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Editorial

Golgotha

Golgotha is a small hillock outside of Jerusalem (now within city limits). In the Aramaic language, *gulgaltā'*, it means skull. In the Hebrew language, *gulgoleth*, it denotes a “bald, round, skull-like mound.” The Latin name, *Calvarius*, means bald skull, today rendered as Calvary in the English language. In the Greek, *keranion*, means skull.

There are two explanations for the name given to this small hillock outside of ancient Jerusalem: 1) It was the place used by the Romans to carry out executions, thus the profusion of skulls, 2) when seen from a short distance, the hillock's resemblance with a human skull.

As Golgotha was absorbed by the expansion of Jerusalem, its ignoble history would surely have sunk into oblivion over a period of centuries, were it not for one detail: it was here that the Lord of Glory was crucified.

The crucifix today is the universal symbol of Christendom. Even though modern Christianity has rejected most of what the cross represents and is ashamed to wear the seamless garment, everywhere—pastors, priests, businessmen, teens, day laborers, laundry women, Madonna—unabashedly flaunt a crucifix.

We are dumbfounded when someone whose life is an open orgy, a source of perversion for millions, insolently displays a cross right next to the heart. The word sacrilegious is totally inadequate to describe such behavior; it is nefarious, fiendish, utterly contemptible, straight from the pit...

We as a people believe that the cross is a daily reality, not a mere symbol to remind us of something that happened two thousand years ago. No crosses are seen in our churches, in our homes or on our bodies. Possible exceptions would be engravings on tombstones and Bibles.

Our spiritual vocabulary, as well as the hymns we sing, are rich in terms that exalt the cross. Sermons, and especially revival messages, extol the merits of the cross. We

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certainly aren't ignorant of the place the cross occupies in Christian life and salvation.

“And [Jesus] bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha.”

To truly meet the Lord requires a pilgrimage to the foot of the cross. This is true when a penitent sinner accepts the atoning blood and is born again. Throughout the life of a Christian, each time the heart is stained with sin, the only remedy is another pilgrimage to the foot of the cross.

But—and that is what this article is all about—to reach the cross, one must first traverse the Place of the Skull.

Based on the customs of those days and the extreme cruelty of Roman soldiers, we have reason to believe that Golgotha was no picturesque hillock, not a place that children would choose to play their games.

Roman governors were more than governors. They were, for all practical purposes, the highest court of the land. They would hear cases that lower courts or judges were unable, or lacked jurisdiction, to judge. These short sessions resulted in a sentence that was immediately executed. We have no way of knowing how many were lead directly from the judgment hall to the Place of the Skull.

The price paid for our salvation defeats our imagination. We retrace Jesus' life, from Bethlehem to His earthly ministry when He himself admitted that the Son of man had not where to lay His head; we follow Him to Gethsemane where His very own succumbed to sleep as He struggled with their sins, and those of the whole world; we hear the commotion as Judas brought the soldiers to arrest his Master, whom he sold for thirty pieces of silver; we follow Him to the judgement hall and hear the enraged crowd cry, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” We see Him struggling up Calvary's hill.

The price of salvation was paid in full on the cross. An innocent child need not even accept the atoning blood to be saved. However, once the age of accountability is reached, man must make a voluntary decision to accept salvation. This decision becomes man's personal Gethsemane, in which the joy of salvation and the agony of the cross are placed on the scales.

We tend to believe that the Master's plea, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,” was dread of the wooden cross. It is even suggested that His resolution wavered, or worse, that the plan of salvation almost came to naught.

Such thoughts are the product of our earthbound minds. We fail to comprehend that when the Master's sweat became as great drops of blood, He was weighing the destiny of two kingdoms—of billions of souls—on the scales. He knew that just as surely as His death and resurrection would open wide the doors of the prison so that all could be saved, it would also seal the eternal doom of all the fallen angels, and their earthly followers. His death would be the triumph of good over evil. As He agonized in the Garden, He doubtlessly saw the billions of souls who would spend eternity in hell, *in spite* of His supreme sacrifice, those who would willfully reject His shed blood. Once again our imagination fails us as we attempt to understand what the Son of God, the essence of love, felt in the Garden. But we can be absolutely sure that the plan of salvation was never hanging by a thread.

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When man goes to Gethsemane, he sees his own sinfulness; he understands that he is lost and needs a Savior. His sins weigh heavily upon his soul. He understands that it won't be enough to merely beg for forgiveness, but that he must commit himself to a new life of holiness, which includes leaving off some deeply ingrained habits and vices.

