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Editorial

Originalism

“We the people...” Thus begins the Constitution of the United States of America.

These three words—“We the people”—epitomize the basic thought and guiding principle of the Framers of this Constitution: Freedom and democracy for all.

The Revolutionary War won the independence of the original Thirteen Colonies, but did not automatically bind them together as a nation. Representatives from these Colonies formed a timid Congress that drafted an equally timid constitution, known as the Articles of Confederation.

Aware of the deficiencies of the Articles of Confederation, in September of 1786, commissioners from five states met in Annapolis to consider the revision of this first Constitution. It was decided to invite delegates from all thirteen states. Only Rhode Island refused to send delegates to the convention.

The delegates soon concluded that the original Constitution wasn’t fixable and that a new one would have to be drafted. On September 17, 1787, this work was finished and the new Constitution was signed by the delegates. Fierce resistance in some of the states drug out the final ratification until March 4, 1789, when the new Constitution became the “supreme law of the United States of America.”

The Preamble sets forth the noble purpose of this Constitution:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

This Constitution is made up of seven articles...

Article One establishes the legislative branch of government, known as Congress, made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The basic function of Congress is to create laws.

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Article Two sets in order the presidency, known as the executive branch. The President must execute the laws created by Congress.

Article Three sets in order the judicial branch of government, which is the court system, beginning with the lower courts and progressing up to the Supreme Court. When laws are enacted by Congress that are considered an infringement on the Constitution, the courts, and especially the Supreme Court, must rule on their constitutionality. Criminal and civil cases are also heard by the courts.

Article Four describes the relationship between states and the Federal government. Among other things, this is to prevent individual states from creating laws that conflict with federal laws.

Article Five wisely prescribes the proper procedure to amend the Constitution.

Article Six “establishes the Constitution, and the laws and treaties of the United States made in accordance with it, to be the supreme law of the land...”

Article Seven deals with the technicalities of the ratification of the Constitution, especially in relation to the original Articles of Confederation.

Amendments. The U.S. Constitution has a total of 27 amendments. The first ten, known as The Bill of Rights, were adopted within a few years of the ratification of the Constitution. The purpose of these amendments, as the name suggests, is to assure the basic rights of all citizens.

The eleventh amendment was approved in 1795, and the twenty-seventh—the last—in 1992.

(It is of interest that since the Congress of 1789, over 10,000 amendments to the Constitution have been proposed, but only 27 approved.)

Even a superficial review of the U.S. Constitution reveals the hand of God. Just as the Almighty chose North America as the final bastion for His people, He also directed mind and pen to “deliver” (“give to light,” as the Spanish and Portuguese languages put it) a form of government with His stamp of approval.

The Framers of the Constitution have long been gone. Today, not even the oldest citizens, remember someone who was personally acquainted with any of them. There is no longer a living link with this phase of history.

We have said that even a superficial review of this Constitution reveals the hand of God. Not everyone agrees with this. Many today, including judges and legislators, see only the feeble mind and trembling hand of man.

If ever there is a time in which we should remember our rulers in prayer, it is when a justice is being selected for the High Court. In a sharply divided court, the vote of one man, or woman, can wreak the destruction of a moral H-bomb. We explain:

The primordial function of the Supreme Court is to determine the constitutionality of laws and issues. The justices should place themselves in the place of the Framers and see the issue as *they would have seen it*. This is called originalism, to seek the original sense of the Constitution.

“The key to originalism is that interpretive decisions made by Judges should be based on facts about the document when it was originally written or ratified, with minimal adjustments for the time or context in which it is interpreted” —Wikipedia

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Increasingly—and alarmingly— Supreme Court justices are handing down decisions based on their interpretation of what the Constitution *would* say if written today (by them). In reality, this transforms justices into legislators, for they base their decisions on what *they* would say if *they* were drafting the constitution.

Justice Scalia, a solid originalist, writes, “The theory of originalism treats a constitution like a statute, and gives it the meaning that its words were understood to bear at the time they were promulgated... I take the words as they were promulgated to the people of the United States, and what is the fairly understood meaning of those words.”

