

Brazil News



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Editorial

The Soul Behind the Counter

Just a few questions to get started. Since we know what your answers will be, we'll answer for you.

Do you believe that every human being has a soul?

Yes, of course. What a question!

Not all human beings are created equal. Some are far more talented and resourceful than others. That's a fact. Does that add to or subtract from the value of their soul?

No, of course not.

God makes us responsible for certain souls. Family members, spiritual brethren, for example. Right or wrong?

Right.

And probably for the soul of some closer friends?

Probably.

And for the soul of the man behind the counter?

The man behind the counter...?

No, the soul behind the counter.

Why are the Rocky Mountains beautiful? Or the Everglades? Or the Redwoods?

Because we don't live there. When we visit these scenic areas, our senses—eyes, ears, nose—are on maximum alert. We know that we are in an area generously endowed by nature and don't want to miss a single sight. So we are, shall we say, tuned in on nature.

And yet we can be sure that there are people living in the Rockies, in the Everglades or in the Redwoods, who trudge through their daily routine, day after day, year after year, unaware of the beauty of their surroundings. These are men and women out of tune with nature.

As we spend a few precious days soaking in the sights and sounds and smells of nature, we dream of what it would be like to actually live in such a place, to have all this

as part of our daily life. Our humanity would tempt us to believe that it would be a little foretaste of heaven.

If, while reveling in this dream, we should be brought into contact with a local who saw no beauty in this paradise, we would be appalled.

Wouldn't we?

Is a soul beautiful? Or have you never seen a soul? Have you never touched a soul?

In nature we can touch but an infinitesimal part of what we see. With a soul the opposite is true. We can't see, but we can feel. The blind man carefully palpates the delicate petals of a rose as he inhales its fragrance, and exclaims, "How beautiful!" So we, to see a soul, must stop and carefully touch.

What can you tell me about the soul behind the counter in your parts store?

He's in his early sixties, morose, seems to be carrying a chip on his shoulder, but efficient. People call him Morris (you're not sure if that's his first or last name).

No! No! You haven't described the soul behind the counter. You have described the house he lives in. For you to "see" that soul, like the blind man, you will have to stop and touch him. Only then will you notice the fragrance of that soul.

All souls are beautiful because they belong to God. Each one was carefully molded by His loving hands. Though the house they live in may be dilapidated with part of the roof missing, the soul inside is just as beautiful to God as yours. So why shouldn't that soul be beautiful to you too?

Morris has the reputation of not being friendly. He never smiles. So after several initial tries to be friendly, your policy with him became a frown for a frown, silence for silence. It works. You get your part and he gets his money. During harvest this is really quite a nice arrangement.

The first few times you smiled at Morris, did you smile at his house or at his soul?

The soul behind the counter isn't there 24 hours a day. At closing time he picks up his lunch pail and heads out the door. We assume he goes home, but it's possible he doesn't have a "home." He may live in a boarding house.

The soul behind the counter may be divorced. He may be single or he may be married. He may dread pulling up in front of his house, knowing that before he even opens the front door, his wife or live-in will be shouting at him. The time he spends in the parts store may actually be the happiest time of his day.

The soul behind the counter may have some sickness. He may be in constant pain. He may always be flat broke because of his medical expenses. On the other hand, maybe he's healthy, but his wife, or child, isn't. He may have to do all the cooking and housework when he gets home. Maybe he even has a second job and so when you see him behind the counter at the parts store, he is totally exhausted—without any hopes of things getting better.

The soul behind the counter may have a shady past. He may have moved to your community from another part of the country—fleeing the clutches of justice. The thought that someday a "customer" may walk in, identify himself, and say, "You're under arrest," may be a constant torment.

On the other hand, the soul behind the counter may not be morose. He may smile

each time you come in. He may chat with you. But his joviality may be a mask. When he leaves the store at closing time, he may be someone entirely different from the friendly fellow you know in the store.

The soul behind the counter may seem to be quite happy-go-lucky. You may get the impression he doesn't have a care in the world. He may be happily married, with a nice family. He may be active in community projects. But when he lies awake at night, he may feel a deep loneliness.

