

Brazil News



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Editorial

The Mother Tongue

A mother tongue is the language acquired in infancy, usually from one's mother. Even though other languages are learned, the mother tongue continues to occupy a special niche of its own.

Those of you readers who live, or have lived, in a foreign country, will follow what is being said. Indeed, those of you whose parents or grandparents were born in the last century, will recall the more relaxed, almost joyous tone of voice in which they spoke their mother tongue, usually a Germanic dialect.

The fact that the mother tongue is a dialect, an unwritten dialect, or even a provincial dialect, does not alter the endearment felt by the speaker. And understandably so. No matter what the social status of the language or dialect, it will have certain expressive words or idioms that can be found in no other. Tunes and ditties learned in the mother tongue are always precious.

A mother tongue isn't learned. It is assimilated. Or if you prefer, it's a gift nature gives to all.

Small children can assimilate a second or third language without any visible effort. A case in point would be children of military personnel or diplomats who spend time abroad. If permitted to make friends with local children, they can often become quite fluent in a foreign language (on their level, of course) in a year or two.

Adults, alas, do not assimilate foreign languages. They must learn them. Laboriously. To become fluent in a second language, that is, to speak and write correctly and with ease, is a Herculean task. There is no simple or painless method.

For most of you N American readers, English is your mother tongue. When you go to the hardware store, you generally know what the item you wish to purchase is called. And if you don't, it's a simple matter to describe it. When you go to see your doctor, you probably have no difficulty finding words to explain what you are feeling.

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When taking your car to the mechanic shop, even you ladies can describe the sound the motor is making and give a fairly intelligent description of what is happening. Or put in other words, you can go to the hardware store, to the doctor, to the mechanic shop, or wherever, without having to stop outside the door and ask the good Lord to give you words to explain what you want. And then enter in fear and trembling and forget even the few words you thought you knew.

You take the gift of expression for granted.

But not so for someone who has “learned” a second language. In the hardware store, how do you ask for a hacksaw blade? In the doctor’s office, how do you describe a shooting pain? In the shop, how do you tell the mechanic the motor is missing out? (Not everyone has the ability—nor humility—to give a vocal demonstration.)

For someone who is fluent in a second language, these occasions are rare. And when they come, it’s no big deal to quickly explain what is wanted. But think of the person who has learned only the basics. Each trip to the hardware store, to the doctor, to the mechanic, becomes a *Via Dolorosa*.

This is a situation we are facing in Brazil. There are those who have made Brazil their home, but have not made Portuguese their language. To them it is an annoyance, a necessary evil. The prospect of living out their days in a country in which they only feel at home on the Colony where English is spoken, looks bleak.

When the mother tongue is a moribund dialect, that’s one thing. But when it’s English, a vibrant, highly expressive language, the universal language, that’s another story. It seems almost sacrilegious to speak an “ugly,” “stupid” language, when they have perfect dominion of a “superior” tongue. Children, born in this country, feel this and openly rebel against this “second” language.

But that’s not what this article is about.

When Adam and Eve became living souls, they were in direct contact with their Maker. In the cool of the evening they would stroll through the garden together, talking, just like we talk with each other. Their mother tongue was a celestial language, for they were able to communicate directly with the Almighty God of heaven and earth.

But after they fell and were driven out of the garden, they lost their ability to freely communicate with the Lord. Even though their vocabulary remained the same, they were now speaking a different language. And so when Cain and Abel were born, their mother tongue was not heavenly, but earthly. And not only theirs, but that of every soul, including the babies being born throughout the world while you are reading these words, have a common mother tongue: the language of this earth.

Or shall we say, the sin language.

God was grieved by the language barrier that now existed between the Creator and the creature. He immediately promised to reestablish a means of communication for those who wished to be in contact with Him.

The language used for the next four thousand years was by no means perfect, as God himself recognized. Individuals who wished to serve the Lord couldn’t speak directly with Him. They had to go through an interpreter, usually a priest. Prophets and

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some kings were able to speak the celestial language, without an interpreter, albeit in a limited measure.

Then God sent His only Son to this earth. He, the great Teacher, would revive the celestial language lost in the Garden of Eden. And more. Not only would men be able to communicate with Heaven in the cool of the evening, but in the heat of the day as well. On the road, on the job, at home, in church, anyplace, those who understood and spoke this language would be able to make contact with Heaven.

