

Brazil News



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Editorial

The Trapper

Both the hunter and the trapper must have a good knowledge of their quarry's habits and habitat. Both must be willing to brave the elements. But that is where the similarities end.

For the hunter to make a kill, he must come within range of his prey. For the primitive hunter, this could mean close enough to thrust in his spear. For the modern hunter equipped with a high-powered rifle, this may be a distance of several hundred yards, or even more.

The trapper, on the other hand, may be at home sleeping, miles away, when he snares his prey. But for this to come about, he will have carefully chosen the spot to conceal a trap. It won't be until the jaws snap shut and the animal is captured, that it will have any idea it was being hunted.

Both hunters and trappers are dangerous. But even more dangerous is the hunter who is also a trapper. Worst of all is when this hunter/trapper is the evil one. And his quarry is the human soul.

When thinking about spending some time on the broad road (or maybe just taking a little detour off the narrow way), it isn't unusual, especially for youth, to think in terms of eluding the master hunter. Stakes are set. "I will do this, but not that. I will go here, but not there. I will taste this, but not that." Or put in other words, "If I watch my step, I can stay out of the hunter's range." But it is forgotten that the hunter is also a trapper.

Possibly for years, maybe for almost a lifetime, this firm resolution seems to be holding out. By exercising self-restraint and certain moral principles, the hunter is apparently held at bay.

That is what Herod the tetrarch thought.

When Herod began putting up with his sister-in-law Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, he knew it was wrong. But he probably set a stake. "I'll marry her, but from

there on I'll be real careful what I do." Maybe he was. By the time Herodias' beautiful daughter was a teenager, his conscience probably didn't even pain him anymore. He very likely treated his stepdaughter as his own.

We don't know under what circumstances John the Baptist met with Herod. To say the very least, it must have been a strange meeting. There was Herod in his royal robes and John the Baptist in his coarse, unconventional camel's hair garb. It's possible Herod called him in out of sheer curiosity. He may have wanted to have a firsthand look at the loco who had the countryside in an uproar.

If he expected John the Baptist to come cringing in, he was in for a surprise. He was even more surprised when this strange creature pointed his finger at him and boldly announced, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

We don't know what Herod's reaction was. Very likely down deep his conscience smote him. He knew this strange creature was right and even respected him for it.

We have reason to believe that Herodias was in on that visit. If she wasn't, she must have soon found out all that was said. She was furious.

If Delilah and Jezabel would have founded an Evil-Women's Club, Herodias would certainly have met all the requisites to belong. The trap she set for her husband leave no doubt about this.

Her first reaction was to demand John the Baptist's death. It is this violent reaction that makes one believe that Herod was touched by the prophet's words.

For Herodias there was a lot at stake. Afterall, she was queen. She was living in the king's palace. She rode in the royal carriage. She had dozens of servants. What if Herod would listen to that loco and decide she would have to go? No, that would never happen. Not if she could help it.

Herod was in a very difficult situation. Fully aware of his wife's Jezebelic temper, he knew that his palace could become a mighty small place to live if she went on the warpath. On the other hand, the decision to execute John the Baptist was loaded with political implications. The multitudes counted this strange man as a prophet. To kill him could bring on riots, something that no ruler appreciates.

And there were personal considerations. Herod himself counted John the Baptist as a man of God. So the solution was a compromise. Prison. Herod likely thought, "I'll keep him penned up for a while until Herodias settles down and some night I'll let him go." She, the master trapper, probably thought, "That gets him one step closer to where I want him."

What we read makes us believe that John the Baptist had a very positive influence on Herod. "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

What were these "many things?" We don't know and won't go so far as to say that one of them was to consider leaving Herodias. And yet . . .

A real friendship appears to have blossomed between the tetrarch and the strange prophet. Herodias doubtlessly was aware of this.

Then came Herod's birthday. In the supper which he was to offer, his lords and high captains were to be special guests. It was to be a gala affair. Many preparations were made.

Not only did Herod prepare. Herodias also prepared. Her trap.

At this point we can but guess what happened. This is our guess:

Herodias called in her daughter and had a frank talk with her. “Daughter, you’re aware of that loco that you’re dad has in jail. Do you know what he is trying to do? He’s trying to get your dad to leave me. That’s right . . .”

“Mom! Are you serious?”

“Dead serious. And do you know what that means? It means the end of our life here in the palace? It means that we’re going to have to get out and live like ordinary people. How does that strike you?”