Judge Roberts was nominated by President Bush, and confirmed by the Senate, to replace Chief Justice Rehnquist, whose place on the bench was recently vacated by death. Those of you readers who followed the confirmation proceedings and read the transcripts of the Senate hearings, will have noticed something strange. Very strange.

Roe v. Wade. In what has been called “one of the most politically significant Supreme Court decisions in history, reshaping national politics, dividing the nation into ‘pro-choice’ and ‘pro-life’ camps,” the High Court legitimized abortion, as a right derived from the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

An unmarried Texas woman, alleging rape (which she later confessed to not be true), demanded an abortion, prohibited by State law. To protect her identity, she was assigned an alias, Jane Roe. The defendant in the case was Dallas County district attorney, Henry Wade—thus Roe v. Wade.

The case was argued on December 13, 1971, and the sentence given on January 22, 1973, a lopsided 7x2 vote in favor of the plaintiff.

The Court determined that even though the “Constitution does not explicitly mention any right to privacy,” the First, Fourth, Fifth, Ninth and Fourteenth Amendments were “broad enough to encompass a woman’s decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy.” The Court goes on to say that if a fetus could be defined as a person for purposes of the Fourteenth Amendment, then the fetus would have a specific right to life under that Amendment. The understanding of the concurring justices was that the Fourteenth Amendment did not afford protection to fetuses. In the Court’s words: “We, therefore, conclude that the right of personal privacy includes the abortion decision.”

Going back as far as the Reagan administration, the litmus test applied to both Federal judges and Supreme Court justices, for both nomination by the president and approval by the Senate, is the abortion issue.

In Justice John Roberts’ Senate hearing, many of the hundreds of questions hurled at him from every direction, were an effort to determine his stand on abortion. Knowing full well that a categorical statement: “I favor...” or “I oppose...” would unleash an uncontrollable public uproar, he prudently refused to be drawn into a trap, wisely stating that in the future he would probably have to rule on such a case and it would not be proper to give an opinion without hearing the arguments.

Roberts was confirmed. Now it’s Samuel Alito’s turn. The same criterion is being used on him.

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The Supreme Court has handed down other polemical decisions. Why are they so unimportant in the Senate hearings? Why does the spotlight shine almost exclusively on the abortion issue?

In most societies taking someone's life is considered the gravest of all crimes, for a life taken cannot be returned; man cannot restore life.

The abortion litmus test makes sense. Liberal elements that support gay rights and oppose prayer in school, among many other issues, are very much aware—and rightfully so—that a justice who defends abortion will probably be playing on their team in most cases.

Those who defend these positions do not pretend to be originalists. They see the Constitution as a “living Constitution,” which means that the Court doesn't base its decisions on what the Constitution says, but rather tries to determine what is “morally correct” *today*, in terms of “the evolving standards of decency” and then justify decisions reached by a “creative reading” of the text. Justices who believe in a “living Constitution” interpret the Constitution as they believe it would be written today. Originalists say that “If the constitution can mean *anything*, then the constitution means *nothing*.” Again we quote Antonin Scalia: “The worst thing about the living constitution is that it will destroy the constitution.”

Federal judges and Supreme Court justices are chosen today, not nearly so much on their professional or judicial merit as on their views on “hot” issues. Thus a highly qualified judge can be rejected for the high bench because of his moral convictions, while a far less qualified candidate can be confirmed because of his *lack* of moral convictions.

All this has had a profound effect on the course of the nation. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than during the administration of a president who holds to traditional values. Knowing that presidents have the prerogative of nominating justices for the Supreme Court, *Roe v. Wade* may easily become a not so subtle issue during presidential campaigns (especially if it is believed that there may be several Supreme Court vacancies to be filled during his term). Thus moral convictions—or lack of convictions—may well take precedence over basic qualifications at the polls.

What we have described is not a pleasant scene. Unfortunately, it is real.

Originalism is not restricted to the judicial branch of our government. It is a very real issue in the religious world of today. It can become an issue in the church.