The soul behind the counter may seem somewhat bashful, but inside have an intense desire to ask questions. Each time a customer leaves (especially you) he may feel a bit frustrated because he wasn't able to work up the nerve to open a conversation.

That's the soul behind the counter. The soul that we so often don't know. The soul that we don't see. Indeed, the soul that we don't even realize exists (because we see only his shell).

A missionary must be a communicator. A good missionary trains himself... no, that doesn't sound right. A good missionary develops his "soul vision." Yes, that's better. Instead of seeing men walking as trees, he sees souls. He looks for opportunities to sit down and talk with them, or to talk with them in the way.

A missionary feels disappointed when he can't get past the shell into the soul. He takes the initiative, he starts the conversation, he asks the questions, he eagerly says yes if invited to a soul's home.

A missionary is on maximum alert, always on the lookout for souls.

Like deep-sea divers returning to the surface, missionaries returning from the field also must often spend time in a decompression chamber as they try to adjust to home life. They discover that taking time during working hours to talk to a soul is frowned upon. (First we work and then we witness.) They find that observations or questions about souls they met during the week sometimes don't make very good conversation fodder when invited out. They can feel a "give-him-a-little-time-and-he'll-get-over-it" attitude. The missionary finds this depressing. The solution is the decompression (dedepression?) chamber.

Is "soul vision" optional for the Christian? Is it a gift for the few? Is it a floodlight we turn on at special times, maybe when on a tract tour? Is it a favor we do God when we try and see souls?

Bared to the bones, what is soul vision? Soul vision is the ability to look beyond the shell and see the soul. It is the ability to make contact with that soul. Sometimes it will only be a smile. Sometimes it will be a sincere thank you after you have been waited on. Often it will be a few words, enough for the soul to notice that you are interested in him or her. Always it will be an alertness for the opportunity to leave a witness of the hope that you carry in your own soul.

If you have been alert, it isn't hard to detect a change in the soul behind the counter. You may remark, "You seem sort of sad...?" or "What are you so happy about today?" The fact that you have taken note of their emotions may open a door to a deeper conversation.

In your anxiety to help, don't become pushy or intrusive. Never shove a closed door. As you gain the person's confidence, you may feel to suggest, "Why don't you come over sometime so we can discuss your problem?" or "If I can be of any help, let me know," or,

when appropriate, “Why don’t you come attend one of our church services sometime?”

We can only imagine what the final day of judgment will really be like. We know that each one will have to give a personal account of his life here. There will be no defense lawyers, no loopholes, no one putting in a good word for us.

Let’s imagine a little scene that will probably never happen.

It is the final day of judgment and billions of souls have already been judged. Then your name is called. As you approach the throne of the eternal Judge, He suddenly holds up His hand and says, “Wait!”

Now he calls another name: “Morris (Morris “Whatever”, or “Whatever” Morris). As He steps into the spotlight of the throne, you see he is dressed in rags. He is trembling. He hears those terrible words, “Depart from me...” As he is turned to the left and begins to slide into the bottomless pit, he catches your eye. You remember the many times he waited on you...

Next He calls the lady who always sat behind the counter in the service station where you bought your gas for years. She too is dressed in rags. She seemed to be sort of a slouchy person and you never saw her soul. Now you’re seeing it. As she begins her endless tumble, she catches your eye...

After a dozen souls are called to judgment, your name is called again. This time you must stand in the floodlight.

It’s a terrible thought, isn’t it—the thought that someone may be eternally lost because we didn’t have soul vision?

Now let’s change the scene. While it doubtlessly won’t happen just like this, what you feel will be similar.

Once again you are asked to come near the throne and wait. A name is called, a familiar name. You watch as a soul dressed in sparkling white approaches the throne. It’s the soul that worked behind the counter in the local co-op. You, and other brethren, often spoke with him. The day came that he got converted. He looks at you briefly and smiles after hearing those blessed words, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

The waitress in your local coffee shop, whom you often encouraged when she told of her struggles in life, also comes forward, dressed in white. She too turns and smiles at you as she goes to her eternal reward.