The only answer is a horrified look.

“Now, I have a plan. If you do your part well, I think we can solve this problem. When the party is at its best, you are going to go in and dance for your dad and for all his guests . . .”

“Mom, but I can’t go in uninvited. You know that just isn’t done.”

“You’re so right. Normally it isn’t done, but for us this isn’t a normal situation. Our life, our good life, depends on this. So here’s my plan.” She calls a maid and asks that she bring in the new dress. “Hold it up,” she orders the maid.

“Oooooooh mom! I can’t believe it! Am I going to wear that dress? Among all those men?”

“Why not? What’s wrong with it? Isn’t it beautiful?”

“It’s beautiful, yes. But it’s . . . it’s so sheer. It’s almost . . .”

“Exactly! You will go in when the men have had their first round of drinks, but haven’t lost their senses yet.”

“But I don’t understand, mom.”

“You will slowly walk in, dancing all the time, right up to where your dad will be seated at the head of the table. Then, right at his side, you will put on your show . . .”

“But I still don’t understand how this will help us stay in the palace.”

“Daughter, your dad will be slightly tipsy. When those men see you dancing in this dress and he sees their reaction, he will lose his head. I know exactly what he will say. ‘Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. Unto the half of my kingdom.’ You can be sure of it. When he says that, you say, ‘Just a minute dad, I’ll be right back.’ Then you run up to where I am and I’ll tell you what to ask of him so that we can stay in the palace.”

We know the story. The evening of the celebration came. His daughter came in and danced. He was enchanted—so enchanted that he didn’t even suspect a trap. He said the exact words he was supposed to say. John the Baptist was far, far away at that moment. The girl ran up to her mother, who now opened the jaws of the trap wide open. The girl ran back to her dad and said, loudly, for everyone to hear, “I want the head of John the Baptist in a charger.”

The jaws of the trap snapped shut with a sickening clap.

John the Baptist! No, not John the Baptist. Why couldn’t she have whispered that in his ear. He gladly would have given her half of his kingdom instead of the head of John the Baptist. John was his friend.

But everyone had heard. His mighty men had heard. There was no option. Not if his word was to be worth anything. He gave the order. His daughter danced, waiting for the charger to arrive with its gruesome contents.

Herod tried to look nonchalant, but inside everything was in a turmoil. He had been trapped.

When giving a warning on the dangers of veering off the narrow way, we do well to point out what Satan the hunter is able to do. This is an inescapable reality. But we should also point out that Satan is a trapper. He knows our habits and our habitat. He knows our strengths and our weaknesses. He knows how we think. He knows how we react. So what he can't accomplish with his conventional arms, he tries to do with a trap.

Like all good trappers, Satan is patient. He will wait a day, a year, ten, twenty, thirty or forty years. He will wait a lifetime, if necessary, to snare his quarry. People need to realize this. No one, alone, is a match for this master trapper. It can take a lifetime to set a trap, but only a moment to be snared.

Everything indicates that after Herod beheaded the man who tried to save him, he quit trying to save himself. ▲

Brazilian Stories

by Mário de Moraes

Where Money Isn't Important

Some time ago some government inspectors were working in the state of Pernambuco, in the northeastern region of Brazil. They went from municipality to municipality, from city to city, from town to town, checking out the tax records. This work took them to the little town of Granito, some 700 kilometers from Recife.

"A record of what is bought and sold here? We neither buy nor sell here," one of the residents of that town told the inspectors.

"You don't buy nor sell? If that's the case, how do you go about doing your business?" the incredulous inspectors wanted to know.

"It's really quite simple. If you like, I can tell you how it works," the man explained.

The inspectors thought something didn't make sense, but as they listened to the story, they realized that it was a hundred percent true.

"It's like this. Manoel has a lot of farinha (a flour made of dried manioc roots), do you know what I mean? I again have lots of eggs. So when I need farinha, I give him a dozen eggs and he gives me a small sack of farinha. Quim has a number of cows. Every now and then he butchers one and divides the meat up amongst us. But for each kilo we get, we give him something else. The other day he gave me five kilos of choice cuts. I paid him with some tools he was needing."

The people in Granito make everything they need—even their tools. Some are quite

crude, but they work. They make their own rapadura [blocks of sugared molasses] and pinga [home brew]. There are two botecos where pinga is sold, but no one pays with money. The customer always has something to give in exchange for his drink. The same thing is true when they buy tobacco, matches and kersosene.