Spiritual originalism is the interpretation given to words of Jesus and the apostles. Sound doctrine—and here we adapt Justice Scalia's words—is “like a statute, and gives [their teachings] the meaning that [their] words were understood to bear at the time they were [spoken].”

When a deliberative body convenes to discuss weighty issues, decisions are made. We talk about Conference decisions. In a very strict sense, it would possibly be more correct to use the term Conference interpretations. Decisions, after all—and above all—must be the interpretation of what is written in the Bible. That is originalism.

A number of years ago a new version of the Bible was put on the market, called “The Living Bible.” So far as I know, there was never any general enthusiasm (isolated,

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maybe) in the church for this bible (lower case initial b not a typo). The idea, of course, was to make the Bible come alive in a new era (which, by inference, would raise a question: was the King James Bible enfeebled or moribund?).

We have spoken about a “living constitution” and now we cite a “living bible.” Does it ring a bell?

We reiterate, that those who believe in a living constitution feel that the original sense of the Constitution has been eroded by time and needs to be replaced by a more dynamic interpretation, which, for all practical purposes, means rewriting the constitution.

If there is no living link with the framers of the U.S. Constitution, after two hundred and some years, how much less is there a living link with the New Testament Constitution after two thousand years! And yet...

And yet we believe there is.

A living link can be physical: When J.G. Loewen lived in Brazil some 30 years ago, we had a C.E. in which he told us his memories of John Holdeman, whom he learned to know as a boy. A physical link can span up to possibly a century and a half.

A living link can be spiritual, in which the original sense of a writ has been uninterruptedly maintained and practiced for hundreds, or even thousands, of years. This is spiritual originalism.

(There is yet another link that can hardly be called living, which we will call the “copy link.” It isn’t unusual for someone to come into our office and ask that we make a copy of a song that is a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy... Many times it has been marked up, while some notes or words are totally missing or illegible. This would possibly describe the link the Catholic church alleges to have with Saint Peter. Not a single doctrine has survived in purity, and much less in practice.)

We can’t help but wonder what the New Testament would sound like if Jesus and the apostles had lived at the turn of this last century. Would the parables have been about sheep and talents and trimming lamps? Or would we read about bailing hay and credit cards and computer hard drives?

It isn’t profitable to even try to figure that one out. But it is profitable to understand that the tenor of both Jesus’ and the apostles’ teachings would have been absolutely identical to those which we now have. The standards of honesty, morality and spirituality wouldn’t have been tightened nor loosened. There wouldn’t be a single loophole included to accommodate modern sinning.

Today it is very much in vogue to go church shopping. Fifty years ago there were a variety of brand name churches to select from. Today street corner churches are proliferating like guppies in a fishbowl, each with its handcrafted doctrine.

One of our local doctors told me several times before his unexpected death that as a retirement project he wanted to research and catalog all basic religions. Then he would set up a clinic for people with spiritual problems. He would hear them out and then prescribe a church to fit their needs. Magnanimously, he would say, “Depending on the patient’s profile, I will prescribe your church.”

We have talked about the U.S Constitution, the Supreme Court and about other churches. Where does that leave us?

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When the Church meets to deliberate, there are three options:

Originalism: To hold issues up to the light of what is written in the Word and carefully and prayerfully attempt to come to exactly the same conclusion that the Church in Jerusalem would have reached. This means calling right right and wrong wrong. That is spiritual originalism.

Legislation: The keys to the Kingdom do not give the Church the right to legislate; only to *interpret* new issues in the light of the old Constitution. The Bible is silent on many of the issues we face today. When vision grows dim, there is a clamor to legislate, that is, to fill in what the Bible doesn't say. This means making our own laws and bylaws—or possibly even worse, to do nothing, saying that if God had nothing to say about it, why should we.