Then came the day of Pentecost, one of the most important days in the history of the world. The miracle of tongues that day had the practical purpose of making it possible for men of many nations to hear the saving gospel, and the symbolical purpose of showing mankind that those who called upon the name of the Lord could once again speak with Him without an interpreter. (It is an act of profanation to interpret that event as the forerunner of the modern tongues movement, in which, if some sort of contact is established, it certainly isn't with the Holy One.)

Jesus taught that His kingdom was not of his world. It is—could we say?—a colony. A colony set apart in the world in which His faithful live. A Colony in which the official language is the celestial language. And in which the sin language is banned.

There were no children born in Eden and likewise there are no children born on this colony. All children are born in the world and their mother tongue is the sin language.

No?

Why then do little two and three year olds say and do such naughty things? Why must their mouths be washed with soap? Why must their hands be slapped?

But just as the laws of the land do not convict small children for offenses committed, so Jesus covers the little children with His spilt blood and forgives their “worldliness.” And so every child in this world is granted the right to live the first number of years of its life on the colony.

But when this child reaches the years of understanding, it, like Adam and Eve, must leave the colony. To return it must be able speak the celestial language.

Let's notice. By now the child (actually, no longer a child) speaks its mother tongue fluently. For it to return to the colony, it must speak the celestial language. And this is where the religions of today are failing the people. They try to “teach” the lost sheep to speak the celestial language. By taking special classes, by works, by “speaking in tongues,” the deceived usher the deceived into what is supposed to be the colony.

Adam and Eve did not have to learn how to talk to God in the Garden. They were created with this free gift. Even so today, the celestial language is a gift God wants to give to all those who would be saved. But how, when they already have a mother tongue?

Jesus told an astonished Nicodemus that he needed to be born again. This is the message (ignored by modern Christianity) that brings salvation. With the new birth comes a new language. This new babe now returns to the colony, speaking this new language.

Children have a limited vocabulary and so do new babes in Christ. But—and this is what is important—they know enough words to be able to communicate with the Almighty God of heaven. As they grow, their vocabulary increases.

At least it should. And that is what this article is all about.

A child's vocabulary is sufficient for a child. But not for an adult. To speak correctly, like an adult, takes learning. That's one of the reasons we send our children to school.

We repeat: To become a member of the heavenly kingdom it is necessary to be born again. And all who are born again receive an elementary knowledge of the celestial language. We ask these converts if they have abandoned the world. Maybe we should also ask: "Have you given up your mother tongue and are you willing from here on out to speak only the celestial language?"

The answer, of course, would be yes. That doesn't mean they have forgotten their mother tongue. But it does mean that from now on out it should become abominable. When that is the case, when it is truly abominable, the Christian feels a real need to increase his vocabulary in the celestial language.

We believe that on God's spiritual colony many of the colonists speak the celestial language fluently. But not all. There are those who have been on the colony for years and still struggle with the language. They find it so much easier to express themselves in their mother tongue. Each time they are expected to say something in the celestial language, they go through a struggle (like the one going to the hardware store or doctor with a limited vocabulary).

And so at revival time they tell of their struggles with the two languages. They say they have seen the wrong of speaking the mother tongue and that from here on out things will be different. But nothing changes. Why not? Because God gives us the basic vocabulary when we are born again, but he does not hand out language cartridges that will increase our vocabulary. He doesn't do it at revivals, nor at any other time. We increase our vocabulary by exercise, by buckling down and studying, by taking eternal life seriously.

But there does need to be repentance—repentance for having despised the celestial language, thus cutting off spiritual communication with the Almighty God and with the brethren. Anyone who sees the seriousness of this will get up from his knees and go look for a grammar book. Like a new missionary on the field who feels a burning desire to communicate with those whom he has come to serve, he will make language study a priority.

On the Colony here in Rio Verde we have brethren who speak fluent incorrect Portuguese. They are brethren who love the language, but haven't got the fine points down pat. They know it too. But it doesn't keep them from communicating fluently. In many situations they speak Portuguese with the same ease they speak their mother tongue. I'm not sure how much people even notice their mistakes when they talk.

The same is true with the celestial language. God doesn't expect that our grammar will always be perfect. What He wants is for us to be sufficiently fluent to look forward to walking with Him in the cool of the evening. He wants us to be able to have a good spiritual conversation with our brethren. And He wants us to enjoy it.