When the inspectors reported all this to their boss, he was impressed. “Even though this may be a cultural lag, I am happy to know that there is still a place in this world where money isn’t the most important thing.”

And that’s not all. If you visit Granito, you will find that the people are healthy and happy.

May it continue so. I hope that this article won’t bring them so many visitors that this way of life will be upset. ▲

The Parrot

The main character in this story is a man by the name of Arthur Britto. He was an office worker in the section of the police department in Santos, São Paulo where thefts were reported.

His constant contact with criminals turned Arthur into a somewhat sullen fellow. He was anything but friendly when some stranger would approach him on the street. For all he knew, it was someone looking for trouble, and that was the last thing he wanted.

Nair, his wife, did sewing for others. Arthur didn’t like this because it meant people were constantly coming to his house.

In spite of all the precautions that Arthur took, one day a thief managed to steal from him. It happens that he had a beautiful parrot that was the joy of his life. He kept the parrot in a cage on his back porch.

Not by sunflower seeds alone did this parrot live. Every morning Arthur would go out and call his parrot. Opening the cage door, the bird would hop out, onto his hand. After caressing his bird for a few minutes, Arthur would give him his breakfast in a special cup: the heart of a piece of French bread soaked in coffee. While the bird ate, he would softly repeat:

“That’s it, that’s it. Now say, ‘Quero café, papai . . . papai, quero café . . .’” [I want coffee, dad... dad, I want coffee.]

Finally the day came that every time the parrot saw it’s owner, it would say, “Quero café, papai... papai, quero café.”

This thrilled Arthur to no end. He even began calling people in to show them how his bird could now talk. But then one morning when he came out, the cage was empty. In the backyard he saw the thief’s tracks.

“They’ve stolen my parrot!” he yelled, totally beside himself.

For some time Arthur wasn’t himself at all. Moody, he didn’t talk to anyone. His neighbors, knowing what the problem was, humored him.

Then one day as he was walking home from work, Arthur heard a voice that he

knew so well. “Papai, quero café!” Was he dreaming? He walked toward where the voice came from. Then he heard it again. “Papai, quero café!”

With just a bit of investigation he found the bird. It was in a cage in a small grocery store. All excited, he asked to speak to the proprietor. He explained that the bird had been stolen from his back porch. He wanted his parrot back.



The man said no way. He had just bought the bird and it was now his.

Seeing the man wasn't about to give up the parrot, Arthur called the police. “This is Arthur speaking. Send a squad car out to . . .” and he gave the address.

The law arrived, as did a lot of curious neighbors to see what was going on. It didn't take long and the truth came out. Arthur took his parrot, and as they walked home, it happily repeated, “Papai, quero café...” ▲

Remembering Out Loud

Life Without a Fridge

It would be interesting to know how many of you readers can still remember back to the pre-refrigerator days. I suspect some of you can, because when I was growing up a fridge was still commonly called an icebox. And even though the dictionary condones this usage, it does cast long shadows on ones age.

It's hard to believe that it's only during this last century that the refrigerator has become a necessity, indeed that it has existed. How did people make out for almost six thousand years without them? Maybe a lot better than we think.

When we moved to Brazil nearly 30 years ago, there were no refrigerators on the farms. In fact, many people living in town didn't have them. How did they do it?

Living without a fridge was a way of life. Let's notice what was involved.

A garden. In a tropical climate it's possible to have a garden the year-round. It's true that not everything can be raised all the time, but all the time something can be raised. We found Brazilians to be accomplished gardeners. They knew what would do well during each month of the year. They knew what kind of fertilizer—always organic—that each plant needed. A favorite trick was to go out to the corral and gather several wheelbarrow loads of cow manure. This would be piled up and then wet down with water to set off the fermentation process. Soon the whole pile would be piping hot. Within several weeks the “fertilizer” would be ready for use—weed free. The heat destroyed all the weed seeds. Chicken manure was also used extensively. Rice hulls were burned and the ashes used as potash.

As can be imagined, this organic fertilizer, used in abundance, produced some of the most beautiful vegetables ever raised. And tasty.

And so, when it came time to prepare a meal, all the housewife had to do was walk

out to the garden and pick or dig up what she would need for that meal. No digging around in the vegetable tray in the fridge.