Amendments. The U.S. Constitution has 27 amendments, of the which the Bill of Rights are the first ten. To amend is “1. To change for the better; improve: *amended the earlier proposal so as to make it more comprehensive*. 2. To remove the faults or errors in; correct. See Synonyms at *correct*” (AHD). That which is called liberalism—to liberate—is essentially an effort to attach a bill of rights to the old Constitution. Often this isn't done on the deliberative floor, but in actual practice, in taking liberties. Spiritual amendments *always* cater to the flesh. The “improvements” can actually be of a very conservative nature. The scribes and Pharisees were masters of amendments, placing choke points on the law that made it impossible for the average Israelite to fulfill Moises' teachings.

We repeat the words of Justice Scalia: “The worst thing about the living constitution is that it will destroy the constitution.” In case you forgot, those who believe in a “living” constitution, believe that it must constantly be upgraded to serve a changing world. Similarly, those who see a constant need to upgrade the New Testament Constitution rapidly destroy it so far as their personal lives or religious groups are concerned.

Spiritual survival (read as: being saved) today is not easy. Those who lose the spirit of heartfelt obedience are doomed to seek obedience in an amended Constitution, by calling wrong right—and sometimes, calling right wrong. For such the church becomes an association, a mere fraternity.

“We the people...” With these opening words, men wrote up a constitution. Sadly, today the constitution of most of Christendom also begins with, “We the people...” The original Constitution has been legislated and amended to where it is, “of the people, by the people, for the people.” Humanism.

The Constitution which can never be revised, amended or legislated, is Of God, By God, For the People. It is the Alpha and the Omega.

And if any man shall take away from [legislate or amend] the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book [Constitution].

Spiritual originalism is the firm belief that the Word, like the Ark of the Covenant, cannot be touched by mortal hand; that *God is His own interpreter, / And He will make it plain.*

Off My Desk

[My desktop was needing some disaster relief assistance urgently. As I went through my piles—not files—I unearthed (undesked?) some items sent to me by others...]

Tomatoes

An unemployed man went to apply for a job with Microsoft as a janitor. The manager there arranges for him to take an aptitude test. After the test, the manager says, “You will be employed as a janitor at minimum wage, \$5.15 an hour. Let me have your e-mail address, so that I can send you a form to complete and tell you where to report for work on your first day.”

Taken aback, the man protests that he has neither a computer nor an e-mail address. To this the MS manager replies, “Well, then, that means that you virtually don’t exist and can therefore hardly expect to be employed by Microsoft.

Stunned, the man leaves. Not knowing where to turn and having only \$10.00 in his wallet, he buys a 25 lb. flat of tomatoes at the supermarket. In less than two hours, he sells all the tomatoes individually at 100% profit. Repeating the process several times more that day, he ends up with almost \$100.00 before going to sleep that night. Thus it dawns on him that he could quite easily make his living selling tomatoes.

Getting up early every day and going to bed late, he multiplies his profits quickly. After a short time he acquires a cart to transport several dozen boxes of tomatoes, only to have to trade it in again so that he can buy a pickup truck to support his expanding business. By the end of the second year, he is the owner of a fleet of pickup trucks and manages a staff of a hundred former unemployed people, all selling tomatoes.

Planning for the future of his wife and children, he decides to buy some life insurance. Consulting with an insurance adviser, he picks up an insurance plan to fit his new circumstances. At the end of the telephone conversation, the adviser asks him for his e-mail address in order to send the final documents electronically.

When the man replies that he has no e-mail, the adviser is stunned. “What, you don’t have e-mail? How on earth have you managed to amass such wealth without the Internet, e-mail and e-commerce? Just imagine where you would be now, if you had been connected to the Internet from the very start!”

“Well,” replied the tomato millionaire, “I would be a janitor at Microsoft.”

By definition, a fable must have a moral. This one four:

1. The Internet, e-mail and e-commerce do not need to rule your life.
2. If you don’t have e-mail, but work hard, you can still become a millionaire.
3. Since you got this story via e-mail, you’re probably closer to becoming a janitor than you are to becoming a millionaire.
4. If you do have a computer and e-mail, you have already been taken to the cleaners by Microsoft.



Wisdom

[Sent to me in Portuguese by my neighbor across the stream.]

