

Brazil News



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Editorial

The Exception

When we gather as a brotherhood to open our hearts, it soon becomes evident that we are at war. Not with one another (although we sometimes almost get that impression), but with a terrible foe. We talk about struggles with impatience, with an unforgiving spirit, with a desire for that which the world has to offer.

Too often, as we do a replay of our victories and defeats, we label ourselves a failure, even though we have struggled valiantly. We feel that to get a passing grade we must reach our goal of zero defeats and total victory. Thus, by striving for an unattainable goal, we become droopy Christians.

On the other hand, it is possible to be surrounded by foes and get the impression that there is no war because our enemies are smiling—and all the while we are down to our knees in quicksand, sinking to our death.

If we could just once slip into our enemy's strategy room, and listen in as our particular case was being discussed, we would have a new vision of Christian life. The droopy Christian would take new courage, for he would realize the importance of each victory gained. The self-confident smilers, on the other hand, would surely go into shock.

In the strategy room, not only would we hear individuals being discussed, but churches as well. The church.

We obviously will never have the chance to eavesdrop on such a meeting. So let's imagine that one of the enemy officers submits to an interview.

Ques: Your name please.

Ans: For security reasons, in my particular unit we never give our real name, only our nom de guerre. Mine happens to be Lt. Exception.

Ques: Lieutenant, could you tell us something about your unit?

Ans: My unit is highly specialized, an elite group. We are only called in as a last resort, after the other teams have admitted defeat...

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Ques: So you're really sort of a SWAT team, right?

Ans: Yes and no. Yes from the angle that we are elite and get only the most difficult cases. No, because contrary to a SWAT team, which is called in to save lives, we are called in to kill. You see, in our army everything revolves around death. Or as you may have read, we come to kill, to steal and to destroy.

Ques: You have me confused. You're a nice looking, friendly chap. You speak intelligently and I have the impression that if you saw a child in danger, you would risk your life to save it.

Ans (laughing): Thanks. I appreciate your compliment. It shows I have trained well. But you are wrong. Absolutely and totally wrong. Man, woman or child, we treat them all the same. Death to all, that is our motto.

Ques: OK, you're elite. So tell us about your foot soldiers, the ones who are in charge before you come on the scene.

Ans: Let's return to our motto, Death to all. As we look over the earth and its six billion plus inhabitants—souls, we call them—we swear, Death to all. Never forget that. Our foot soldiers, the ones just out of training are assigned to individual souls. They are given instructions to follow that soul day and night, to give it no rest, until it is destroyed.

Ques: Give us an example of how this works.

Ans: Let's take a young boy, maybe twelve years old. Until more or less this age, we can't harm children. Oh yes, we can take their lives, but it doesn't kill their souls. We kill children because of the pain it causes to the living. But as children approach the age in which we can get our hands on their souls, we give them no rest—nor do we give ourselves rest, until we have destroyed them . . .

Ques: Which makes it sound like you are always successful.

Ans: Usually, but not always.

Ques: And when you aren't?

Ans: Then more experienced agents are called in. You see, nowadays things are much simpler than they used to be when our men had to sweat to destroy a soul. Someone who is, in our jargon, TV-fed, is a pushover. We say, TV-fed, easily bled.

Ques: So really you're all sort of on easy street?

Ans: By no means! The fact that individuals are running to us, ah, shall we say, as lambs to the slaughter, doesn't mean we have time to sit around. It frees us for more important projects. You see, we don't only attack individuals. We zero in on churches . . .

Ques: But I thought that most churches were watered down to where they no longer posed a threat to you.

Ans: True. Most are watered down, but they still have a certain influence on souls. We will not rest until all churches have been transformed in clubs. Contrary to people, who are lulled to sleep by partial victories, no one in our camp will rest so long as there is one soul on this earth that hasn't fallen under our sword. (laughs) I think that we make a heap better missionaries than you.

Ques: How do you go about destroying churches?

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Ans: It varies tremendously from one church to another. There are popular churches that for all practical purposes we have destroyed, but because of their social functions they continue to attract large crowds. These churches, or shall we say, these shells, we support because they work in our favor. Once we get them to where they tolerate—whether officially or unofficially—divorce, abortion, unfaithfulness, humanism, they become our agents. To tell you the truth, we don't want to see these churches die out. They are ours...