A small field called a roça de toco, which is farmed by hand. This is the man's part of the project. Here he raised enough rice so that his wife could prepare approximately five pounds a day. Here is where he raised manioc, corn, squash and beans.

Meat and leftovers. It's impossible to talk about one without the other. Leftovers. Let's take the last one first. What did the housewife do with leftovers? And here I hasten to insert that there all kinds of leftovers. Brazilians, especially the old-timers, believed in always preparing enough so that if unexpected company showed up at mealtime, they could be invited to the table and there would be plenty.

Not only on the farm, but also in town, many people raised a pig and a number of chickens in the backyard. Basically they were raised on leftovers.

In the case of the chickens, it isn't hard to understand how it worked. Since they were raised loose, people had a small dog trained to catch them. All it took was to show the dog which one it was to catch. After a bit of yipping and squawking, the chicken's fate would be sealed. And in less than an hour it would be ready to be served.

Then there were the pigs raised on leftovers, corn, manioc and squash. These were the lard type hogs. A fairly good sized animal could yield 25 gallons or more of rendered lard. And this is what the people wanted, because back then all food was prepared with lard instead of cooking oil.

But it was lard that in many cases took the place of the refrigerator. When a pig or a cow was butchered, part of the meat was fried down and stored in lard, and part of it was dried, usually in the sun, but also above the the wood stove where it would soon become saturated with smoke.

Depending on the weather, meat fried down in lard would keep up to six months. To a cholesterol conscious generation, this kind of meat would be taboo, but that doesn't keep it from being some of the most delicious meat in the world.

People living on farms usually located near a small river. Every day they would feed the fish corn, rice, or whatever, at a particular spot in the river. That meant that whenever they wanted to go fishing, in just a jiffy they could have a nice mess of fish. Most of the fish were caught, prepared and eaten. Some, however, were cleaned and dried, either in the sun or above the wood stove.

Obviously, with a lot of chickens around, people ate a lot of eggs. Usually there was a milk cow or two around, which meant there was always cheese to be eaten—fresh, cured, or at any stage in between.

Those people didn't need a fridge. What they ate was either fresh or preserved in one of the ways we have just related. Leftovers were recycled. It was a system that worked extremely well. But as mentioned in the beginning, to live without a fridge was a way of life—a way of life that just doesn't fit into modern living. So we must use fridges.

I would love to hear from some of you readers with longer shadows on your age. Tell us how you managed without a fridge in N America years ago. I'm sure readers would enjoy reading your experiences. ▲

No Lights, Park Lights and Headlights

When we people who have spent a lot of our life in Brazil visit N America, one of the things that impress us is the amount of people who drive during the day with headlights on. What is impressing me right now in Brazil is that people are starting to do the same thing.

What's so impressive about that?

Latins are a very spontaneous people. They are some of the most helpful people in the world (except for when they're on the job). One of the places they take special pleasure in being helpful is on the road. If they come upon an accident, they furiously blink their headlights to let oncoming motorists know there is trouble ahead. If there is a cow on the road, they blink their lights. If there is a particularly dangerous place in the road, they blink their lights. If they recognize your car at a distance, they blink their lights, because you are their buddy. But most important of all, they blink their lights when the cops have set up a radar trap. I think their conscience would really bother them if they didn't warn their fellowmen of a mean cop hiding out, wanting to fine them for driving too fast.

It used to be that headlights were not turned on during the day. They weren't turned on at sundown. They weren't turned on even as it began getting dark. That is when park lights were turned on. Headlights were turned on only when it became impossible to see without them. If they were turned on sooner, oncoming motorists would show their disapproval by blinking their headlights.

But that isn't all. When passing another car at night, it wasn't unusual for the car that was doing the passing to turn off its headlights, using only park lights while in the opposite lane. Once while traveling in a taxi at night, I asked the driver why he did that. He explained that with his lights off, it was easier to see if there was an oncoming vehicle. Who knows . . .

Fortunately, that has changed. It's been a long time since I last saw that happen.

Even so, things will have to get a lot better for traffic to pull out of the chaotic range. There are a lot of things I appreciate about Brazil, but the traffic isn't one of them. I heartily detest it.

Some of the larger cities are reducing accidents by 20 percent, or more, by installing cameras on busy intersections that automatically photograph cars (and their license plate) that run red lights. Placed on busy avenues, speeders are also clicked. It adds up to a lot of fine money. ▲

Missions

Pierre

The other Sunday we were invited to the home of a young couple who have been in the church for barely a year. During the conversation that afternoon, the brother asked why it was that so many of the first Brazilian members left the church. I told him, "They were from the first generation."