God wants us to speak the celestial language with ease. It has never been His will that speaking His language should be a cross. When we see the beauty of the celestial language, we will despise our mother tongue.

Can we love His kingdom, but not his language?



Your Sisters write

by Roseni Luiza da Silva, Rio Verde Congregation

A Dream

In the year of 1996, when I began attending services in the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, I had a dream that was a big help to me.

I dreamt that while I was looking up to heaven, I saw Jesus returning in a great white cloud. I am unable to express the joy that I felt at that moment. My greatest desire was to go to heaven. Now all my heartaches and suffering on earth would be over.

There was a small doorway in the cloud. I saw youth and children going through the door and they looked so happy. I was waiting for Jesus to take me too. Suddenly there was a commotion and when I looked the cloud was gone!

I felt such a terrible disappointment. It seemed there was no more hope for me. Jesus had come to take His own, but I was left behind. I remembered the many opportunities I had in the past to accept Jesus as my Savior, but was unwilling. I thought he would never come to this earth again.

Then I began to feel an intense heat. It was a hot fire, much hotter than any natural fire. I tried to flee these flames, but everything began heating up around me. The earth itself was turning red with heat.

It was here that I awoke. At first I thought I was really in hell. But when I realized that it was only a dream, I was still frightened, and at the same time happy, for I knew God was giving me another chance.

Brethren, I want to encourage everyone to be strong in the Lord, because the joy I felt when I saw Jesus return, I want to feel in reality when He returns to claim His people. I hope each one of you may feel this desire so that everyone will be free of the flames that I felt in my dream.

By Márcia Elaine Silva Martins,, Rio Verde Congregation

How God Healed Me

In January of 1996 I was already going to the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, although I wasn't a member yet. But even then God was taking care of me. At that time I was going through many struggles. My youngest daughter was only one month old. And that is when I got sick. That was really a trial, because beside the serious problems I was having, now I was sick on top of it all.

I needed to go see the doctor, but since I was nursing my baby, this was difficult and I had no one to help me. But one day I left the baby and my other little girl with a neighbor lady and went to see the doctor. She asked for a number of tests, which I did

that same week. When I took the results back to the doctor, she said everything was normal. But then she asked that I redo all the tests at a different lab.

I did this and took the results to her again. I told her the pain was more than I could take and asked what my problem was. She said, “Márcia, you have a very bad infection and you’re going to have to be under my care for a while.” She didn’t even want to let me go back home, but I said, “Doctor, my daughter needs me.” She repeated, “Márcia, you will have to be under my care for a while so that you can take care of your daughter.”

I began to cry. She asked me, “Your daughter is OK, isn’t she?” I told her she was. The doctor repeated, “Then you must get better so that you can take care of your daughter.”

Finally she agreed to let me go home, but she prescribed some medications, which included a shot every 12 hours. If I wasn’t better by Saturday, I was to call her. I could see she was really worried about my case.

I went to the drugstore and took the first shot. The next day I took the second shot. The doctor said that by the third day I would be feeling better. But I didn’t feel a bit better. The pain kept getting worse. Before just my abdomen hurt. Now my arms were aching too. I couldn’t nurse my baby because of the very strong medication I was taking. I asked God that He would purify my milk so that my daughter could take it. I prayed in faith and God heard and answered my prayer.

I was really in a bind. It was already Friday and the pain still hadn’t left me. I went to my bedroom and cried. I didn’t feel like taking those medications anymore. Then the thought came to me, “You have God, who is the Father of all. Ask Him to heal you. Why are you going through all this suffering?”

I knelt and made my petition. “Lord, please help me. I can’t bear this any longer. My suffering is great. Please take this sickness from me. I need to take care of my daughter. Help me, oh Father! Amen.”

When I finished my prayer, I already felt better. I put all my medications in the cupboard. I didn’t take another shot.

Saturday went by. Sunday I went to church and was feeling OK. On Tuesday I was back to normal. By the mercy of God, I was healed. I thanked Him for what He did for me, and even today I still thank him for the good health He has given me.

That happened two years ago. I thank God for all this and want to encourage everyone to trust in this God who is able to do all things.