Ques: Could you give us an example?

Ans: State churches. The bigger the better.

Ques: But today there are very few state churches anymore . . .

Ans: True. There are the mainline "reformist" churches. Some of them began as, or are the offspring of state churches. Many of them began with quite noble motives and a sincere desire to return to something more basic. Needless to say, they were a real headache to us, at least while they maintained their original fervor. We lost entirely too many souls to these groups.

Ques: So what kind of strategy did you use to bring them down?

Ans: To begin with, everyone of these groups came into existence with some kind of fatal flaw in their doctrines. We exploited these flaws to the maximum.

Ques: In what way?

Ans: If you will take a close look at these groups, you will notice that everyone of them has some sort of fire escape (laughs uproariously). Fire escape nothing! Slippery slides right into the middle of hell, mind you. There, of course, is the purgatory fire escape. People mess around in life believing that someone will pray them out of the pit. We have every single one of them. There are those who believe that once saved always saved. What a joke! It ought to be, once enslaved, always enslaved. There are the predestinationists, who see everything as cut and dried. About all we have to do with them is encourage them to be faithful in their doctrine. There are the spiritists who believe that there will be another chance to reincarnate and make amends for what they did wrong in this life. But the biggest group are those which we find in all religions, those who believe that they can buy their exemption from hell with good works.

Ques: What about all the street corner churches that are springing up like weeds?

Ans: We have to keep a close eye on these groups. It's true that with all their yelling and carrying on, they play right into our hands. But they encourage their members to read the Bible. And so even though the group itself is way off in left or right field, often through their influence, we end up losing souls. Since the preachers in these little street corner churches have a very strong influence on their members, we try and corrupt them. When their waywardness becomes known, the most sincere members are most affected and often they decide that it just isn't worth the effort to keep trying if even the pastor can't manage.

Ques: So you would say that all of your objectives are being met so far as destroying individuals, churches and religion in general?

Ans (frowning): You must remember that our motto is death to all. Analyzed

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numerically, you might get the impression that we are being tremendously successful. (becomes agitated) But the greatest victory, the sweetest victory, continues to elude us.

Ques: How so?

Ans: Remember that human souls are pawns on a much larger battlefield. Yes, yes, there is great rejoicing in our camp over each soul that we kill. But our great objective, our obsession, is to overcome our enemy's bride. If we slay her, victory is ours.

Ques: What is it that differentiates the Church of the Bride from all others? Or is there no difference?

Ans: We of course look at everything militarily, and from this perspective, the difference is enormous.

Ques: How so?

Ans: To begin with, we have never been able to touch the doctrine of the Church of the Bride. Never. We have done everything . . .

Ques: Everything . . . what would that include?

Ans: For over fifteen hundred years we raised absolute havoc. We confiscated, we imprisoned, we ostracized, we tortured, we killed. You might say we were given the run of the place. But it was like swatting flies on a picnic table. No matter how many we killed, more showed up. Finally we came to the conclusion that there had to be a better way and threw away the fly swatter.

Ques: What was this better way?

Ans: Instead of confiscating and torturing and killing, we let them have what they wanted.

Ques: Did it work?

Ans: It depends on how you look at it. We reduced their numbers, but haven't managed to touch their doctrine. This is unacceptable. So long as their doctrine continues intact and is kept by the believers, victory eludes us. Personally, I believe their doctrine has some kind of a seal to it which we won't be able to break.

Ques: So you are admitting defeat?

Ans (angrily): You don't know us. We NEVER admit defeat . . .

Ques: But if you can't touch their doctrine, if their faithful are unshakable . . .

Ans: One "if" too many. Who says their faithful are unshakable? Who says? This, my good friend, is where Lt. Exception shines. This is where his DEATH team is called in. He can do what others can't do.

Ques: I'm curious about your nom de guerre—Lieutenant Exception. This obviously isn't your birth name. "Lieutenant" is your rank, but how did you come up with the name Exception?

Ans (swelling with pride): This name, Exception, was given to me personally by my supreme commander when I was promoted to Lieutenant.

Ques: But why did your commander choose that particular name?

Ans: Because of what I have been able to accomplish with exceptions. Computerists talk about "work around solutions." That's what my exceptions are. They're a work around solution.

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Ques: Give me an example of how your exceptions work.