Thus the chain smoker tosses out his pack of cigarettes and promises to never smoke again; the unfaithful husband promises to become faithful; the man who cursed and swore promises to purge his tongue...

These "sacrifices" which are made in the Garden give the sinner a good feeling. He arises from his knees with a lighter heart, leaves the Garden and looks toward Calvary where he sees the Savior on the cross. In "faith" he accepts the atoning blood. That is his experience of the new birth.

It can also be the basis for our reconsecration experiences.

Gethsemane was not the culmination of the plan of salvation; it was the bitter beginning. Jesus did not leave the garden, walk to Golgotha, look at the cross, and say, "It is finished."

He didn't look at His garments stained with the blood shed as great sweat drops in Gethsemane and say, "This is my blood...which is shed for many."

After Gethsemane there came the mock trial, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the mockery, the spittle running down His face, the Via Dolorosa as He staggered under the cross on which He shortly would be hung.

We have all had the privilege of learning to know Christians of other denominations. Often we are impressed with the conversion experience they earnestly tell us, with their zeal, with the radiant testimony they freely share with others.

Quite a few years ago I learned to know just such a couple, American missionaries, in our local town. Soft spoken, they didn't hesitate to tell others what the Lord had done for them. The man would tell others how he used to smoke, drink, swear and live an ungodly life. Then he would offer hope to his listeners. Such a beautiful witness!

And yet there are some nagging questions. How far reaching will the effects of their testimony be if they don't teach against television and other worldly activities, which instigate man to commit the very sins which they now condemn? Where is the teaching of non-conformity to the world? Of non-resistance? Of a true church?

(We believe that there are those who get converted in environments in which there are no fellow believers, no doctrinal instruction, possibly not even a Bible, and that in such situations the Lord is very long-suffering. The kind of Christian we have been describing would not fit into that category.)

Only God is judge and we never want to call unclean that which God has purified. Could we, however, ask if it is possible for one to base his salvation on a Gethsemane experience, without actually going to Calvary?

In Gethsemane we see the sinfulness of our sins.

On Golgotha we see the sinfulness of our flesh.

At the cross we willingly offer our sinful flesh to be crucified, for we realize that we

will obtain neither pardon nor victory over sin so long as our flesh remains alive. Jesus' blood is never applied to living flesh.

We repeat that Golgotha, the place of executions, was not a pleasant place. We can be sure that in many executions, especially in the case of transient criminals, there was no Joseph of Arimathaea to claim the body. In those cases, how was the body disposed of?

Repeatedly the Old Testament speaks of dead bodies being left for the fowls of the air. "And their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven" (Jeremiah 34:20). We have reason to believe that this was often the case with executed criminals, which would account for the name Golgotha—the Place of a Skull. We can further believe that frequently there were bodies in an advanced state of decomposition. Decidedly, Golgotha was not a pleasant place.

After we leave Gethsemane, we are taken to Pilot's hall and judged. There is no need for false witnesses, for our very lives and deeds testify against us. According to a law far greater than that of the "Medes and Persians, which altereth not," we were justly condemned to death.

So great were our crimes that we were deemed unworthy to die for our own sins. In an irony of ironies, our Savior had to be unjustly condemned so that He could die for our sins for which we had been justly condemned, and should have died, but could not. Thus it is His spilt blood, and not ours, that saves us. Yet there is a condition: In weakness we must follow His footsteps through the Garden, through Pilot's hall, up Calvary's Hill and to the foot of the cross, if we would be saved.

To get to the foot of the cross we must first go to the Place of a Skull, which is where we are able to see the total and absolute corruptness of our own flesh.

Of all the nauseous smells, few compare with that of a human body in an advanced state of decomposition. To see such a body, to smell such a body, and to understand that our flesh, which we regard so highly, is even more repulsive, teaches us an eternal lesson: Our corrupt flesh will never inherit eternal life. Unless it is crucified and brought under subjection, its stench rises to high heaven and bars us from ever entering the pearly gates.

Man finds it easier to confess his sins in the Garden than to admit the corruptness of his own flesh at Golgotha. As he approaches this infamous hillock with the sins he admitted to in the Garden, the Place of A Skull stands between him and the cross. The flesh rebels, it recoils, and then it begins to look for an easier way to the foot of the cross.

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary shows a photo, with the caption: "Traditional site of Golgotha, called Gordon's Calvary." The forward edge is an escarpment of jagged rocks.

