

Brazil News



No. 193
5 JULY 14

Editorial

Colorblind

I am color-blind.

So, we'll begin with a few facts on color blindness.

Color blindness is a sort of misleading term. Color deficient is more correct, since only one percent are truly color-blind, that is, their world is a drab gray scale, "a series of regularly spaced tones ranging from white to black through intermediate shades of gray" (Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary). This condition is called monochromacy.

People with normal vision can differentiate between apparently one hundred hues. Those with color deficiency between approximately 20 hues. This means that rainbows, sunrises and sunsets are never as colorful to the color-blind as to those with normal vision. But, it doesn't mean they can't enjoy them.

Eight percent of all men suffer a degree of color blindness and only 0.5% of all women.

While color corrective glasses can in some cases attenuate the effects of color blindness, there is no medical cure,

Being color-blind can be a hindrance, or in some cases preclude the exercise of certain professions such as that of police officers, firemen, pilots, lab workers, to name just a few.

A Colblindor is a color-blind person who has learned to enjoy his color-blind



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life. In fact, it can be useful to be color-blind. During WWII, high altitude aerial photos taken behind enemy lines were later meticulously analyzed by intelligence officers. There were times in which it was helpful to have a color-blind analyst on the team because of his ability to see revealing details that those with normal vision were unable to catch.

John Dalton wrote the first scientific paper on color blindness. Thus, “daltonism” (“daltonismo” in Portuguese) is sometime used for color blindness.

Among other things, color-blind men have trouble matching clothing and being able to tell the color of a flower. Back in the days when I made up wedding announcements for people getting married here in Brazil, a smiling bride might request: “I want a nice yellow rose on my invitation.” I would find the most beautiful rose you can possibly imagine and print it out. She would take the printout and the smile on the face of the smiling bride would become a bit pinched. “Ah...ah...do you suppose...we could change this color just a bit?” After half an hour of changing hues, she would force a smile on her now quite smileless face and say, “Well, I suppose this will be okay.” I think she was thinking, “Forget it! The color of this rose won’t keep me from getting married.”

The most annoying question to ask the color-blind: “What color is this to you?” That is like someone holding the photo of a beautiful rose up to your nose and asking, “What does this rose smell like?” You can sniff that photo the rest of your life and not know what the rose smells like. You can’t cajole a color-blind person into seeing colors he can’t see.

And finally, dogs are never color-blind.

* * *

What we have just described is the kind of color blindness that inconveniences only eight percent of the men and one half percent of the women of the world’s population. We now go to another kind of color deficiency for which there are no statistics. I suspect it is for more widespread than the daltonism we have just described.

Assumed value color blindness – This is the inability of another culture to see values we assume to be correct, even sacred values, as we see them. In our Mennonite culture we are taught that the name of God should never be used as a secular expression. Thus, “Oh, my God!” is always a foul ball. “By God!” and other similar expressions are unthinkable. I think that most of us who were brought up under this teaching never once in our lifetime have “used the “name of God in vain.” This is laudable.

Anyone who has lived in a Latin American country knows the name of God is used more liberally than in our culture. When children’s tiny ears hear the name of God used casually or to express strong feeling, it is totally natural that they reach adulthood seeing no harm in exclaiming, “My God in heaven, I forgot to turn off the oven!”

And so, what happens when Brazilians get converted and become members of the church? Do they adhere to the Mennonite concept of the proper usage of God’s name? Some do. I suspect mainly those who have a N American spouse. Where does that leave everyone else?

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When I was editor of the Mensageiro (Portuguese Messenger) I wrote a number of articles decrying the widespread casual usage of God's name in our midst. I doubt if many readers took these admonitions very seriously. Today, decades later, God's name is still used casually.

Have we thrown in the towel? I think so. At least I have. And here's the reason. We have solid, useful brothers and sisters here who have been the church for years and continue to use God's name casually. I'm sure it isn't even an issue to them.

Who is right? Who is wrong? And one more question: How was the name of God used back in the time of the Apostles? You think you know. They think they know.

Are they color-blind? If so, to quote myself: "You can't cajole a color-blind person into seeing colors he can't see."

(Personally, never have, and the Lord willing, never will.)