Ans: Here's a simple one. All through the centuries the Church of the Bride has been against taking interest. We have tried at different times to get them to change that doctrine, but they won't hear of it. So what do I do? I begin talking about the "spirit" of the doctrine, which I tell them is to not make money on money that has been loaned out. Once I get them to swallow that one, I get into the economic field and give a lecture on inflation. Then I say, "Now, if you have loaned your money out at four percent and inflation is running at four percent, what are you gaining? (a gleeful laugh). Then I come in real quick with pointers on good stewardship. I ask, "Is it good stewardship to keep your excess money in a checking account and find out you have lost four percent of its buying power at the end of a year? Is that good stewardship? I hammer away at that

Ques: And it works?

Ans: Does it ever work! You see, they console themselves by saying they believe in the doctrine, but since inflation is eating up their money, this is an exception to the rule. So they put their money on interest.

Ques: Really then, it's a snare you set . . .

Ans: What of it? That's what my business is all about. (laughs uproariously) You ought to see them when inflation drops to almost nothing. They squirm around a bit, but their money stays on interest. Once I get someone hooked on an exception, I don't need to change the doctrine anymore.

Ques: So what you're trying to do is turn the doctrine of the Church of the Bride into a museum piece, right?

Ans: Right.

Ques: Then basically what you do is say, "Hey, your case is an exception, so that doctrine doesn't apply?"

Ans: Exactly. And once I get someone steered onto "Exception Road," I have won a tremendous victory. What I need is "exceptional"—excuse the pun—leaders, men of inaction because they are able to transform their problems into exceptions.

Ques: Do you really believe that through your efforts the final victory will be yours?

Ans: Remember that I am only one of many. Today my technique is a shining star. Tomorrow one of my colleagues may come up with something that works even better. That's perfectly OK with me. I don't care who gets the credit, so long as the Church of the Bride eventually becomes defiled.

Ques: I mentioned in the beginning that you look like a nice fellow. You're nice to talk to. During the time of the martyrs you weren't that way. You showed your true colors. Do you believe that some time before the end of time you will again show your colors?

Ans: I doubt it very much. You see, everywhere you go the order of the day is peace and safety. Since we are diametrically opposed to both, it may surprise you to know that we plan on playing both of them up. There is nothing better than for people to lose their sense of danger.

Ques: What would you say if I told you that the Church of the Bride is confident that in the end victory will belong to the Bridegroom?

Ans (red with anger): If I could, I would kill you this very instant . . .

Good reader, Lt. Exception is waiting for you. ▲

A Story for All

[I found this little story, by Henry T. Sell, that was written in the beginning of the 20th century. A few minor changes have been made to make it politically correct.]

A Nervy Smile

One of the most difficult things to do is to smile in the face of extreme danger, when all hope of escaping from it seems lost.

One of the finest examples of this sort of thing came to my attention the other day while reading the tale of an African explorer.

He was stopping at a small government station, on a river in the heart of the Dark Continent, around which there was a little clearing.

One day, while the keeper and his two helpers were away up the river, and only the natives were about, this explorer thought that he would take a walk, by a native path, down along the river.

Although the settlement was in the midst of cannibal tribes everything had been peaceful for some time. He, therefore, took no weapons with him. He carried a camera with him, hoping to get a picture of a crocodile. He had gone some distance when the path turned abruptly to the river where there was a crude native bridge just wide enough for one to cross.

Going out on this the explorer halted near the center and looked down the river. He had not been long here before he heard a slight rasping noise which seemed to come from the near shore end of the bridge. Sensing danger, he turned slowly and saw a big wild looking man at the end of the bridge. This man had just drawn his knife from its sheath. This was the sound the explorer had heard. There was no doubt about the intention of the man with the knife. That he was a cannibal was shown by the marks on his forehead.

Certain death seemed to face the explorer. His retreat was cut off. It was a hard situation, and what to do, at first, he did not know. Then, as a last resort, he smiled and advanced upon the savage. Holding out his hand he said, in the little native language he knew, "How much for the knife? I will give you so much." (Something equivalent to about fifty cents.)

Putting his hand in his pocket he drew out the money and gave it to the savage, receiving the knife in return. Then he bargained for and got the sheath of the knife and went off, up the path, smiling. But he took no more walks unarmed and alone.