It is eight o'clock in the evening on a busy thoroughfare. The couple is going to have dinner with friends and they are late. Their friends have moved, but before leaving the wife went to the pains of checking out the best route on the city map. The husband is driving, following her directions. A final turn to the left will bring them close to their destination.

The husband is sure that they need to turn to the right. Their ideas clash. The wife realizes that beside getting to their friends' place even later if they turn to the right, they will get there in a bad mood, so she tells the husband to turn right.

They haven't driven very far before he realizes he is wrong. While turning around, he sullenly admits he was wrong. Smiling sweetly, she tells him that getting there a couple of minutes later won't be any big deal.

Curious, he asks, "If you were certain you were right, why didn't you insist I turn left?"

"I had the option of being right or being at peace. I decided that being at peace was more important. We were just about to get into a fight and that would have spoiled our evening."

Moral: This little story was told by a business woman during a speech on how we shouldn't complicate things on the job. She used the incident to illustrate how we go to great lengths to prove that we are right. No matter how right we are, we can do more damage trying to prove we are right than by humbly letting others think we are wrong. And so, there are times we should ask ourselves: Is it more important to be right or to be at peace? ▲

The Explosion

[This is a soiled, termite damaged, almost illegible note my daughter Sylvia received from a parent while teaching school here, during the 1900s. How did it ever end up on top of my desk?]

Miss Becker,

As far as I'm concerned, you don't ever have to send one of those HUMUNGOUS balloons home with my children again. _____ blew hers up today and I tied it for her. Quite a while later (having forgotten the balloon), I was in the house by myself. All of a sudden there was this **terrible** bang. I didn't see anything, but I sure heard it. I couldn't for anything figure out what had happened. *And I was scared.* It sounded like when lightning strikes close by and it pops in the house, but there was no storm. Or it sounded like a gun shot very close. I wanted to call the children in to help me figure out what had happened, but I was afraid I might get shot if I stuck my head out of the door. Believe me, **I was scared.** Even so I went out

and called the children in and we very cautiously started checking things out in the hall and bedrooms, as that was where I thought the noise came from. I was afraid to touch anything. Anyways, we didn't find anything and ended up back in the dining room. Pretty soon _____ said something like, "There's a balloon popped." He had a piece of it in his hand. (I don't know where the rest of it is.) Imagine how relieved I was, and a little embarrassed. ▲

A very scared mother

Technologically Challenged

[Even you folks who are computer illiterate will enjoy some of these little tidbits.]

Compaq is considering changing the computer command "Press Any Key" to "Press Return Key" because of the flood of calls asking where the "Any" key is.

AST technical support had a caller complaining that her mouse was hard to control with the dust cover on. The cover turned out to be the plastic bag the mouse was packaged in.

Another Dell customer called to say he couldn't get his computer to fax anything. After 40 minutes of troubleshooting, the technician discovered the man was trying to fax a piece of paper by holding it in front of the monitor screen and hitting the "Send" key.

Yet another Dell customer called to complain that his keyboard no longer worked. He had cleaned it by filling up the bathtub with soap and water and soaking the keyboard for a day, then removing all the keys and washing them individually.

A Dell technician received a call from a customer who was enraged because his computer had told him he was "Bad and an invalid." The tech explained that the computer's "bad command" and "invalid" responses shouldn't be taken personally.

A confused caller to IBM was having trouble printing documents. He told the technician that the computer had said it "couldn't find printer." The user had also tried turning the computer screen to face the printer, but that his computer still couldn't "see" the printer.

An exasperated caller to Dell Computer Tech Support couldn't get her new Dell computer to turn on. After ensuring the computer was plugged in, the technician asked her what happened when she pushed the power button. Her response, "I pushed and pushed on this foot pedal and nothing happened." The "foot pedal" turned out to be the computer's mouse.

Another customer called Compaq tech support to say her brand new computer wouldn't

work. She said she unpacked the unit, plugged it in and sat there for 20 minutes waiting for something to happen. When asked what happened when she pressed the power switch, she asked, “What power switch?”