“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”
(Psalm 50:15). ▲

[Márcia is a sister to Roseni. She speaks about struggles during the time of her sickness. It was indeed a dark period as her husband was leaving her with two small children to take care of. Life still isn’t easy for her, but she is doing an excellent job of taking care of her children—and of being an example to us on how to lean on the everlasting arms.

The School Mailbox

by the 7th & 8th Graders of the Monte Alegre School

Our Trip to Goiás Velho

Candace, dau. of Stanley & Kathy Holdeman

For our special fieldtrip, we went to the old Capital called Goiás Velho. It is a little oldfashioned town approximately 360 kilometers away with a population of 40,000 people. This city became the capital of [the state of] Goiás in 1727 and was transferred to Goiânia in 1937.

Leanna, dau. of Leo & Mim Dirks

On Friday, the 27th of February, I got up at 3:45 A.M. Both Mamma and I were going to Goiás Velho, our old capital. We arrived at the schoolhouse at about 4:45. We pulled in just ahead of the bus. A short while later we had a prayer and climbed into the bus. Quinda had taken some delicious cinnamon rolls. Steve, Candace and I had taken hot chocolate. Two hours afterward we ate breakfast and saw the sun come up. It was fun walking in the isle and serve hot chocolate, coffee, and rolls. We also began looking for items on our list in the little booklets.

Steve, son of Harold & Irene Holdeman

As it got lighter, we noticed that we were in a dense cloud of fog. When we got out of it, it looked just like clouds. As we got closer to town, we saw stone fences that had been built by slaves.

Norman, son of João & Charlene Souto

We got to Goiás Velho at 10:00 a.m. The first thing we did was find a place where we could eat dinner and to tell them we would be there at 12:30 for dinner. While the schoolboard looked for the restaurant, we students went to see the Cruz de Anhanguera. It was built in 1722 marking the place where Goiás should be built.

Candace Holdeman

Next we went to the towns former water supply. It was built in the year of 1788, and was the Chafariz de Cauda. Before the town had running water, they came here to get water. It was about 15 feet tall and 4 feet thick. There was an aqueduct or a bica behind the building leading in by a small door. This was how the water ran in. Then, in the front, you just turned taps and clear water gushed out. Down below there was a trough for the animals to take a drink.

Leanna Dirks

We found out how it is to drive on uneven cobblestones! . . . All of the houses had the same style of entry. There was a little hall with two rooms one on either side. In

each room was a guard, that way, they could protect their master. One of the guest rooms was better than the other. The good room was for good people. I think some of these people got rather proud.

Quinda, dau. of Daniel & Linda Holdeman

The next place was the governor's palace. It was built in 1755. We went in for 50 cents each since it was a group. The first room we went in was a room with some chairs and pictures on the walls of some men. The next room had a desk with three chairs behind it. One for the governor and for two other men.

Sherri, dau. of Elias & Colleen Stoltzfus

To build this palace, 50 kilos of gold were needed, this was the governors house through the years 1748 and 1930. Ninety-eight governors lived there. We saw some old-fashioned porcelain from Germany all set out on an old-fashioned table. The palace which was built in 1755 is quite old-fashioned. Our governor from Goiânia goes to Goiás Velho and sleeps on the previous governor's bed during his vacation which is in June.

Steve Holdeman

Our guide was quite interesting. He kept saying, "Senhores, senhoras e senhoritas," which was real funny. Also it had many bedrooms. Then we saw the courting room. The couple would sit in two backless chairs. I think that they used each other to lean on as backrests.

Rosanne, dau. of Paul & Rachel Yoder

Then we saw some beautiful green and pink beds. There were green sheets on some beds and pink sheets on others. They did not have a modern bathroom until 1960. In another room there were a water pitcher, a basin and two soap dishes.

Norman Souto

By the side of the palace there was a money house where they made the coins. On the other side there was a church where the governor took his guests for masses. One time there was a priest who kept saying bad stuff of the governor and the Marine Corps so the governor had him disciplined and then that priest put a prague [curse] on the church. Thats why the church keeps braking down.

Sherri Stoltzfus

We went into a room where we saw the governors safe where he had kept his gold and documents. If they ever found anything missing, everyone who had anything to do with it was hung.