The Savior meekly traversed the Place of the Skull, as a lamb going to the slaughter. He offered no resistance. This was hardly the case when common criminals were lead to their execution. As they saw bleached bones scattered about, and possibly the vultures circling overhead, seeing this was their final chance to escape, they must have engaged in an almost superhuman struggle with their Roman guards.

Our flesh is no different. But contrary to common criminals who were compelled to

go to the cross, we must do so of our own free will. Our heart tells us there is no other way, but our flesh cries out that there is. It tells us that if we circle the hillock we will find an easier approach to the cross.

We begin circling, always keeping the cross in view (Would that explain the compulsion of so many to have a cross hanging from their neck?) Each time we approach bleached bones and decaying flesh, we back down just a bit—but keep circling.

Finally we reach the escarpment, the jagged rocks. Gamely, with the aid of our hands and feet, we begin the torturous circumvention of the Place of a Skull. The going is rough. Our hands and feet are bleeding, but we keep going, for our flesh no longer opposes us. Indeed, it gives us strength to continue (Would this explain pilgrimages to a shrine in which the final approach is made on hands and knees on sharp stones?)

The pain is intense and our flesh now comforts us: Look at your bleeding hands! Look at your bleeding feet! Now look at the cross! It is finished!

The flesh has won. We go forth displaying our hands and feet for all to see. Our testimony is clear: I have been to Calvary. Others exclaim: Behold the man!

Yes, the flesh has won. All too often this is the story that is told. And—how can it be?—sometimes even we are impressed.

Jesus' hands and feet were lacerated. They were pierced. When Jesus held out his hands for the disciples to see, He must have turned them so that they could see both the palm and back.

Cuts and scratches do not hold the flesh to the cross. Nails that pierce the hands do.

When we hear conversion and reconsecration experiences, we must be careful to not let our judgment be blighted by the amount of blood we see, by the cuts and scratches. They can make for an impressive, emotional experience, but lack the basic kernel.

For some, revivals can become a “bloody hands and feet” ritual. Each year it becomes a challenge to come up with a new set of cuts and scratches, with a profusion of blood.

But no nail holes.

Only pierced hands and feet witness to a true Calvary experience; only they can produce a broken and contrite spirit.

In the end, only those who deny their flesh and resolutely traverse the Place of a Skull to arrive at the foot of the cross will be saved. Colonization

The Ten Commandments for Colonization

[Recently someone asked me to give some thoughts, based on our experience here in Brazil, what it takes to make a colonization project a success. These “commandments” are especially true in the case of foreign colonization.]

I — Love thy home congregation.

When Americans ask me how to go about learning a foreign language, my first advice is: Learn the English language well. Someone who has a good command of English grammar, who speaks correctly and understands sentence structure, who sees the beauty in his native tongue, has a good start on a foreign language.

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Similarly, anyone considering being part of a colonization project should understand, appreciate and love his home congregation. An I-can't-wait-to-get-out-of-here attitude disqualifies one for a spiritual visa to a colonization project.

II — **Love thy church and her doctrine.**

This is a MUST. Individuals or families who are weak on the church and her doctrine should never, never be part of a colonization project. At the best they will cause much grief and confusion; at the worst they will cause the effort to collapse.

III — **Love thy Master and His Word.** Be spiritual. A spiritual colonist will have a much easier life than one who is carnal or lukewarm. Repeatedly there will be situations in which the only help available comes from above. Someone who isn't accustomed to taping that source of power will be like a ship without a rudder.

And remember, there will be difficult situations. Sickness, death and accident seem to lurk just a bit closer than at home. In a new and distant environment, far from the amenities that before were taken for granted, the unpolished side of life is often seen in these unpleasant situations.

The intensity of spiritual problems is amplified in small groups, far from emergency counsel and experienced direction. These, truly, are times that try men's souls—and the quality of the glue that holds the brotherhood intact.

IV — **Review thy values,** both spiritual and material. More succinctly, what is your goal in this life? It is possible to be dynamic, industrious, entrepreneurial, courageous... and egocentric. Such a person may build an empire on foreign soil, and be an utter failure as a colonist.

A colonist must be a “congregationalist,” that is—if we may bend the meaning of this word just a bit—someone who from day one sees a vigorous congregation as the primordial and crowning objective of the settlement of which he is a part. When this is not the case, when there are egoistic or speculative values motivating the colonist, his contribution will at the best be temporal. At times not even this.