That was a “Nervy Smile” and accomplished, at the time, what nothing else would. The cannibal was thrown completely off his guard and deflected from that purpose. He had expected to be met with a weapon and the same intent to kill that was in his own heart. It took the highest order of courage on the part of the explorer to rise to the smile, but he did it and so saved himself from otherwise certain destruction.

There is a great truth to this story. It is that meeting danger and hard situations, of every sort and kind, with a courageous smile is the best sort of way to conquer them. People who say and do hard things to us expect us to respond in kind. When this is not done, and we return good for evil, they are thrown off guard. It is often said that it takes two to make a quarrel. If one will not enter into it there is an end to it! It pays to “be of good courage” and have a “Nervy Smile” in time of danger. It is the best possible defense. ▲

Zigzagging Around

Felis Catus

Felis Catus is the scientific name for a small, furry mammal, better known as a cat.

By original nature the felis catus is family orientated, a typical family being made up of a tomus catus, a momus catus and a number of kittus catus. Of course, there are grampus and gramus catus too.

There are more than one kind of felis catus. There are the barnus catus that live in barns, the alleyus (sort of hard to pronounce) catus that live in alleys, the housus catus that live in houses, and the strayus catus that all of a sudden just show up or disappear.

Anyone who didn't grow up on a farm with a barn with a hayloft with hay in it and with stanchions down below with cows in them at milking time being milked by hand, may not know for sure what I'm talking about. But especially on a cold day, at milking time, the whole family—tomus, momus, kittus (if they were big enough), grampus, gramus, unclus and auntus—would show up and take up their stations around the old kettle that they knew would soon be full of warm, foamy milk. They would never fight like canidae (dogs) or sus scrofas (pigs) do. If necessary they would wait their turn. Then when they finished they would sit back and purr and take a lick bath (not unlike the baths some of us used to get on the way to church when our momus would lickus her hankus and washus behind the earus—except that there was no purring on these occasions). Just having that happy family of barnus catus purring around made everyone feel happy.

But nothing could compare to finding a new nest of baby kittus catus up in the hayloft. After that every chance we had, we crawled up into the loft and checked on our baby kittus catus. We would get there and they would be lined up one against the other, getting their breakfast or dinner or supper. At this point the momus catus hadn't had time to teach them proper table manners yet and so they would fight just like children sometimes do at mealtimes.

Then the day would come that one of them would have the corner of its eye open. This would send us into ecstasy. Now the visits were more frequent and each time, like miniature optometrists, we would carefully examine their eyes until they were all completely opened.

Soon after this they would begin to play. This was when the real fun started.

Let's not get the idea that barnus catus were just for drinking milk and entertaining children. No way. The reason most farmers had them was to keep the mus musculus (mice) and rattus from taking over the place. In other words, they had to pay their own room and board.

It was a big job. Both the tomus and the momus catus worked hard at this. As soon as the kittus catus were big enough, they began to catch mus musculus too.

All in all, the barnus catus family was a functional family. It's too bad that very few children today have the privilege of enjoying an honest to goodness barn with a loft with alfalfa and hay and straw bales, with snow blowing outside and with a nest of baby kittus catus and with the whole family drinking milk at breakfast and supper time out of a big kettle.

I can't tell you much about alleyus catus. All I know is that they live in alleys and don't behave themselves. So people say unkind things about them because they're almost always dirty and have fleas. But since they do catch some mus musculus and rattus, they are reluctantly tolerated.

The housus catus. There's a heap of difference between housus catus and barnus catus. The barnus catus make their own living and pay their own way by keeping the mus musculus and rattus population in check. You don't have to be around barnus catus very long to see that they have a lot of character.

The housus catus are different. They do some hunting, as a sport, but depend on Homo sapiens for their living. So I suppose you could say they are living off the government. Cut their food stamps and all they do after that is meow and get skinny. And have little ones.

The strayus catus. Some of the finest felis catus in this world are strayus catus. They're the ones that show up dirty and skinny and sick and cold. We don't need another catus and we wish they'd go away, but they don't. So for humanitarian reasons we give them a bowl of warm milk. We are rewarded with a vibrant purr which we immediately take to mean thank you. We're hooked and the first thing you know we have a clean, healthy, felis catus that we wouldn't get rid of for anything.