Quinda Holdeman

By then it was 12:30, and time to eat dinner. So we walked down the street aways,

crossed a bridge that was over the Rio Vermelho, went a little ways up the street and went into the restaurant, Restaurante Caseiro Dona Maninha. There we had rice and beans, chicken, pork, beef, fried carrots, salad plate, beets, frenchfries, orange squash, and soda limonada and guaraná [to drink].

Rosanne Yoder

After dinner we went to Cora Coralina's house. The house was built by the king of Portugal when gold was discovered. This house was used to wash and measure gold out. One fifth of the gold went to the crown. Later this house was Coralina's. Cora Coralina was born in 1889 and died in 1985. She was 95 years old when she died. In her whole life she only had one teacher. She wrote many poems.

Sherri Stoltzfus

She made doce [a kind of dessert] in São Paulo for 14 years. Then at the age of 60 she became a poet and learnt to type. We saw her typewriter, all her prizes, and a trophy.

Ivan, son of Myron & Martha Kramer

Then we went to the jail. We saw the torture room where prisoners would stand on a stone floor with salt on it.. In that room was the hanging pulley for the gallows . . . We went through a room where I saw a weaving loom, a carding machine, and a spinning wheel . . . The last room was where the prisoners that would lose their mind would go. This jail was used from 1776 to 1950.

Candace Holdeman

There was a prison cell. We had to duck to go through a small door. They used to not have a door there until they quit using it for prisoners. They let prisoners in from a trapdoor in the ceiling and a ladder chained to the ceiling. The cell usually had 50 people in there. They put salt on the floor to make it more miserable for the prisoners, but it was also to help cure them for they had been walking and had cracks in their feet. In the corner was a barrel. It was a very inconvenient stool for it was impossible to flush it.

Sherri Stoltzfus

It was emptied every two weeks. Four boys were needed to carry it down to the river where it was emptied. They were lucky because then they could take a bath . . . All the walls of the prison were 1½ meters thick. In another room we saw a tongs from a Catholic church that was used to make their communion wafers. It makes crosses on all the wafers. Later we saw a coin stamper. Have you ever seen real gold? We did. It was in a balance, only three grams of it but one side of the balance was way lower than the other.

Steve Holdeman

We also saw a goldsmith's desk which had been used so much that the front was worn away. We saw handcuffs, rings for on necks and other stuff like that . . . Then

we saw a church that had 70 steps leading up to it. Then we left for home. On the way home, we stopped at [the town of] Iporá to use the restrooms. Then a most interesting incident occurred. Three girls decided that they would tour the men's restroom and streaked through the door. That is something I will never forget.

Ivan Kramer

We left for home around 5:00 and got here at about 10:00.

A Few Comments

The Rio Verdinho School was included in this field trip. Unfortunately, I didn't receive any reports from them. Next month we will have some interesting reports on how the other grades spent the day.

Teachers in N America, how about sending me some of your reports on field trips so we can compare notes. ▲

Paraguay

by Edwin Schmidt

Voluntary Service in Paraguay

[I was pleasantly surprised to receive a 29 page fax from Edwin Schmidt, in which he tells of the time he spent in Paraguay (April 19, 44–June 6, 48) with the MCC after World War II, helping the refugees get settled. I suggest you also read the book *Up From the Rubble*, by Peter & Alfrieda Dyck, which deals with this same period.]

I have been asked many times. “Why did you go to Paraguay, and what did you do there?”

Probably a little background would be in order. After my conversion at the age of 20 in December of 1938, I had a conviction that it would be for me to give some service to the Lord away from home, probably in a foreign field. At this time I did not know when or where, but as I continued in my Christian life I tried to keep my heart and life open to the Lord's will. Also together with this was the involvement of the United States in World War II in the early forties. I was of the age that I could expect to be drafted and would have to leave home before long. This gave an added urgency to prepare for what the Lord might have for me.

The Biblical teaching as to the true church and her doctrines were some of the teachings that I felt I needed to understand better. On May 14, 1942, I left home for my C.P.S. service. Three years and nine months were spent in C.P.S. service in four different camps and units doing a number of different kinds of work.

After I had been away from home around 2 years, the church asked if some of

us brethren in C.P.S. would be willing to give 2 years of voluntary service with the MCC after our release from C.P.S. after the end of the war. The church felt that since we were giving a lot of money to the work of the MCC it would be well to have personnel representing our church in the work being done by the MCC. I was one of those volunteering to go. In giving our consent to work under the MCC was the understanding that they, to a large degree could decide as to where and in what work we might be assigned to serve, of course also with our agreement to accept the assignment.