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(The word “generation” is not being used in the genealogical sense, but rather as used in industry, e.g.: a new generation of tractors, a new generation of computers.)

I had never thought about it like this before and it brought on some interesting—and perturbing—thoughts. It isn’t only in Brazil that the casualty rate in the first generation of members has been alarmingly high. Those of you who are involved with the mission program, either directly or indirectly, know what we’re saying. How many countries couldn’t you tick off in which this has been the case?

What makes this?

We don’t pretend to have the solution to this strange problem. Only a few observations. We will begin with Pierre.

When we moved to Rio Verde about three decades ago, we didn’t know anybody. But soon everybody knew about us. As can be imagined, all kinds of stories about the Americanos were floating around. Some were true. Some weren’t. One of the more outstanding stories was that the Americanos had lots of money. Soon there were people offering everything from horses to houses, from land to laying hens, from bolts to Brahma cattle, in an effort to help us spend our money.

The truth of the matter was that we needed to buy a lot of things. Very often what they offered us was exactly what we needed. But was it any good? Was the seller overcharging? Was he trustworthy?

We hadn’t been here very long until we learned to know Pierre (his nickname), a young man in his early twenties. In a way he was sort of a mysterious character. (Homer Unruh was convinced he was with the CIA. I believe he still thinks so.) Apparently he made his living by coaching a small league soccer team, among other things.

The most interesting thing about Pierre, though, was that he had taught himself English. Good English. Also, we could speak to him in Spanish and he would understand perfectly. So it didn’t take long, when we went to town, about the first thing we would do was hunt up Pierre. He would spend the day with us, helping us find what we needed, telling us if the price was right, if the item being sold was any good.

If Pierre was with the CIA, then the Lord must have seen that we needed a CIA agent to help us get started in Brazil. I don’t know what we would have done without him. It was through his help that we got our bearings in the beginning.

Now back to the first generation of converts. Anyone who has been the first missionary—or one of the first—on a new field knows how it feels to have no one to go and ask, “What do you think about José? Is he sincere? Do you think he’s converted?” To complicate things even more, sometimes a rapport is established with some apparently reliable person. But after taking his advice for a while, it is found that he himself is off. And how that can mess up a fledgling field.

Oh, for a spiritual Pierre!

It’s possible for a missionary to act with less than noble motives. We however believe that seldom this is the case. When a generation of converts is lost, not only the missionary, but the mission board as well, have done their best to make things work.

Why is the second generation often a success, when the first isn’t? Isn’t it true that

by that time a “Pierre,” or several “Pierres,” have shown up? It’s been possible to go to one of these Pierres and ask, “What do you think about José? Is he converted?” And get a solid answer. That makes all the difference. It can make the difference between a generation maturing or losing out.

No one will deny the value of a Pierre or two to get a field off on the right foot. The question is: Where do you find these Pierres?

The highly visible Pierres are hard to come by. But we might be surprised to know how many low-key Pierres there are in most any part of the world. Since we don’t realize they are there, it’s understandable that we won’t find them very easily.

Have you ever found yourself in a group of people that were culturally, intellectually and professionally way over your head?

No? Well, let’s try and imagine how it would be.

Heart surgeons from your state are having a convention in a nearby city. Through some quirk of circumstances you are present. You don’t look like a doctor. You don’t talk like a doctor. You don’t act like a doctor. You don’t think like a doctor. You aren’t a doctor, and period.

Really, you stick out like a sore thumb among that august group of men. It’s hard to feel at ease. Every now and then some of them will try and strike up a conversation with you. They are very courteous and make a sincere effort to discuss things on your level. But alas, all too often your conversations are awkward. You do your best to give answers that will make sense to them.

That’s exactly how the relationship frequently is between the missionary and the folks he has gone to serve.

The missionary is acutely aware of this cultural inequality, and he doesn’t like it. So he makes a special effort to bring himself down—to condescend—to place himself on the same level of the one whom he hopes to serve. But often it only makes things worse.

Do you know why?

Culturally the national may not be up the ladder very far. But he’s not dumb. He may not be able to read or write, he may not be able to express himself clearly, but there’s nothing wrong with his basic reasoning. When the missionary, in an effort to win the national’s confidence, helps him hoe his bean field for a day, down deep he isn’t as impressed as he lets on to be. He knows that if the missionary had to do that everyday, like he has to, he wouldn’t laugh so cheerfully when counting the blisters on his hands.