Another IBM customer had trouble installing software and for support. “I put in the first disk, and that was OK. It said to put in the second disk, and I had some problems with the disk. When it said to put in the third disk, I couldn’t even fit it in...” The user hadn’t realized that “Insert Disk 2” implied removing Disk 1 first.

A story from Novell NetWare SysOp:

CALLER: “Hello, is this Tech Support?”

TECH: “Yes, it is. How may I help you?”

CALLER: “The cup holder on my PC is broken, and I am getting within my warranty period. How do I go about getting that fixed?”

TECH: “I’m sorry, but did you say a cup holder?”

CALLER: “Yes, it’s attached to the front of my computer.”

TECH: “Please excuse me. If I seem a bit stumped, it’s because I am. Did you receive this as a part of a promotional at a trade show? How did you get this cup holder? Does it have any trademark on it?”

CALLER: “It came with my computer. I don’t know anything about a promotional. It just has ‘4X’ on it.”

(At this point the Tech Rep had to mute the call because he couldn’t stand it. He was laughing too hard. The caller had been using the load drawer of the CD-ROM drive as a cup holder and had snapped it off the drive.)

A woman called the Canon help desk with a problem with her printer. The tech asked her if she was “running it under windows.” The woman responded, “No, my desk is next to the door. But that is a good point. The man sitting in the cubicle next to me is under a window and his printer is working fine.” ▲

A Brazilian Story

by Mário de Moraes

The Unearthly Armadillo

My friend, also a journalist had the habit of going to a certain bar in Copacabana [Rio de Janeiro] for an after-hours drink. Often he would meet another “regular,” notorious for his alcohol consumption. It wasn’t at all unusual for my journalist friend to load the now totally inebriated customer in his car at closing time and take him home.

Since the customers in this bar were well-known to the proprietor, they would often settle the accounts at the end of the month. So it was that one evening the tippler came

in, had several drinks, and then, strangely, got up and asked for his bill, which he paid with a check. Then, mysteriously, he solemnly shook hands with the patrons and left. He wasn't seen for months, until one day my journalist friend met him on the street.

"Hey, man, what's going on? You've disappeared."

"Yes, I have. As you know, I was drinking heavily. I lost control and the more I drank, the more I craved. The night you saw me in the bar for the last time, I had had several drinks, when suddenly I saw an—you won't believe this—an armadillo in the bar. That's right. There it was, right under the table. It was looking at me with the most mocking eyes you have ever seen. Even I didn't believe it at first, but finally I admitted to myself that it was a sure-enough armadillo. Slowly, slowly it edged up to me.

"But then I got to thinking. That was impossible" Through all my drinking I was losing my marbles. The next thing I would be in the crazy house. I knew it, sure as anything.

"Right there and then I decided to never drink again. That is when I paid my bill, shook hands with all you fellows, and was on my way."

Triumphantly, he added, "And from that day until now, I have never touched liquor again!"

My journalist friend finishes the story for us:

"The interesting thing in this whole story is that there really *was* an armadillo in the bar that night. A fellow raised the thing from little and decided to sell it. He took it to the bar in a cage, but somehow it got out and began wandering around under the tables. I was so glad that my friend had stopped drinking that I didn't tell him that he really *had* seen an armadillo that night. What if he would go back to drinking...?" ▲

[Just a little footnote. Here in Brazil, armadillos are known to include cemeteries in their hunting grounds, which explains why cemeteries are often enclosed in solid walls. Thus an armadillo can easily be seen as an omen of death, which doubtlessly added to the tippler's consternation and resolution to stop drinking.]

The Colony

The Move to Brazil – Reflections

The Mennonite Colony in Rio Verde came into existence in 1969. Most of the families that moved to Brazil did so during the first 10 years. After that influx dwindled to a trickle. This initial period was marked by both growth and turbulence.

Today, nearly 37 years later, there is very little to remind one of the first years on the Colony when there were no roads, no electricity, no telephones, no modern stores in our local town, no agricultural technology, not even a market for soybeans.

This is all in the past. Everything we didn't have, today we have (not in the same variety or profusion as in the US, but much more than we need). We can have comfortable, normal lives.