The last 16 months of my C.P.S. service was at a unit in Beltsville, Maryland. Altogether there were 20 some young men there, including several of our brethren. This was a relief training unit arranged by the MCC, where we worked our regular eight hours a day in C.P.S. under government supervision, and on our off-hours, the MCC arranged for classes, lectures, and language studies that they felt would be helpful for us in our MCC service after the war. I felt the language studies helped me the most. They were half through a German class when I arrived at Beltsville, so I just sat in class. With my German background I had no trouble understanding the High German by the time the class ended. Had I learned the German grammar, it would have been an added help.

Here is where I had my first Spanish lessons and by the time I arrived in South America, I could get along with the Spanish. These were the two languages that were the most useful to me during the time of my MCC service, that is, besides the English language.

The war having ended on Jan. 30, 1946, I was asked by MCC to go to Paraguay for 2 years. For this I had the church's support as well as my home congregation's. I got my release from C.P.S. service on February 9, 1946, went home for a little over two months and left for Paraguay April 18, 1946.

My going to Paraguay was somewhat different than I had expected. I had thought that I would be leaving together with at least one or two other church brethren. This was not to be. I went by myself. We as a church are a closely knit people and during my C.P.S. service I had always been together with others of our brethren. Learning to know other brethren from many different congregations, I had learned to appreciate the church as a whole.

Upon finding out that no other brother was available to go together with me at that time, it caused me to have many thoughts and questions. The thought of most likely seeing none of my church brethren for two years seemed like a long, long time. However, considering the call to service since my conversion, having spent a number of years away from home, and the close connection of the church, having needed to adjust to living together with other young men not of our faith, I felt that really that had not been that difficult to do. It was all a part of the Lord's preparation for the step that was before me now.

By this time I was 27 years old. With the support of the church the step was taken in faith that the Lord would have a way for what was ahead.

Some 18 years earlier some Mennonites had secretly fled out of Russia because of communism, some by the back door from Russia into China and some by way of

Turkey, and maybe other ways too. These the MCC helped to settle in the Chaco of Paraguay. Because of the open way Paraguay accepted refugees when no other country would accept them, the MCC offered to make a leper colony or hospital because Paraguay had one of the higher percentages of lepers in the countries of the world. This was to be a thank-you project. It was to help with this work that I was sent to Paraguay.

This, then, is the answer to the first question, “Why did you go to Paraguay?”

The second question is, “What did you do there?” This turned out to be completely different from what I was sent there for. I did not find it difficult to accept that change. The word adaptability comes to my mind when I think of my C.P.S. and MCC service. The changes that at times needed to be faced, some of which seemed rather major and some rather sudden, when they could be faced, and by God’s grace, adapted to and made the best of, made for the greater peace of mind.

The trip from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Asuncion, Paraguay, was to be 18 days by ship. But as it turned out it took 55 days! This came about because of unexpected happenings and delays. At this time there was no passage available on passenger ships. Because of the war they had all been converted into troop transports, but the government required freight ships to make passage for as many passengers as they could until the passenger ships could be reconverted back for passenger service.

During the war all freight ships were armed and had gunners’ quarters. This is where the passengers now had their accommodations. It was furnished with the bare necessities. It had two small rooms for two passengers each and one room for eight, as we were twelve passengers. But we did get to eat in the ship’s officers’ dining room and were served good meals.

I had my bunk in the room for eight passengers. Around half of the passengers were Jews. Two of them had lived in countries that Germany had taken over during the war and had been in concentration camps. They had seen many people taken out, never to return, all the while wondering when their time would come. They had sad stories to tell. Their lives were only spared when the Allied forces arrived and set them free. One said he had come to the place where he could no longer believe that there was a God. If there was, why did He permit such things to happen? He said as far as he knew, he was the only one of his family that was alive. These men seemed to be from the mid-forties to the mid-fifties. How could one comfort such people? Often it seemed the best one could do was to give them a listening ear as they unloaded and shared their feelings.