Why all this talk about felis catus? Why not talk about Homo sapiens instead? According to scientists we're Homo sapiens. In Latin that means we are people with the capacity to be smart. But when looking this world over, one sees more and more Homo dumiens, people who are losing their capacity to think objectively and make intelligent decisions. The barnus catus type family is becoming an endangered species.

We are seeing a new generation for which children are an accident and not a blessing. Thirty some years ago, working in the trailer factory in Newton, one of the workers was telling about his family. He said: "My wife and I had decided to have two children,

but we ended up with three. Sure, I love them all . . . but I do wish we would have stuck with our original plan.” Two planned children and one accidental.

But even that doesn't look so bad when placed along side Homo somethingorotherus whose life circles around career and leisure. They don't want the responsibility of married life, and much less of children. In recent years the verb “ficar” in Portuguese has assumed an additional meaning. It is used when a man and a woman desire each others company, but with no emotional attachment. They may go out to dinner together once or twice and that is it. They may spend weekends together for a month or two. Or they may see each other regularly for an extended period of time. But at no time do they become attached to each other. It is mutually understood that the relationship can be terminated at any time without so much as an explanation. Since they have nothing to share and nothing to divide, all it takes is a telephone call. True allyus catus.

Yes, the barnus catus type family is rapidly disappearing. People who spend more time in physical fitness academies than in church are turning into glorified allyus catus. Outwardly they may be in top shape, but inwardly they have all the character of a purebred allyus catus.

We just as well face it. If time goes on much longer, our banker with whom we do our business may be of this species. Maybe the pilot of the plane we happen to fly. Our doctor. Or even our president. ▲

Paraguay

by Edwin Schmidt, chapter VIII

Voluntary Service in Paraguay

Anyway, we transferred the refugees to the Paraguayan train and got to Asuncion just fine. To travel on a train for about three days, the people would need to be fed. The Argentine train had a baggage car in the back in which we had our office, a food supply, which was replenished along the way, and here the meals were prepared. Cold lunches and meals were served, such as bread, meat, cheese, fresh fruits, and hot coffee. Our kitchen worker worked very well and faithfully, and it worked out well.

It took two days or so to get the two groups who came up from Buenos Aires by river boats and those by train, ready to leave for the trip up the river to Puerto Casado and the Chaco. I went with a group of 171 refugees as far as Puerto Casado, which took three days. It was a rather hard trip for some of them. There were not nearly enough cabins for them all. Some were not very well, some not very strong. Some just had to stay on the deck. There was a roof over the deck, but the sides were open. This was not bad when the weather was good. We did have some rain and then some couldn't keep very dry.

We arrived at Puerto Casado in the evening, so the refugees stayed on the boat over

night. The next morning the people got off, and by the time baggage was unloaded it was 1:30 P.M. People from the Fernhein Colony came to take them the rest of the way to the Colony.

Now my responsibility ended. I returned to the MCC center in Asuncion to make arrangements to return home. On my way home I took a few days to visit an Old Mennonite mission not so far from Buenos Aires, at Bragado. I was interested in seeing how they worked. One question I had was about the non-resistant doctrine. One reason the MCC had not been interested in settling refugees in Argentina was because there was no military exemption; their young men went to the army.

Argentina was a country with much potential, but because of no military exemption, it did not seem like a very good place for a mission at that time. On getting back to Buenos Aires I had made arrangements to go by train west across Argentina into Chile. I wanted to take a ship from Valparaiso, Chile. To get into Chile meant crossing the high Andes Mountains. At that time the way was closed because of a snowstorm in the high mountain area, so we had a day's lay-over at the foot of the mountains. The train stopped in the city of Mendoza. It was a beautiful place that looked like California with its many vineyards or fruit orchards.

On the train I got acquainted with an Argentine lawyer who was on his way to the United States for a six months' study of the States' law system. For some reason, during the last few years I had made a rather in-depth study of the first five books of the Bible, the law. This lawyer talked good English, and he was very ready to talk and to ask questions, as it seems lawyers are taught to do. He also was booked to travel on the same ship as I was. From the time we got acquainted on the train we had many talks and discussions. It was a day's travel across Argentina, another day to cross the mountains and get across Chile.