V — **Prepare thyself for a transfer of loyalty.** This does not mean that someone moving to a foreign country should denounce or renounce his birth country. At least not anyone leaving a democratic society. But it does mean that these feelings of loyalty should be kept on the back burner while a new set of loyalties are cooked on the front burner.

A bank official told me years ago about an American who delivered a lengthy harangue on the flaws of the Brazilian banking system and the obvious superiority of the N American system. He said, “I felt like telling him, ‘If things are so wonderful back where you came from, what are you doing here?’ ” If this transfer of loyalty can't take place, it is better to pack ones bags and return to where things are better. It isn't a disgrace to do so. In fact, it is a gesture of kindness.

VI — **Prepare thyself for a simpler lifestyle.** Maybe that is putting it a bit mildly. For those of us who moved to Brazil, it meant no roads, no electricity, no telephones, no houses (until temporary quarters could be built)... For some of us at least, as we look back we see those as the best days of our life. It wasn't that doing without was so wonderful, but rather it was a challenge to build from ground level. Today we

remember with a deep satisfaction how our roads improved, how we finally got some small generators for evening electricity, and then the day when the highline reached us and we could turn on a light in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. We remember the sensation of being able to make an international call (through an operator) and talk with loved ones in N America.

Unless you can see yourself fitting into a simpler lifestyle, do yourself (and others) a favor by staying where you are.

However, there is an exception—very important—which we dare not omit. Not everyone, especially some of the wives, find it easy to fit into a simpler lifestyle. At times they can hardly be cheerful. Yet it is often these exact women who make a lasting contribution to the project by their exemplary dedication to their families and a willingness to help others.

VII — **Be willing to use thy gifts**, both natural and spiritual. And we add: Be willing to respect and appreciate the gifts of your brother or sister. Here in Brazil it was amazing how someone with some electrical experience back in N America became an electrical consultant in our little settlement. The plumber became a consultant, the mason, the carpenter, the mechanic, the nurse, the teacher... As these gifts were shared and pooled, miracles took place.

VIII — **Let there be a mixture of financial means**. A colonization project of only poor brethren is almost certainly doomed to failure. One of only well-to-do brethren has never occurred. And may it never. The idea isn't that the rich support the poor. The value of those with less means is that they often fit into slots for which the more well-to-do don't have time or patience. The less well-to-do also have talents, some of which are very important to the development of a settlement.

IX — **Prepare thyself for the thorns**. It's unbelievable how fast a colonization project can turn sour. If ever there is a place where brotherly love is brought to the test, it's when a few families, just a handful of people, are thousands of miles away from families, friends and congregations. There comes a time in which, in spite of vast open spaces, the colonists get to feeling they are living in a submarine with no elbow room, no fresh air to breath, no escape from the odors that permeate the air. The honeymoon is definitely over.

This is not a pleasant period. The time spent in the submarine depends on the (lack of) spirituality and (lack of) determination of the colonists. In a worst case scenario, lasting scars are inflicted during this time and the project can disintegrate. On the other hand, there can be a healing that results in strong and lasting friendships, a robust brotherhood.

During the initial period there are other thorns. Not knowing the customs and language of a people can produce enough bumps and bangs to where one feels qualified for a place in the Guinness Book.

Faith is of utmost importance in a colonization project. Unless we are very careful, our faith will be directly proportional to the size of our dwindling bank account back in N America.

Finally, there are all the little insects, crawling and flying that bite and sting and

buzz. There are poisonous snakes. There are strange laws. There are a thousand and one things that want to get under one's skin.

X — **Thou shalt go through the front door.** Needless to say, it is important that prospective colonists enter the project through the front door, that is, with a solid recommendation and proper clearance from their home congregation. Their motives and goals should be pure as they begin their new venture. Obviously.

It isn't uncommon, after a period of time, for families or individuals to decide to return to their birth country. When this happens, they should leave through the front door, and not the back door.

It isn't necessary to have some big reason or outstanding conviction to leave. But it IS so important to love and be in fellowship with the brotherhood. It is wonderful when the one, or ones, leaving can do so with the status of ambassador. Upon returning home they frankly state their reason for leaving, but add, "It's a wonderful place."

Right in the beginning we had one family leave after spending only a week here; others left after spending many years. One couple bought in on the original tract of land and sporadically lived here for short periods, but never on a permanent visa. In most of these cases, we were blessed with great ambassadors. ▲

Life in Brazil

by Stephen Kramer (Conclusion)

God Opened the Way

Well, now I decide to go check in our baggage to get rid of it, so I head down to the check-in and hand them our tickets...whoops here we go again, The check-in girl has her patient face on, she says, "Sir, your PM flight to Brasilia has just been canceled." Oh no, so that's why there were promotional seats available, the flight was empty and now they scratched it. What next? "Not to worry, we'll get you there sometime."