Economic color blindness – We're not talking about someone who is slipshod, willful, avaricious, unscrupulous, who makes debts based on dreams rather than solid facts. We're talking about the youth, young married man, or middle-aged man who simply can't get his act together. He is sincere, he's a hard worker, he's generous, but he doesn't get ahead financially. He listens to advice, tries to implement the counsel given, but he never gets to the place where the bank manager gets a big smile on his face when he walks into his office.

I am no financial wizard, but I do observe. The young man we described may come from a family in which his dad and brothers are all doing well. But this particular young man, in spite good training, of his good intentions, has a hard time making it to first base.

Is there such a thing as financial color blindness? I believe so. It is the inability to turn opportunity into cash. Here are a few hints for successful financiers who would like to help an economically challenged brother or friend: 1) Remember, no matter how clear and logical your solution may seem to you, the one you are counseling probably is seeing through a glass darkly—never mind how vigorously he nods his head in agreement to everything you say. 2) If he is somehow keeping his head above water and is cheerful, don't load him down with challenges on how he could do better. He already has a plateful. 3) If the brother or friend is barely making ends meet and runs into a financial snag, don't loan him money if you know there is no way he can possibly repay you. Graciously give him enough money to restore steerage* to his boat. Somewhere we have come up with the idea that to give a needy brother or friend some money with no strings attached will somehow have a corruptive effect on his character—turn him into a beggar. The apostle Paulo gives us excellent advice: "He who gives, [give] with liberality."

Tactfulness color blindness – Tact: "A keen sense of what to do or say in a difficult or delicate situation in order to maintain good relations with others or avoid

**A ship dead in the water has no steerage, that is, it doesn't respond to the helm and is at the mercy of the waves. In a severe tempest, a ship that swings broadside to the waves stands a good chance of sinking. Similarly in warfare, a ship with its rudder torpedoed by the enemy loses maneuverability and much of its ability to defend itself.*

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offense” (MW Unabridged). For the sake of what we are about to say, we amend this to read: “A keen sense of what to do or say in ANY situation...”

We all know people who suffer from “hoof in the mouth” disease. They are great people and well-intentioned, but they have no fuse box between their brain and their mouth. As a result it isn’t unusual for them to say things that range from inconvenient to offensive. If they perceive they have offended or created heart burn in their fellow, they feel badly and apologize (in spite of not really understanding what the problem is).

The only viable solution to this problem is salt. A “grain of salt.” Don’t try to feed the salt to the one who so often speaks out of turn. The salt is for you, the listener.

1) Remember that since the intention wasn’t to wound or offend, don’t let yourself be wounded or offended. 2) Don’t repeat anything he/she says that could rankle others. Let the words die in your ears. 3) Do not offend the tactless one with a sharp rebuke. If you feel that a gentle (“Are you sure about that?”) might be helpful, try it. 4) Finally, remember that diplomatically and carefully chosen words can carry a sting when coming from an impure heart. So, in your interchange with the less-than-tactful, look at the heart.

Cultural color blindness – “These people.” After over 40 years in Brazil, it is very common to hear Brazilians referred to by Americans living here (many of them born in Brazil to American parents) as “These people.”

The term, “These people,” is normally used when referring to what is seen as an less than desirable cultural trait. “Brazilians,” on the other hand, is used for positive traits or abilities, eg: “Brazilians make the most delicious grilled meat.”

This is definitely not a strictly an American/Brazilian phenomenon. Where I grew up north of Galva, KS, there were a lot of Swedes. (In fact, on our old party line depending on when you picked up the receiver you might hear Swedish, Dutch or English being spoken.) Those who were not of Dutch/Mennonite background—particularly the Swedes—were called “the English” (usually in Dutch, something like, “zae angulsha”). Fortunately, relations were good between the Dutch and the Swedes, so the moniker “English” was not customarily used in a derogatory way. It expressed a definite difference of cultural practices, not the least of which linguistic.

Missionaries face this issue from day one when setting foot on foreign soil. Their initial response can be summarized in “we” and “they.” This may still be their mindset after many years on the field.

For both settlers and missionaries, is cultural color blindness a problem? And more importantly, does it have a cure?

