feel like I have no rights..."

D.A.: Now, Mr. Nite, this court is very interested in knowing a few more details. How did you find out where the man who stole your machinery was from?

Nite: Ah, well, I, together with my friends who also lost machinery, went to see a lawyer...

D.A. (interrupting): A lawyer, did you say?

Nite (flustered): Yes Sir. You see...

D.A. (in a thundering voice): Yes, this court wants to see. Please proceed.

Nite: Well, we looked up this lawyer, just to see if he had any suggestions. We told him how we believe because, well, like I say, we wanted to know if he had any suggestions.

D.A. And did he?

Nite: Well yes, he wanted to call the police, but we told him that was sort of off bounds for us. So he asked us if anyone had noticed the license plate. I had, so I told him what it

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was. He excused himself and about 15 minutes later came back and told us the fellow who got our machinery had done this before and that if we would sign a warrant, the police would have him in jail within an hour. I told him that would go against our believe, but that maybe he could just tell us where the man had his headquarters so that we could go talk things over with him.

D.A.: And then you left your lawyer?

Nite: Well, no. We asked him a few more questions.

D.A.: For example?

Nite: We asked him what the law said about this kind of thing.

D.A.: Curiosity, I suppose, this thing about wanting to know what the law says. Please proceed.

Nite: Well, since we now had his address, six of us drove up to his place to have a talk with him.

D.A.: And after a friendly chat he readily agreed to return your machinery, is that it?

Nite (visibly miserable): No Sir, not exactly...

D.A.: This court would like to know *exactly* what took place. Remember, although you have not sworn to tell the truth, you are subject to the same laws and penalties of perjury. In your testimony you mentioned that you wished that everyone knew how you believe, even your enemies. Did you tell this "enemy" how you believe in your friendly chat with him?

Nite: No Sir.

D.A.: And why not?

Nite: Well, I guess...ah...

D.A.: Need some help? (thundering) Did you tell your five friends, as you were walking up to the front door of the house where the machinery thief lived, "Now, we don't have to let him know we're non-resistant. He may not know, so let's try and scare him a little"? Did you say that?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A. Tell this court about your friendly chat with the man who stole your machinery.

Nite: Well, Sir, I guess it wasn't so friendly...

D.A.: You guess?

Nite: No Sir. It *wasn't* friendly. The man was shocked to see us. Apparently someone *had* told him we were non-resistant, so he didn't expect any problems. When we told him we could have him in jail in 30 minutes and that we knew about what his sentence would be, he offered to return our machinery.

D.A.: And you accepted?

Nite: Well, yes, except that we told him that since he knew where to get the machinery, *he* could take it back. We would follow him in our van...

D.A.: Let's suppose you're bluff wouldn't have worked. Then what would you have done?

Nite: In that case we would have had to let him have our machinery.

We now step out of the courtroom. We have heard enough.

That, folks, is a cold war. We don't actually go to war, but we covet the fruits of war. And often get them.

If time goes on another one hundred years we Mennonites will be staunchly non-resistant on "hot" wars. But what about cold wars? Forget the hundred years. Today. Yes, today, are we really as solid as we think we are in our non-resistant stand?

The court case you just read is imaginary. Turn your mind to real life happenings. Examine your own life. Ask yourself: Do I have a non-warring will, a peaceful and submissive will? Or do I covet the fruits of war? ▶

A Brazilian Story

A Vaca (The Cow)

This story, by Mário de Moraes, tells a profound truth. It is said that when we become discontented, if we suddenly lost everything we owned, and then miraculously got it all back, we would be one of the most contented people around. Here is how Moraes tells it:

It's funny how happiness is sometimes found in the strangest possible ways. Whenever I hear of one of these happenings, I remember the story of the cow. What cow? I'll soon tell you. But first of all I want to tell you a story about my friend who works for a business that isn't doing too well. It used to be the only thing he could talk about was a raise. He would tell how he planned to present an either/or ultimatum to his boss. Either he would get the raise he wanted or he would walk out on him. The only thing his boss would have to do is say yes or no to his proposal.