Then a man with a radio comes jogging against the current up the baggage belt and starts barking orders over the radio and to the check-in girl. Soon they hand me boarding passes for the 12:30 flight to Natal. Natal is in the wrong direction and 12:30 has already passed. "The flight is a little late," we are told. So I take off at a gallop to find Dete and the baby and we hurry to the gate. Everyone there is patiently sitting, no sign of boarding. As we wait we begin to pick up on the hubbub around us. Seems they are fixing the brakes on the plane. Some people are concerned about that. I'd sure rather they fix them than leave them unfixed.

After another hour or so they finally let us board for this first of 6 hops that finally bring us to Goiânia. Karson has been very restless, seems he doesn't like to wait for fixing brakes. As we strap ourselves in and they back the plane away from the terminal and the engines begin to hum he settles down and goes to sleep. Maybe he's as anxious to get home as we are. It is almost midnight when we finally land in Goiânia. We've

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had a birds-eye view of most of the capitals on the northeast coast and considerable acquaintance with Vasp cuisine. During the day we more than once heard someone pointedly reminding their disgruntled traveling companion that “YOU are the one who bought Vasp tickets.”

We finally arrived at Grandpa Kramers in the wee hours of the morning. Just as we were drifting off to sleep, Karson woke up fresh as a pansy after sleeping most of the day and the night while traveling. When we insisted with the sleeping idea he began to whimper and complain. About then there was a knock on the bedroom door and there stood two little girls in nighties, “Oh Daddy, can we please have him?”

Hours later when we awoke they were still playing doll and he was soaking up the attention like a sponge.

In retrospect, seven months later, I sort of wish I had the guts to do it again. But then, was it guts? Not hardly. Was it sense? Maybe not even that. What made it work? While I do not believe that Karson was predestined to be our son, I do believe that God saw fit to bless our choices and decisions made in weakness. He blessed our decision to choose Karson to be our son. Was it Judge Magno and “Modern Mom” who drug things out and made us miss our original travel date? Maybe it was God who wanted to test our trust and submission to His will. I absolutely believe it was God himself who touched Judge Magno’s heart and moved him to do what he did. We felt at the time, and still believe, that it was a miracle. To be the recipients of such a miracle should be a humbling and enriching experience. We trust it was that for us.

There were a number of things in our favor from the beginning: While we were in Acaraú there was considerable public outrage over something that happened a few weeks before our arrival when a newborn baby was found abandoned in the street. It was rushed to the hospital but died shortly.

Grandma Registrar was the first one to tell me this story. She told it with tears streaming down her face. The legal groundwork done in Sorriso was invaluable. Judge Magno said that the home-study fulfilled all the legal requirements of the ECA (Estatuto da Criança e Adolescente) concerning us and gave him room to do what he did; the biological mother was only 13 years old when Karson, her second child was born; the first one died. She does not live with her parents, has very little education and practically no income. When she said she did not have the means to care for her child, no one challenged that.

Even so, it became evident that all of our best-laid plans, preparations and efforts would have been insufficient without God’s blessing. We know there are times when God allows disappointments and things do not work out. We knew and to a point accepted the fact that God might permit it to happen that we would come home again without Karson. At times the whole thing looked hopeless and impossible but then God took over and made it work.

Today Karson is very much a part of our family and we all love him dearly. I’ve said that the emotions and feelings he evokes are if anything more intense than our biological children did. One of his pet names is Teddy Bear and it aptly describes him.

He is a stocky, plump, cuddly, jolly little boy with a head of black curls, who knows no stranger and is friend to all. He is our son by virtue of something much more profound than an adoption decree and a birth certificate. It lends new meaning to the words “Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

Dete and I have six children, 4 daughters and 2 sons. ▲

Education

Higher Education

The term “higher education,” as used in our circles, generally refers to schooling that goes beyond the eighth grade. It can be argued that a high school diploma today carries but a fraction of the academic and social value that it held over a hundred years ago when this term was coined. There is a good bit of truth to this; the “earning power” of a high school diploma has been eroded by educational inflation.