Some years ago Purina did a study on how to best sell their product to the poorer folks in Brazil. One interesting discovery that Purina made was that these people do not appreciate it when sales personnel try to talk their hillbilly language. It sounds fake.

We can learn a lesson from that. If the heart surgeon you learned to know at the convention comes to your mechanic shop and offers to help take engines apart for a day, you won’t be impressed. He’s a surgeon and doesn’t plan to ever be a mechanic. So why should he get his hands all greasy for no reason? He’s your doctor friend and not your mechanic friend.

So how do we develop a two-way street relationship with the national so that he will feel free to tell us what he thinks, like Pierre did with us? We must really need them if this is to happen.

Several of the doctors you met at the convention found out you are a mechanic. One of them tells you about a problem he is having with his car. He has taken it to different shops, but no one can come up with a solution. You tell him to bring it to your shop and you'll see what can be done. He does and you fix the problem. You become the doctor's Pierre. After that only you touch his car. Pretty soon you are totally at ease in his presence. He isn't coming to your shop to make you feel good. He's coming because he needs you. That's the secret.

And that's the challenge. When the Bible instructs us to condescend to men of low estate, it doesn't mean that we go hoe beans for a day. It doesn't mean we must live in a house just like the house the national lives in. No, it means that we find a common denominator in which we feel at ease with each other.

It also means that we ask for advice, and not merely for a word of confirmation for that which we have already decided. If the national answers wisely, we pat him on the back and say, "Brother, I appreciate your wisdom."

He'll never be a Pierre.

In a second scenario, the missionary walks up to the national's house. He says, "Pedro, I need your advice. That woman who has been coming to church for a while, the one who lives up near the pond, do you feel she is sincere?" Pedro knows that his answer will carry a lot of weight with the missionary. So he thinks for a while and then says exactly how he feels.

That missionary has a Pierre at his disposal. The first generation of converts may just pull through. ▲

Twenty Years

by Maria de Fátima Tavares

[By no means did we lose all of our first generation members. We have some very stable members from that generation who today are pillars in the church. Sister Maria is one of them. (BN nos. 42 and 52 have other articles written by or about her.)]

This year I will have been in the Church of God for 20 years. I felt to share a few thoughts with my brethren and friends about my Christian life.

When I got converted, I felt a hunger for Christian wisdom. There was nothing I enjoyed more than to hear the preaching of the Word, read the Bible and learn, learn, learn... Through His Spirit, God taught me, guided me and always upheld me.

I have come through times of trials and struggles in my life. Satan tempted me in different ways, but God's grace was always greater than the temptations and I came through victorious.

I also had very happy times. God showed me how much He loves me and that I am His daughter. Even though I am weak and often fall, He is a kind Father who forgives and gives more grace.

When I came to the church, I was the only one of my family. I got no help from them in my Christian life. Today I am blessed with a Christian husband and with many relatives and friends who also are Christians. This is how God has blessed me. He has shown me the good that I can do by simply being faithful to His Word and striving onward.

I wish that all of the creatures upon the face of the earth would know the love of God as I know it.

And now, after 20 years, I still feel the same desire to learn more about God's will. Everyday I feel my weaknesses and must face a violent struggle with my own flesh. I always need the love and grace of God to overcome.

I ask that you help me with your prayers so that I can have strength and courage to remain faithful, marching toward heaven together with my brethren. Read the 23rd Psalm. ▲

Religion

Evangelicals

Brazil has for years been known as the most Catholic country in the world. Several decades back the Pope, statistically—or shall we say, aquatically (through baptism)—claimed some 98 percent of the population. If the purported Vicar of Christ was able to boast of the size of his Brazilian flock, he certainly couldn't do so about their faithfulness. As we have mentioned before, many Catholics are actually closet-Spiritists. Others maintain a very loose tie with the church for social reasons. The big headache in Rome now, however, are the Evangelicals.

VEJA Magazine, normally quite cynical and critical about religious matters, gives the Evangelicals some very special treatment in its cover story. Most interesting is the fact that they unapologetically present the Evangelicals as more honest and more industrious than Catholics. This fits in with a personal theory that Latin American countries aren't third-world nations because of Latin blood, but rather because of Latin religion.