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Just as people moved to Brazil, so, through the years, people also moved back to N America—and continue to. Even so, our internal growth and people coming to the church is sufficient to give us positive overall (congregations and missions) growth.

That doesn't mean everything is going smoothly. Soybean farmers are feeling the crunch of a very low exchange rate when selling their crop. Several years ago beans were sold for over 50 reals a bag. Recently they have sold for 20 reals, or less.

The economical backbone of the church in Brazil has been soybeans. In the last three years in the Monte Alegre Congregation a number of chicken barns have come in, plus several dairies (one at the Rio Verdinho Congregation), which help. In the Mato Grosso and Tocantins settlements, things are even more difficult. They must pay more for what they put into their crops and then get less when they are sold. (In Mato Grosso beans were recently sold for 16 reals a sack.)

The Tocantins settlement is in the initial stage in which expenses still outweigh income.

The Rio Verde Congregation, which is second in numbers, has no soybean farmers. Nor does the Pirenópolis Congregation, which is the smallest.

What does all this mean? It means that the three missionary couples on the field in Brazil, plus the tract and literature work, all of which are financed by the church in Brazil, are no longer finding an abundance of soybeans.

And that's not all. The brethren at the Rio Verdinho are good givers. But their numbers are constantly falling. Different members who have returned to the US or moved to Tocantins have sold their land to outsiders. Since Rio Verdinho is a soybean/corn congregation, with only one dairy, there are no prospects of growth. Should another family or two decide to leave, both the school and the congregation will begin losing steerability.

What is the future of the church in Brazil? Let's analyze some facts:

The church is firmly established. There is no doubt about this. After all, this is the first reason for being in Brazil. Our entire staff has been ordained here, three of whom are Brazilians. The church is growing, as are future gifts. Is it reasonable that God would permit such a situation to come to naught?

The financial crisis will pass. We have every reason to believe that the exchange rate, the villain of low prices, will in time be corrected. Some of the brethren are raising beef cattle, which in the long run always provides a reliable income. Raising both hogs and chickens for Perdigão continues to be an option. The dairy business is a very bright spot. The brethren with dairies are doing well, especially in a country without cold winters. We hope that a conscience will develop against selling land to the outside. We can't afford it if we're going to keep things going here.

Brazil is the natural launching pad for mission work in S America. Obviously, Brazil won't be able to provide all the money or personnel for this effort, but it is in an excellent position to provide logistic support to the work.

A nucleus is developing. Amongst the Americans, we see a definite tendency to accept Brazil as "home." This is very, very important. And proof of this is the nearly 20 Americans who have applied for Brazilian citizenship. Very likely there will be others. On the other hand,

there will still be some leaving. We have said before that it is possible to leave in a proper way. When this is done, it is not a hindrance to the work here. (It is actually a greater hindrance to want to leave, to not like it here, and not leave.)

Brazil continues to be a good place to live. The fact that we don't have access to all the extras that you folks in N America have doesn't seem to be a hindrance to spiritual growth. ▲

This & That

The city of São Paulo is expected to have a population of 20 million by 2015. World population hit 6.5 billion this year, an increase of one billion since 1993. This means that approximately one half of the population lives in cities and the other half in rural areas. (Other four cities expected to have a population of over 20 million by 2015 are: Tokyo, Bombay, New Delhi and Mexico City.)

A graveside service was held on Nov. 12 at the Monte Alegre Cong. for Kristen, André & Andrienne Passos' premature baby who lived only several hours.

Leide & Marta Peixoto returned from the US on Nov. 15, after spending a number of months in Ohio working. Their two children were baptized during their stay.

Emma Burns spent several weeks in Tocantins with her daughter Mim Dirks and her family. Faith Becker and grandson Kelwin spent five days there at the end of her stay and they returned together on the bus.

Ely & Vânia Bessa have adopted two little children. When the biological mother, a young teenager, started getting sassy during the hearing, the judge quickly and firmly put her back in her place—and proceeded to grant the adoption.