I had a day's layover before this ship left. This time I had a good new ship and good traveling. It was a combination passenger and freight ship. It was clean, and from what I saw, not heavy, dirty freight. I know at one stop they loaded a lot of bananas. It seemed like the freight was at the bottom and passengers on the top.

We made stops at Antofagosta, Chile; Callao, Peru; Puna, an island off the coast of Ecuador. If I remember right, this is where the bananas were loaded. We also stopped at Buenaventura, Columbia, and on through the Panama Canal, to Charleston, South Carolina, and at last to New York. From Buenos Aires to New York it took twenty-two days. The days on the trip passed rather swiftly, I would say to quite an extent, because of the lawyer I learned to know on this trip. He wanted to know about me and what I believed, and I wanted to know about him, too. I felt he was much better at asking questions than I was, for he asked me many, many questions. He said he was a Catholic, but had lost faith in that church, the same as many others. He had given up going to mass. Another time we had a long talk on the question of right and wrong. He said the law of Moses is right and that all law was based on it.

One day we talked much about family relations and family difficulties and the divorce question. He said he dealt much with these matters. Since I had just made that

study of the first five books of the Bible, which deals much about the law, this was a big help to me in talking with this lawyer. The Holy Spirit was there to remind me of what the law taught and gave words to speak. When we talked about divorce I showed him what Christ had to say about it, that in the beginning it had not been so, and that He reaffirmed it as it had been in the beginning. He thought that was taking too rigid a stand. He could believe that which he could understand. I tried to impress him that to believe God only as far as he could understand and comprehend was bringing God down to man, that there are things about God that man cannot understand; we must believe by faith. He seemed to be able to grasp that in regards to God, that might be so. Before we parted he said he wanted to know enough about Mennonite people so if he met them while in the States he would know who they were. When told we are not all alike, that is not easy for many people to understand. Is it time that we should be known by a different name than “Mennonite”?

When I arrived in New York City, I was met by a man from the MCC center at Akron, Pa. We arrived at Akron in time for the evening meal. I was asked to have the devotional the following morning. As I thought of my past two years, the scripture I felt to read was Ecc. 11:1-2, 6. “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for Thou shalt find it after many days, give a portion to seven and also to eight; in the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that or whether they both shall be alike good.” The thought was that this was the way I felt about my last two years; that bread that had been cast upon the waters and the seed sown had been committed unto God to bless and prosper as He saw best.

After the devotional a woman that worked there in the Akron MCC Center stepped up to me to talk. She no doubt had seen MCC workers leave for and return from their assignments. She said in a church periodical she had read an account of a young Cuban in Buenos Aires who had attended meetings at a Youth for Christ rally. At an altar call he had responded and told his story. If I remember rightly, the heading of the account had been “One Soweth and Another Reapeth.” In the account the Cuban told the story of the trip from Philadelphia to Buenos Aires, about the troubles on the way, and being stranded on the reef. He told of my reading of the Bible, and talking about it, and of his deep impressions. By the time we arrived at Buenos Aires he knew he was a sinner and in need of salvation. The Lord knew the cry of this young man’s heart, and the Holy Spirit spoke to him in a way that he understood. I believe he spoke to others on the ship also. The woman said she had wondered if she would sometime meet this MCC worker. I believe that it was because of the scripture read and the comments made in the devotional that she realized that this was the MCC worker she had wondered about. She was interested in knowing more about this account.

After a day at Akron the final report to the MCC had been made and it was good to be on my way home. On the last lap home, my seat partner was a young man about my age or maybe some younger. In the process of our visiting, while I was looking forward to a happy meeting of family and friends, he said there would also be those to meet

him who would act as though they were happy to see him, but that would not be the way it really would be. My! What a difference! Truly as we read in the Bible, Psalm 16:6, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” That is the way I feel as I look back to those years. I remember after I was home and thought back to the time before leaving, pondering what the two years before me would hold and what it would be like, and now seeing how the Lord had been present to sustain, to give direction, extending His protecting care, and many times given the needed words to speak, the thought came to me, “Why ever again doubt the Lord’s promise that He would be with us all the way?” But I have also seen that as life continues we need to continue to call upon the Lord for His presence and direction daily. As I look back I also see my many failures, and see where I should have done better. How many times did I fail to understand the cry of someone’s heart? ▲

The End

Personally, and in the name of BN readers, I would like to thank bro. Edwin for having shared his experiences with us. I am hoping he will be so good as to permit us to print them up in booklet form. What he has to say must not be forgotten

Many lessons can be learned in Edwin’s story, but one of the most important, doubtlessly, is that we don’t need to wait until we reach our destination to begin witnessing. For the one who prepares himself and has his spiritual eyes open, there are many opportunities to sow the seed. Only God knows how many of these little seeds sprout and produce golden grain that He stores in His eternal granary.