Let's notice what VEJA has to say about the Evangelicals in Brazil. Following are some excerpts.

Since the eighties, the Evangelicals have doubled in numbers, while the population of Brazil has increased only 31 percent. That means that the Evangelicals are increasing in number three times faster than the general population. Today there is a flock of 16 million Evangelicals. It's an orderly, hard working bunch of people that is climbing the social pyramid with an amazing speed.

This conquest of souls has been interpreted by some as a demonstration of fanaticism, of exploitation of the poor by shrewd manipulators. That is totally wrong. These souls were won for the “living God” because in one way or another the converts are finding their new religion useful to them. Let’s notice some of the benefits:

- The Evangelical churches are doing a monumental work of eliminating illiteracy. Even though many of their followers come from the poorer classes, their literacy rate is much higher and 54 percent make at least five minimum wages [\$700] per month, as opposed to only 20 percent of the population in general.

- Because of the importance they place on education, Evangelical’s children do better in school than other children.

- In 270 clinics, Evangelicals have drug and alcohol recuperation programs for 12,000 people. Their success rate—60%—is the same as that of the Alcoholics Anonymous.

- Because of the close ties between Evangelicals, they help each other with their financial problems. In their businesses, they try and hire their spiritual brethren or converts. They have created 600,000 jobs.

Presidents make a point of meeting Evangelical leaders. Even though they are usually Catholic, they find that the Evangelicals support their positions much better than their own brethren. In a recent meeting with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the president of the Assembly of God church, José Wellington Bezerra da Costa, declared: “We are 100% against homosexual marriages, 100% against abortion, 100% against drugs and 100% against the Movimento dos Sem-Terras [a leftist movement that encourages poor people to invade and settle on large landholder’s farms], and we support the bills which the president hopes to get through congress.”

On the cover of the magazine there is a cross intertwined with a dollar sign. The article proves that becoming an Evangelical definitely places one in a higher wage bracket. In a nation scourged by poverty, to up ones standard of living by honest labor is certainly not a bad thing.

Most interesting, there is very little the Catholics can say about what is happening. This is a phenomenon that bears watching. ▲

Zigzagging Around

Feijoada

Brazilians have an extraordinary sense of humor. Most any situation can overnight turn into a national joke. To understand one of their latest gags, we must give a little explanation on feijoada.

Back in the colonial days, before the abolition of slavery, when a pig was butchered, the better cuts of meat went to plantation owners and what was left over to the slaves.

These “leftovers” included the head, the feet, the intestines (made into sausage) and some fatty pieces. The head would be deboned and the ears, jowls and tongue, together with the

feet, sausage, bay leaves, black beans (not good enough for the aristocracy), pepper corns, garlic, onion, etc., put into a huge cast iron kettle and cooked. The slaves loved it.

I have never read exactly what happened, but I suspect that the plantation owner's children learned to like it too. Finally the owners themselves must have decided to try this slave dish. They must have liked it.

Today feijoada is a very traditional dish, served even in the most chic restaurants. It has turned into a Saturday specialty in most restaurants.

Anyway, after the Holyfield/Tyson bite—or fight, if you prefer— Brazilians are saying that now feijoada is being consumed in the US.

Several days after the bite, a car agency ran a half-page ad in the Goiânia paper in which Holyfield is being threatened by Tyson, who says, “Tell me where you bought that car or I'll bite you.” Holyfield replies, “OK, OK, I'll tell you. It was at Testarossa.” ▲

Cars on the Hit List

VEJA Magazine reports that Brazil has always been the car thief's paradise. But it's getting worse all the time. A car is being stolen every two and a half minutes, making a grand total of 225,000 vehicles a year. And now that imports are coming in strong, they are being singled out by thieves.

The following eight imports are the highest on the hit lists, as well as their new price in Brazil and the price thieves get for them in Paraguay:

Toyota Hilux SW4 – B \$44,000; P \$13,000.

Nissan Pathfinder – B \$64,000; P \$6,000.

Mitsubishi Pajero – B \$54,000; P \$15,000.

Chrysler Jeep Cherokee – B \$70,000; P \$19,000.

Honda Civic – B \$36,000; P \$14,000.

BMW 325I – B 60,000; P \$16,000.

Asia Towner – B \$12,000; P \$4,000.

Mercedes-Benz C180 – B \$55,000; P \$15,000.