To understand the answer, we turn the tables. A family moves into your community. They are nice people, but have different values. Instead of the obligatory Mennonite crew cut front lawn, it tends toward more modern hairdos. Birthday celebrations, holiday festivities and family get-togethers are unquestionably more animated with higher decibel emissions than is normal in this section of town.

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How many years need to go by before you feel that a certain Americanization should take place? Five? Ten? Twenty? Forty or fifty? Or maybe a generation?

The truth is we believe that time should have a have a certain modifying effect on the one who has moved into our community.

There is a simple rule of thumb: Spiritual and moral values should never be sacrificed for the sake of cultural compatibility. Integrity and solid work ethics are non-negotiable.

What does need to change is the “we/they” mentality. There is nothing to be gained by seen or referred to as “those Americans.” I think it can safely be said that any culture in the world that has not been contaminated by radicalism can enrich our lives if we have the humility to seek out and value its positive aspects. Until this occurs, there will always be an Equator between the two cultures.

We return to your Colombian, Vietnamese or Angolan neighbors. You don’t expect them to do everything like you do. But, what does turn them into good neighbors is when you and they feel totally at ease in each other’s presence. It is when the word “we” effortlessly slides off both of your tongues. When this happens, color blindness gives way to colorful. The cultural differences that remain enhance, rather than strain, relations. Call them “cultural spice,” if you will.

Seeing-the-good-in-others color blindness. Admittedly this is a bit of a clumsy subtitle. But fortunately, this is a form of daltonism that has a cure.

We planted a small orchard quite a few years ago. In spite of efforts to get it to produce, the trees remained small and spindly. The situation took on Biblical proportions when I declared to the hired man, “See, for [many] years I have been looking for fruit from [these trees], and I have not had any: let [them] be cut down; why [are they] taking up space?”

My hired man said to me, “Let it be for this year, and I will have the earth turned up round it, and put animal waste on it, to make it fertile. And if, after that, it has fruit, it is well; if not, let it be cut down.”

I don’t know what my hired man did, but less than a year later the trees were producing. A tangerine tree was so loaded that the branches would have broken without numerous bamboo props. We have been eating delicious tangerines for a number of months and sharing with visitors. Oranges will soon be ripe.

That little story is about trees, but many, many times doesn’t this happen with people? We see who they are, but fail to see who they could be. So we write them off. We don’t say, “Give me a chance to give them a chance.”

Some of the most beautiful success stories involve someone—a teacher, a relative, a friend, even a happenstance encounter with a stranger with an alert eye—who took the time to give someone a friendly tap on the shoulder, who went out of his way to place latent talents in an incubator, who fertilized a non-productive tree and caused a lifetime transformation.

When dealing with others who are color-blind, be kind. With yourself, remember that even you may at times be color-blind. ▲

History

Portugal

Portugal is to Brazil what England is to the United States. Both were colonized by their respective mother countries, from which they eventually won their independence. Both speak their language.

For didactic purposes we point out that someone born in Brazil is Brazilian—not Portuguese. In fact, when a Brazilian calls another Brazilian a *Português*, it reflects negatively on his IQ.

At the time Portugal became an independent kingdom in 1239, the greater part of the populace lived under the feudal system. For more than a century, this new kingdom, ruled by the Borgonha Dynasty, was involved in a bloody war against the Moors. Once they were driven out, Portugal, under the leadership of King Dom João I, began to transform its feudal economy into a market economy.

To understand the importance of this changeover, we must remember that under the feudal system, each landowner was the virtual king over a small self-contained territory. Commerce couldn't flourish under feudalism simply because each landowner produced his own crops, had his own carpenters, cobblers, blacksmiths, etc. Apparently no effort was made to come up with surpluses that could be traded or sold.

Portugal was rapidly becoming a world power in the 13th century. Since the ruling class in the large cities considered it undignified to plant crops, commerce was seen as the most viable way for Portugal to assert itself on the international scene.

It was exactly here that the Portuguese merchant marine and advanced navigating techniques (for that time) would shine. The highly lucrative commerce of spices, porcelain, silk, etc. purchased in the Far East and sold in Europe had a serious bottle neck. To reach the ports on the Mediterranean Sea, goods had to be hauled overland by camel trains. These caravans were slow, greatly increased the price of the goods, and worse, were many times preyed upon by marauding bands of thieves. The obvious solution was to find a water route to India and China.