Once again, thank you.

Beginning next month our brother Eduardo Vieira da Silva, from Patos, Paraíba, will tell us his experiences and observations during the time he was in the mission in Mozambique.

This Month in Brazil

Favorable Winds

In the January 94 issue of BN we reported that inflation was “approximately 40% per month and rising.” That is when Finance Minister, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, set in motion the monetary reform, known as the Plano Real, that put a leash on inflation.

During the next presidential campaign, Cardoso was elected president of Brazil, and now, four years later, he was reelected to a second term.

Today inflation is estimated at two per cent per year and for next year economists are predicting a slight deflation.

Now President Cardoso is facing a second challenge, possibly more difficult than taming inflation. He must balance Brazil’s budget. To depend on foreign capital to finance an internal deficit is equivalent to taking a mortgage on your own country.

Sooner or later things will fly apart, which they almost did for Brazil in the last several months. It was only through a supreme and very costly effort that our president and his economical team kept the ship afloat.

Ever since President Cardoso took office he has proposed a total overhaul of Brazil's antiquated tax system and the reduction of public spending, but the political resistance was so strong that his knees grew feeble. But now, reelected by a strong popular vote, he can courageously face congress and say, "This is what the people want." It's hard to argue against that one.

The elections this year were for governors, state and federal congressmen, and the president. In the nearly 30 years we have been in Brazil, I have never seen the voters show better sense than they did this year. Many candidates with a trail of corruption or leftist leanings didn't make it back into office.

Third world countries are beginning to fight corruption, not for religious or moralist motives, but because they have discovered that no one wants to deal with a dishonest government. Furthermore, the people are awakening to the fact that when a government is dishonest, a few become filthy rich while the masses remain in poverty. It is exactly this awakening that is creating the possibility of better times. Voters have caught on to this.

But for these better times to become a reality, some real adjustments will have to be made. The president isn't promising easy times to anyone during the next year or two. It's going to take some sacrifice to undo some of the mistakes of the past. But folks, remember this one little thing: If Brazil can do with corruption what it has done with inflation, ten years from now, if time continues, it will have reached manhood. ▲

Perdigão

Just as a refresher, Perdigão is the company that is investing half a billion dollars in Rio Verde to get their hog and poultry project going. In spite of the global crisis, construction of the new installations continues in high gear. First the hog project will be launched and then the poultry project.

A question that is often heard on the Colony is: How many Americans do you think are going to put up barns? The answers vary from "very few" to "quite a few." The answer may lie half way in between.

On October 15 a small meeting was held at the Monte Alegre School with Larry Trissel from Shenandoah Manufacturing Company. As you poultry raisers in N America know, Shenandoah manufactures brooders that produce "Radiant heat – like the sun," as their literature puts it.

During his presentation, Larry said, "These Shen Glow brooders are probably all Dutch to you." Leon Koehn held up his hand and said, "Not to me. I use your products on my operation in the US." What Leon had to say about their products was definitely helpful to his sales pitch.

Shenandoah is retailing its products through existing farm supply stores. The business in Goiânia, Nutrial, that sells their brooders also sells Chore Time products.

Some of the brethren in the land leveling business have been working on the Perdigão building site near Rio Verde. They are hoping to get in on the leveling on the building sites where the farmers will be putting up their barns. ▲

Visitors in Church

It isn't unusual to have visitors in church from town and other parts of the country. It's not too often, though, that we have them by the busload. That is what happened on Sunday, October 11.

The director of an English school in Jandaia, a town on the way to Goiânia, contacted Myron Kramer and asked for permission to bring a busload of students to our Sunday morning worship service. He told them it would be fine and so on Sunday morning, before any of us got to church, the bus was there waiting.