Sam's Club opened its first store in Goiânia on Thanksgiving Day. On Dec. 1, Wal-Mart opened its doors to the public. (For those of you who are familiar with Goiânia, it's across the street from Carrefour.)

Colony visitors were: Lloyd & Luann Holdeman and dau. Julie, together with their three married daughters and spouses: Jeremy & Sheryl, Jonathan & Jaclyn Mastre, Mitchell & Marjorie Holdeman.

Missionaries from Paraguay, Eldon & Paulina Bartel, and their Spanish interpreter, Barb Martins, visited the Colony, together with Melvin & Margaret Warkentin and Eleanor Barkman and dau. Connie, who visited the Bartels in Paraguay. On Sunday night Eldon gave us an inspirational report on the work in Paraguay.

A pioneer woman, Frances, Mrs. Jonas Schultz, was laid to rest on Dec. 12. Frances was not a born pioneer, but is a beautiful example of how a Christian wife rises to the occasion and in love and dedication stands by her husband. Jonas & Frances came to Brazil in 1973 and were the first ones to buy land in the Rio Verdinho Cong. area. When Jonas passed away in 1980, Frances continued living on the home place. Several years ago she made her home with her daughter, Deanna's family, the Tim Burns', who cared for her until her death. Granddaughter Kendra, from Kansas, came out to be with her during her last days. She left a matter of hours before she

passed away, but was able to listen in on the funeral service during a layover in the Dallas airport.

Wildlife is slowly returning to our area. Indiscriminate hunting, insecticides and loss of natural habitat decimated our animal population. Going to work the other day, we had just turned out of our lane when Faith spotted what appeared to be an oversized vulture on the ground wire of a concrete highline post. We stopped and while we watched it came down the pole in very unvulture style. We realized it was a large monkey (And don't ask me how in the world it managed to not hook its tail on the hot wire and blow a few fuses). Anyway, the next thing we knew a whole troop of monkeys was crossing the road and going up in the trees on the other side.

The last six weeks have been RAINY and cloudy. Just during the first 19 days of December, we have had 18.7 inches of rain. Some of the soybeans are a bit yellow from lack of direct sunrays. Yet, they're beautiful. And today we had a sunshiny day.

Revival meetings are in progress at the Rio Verde Cong. (the "town church"), with Antônio Oliveira and Dean Mininger as the evangelists.

Meetings have also been taking place in England, where the Paul Jeffery family lives. Arlo & Priscilla Hibner from here were to meet Keith Nightingale and ??? in London and then travel out to the Jefferies. I believe they are going to be hearing at least one conversion experience. More on this next month.

A new baby, Londa Ranae, born to Lawrence & Patrícia Kramer on Nov. 19.

Another new baby, Lamar John, born to Nelson & Ruth Unruh on Dec. 12.

More visitors: Daniel & Linda Holdeman (she is Frances Schultz' daughter), Stanley & Kathy Holdeman and Lester & Sharon Holdeman and daughter, were here for a short visit and renew their Brazilian I.D. cards.

A follow-up on Roe v. Wade. We have already mentioned that Ms. Roe admitted the story she told to the court was false. Later went further and took a solid anti-abortion stance. She tried to petition the court to overthrow the sentence given on her account, but to no avail. However, since the sentence was given too late for her to have the procedure performed on herself, at least her own child was saved.

While we're on the subject... A number of years ago the crime rate began dropping in some large cities, in some cases an over 50 percent drop. Politicians and mayors began tooting their horns, claiming they were responsible for this welcome news. Chief of Police and entire police departments were given the credit, as was more modern crime-stopping technology. Interestingly, it wasn't only where police departments had been beefed up. In some cities in which absolutely nothing was being done different, the crime rate was also dropping. It took an economist to figure it out. Roe v. Wade. It's a fact that happily married women don't destroy their own offspring. Normally those who take advantage of Roe v. Wade are poor (poor? living on welfare), single women who are totally unstructured to give a child a decent upbringing. This economist discovered that when the destruction of tens, or hundreds of thousands of potential criminals, some 20 years later, crime rates began falling. You may not like these facts, but it's a bit difficult to explain them away. ▲