I don't know if he actually presented the ultimatum to his boss, but I do know that things got worse and worse as the books got redder and redder. Workers were laid off.

Then one day, looking like a scared rabbit, my friend told me,

"They're behind . . ."

"Behind on what?" I interrupted.

"Behind on my pay. It's the first time this has ever happened."

Two weeks went by without a check. Then another two weeks. Finally it was a month and a half without seeing a red cent in pay. My friend was beside himself. He threatened to go to law to get his pay. Even that threat didn't do any good.

Then one day I met my friend. He was on cloud nine.

"Finally . . ."

"Finally what?"

"Finally I got my check. Every bit of it. There wasn't a single cent missing."

He was beside himself. I decided to have a little fun with him.

"How about your raise?"

"Raise? What raise?" He didn't seem to catch on. "What's important to me is to be paid on time."

Talking about a happy friend!

That made me remember the story of the cow. It's an ancient story, but maybe someone hasn't heard it yet.

Way out in India a man looked up the local guru. He too was beside himself.

"Master, I can't take it any longer! I have an enormous family and we are down and out. We live in a one-room shack and we have to sleep in a pile. You can't believe how filthy everything is. When it rains the roof leaks so bad no one can sleep. And in the summer, when it gets hot, it's like an oven inside.

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The guru meditated for a few moments and then asked a question:

“You consider yourself to be about as unhappy as a human being can get, don’t you?”

“Yes, master.”

“Then this is what you will do. You have a cow, don’t you?”

“Yes, master.”

“Keep it in the house . . .”

“What did you say, master? In the house?!”

“That’s right. From today on your cow will live in with you.”

Since you don’t argue with a guru, the unhappy man followed orders. Some days later he returned to see his guru.

“Master, you can’t even imagine what things are like at home. With that cow in the house, things are filthier than ever. We can’t even eat or sleep in the house any more. When it rains the cow turns the house into a pigpen. If I was unhappy before, you ought to see me now. What shall I do?”

The guru looked the man right in the eye and ordered:

“Get the cow out of the house.”

That’s what he did. Never again did the man complain about his little house. He was now a happy man. ▶

David Brooks, New York Times

Following is an excerpt from an article I read: We’re living in an age of anxiety. The country is being transformed by complex forces like changing demographics and technological disruption. Many people live within a bewildering freedom, without institutions to trust, unattached to compelling religions and sources of meaning, uncertain about their own lives. Anxiety is not so much a fear of a specific thing but a fear of everything, an unnameable dread about the future. People will do anything to escape it. ▶

This & That

I just got word from the Tocantins Congregation that their new church building is progressing well. We hope to soon have news about the dedication.

The GO174 state highway that we use to go to Rio Verde is under construction. Passing lanes are being put in. While this is good, everyone agrees it should have become a four-lane highway. It has a lot more traffic than the federal BR060 highway from Rio Verde to Goiânia. Even so, we are thankful for what we are getting.

Our dry season this year has been very dry and nights have been colder than usual. (Cold enough to where we had fire in our fireplace for two weeks straight.) We consider September to be the beginning of our new rainy season and expect at least a few showers. Both politically and economically Brazil is going through a difficult period. This isn’t the first time this has happened, but probably the worst. However, the bright spot is that our courts are constantly convicting both high-level politicians and businessmen

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involved in corruption and sentencing them to time behind bars. This is the first time in the history of Brazil that no one has been immune to prosecution. The battle isn't won and the final outcome will most certainly not be as decisive as we would desire. But, Brazil is headed in the right direction.

In the next issue we hope to tell you readers something about the five congregations in Brazil. Faith can supply me with the membership statistics, etc., but we would like to have a down-to-earth report on anything and everything that would most certainly be of interest. So, will someone, or *someones*, from each congregation send me this information, please. Remember, most of our readers know nothing about your situation and will enjoy hearing.

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