It's no big deal for the ushers to accommodate a busload of people in the main auditorium of our church. Sunday school is a bigger problem, but the superintendents, together with Myron, soon had things ironed out. Extra lessons were made ahead of time and it all worked out real well.

Lunch was at the dam, together with some of the Monte Alegre youth and couples. Cláudio Silva grilled hamburgers for everyone.

The group was very well behaved, both in church and during the afternoon. They were very favorably impressed by what they experienced. Some would like to come back and attend more services.

Since then Myron has been contacted by the director of another English school who would like to bring out four busloads of students.

Sunday morning this was brought up in church to see what the congregation thought about it all. There was good support to leave this door open, but request that only one busload come at a time. It is true that they come for cultural purposes, but we receive them for religious reasons. There is no doubt but what the seed is being sown in these events. We don't know how much is falling on a prepared acre. What we do know is that it is God who gives the increase. ▲

The Monte Alegre School

Two classrooms and a large breezeway were added to the Monte Alegre School, making a total of seven classrooms.

On October 19 the Rainbow Helpers youth girls painted the classrooms and on the 24th there was a district workday to clean up inside and out and get the desks moved in

from the social hall where classes were temporarily held. The following Monday classes began in the new addition.

Because of our bilingual situation, additional classrooms are needed. There is a chance that in the near future several more classrooms will have to be added.

Schools are expensive to build and to maintain. It is possible, however, that no money we spend brings greater and more eternal returns than that which we give to our schools. ▲

Thinking Out Loud

Xmas

We don't like it. We say people are taking Christ out of Christmas, that it's a paganization of such a sacred event.

But is it really that bad? My dictionary says that X is the abbreviation of Cisto (Christ) in the Greek language. That pleasantly opens the way to remove Christ and replace Him with an inspirational X. It also gives us food for meditation on the spirit of Xmas.

When we buy unnecessary gifts with money we don't have and give them to those who don't need them, wouldn't it be more proper to say, Merry Xmas?

When we spend hours and days and weeks preparing for this special holiday, making, baking and decorating, and wearing ourselves to a frazzle, when the day finally comes, wouldn't it be more proper to greet our children and guests with Merry Xmas?

When we think of the poor people in the world . . . no, forget the world, in the church, brothers and sisters in the faith, who are literally struggling for their daily bread, and we close our bowels of mercy, so that We (capital W) can indulge, wouldn't it be more proper that we greet each other with Merry Xmas?

When we go to church on the morning of December 25th and worry all through the service about the turkey in the oven and a lot of other details necessary to make our day a perfect success, as we rush down the aisle after the last amen, wouldn't it be more proper to rapidly greet our brethren with a quick Merry Xmas?

When our children rip the paper off the presents which they possibly shouldn't have and often don't appreciate, wouldn't it be more proper to tell them Merry Xmas?

When we decorate our house and lawn with icons of what the world displays openly (and wish we could too), until a special atmosphere permeates our home, wouldn't it be more proper to greet anyone who shows up with a hearty Merry Xmas?

When an unexpected (read as: unwanted) guest shows up, or worse a family, just as the celebration is getting into motion, and threatens to spoil everything, wouldn't it be more proper to at least be civil enough to wish them a Merry Xmas?

When we struggle to the checkout counter with an overflowing cart, loaded with presents and goodies, wouldn't it be more proper to wish the checkout girl a Merry Xmas?

Xmas! What a disgrace to take Christ out of Christmas and fill the empty space with an X. How ugly, how distasteful. So very pagan. “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are . . . or even as this [pagan who celebrates Xmas].” Yes, what a disgrace to trade the Messiah for an X.

If, as my dictionary says, X is the Greek abbreviation for Cisto, then I wonder why the apostle Paul didn’t say, “For me to live is X, and to die is gain,” or “Who shall separate us from the love of X?”

No, the apostle Paul didn’t abbreviate Christ to X. If any of the ancient Greeks did it, surely it must have been the heathen and not the Christian Greeks.

After conversion, the apostle lived for Christ, and for Christ only. Never for X. So far as we know, He lived for Christ 365 days of the year. Could it be, folks, that we’re living for Christ 340 days of the year and for X 25 days?

If the apostle Paul would show up in your neighborhood around the 15th of December and observed all the hustle and bustle, do you suppose that on Sunday he would say in his sermon: “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found altars in some homes with this inscription, TO X. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” ▲