We were 44 days getting from Philadelphia to Buenos Aires, Argentina—time to visit, get acquainted and to witness. Another Jew about the same age as the one already mentioned, was a taxi driver from Atlantic City, New Jersey, a man free to talk and express himself. He had a philosophy that if you had problems and things didn’t go right, just take a drink and forget your problems. But before we got to Buenos Aires there came a time his philosophy didn’t work. More about that later.

He had been born in Argentina but had worked long enough on U.S. ships that he had been able to claim U.S. citizenship. He told me what it was to grow up in a Jewish home. He had not seen his parents for many years and was now going home to see his

old parents. One thing these Jews had in common was that Christ had been a good man and a great teacher, but He was not the Messiah. And especially this man also expressed himself as almost losing hope in His coming, but then would add, “But He has to come.”

Perhaps I could mention two passengers who were not Jews with whom I had considerable contact. One was a young Cuban about my age who was going to Argentina as a salesman for a U.S. company selling big industrial equipment. He did not like Jews. The other was an Argentine school professor who had been in the U.S. six months to study the U.S. school system. I had a Spanish language study book with which I spent considerable time. When he noticed that he offered to help me, which I accepted. So we became well acquainted. More about these men later.

There were also the contacts with the crew members as well as the passengers. But of course not as close a contact as with those one lived with 24 hours a day. From the very beginning both the passengers and the crew members took me for a Christian. That didn't seem to be a question. It was the crew members, especially two of them, that challenged me as a Christian, one from the standpoint of people claiming to be Christian and yet their lives not showing it. He pointed to evil and wrong things they did—even the preachers, he said. I saw that he, to a large extent understood what was right and what was wrong. After he'd had his say, I gave my witness what it meant to profess and live as a Christian. We had a profitable discussion, parted as friends, and continued to be friends.

The other was a young man about my age. One day after a meal, as I came out of the dining room, he was on deck waiting for me. He stepped up to me and said, “So, you are a Christian?” “Yes,” I answered, “I am.” He seemed to be full and spilling over to talk. He came from the angle of what Christians had done. The biggest persecution the world has ever known was done by Christians, referring to the Catholic church. At first he seemed rather anti. I wondered if he wasn't rather influenced by communism. I gave room for that which was true in what he had said, but told him many things had been done in the name of Christianity that weren't Christian and tried to hold up to him what true Christianity and true Christians were.

We had quite a visit that first time. By the time we parted, his attitude seemed to be changing and we parted as friends. After that many visits followed. He was an oiler and worked in the big engine room at the bottom of the ship, keeping the motor oiled and clean. He worked a day shift and came off duty at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. He came many times after he was off duty to visit. In time his attitude changed almost completely. He wanted to talk spiritual things.

The young Cuban was also one with whom I visited considerable. Though there really was no privacy, I did make it a practice to have a time of devotion and Bible reading. Under the circumstances, it needed to be done openly. At times it made for an open way of discussing the Bible and its teachings with fellow passengers. My life was open before them, and this was a part of it. I don't remember ever really feeling a sense of ridicule or disrespect towards me.

One evening I had gone by myself away from the other people. It was a beautiful quiet evening, and the sea was very calm. There had been a beautiful sunset and it was getting dusk. I was standing on the deck a little back from the railing, facing west. I don't remember how long I had been there nor what my thoughts or meditations had been. I may have been softly singing a Christian hymn, or just humming the tune, when suddenly I realized the young Cuban was standing beside me. As I turned to look at him, he said, "Edwin, you are different. Your songs are different. You sing different songs than I would expect a man as young as you to sing."

Yes, we who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ are different. We have been given a new heart, a new goal to strive for and our lives should show that we have been with Jesus as we read in Acts 4:13. It was ever my hope and aim to leave this witness and testimony. Often God, according to His promise, through the Holy Spirit, gave the needed words to speak for the occasions that arose, as we read in Mark 13:1. ▲

To be continued

This Month on the Colony

Changes in the Church in Town

The Rio Verde Congregation, or "the church in town," as we commonly call it, is a beacon in the city of Rio Verde. It has that special atmosphere, found in spiritual congregations, that makes you glad to be there—even if only as a visitor.

We see three kinds of growth in the town church.

First of all, the members are growing spiritually. They are becoming established in the faith. They take an active part in the functions of the congregation.

Secondly, they are growing in numbers. This is always a good sign.

Thirdly, there are a lot of visitors in their services. The house is usually full or pretty well full.