Five hundred years ago, Latin America was colonized by Spain and Portugal, two countries set apart by their avariciousness, brutality and religious fanaticism. Their quest in Latin America (and in U.S. early history) was gold. The fact that most of the countries didn’t have the ready gold they desired deeply disappointed them, but did not thwart their crusade for riches. Now, instead of seeking for wealth hidden in the earth, they looked on the surface: *Pau Brasil* (Brazil wood, a highly priced lumber exported to Europe) and sugar which was produced on immense plantations.

It is important to understand the social structure of colonial America and colonial Brazil. The United States was colonized by middle class, hard-working laborers with strong religious convictions—some of them fleeing persecution. When they made their decision to leave their homeland, they knew that...

1) Their first hurdle would be to cross the Atlantic in a fragile craft without breaking up in a storm or being brought down by an epidemic aboard ship. The chances of a family arriving intact, or even arriving, weren’t the best.

2) The first ones arriving had no welcoming committee to receive them, no relatives to give them temporary shelter. With only rudimentary tools those who survived the trip had to build a shelter to pass a rigorous winter. There doubtlessly was a lot of solidarity among these early settlers, and yet survival was a very personal matter. The man who didn’t sharpen his ax and cut down trees to build a sturdy log cabin would pay the price during the winter.

3) As settlement of the eastern seaboard progressed, the bulk of the emigrants were common folk—with an uncommon determination. Some were received by relatives and given temporary shelter, but soon had to row their own canoe. The Laura Ingalls Wilder books give a photographic view of what life was like on the prairie. Decidedly, it was not for the weak.

4) Most of those coming from the Old Country were literate. Thus elementary schools blossomed at the same rate that settlements were established. And not only

elementary schools. Harvard University, today one of the most prestigious universities in America—and the world—was founded in 1636 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, showing the importance given to education in America right from its concept. Once again Laura Ingalls gives us a portrait of how out in the middle of nowhere, amidst blizzards, prairie fires, withering draughts, life went on. And school too.

4) Since America was settled by middle class people it became a nation with a substantial middle class. A literate middle class with a middle class mentality, which can best be described in the words of the little Engine that Could: I think I can, I think I can, I think I can... And they could.

5) After an early abortive attempt in parts of New England and on the west coast by Jesuits and other religious orders to establish Catholicism as the national religion, Protestantism prevailed —doubtlessly by divine design—opening the way for “one nation, under God.” For many years the United States of America was truly worthy of the title of “A Christian Nation.”

The standard of honesty practiced by a large segment of the population can best be illustrated in the story of the owner of a gasoline pump in the early days of the automobile somewhere between Kansas and North Dakota. At night he would leave the cash box near the pump so that customers could make their own change; some would pay with a check and others would merely leave their name and the gallons taken on a scrap of paper and then pay later. That is secular honesty at its best.

6) All this resulted in a solid work ethic, impossible in an idolatrous and corrupt society. So long as the guiding principles of the founding Fathers remained intact, the populace understood that to spend a dollar, one must make a dollar. When the wolf started to sniff at the back door, men and women rolled up their sleeves and found something to do. (No one petitioned Washington to come out and exterminate wolves.)

We turn the coin over. In Latin America, and more specifically, Brazil...

1) Colonization was carried out by two extremes. With the change of political winds, many noblemen in Portugal were losing their vast holdings, thus being reduced to a relative penury, while holding their title, an untenable situation for a lifestyle that required a constant inflow of cash. Thus the Portuguese Crown donated enormous tracts of land in Brazil to disgruntled nobles, with the understanding that they would engage in activities that would bring revenue to state coffers in Portugal.

Plantations in pre-industrial days required a small army of workers. Needless to say, the common laborer in Portugal had no desire to risk his life crossing the ocean and working for a detested nobleman. Labor had to be found elsewhere. The most obvious source was in the many indigenous tribes in the area. The fact that something is obvious doesn't mean it will work. The noblemen soon found that the locals wouldn't solve their problem.

The next solution was ingenious, to say the least: bring in prisoners and *degreddados* (banished criminals) from Portugal. This happy solution would with one stroke solve a problem with crowded prisons and bring a large savings to the state. Best of all, it would be a win-only situation. If the ship sank in mid-Atlantic and everyone aboard

perished, nothing was really lost, rather it was a permanent solution. On their new jobs, these men wouldn't have to be treated with any special gentleness. The incorrigibles could be eliminated without fear of recrimination.

Thus, right from the beginning, Brazil had no middle class. It began as a society of frustrated noblemen and freed prisoners, hardly an auspicious genesis.