Bartolomeu Dias was the first to reach the Cape of Good Hope on the southern tip of Africa. Next Vasco da Gama reach the Far East by continuing on this same route. Remember this is what Columbus was after when he stumbled upon North America.

As the Portuguese opened up this new trade route, they proved themselves to be shrewd businessmen.

To this day Portuguese descendents who live in Brazil gravitate toward industrial and commercial enterprises. As a result the immense interior, with its millions and millions of acres of virgin soil had never been touched by a plow.

It was in the middle of this vast, untouched area, of almost no commercial value, that Mennonite Colony in Rio Verde, Goiás, was established.

That is another story for another day.s



Statistics

Weather

In N America the four seasons are very distinct and recognizable. So much so, in fact, that poets write prolifically about the mystic of each. Textbooks here in Brazil teach the four season, but in real life there are only two: winter and summer, or, the dry season and the rainy season.

On my Davis weather station, I have set September as the beginning of our climatic year, when we can expect our first rains after approximately four months almost no precipitation. It is for this reason that the following chart begins with September. This is for 2013, a year of reduced rainfall, with only 51.70 inches. Rainfall is expressed in decimal inches, temperatures in Fahrenheit and wind speed in mph.

MONTH	RAINFALL	MEAN TEMP	HI TEMP	LO TEMP	MEAN WIND	HI WIND
September	0.33	73.1	98.9	48.9	2.5	25.0
October	4.28	75.3	97.7	56.1	1.8	44.0
November	6.41	74.5	96.2	60.7	1.5	24.0
<u>December</u>	<u>4.55</u>	<u>75.1</u>	<u>93.9</u>	<u>64.8</u>	<u>1.8</u>	<u>27.0</u>
January	10.90	74.1	92.5	63.9	1.4	68.0
February	5.78	73.7	95.8	62.7	1.2	26.0
March	14.44	74.5	95.8	64.3	1.5	28.0
April	2.76	70.8	91.5	51.9	1.4	20.0
May	0.95	68.7	89.0	43.4	1.2	24.0
June	1.28	68.4	88.2	51.7	1.0	21.0
July	00.00	64.5	89.9	40.0	1.5	23.0
August	00.00	67.1	93.9	40.0	1.9	21.0

You will notice that our mean wind speed is very low compared to, let's say, central Kansas, where chasing errant hats and caps is a compulsory national sport. Since for us a high wind is 25-30 mph, our buildings, especially our roofs, can't take a lot of abuse. So when one evening in January we had a 68 mph wind, roofs were damaged and roads blocked with fallen trees. Fortunately, there were no casualties. ▲

News from Brazil

Boys' class. The boys' preparatory class is being held at the Rio Verdinho Congregation, with Min. Kendall Jost as instructor.

Corn harvest. Corn planted after soybeans is now ripe and being harvested.

The World Cup Soccer Match is in progress. Billions of dollars have been spent, not only on stadiums, but in infrastructure, especially roads. No matter who wins the games, we all win with the nearly-finished four-lane highway to Goiânia.

The Annual Farm Tecnoshow took place this year from April 7 – 11 in Rio Verde. It is probably one of the best organized events in Brazil. People from all over Brazil and some foreign countries accounted for the over 100,000 visitors. A number of

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farmers from Angola were present. I have heard that many of the hotels are already booked up for the Tecnoshow in 2015. There were 520 stands. Sales—almost all machinery—came to approximately 650 million US dollars, a 56% increase over last year's sales. The 2015 Tecnoshow is scheduled for April 13-17.

Pilgrimage to Trindade. The 100,000 visitors to the Tecnoshow pales when compared with the 2,000,000 visitors expected at the sanctuary of the Divine Eternal Father in Trindade, a small town some 25 kilometers from Goiânia. The faithful fly in, come by bus and car, on cycles, on horseback, on foot and on an occasional ox cart. The blessing received is supposed to be directly proportional to sacrifice involved in getting there. Those doing the pilgrimage on foot on state or federal highways must wear a luminescent vest.

More numbers. When we moved to Rio Verde in 1969 the population was approximately 30,000. Today it is over 200,000.