Now for the changes. Arlo Hibner has been the non-resident minister there for the last three years, on loan from the Monte Alegre Congregation. There was a general sentiment, however, that it would be good if he came "home" for a while. After all, he was on loan.

The church in town was given a list of nominees and the privilege of choosing a minister and a deacon to take the helm of the flock there. They chose Minister Elias Stoltzfus and Deacon John Unruh, both from the Monte Alegre Congregation.

I think all of us had to take ourselves to task and repent of selfish feelings. The truth of the matter was that we wanted Arlo back and didn't want to give anything in exchange. And yet as each one of us becomes willing for what we sincerely believe is the Lord's will, the blessings will exceed the sacrifices.

Remember the work in the city of Rio Verde. We say "city," because there are over 100 thousand souls living within the city limits, and in another five years, it could easily be 150 thousand. Indeed, it is a worthy undertaking. ▲

The Kidnapping—An Update

The two kidnappers who were still loose are now vendo o sol nascer quadrado—seeing the sun come up square, as Brazilians say when someone is behind the bars. But, one of the six who were in jail, managed to escape, so they still aren't all in jail yet. The delegado de polícia, however doesn't think it will be any big deal to catch the fellow again.

We mentioned before that these kidnappers weren't professionals. In fact, they would hardly qualify as amateurs. And that is the reason they caught the last two in the neighboring state of Mato Grosso. They were bragging about the sharp one they pulled in Rio Verde. Someone overheard and reported them to the delegado from there, who immediately had them arrested.

Police also found a number of firearms and a large supply of ammunition with the criminals, as well as a crude map of a neighboring fazenda. The truth soon came out that they were planning on kidnapping the fazenda owner.

I have mentioned before that in Brazil criminals are entitled to a day in court—literally. Most criminal cases are solved in one day. This is possible because evidence is introduced in pretrial hearings, and not during the trial, as in the American judicial system. I must say that in this Brazilians are light years ahead of the Americans, where much of what is said is meant to hide, rather than reveal the truth.

Anyway, the Holdemans were called in for a pretrial hearing. I was interpreter for the children, which proved to be most interesting. I feel a very solid witness is being left. As Caleb left the courtroom with Marshall, his little boy, they stopped in front of the handcuffed kidnappers, who were also present, and told them tchau—goodbye, gave them a big smile and waved at them. The judge and attorneys made no comment. But what wouldn't I give to have overheard their thoughts!

While the clerk was fixing up a document for me to sign as interpreter, the wife of one of the kidnappers was called in for questioning. The atmosphere immediately chilled in the courtroom. The woman was sullen and the judge, without any preamble, began questioning her. I got the distinct impression that the court appointed lawyers for the kidnappers are acting more out of duty than pity.

The delegado de polícia believes they may recover some more of the money. He thinks they may have invested it in something. If they have, it shouldn't be too hard to trace it down. Personally, I believe it's more like they had themselves one party and it's all spent.

We don't know why God permitted the kidnapping here on the Colony. We thought He would never let such a thing happen. What we do know is that the trial of our faith is more precious than gold. Maybe that explains it. ▲

This & That

On February 28 we went off of daylight saving time. So now, while you folks in the CST zone are on normal (civilized) time, there are three hours difference. Once you go on DST, there will be only two hours.

On March 4 the Monte Alegre youth helped put together tract bundles.

A number of the staff members went to Annual Meeting.

The Monte Alegre Cong. began having Wednesday evening Bible Study on an every other week basis. The youth are having singing practice once a month, with Daniel Holdeman responsible for the classes.

Staven & Adeline Schmidt visited the mission in Mirassol, São Paulo, the Roberto Amorim family in Curitiba, and the Iguazu Falls.

John & Joan Unruh and dau. Marion spent the March 21 weekend with the Boa Esperança Colony in Mato Grosso.

Maxine Loewen invited her students to help clean up Edna Loewen's yard after school, and then for a mystery supper. The parents and grandparents were invited for the evening.

On December 17 a municipal law went into effect stipulating a \$50 fine for dumping a dead animal in the ditch along a highway. Unbelievably, there were cattlemen who would drag their dead animals out to the roadside to let them decay.

Some local dairymen made a trip to New Zealand to get a first hand look at their dairy operation. They were impressed. Bulk tanks will soon be mandatory on all dairies in the area.