2) Needless to say, the natives recruited (read as: lassoed) to work were not religious. Neither did the prisoners and *degradados* imported from Portugal have an overabundance of Christian principles. Or any other principles, for that matter.

The noblemen, on the other hand, were of a deep pharisaical religiosity. They brought with them priests to attend to their own spiritual needs and bring the heathenish natives and prisoners into the fold, a task which was not always easy. Since the imported prisoners and *degradados* were all men, they felt the need for feminine company, which they found in the local tribes, creating enormous problems for the noblemen.

Admonitions and threats made by noblemen and priests went unheeded. Barring an effective solution, the result would be a social convulsion which would seriously affect the productivity of the plantations. The innovative remedy for this problem can be found in the national archives, in letters sent to Portuguese authorities by priests requesting that prostitutes be sent to Brazil so that uninhibited passions be redirected and a collapse in local labor avoided.

Success was limited. A society built on an idolatrous religion, paganism and a total disregard for religion, as was the case of the prisoners and *degradados*, was doomed to obscurity.

Needless to say, in the following centuries many worthy, hardworking men and women migrated to Brazil. Already in the 19th century, valiant Protestant missionaries began a work that today has to a large extent invalidated the oppressive grip of Catholicism. Yet a lingering residue of Brazil's ungodly early history continues to plague the country.

3) Education means power. The early ruling class knew this and made no effort to educate the masses—indeed, they made a conscious effort to keep them in ignorance. Thus promising young men of the aristocracy were sent back to universities in Europe to become doctors, lawyers, engineers... And the descendents of the noblemen found their place in society as upper class citizens.

With the passing of time it became impractical to send all promising young aristocrats to Europe for an education and universities were founded in Brazil. It wasn't until the 18th century that it became possible to found the first medical school, and this because the government took the bold step of expelling the Jesuit priests, who, for all practical purposes, were servants of the aristocratic ruling class.

It wasn't until approximately 1930 that an effort was made to make education available to anyone who wanted to study. However, since 80 percent of the population lived in rural areas, most believed they were doomed to illiteracy. Rural schools were virtually nonexistent. Those parents who desired that their children get an education had to purchase or rent a house in town. The mother would live

in town and the dad on the farm. Even when we moved to Brazil in 1969, this was the method used to educate the children of those living on the farm. Many couldn't afford it.

4) During the first centuries of the history of Brazil, work was done first by prisoners and *degradados*, and later with the help of slaves. (It wasn't until 1888 that slavery was officially abolished.) In a sense, they were in an enviable situation. Times could be good or bad, they always had their living. And that was all! They were expected to take orders and show no initiative on their own. They came to believe that destiny had dealt them a cruel blow and that that was their lot in life. And period.

All this produced hardworking men and women who didn't believe in their own work. They worked from early to late to survive, not to get ahead. A nation cannot be built on such a mentality.

5) A xenophobic mentality was created by the aristocracy and the Jesuits, for they knew that foreign blood would be a threat to their egocentric way of life. It was especially after World War II that there was a heavy influx of Germans and Italians who settled in southern Brazil. The result was miraculous; it was another Brazil. In fact, for years these southern states hoped to secede from the Republic and set up their own government.

Deprived of foreign blood, the minuscule ruling class was able to maintain its status quo for centuries, keeping the masses in darkness and illiteracy.

6) Brazil underwent a change. When both high school and college became a possibility for anyone with reasonable means, to get an education was the passport to a better life. In the case of a family with a half dozen children, the one who managed to become a doctor, dentist, lawyer, engineer, ... had an entirely different outlook on life than his five siblings who continued to struggle for survival. The children of the fortunate one also grew up with a different outlook on life. In other words, a vicious circle was broken. Seen from this perspective, an education was everything.

The minimum wage in Brazil is approximately a hundred dollars a month. There are those who have better jobs and get two, three, four, or more minimum wages per month. We have brothers and sisters in the church who are making one and a half minimum wages—one hundred and fifty US dollars—per month. They can't afford a car, not even an old junker. Most of what we accept as a necessary part of life, they can't have.

Yet they dream. The mentality that a life of poverty is what destiny has reserved for them is losing its force. They would like to have a car, live in a more comfortable house, be able to give their children a better chance in life.

They go job hunting. When they look down and admit they have only a grade school education, the answer is usually the same: "Um salário mínimo para começar." ("One minimum wage to begin.") They are told to get an education and there will be more and better opportunities. An education continues to be seen as the key that will unlock the door to a middleclass life.