The chances of getting one of these cars stolen is 1 in 40, of a Brazilian make it is 1 in 80. As can be imagined, insurance is skyrocketing. On a Brazilian car, insurance runs at 8 percent of the value of the car. On imported cars the rate is going up to 20 percent. That means that in the case of the Chrysler Jeep Cherokee, insurance for one year will run \$14,000. Even that sounds like thievery.

The majority of the stolen vehicles are taken to Paraguay. Incredibly, 60 percent of all the vehicles on the road in that little country are stolen. Since they have no national vehicle department, all it takes to legalize a stolen car, once it is in the country, is for the thief to sign a document saying he sold the car to whoever is buying it. Needless to say, it isn't only the thieves who are making money with these stolen cars.

Have we had very many vehicles stolen? Some. Most of the thefts have occurred in Goiânia while shopping. I don't believe we would come into the national average of 1 in 80. That's sort of a consolation, unless it is your vehicle that is stolen. ▲

This & That

This is the time for the annual pilgrimage to the US. Both the Rio Verdinho and Monte Alegre congregations have lots of empty seating these Sundays. For the next month or more people will be dribbling back.

Ministers Mark Loewen and Elias Stoltzfus where to the mission in Goiânia for a short series of revival meetings.

Lester & Sharon Holdeman and the Harold Holdeman families took trips to southern Brazil.

Luiz & Maria de Paula from the Pire-nópolis Congregation have moved to the Colony. He will be working for Mark Loewen.

Different ones from the Boa Esperança Congregation in Mato Grosso were out for a short visit.

On June 7, Myron & Sheila Unruh had a little girl, Vanessa June.

The Jair da Costa and Tim Burns families spent 10 days in Mato Grosso camping by a large river and going fishing. I think they have some interesting stories to tell about how the river came up in the dry season. I think they like fishing better than writing, so I don't know if we can expect a report from them.

The John Unruh and Paulo David families spent June 8 in Goiânia visiting the mission.

Ministers Arlo Hibner and Dean Mininger had meetings in the two missions in the Northeast. Different ones from here went along, including Arlo's daughter, Teresa, Dean's wife and children, and Lucélia Duarte. Frank Coblentz, who has been living in Mato Grosso, returned with them to Patos, where his parents are stationed. They will spend some time in the US on furlough. The new chapel was dedicated in Patos and they had communion. Some of the members from Acaraú were there for this special event.

On June 9 Antônio & Raquel Oliveira from the Pirenópolis Congregation had a little boy, Elias.

On June 12 Robson & Glauciene Gold, from the Rio Verde Congregation had a little girl, Thais.

On June 13 the Monte Alegre Congregation had a grocery shower for Carlinhos & Maria, who are living in the small house on the old Harold Dirks place, and for Luiz & Maria, who will be working for Mark Loewen.

The José Cardoso family from Rio Verde spent the June 15 weekend in Pirenópolis visiting the congregation.

Different ones have left for the US to attend Milferd Loewen's (Mark & Glenda's son) wedding in Iowa to Sandra Zimmerman. They will be making their home in Brazil.

Craig & Monica Redger and three sons were here for a short visit. Monica's sister Wendy Penner returned with them.

On June 22 the Monte Alegre Congregation had a farewell after the evening

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service for the Dave Kramer family. Dave & Marta are moving to the Boa Esperança Congregation in Mato Grosso.

On June 23, Jon & Sheila Coblentz had a boy, Travis Dale.

On June 25 a number of sisters visited Alma Penner for her birthday.

Faith and I spent June 29 in Anápolis visiting Gilson & Viviene David. Gilson, an architect, is Paulo David's brother. They are both converted and want to come to the church.

Luís Fernandes from Pirenópolis, Stanley Schultz and the Dennis Kramer family paid the Boa Esperança Congregation a visit.

A group of men are visiting the Perdigão installations in Videira, Santa Catarina. Hopefully we can have a report on this trip in the next issue of BN.

Another US airline is beginning to fly into Brazil. Now it's Continental. It will be flying between Newark and São Paulo.

So here is another suggestion. Instead of a larger tour group, how about some smaller ones? They could be any size. If you're interested in something like this, contact Pat & Sylvia Baize in S Dakota, phone: (605) 546 0244. They will keep a data bank on who is wanting to go, and when. By calling them you can find out who is interested and then form your own group.

Needless to say, you have a warm tropical welcome from all of us here in Brazil. If you don't know anyone here, don't worry. We'll introduce ourselves and then you'll know us.