These same brothers and sisters ask for permission to continue their studies, to get a high school diploma, and then possibly a college degree. They are told that we as a church don't believe in higher education, because a higher education leads to high-mindedness, etc., etc.

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They don't understand. So we explain again. And again they don't understand. The mentality that a diploma is synonymous with a decent living is deeply engrained. In all fairness we must point out that these brothers and sisters are not looking for status or position when they ask to continue their studies. They want buying power.

And here is where we repeatedly pour salt into the wound. After we tell them what the church believes, they ask us what they should do. We give them a brief rundown on what the Bible teaches about being contented and living within our means. They don't argue with us, but inside a fire burns. Who are we to tell them to be contented without that which we have? If we were suddenly thrust into their circumstances, would we drink a dose of our own advice? They know, and we know, we wouldn't. The church in N America would take up a collection for us. We would be airlifted out of here.

That's the long and the short of it.

And so, is the solution to open the door for higher education in Brazil?

No.

Should we take up a collection for them so that they can up their standard of living?

No.

Here are some...ah...contestable facts.

1) Brazilians who are now our—and your—brothers and sisters were not raised as “freemen” as we, that is, with the firm conviction that we are, at least to quite an extent, masters of our material fortunes. We believe that hard work produces progress. These brothers and sisters don't. They work, work, work, and all too often get nowhere. That was the case of their parents, of their grandparents... So, let's save our breath and not give them a long sermon on how hard work is the key to success. They know how to work hard. Harder than we.

2. A high school diploma, or even a college degree is no longer the key to success in Brazil. Rio Verde today is swamped with young dentists—top-notch dentists. Competition is so keen that prices here are approximately 20 percent of what you pay in the US for identical work. Older dentists are forced into early retirement. Our local college turns out 40 lawyers a year. So we have lawyers doing menial jobs, making 300 US dollars a month. The same is true for those with a degree in business administration (another 40 each year). It's a long list. In many cases to have a high school education takes the worker out of the two minimum wage (US\$200) bracket and ups him to four minimum wages. Yes, it is true that we have professionals who are making all kinds of money. But not nearly all.

3. There are some real incongruities in our midst. We have a brother who is an architect. He works at his profession during the day and at night teaches architecture in a university. We have another brother who has a fifth grade education. He worked as a mason's helper, then became a mason, and today has his own construction business. His earnings far exceed those of the brother who has a college degree in architecture. We have a number of brethren who began life without a chance (according to the prevalent mentality), but today are doing well financially. Yes, some of them got a boost from the brethren, but not all. It IS possible to start at the bottom of the ladder in Brazil and get ahead.

That is a fact, but it doesn't change the "predestinated to poverty" mentality. It may help some.

4. We have brethren who will never reach a middleclass standard of living, but who are totally satisfied. Several weeks ago in Sunday School, economical differences were being discussed. A brother, illiterate, who owns an acre of land along the Monte Alegre River, has an old car and a modest house, plus a job that probably yields him three hundred US dollars a month, asked a question: Have there always been the rich and the poor? When told that has always been the case, he made a little speech. In essence he said: "Since there have always been rich and poor, I am one of the poor ones. But I have nothing to complain about. I have a good job and a good boss; I have my acre of ground right by the river and a nice house; I have plenty to eat and all of my needs taken care of... I don't feel like I'm poor." This, truly, is godliness with contentment.

5. Brazil is a land of opportunity. We don't have a caste system that condemns some to eternal poverty. With just a bit of entrepreneurship it is possible to peck ones way out of the shell of poverty and begin walking on the path that leads to a more comfortable way of life.

This issue—and I hasten to insert here that it is not a "hot" issue, but sort of a nagging issue—must have a solution. As mentioned, the solution is not handouts or a loan agency (although at times a brotherly loan may be very much in order). We are looking at changing an age-old mentality. That isn't easy.

It is very likely that we who teach that higher education is not the key to success will have to, somehow, show our brothers and sisters—and especially their children—that the shackles of poverty can be shed.

The problem, in a nutshell, is that these brothers and sisters haven't been taught by their parents that they can excel. Rather, from little on up they have been immersed in a fatalistic attitude toward life. If this vicious circle is to be broken, those who have a broader vision will have to become fathers and mothers to these brothers and sisters and their children. Just how we will go about doing this is unclear at this point. It will take a deliberate effort and possibly an organized effort of the brotherhood.

It would be nice to end this article with a clear solution that could be used in other third world and developing nations. That isn't the case. But with persistence, brotherly love and vision we can—and must—come up with a solution. ▲