Do you have soul vision? Are you able to see the beauty of a soul? Or are you going through life without seeing the soul behind the counter? ▲

Remembering Out Loud

Telephone Service

The other day while standing in line in the bank, I met an old friend. Aloísio was a local telephone operator in the 70s, where we would do our calling, since we had no phones on the Colony. I said to him, “You know, we need to get together sometime

Brazil News

and talk about the old days—about the time I spent eight hours in the telephone office waiting for a call to go through to the States.” He laughed, “It takes less time to go there than it used to take to call.” This must have been in 76 or 77.

When we moved to Rio Verde in 69, our only communication with N America was by telegram and letter. A telegram took about two days and a letter two weeks. One way. To receive a response, those figures had to be doubled. Or more. Since it wasn't unusual to not go to town for several weeks, the letter could come in the day after our town day, delaying the response to a letter for up to six weeks.

All telegrams had to be sent to Rio de Janeiro, and then retransmitted to N America. Inversely, telegrams sent to Brazil went to Rio de Janeiro and were retransmitted to Rio Verde. Since the telegrams were usually in English, the retransmission process rendered some of them unintelligible. As happened with a letter, depending on the day these telegrams came in, they might lie in the post office for several weeks before we picked them up.

When expecting an urgent reply when someone was buying a piece of land, for example, I would go to the telegraph room above the post office and listen to the “woodpecker” (as Brazilians called the old dot and dash apparatus) receiving messages. If I was lucky, the telegrapher would suddenly say, “This one is for you.” Over his shoulder I would watch him write the letters down, one by one, as he listened to the woodpecker, which formed the anxiously awaited response.

That was 30 years ago. Progress was slow. Finally the day came in which it was possible to call out from Rio Verde to Goiânia and other cities. The big break-through was to be able to call the US, even if it could mean hours of waiting for a call to go through.

Nobody even dreamed about rural telephones back those days. It was bad enough to own one in town. A phone could cost up to 3,000 dollars and might not be installed for a year or two. Rates for out of the country were out of the world. A call to N America cost up to three dollars a minute.

All that has changed. The inefficient state owned telephone company was sold to private enterprise. Today a phone in town costs some 40 dollars, and depending on the section of town, the installation can be almost immediate. Rates to N America are less than 50 cents a minute.

Almost everyone on the Colony has some sort of telephone. Most are base cellular phones, which give us excellent service. According to our last phone list, there are approximately 25 mobile cell phones on the Colony, and the number is constantly growing. We are served by two carriers, one a Canadian company which offers only digital service, and the other, Italian, which offers only analog service, but should in the next days or weeks include digital service.

To get a cell phone activated used to cost over three hundred dollars. Today, with competition, it's free, although we do have to pay for our phones, which can range from 150 – 1,000 dollars. Three hundred and fifty dollars buys a phone with all of the bells and whistles.

I think back 30 years when we were out here in total isolation. Today I can be talking with my daughter in the US while taking a walk in my pasture. In my study at home, and at work, I have a fax machine. Not only do I receive messages from N America, but from Japan as well. At work the phone rings, we answer, and find ourselves talking with the missionary in Mozambique. (A rather disconcerting experience, similar to talking on a CB radio. When one party quits speaking, there is an interval of a second or two, after which the other party can begin.)

Do I long for the good old days? No way! It was a good experience to have in life, an experience everyone should have—but only once. ▲

Calculators

When we moved to Brazil in 69, I had never seen a calculator. I don't know if they even existed back then.

When I was still in my teens, Franklin Koehn was the owner of the Galva Feed Mill. One day my dad came home and told about the ultra-modern calculating machine Franklin had in his office. It would convert bushels into something, or something into bushels, or something or other.

I knew that I just had to see this latest technological breakthrough. So the day came that I found myself in Franklin's office, together with several others, all wanting to see a demonstration of his miraculous machine.

Franklin took his place behind the counter and began making a speech about what was about to happen. We, in front of the counter, leaning over, tried to understand his technical explanations.

Then Franklin began punching buttons. It was quite evident that not just anyone could run that machine. Wide-eyed we watched.

After Franklin hit the last button, the machine started making the most awful noise: Clickty clack, clackty click, clickaclack, clackaclack, click, click, click, clack, clack, clack, clicktyclacktyclick, clacktyclicktyclack, and on and on and on. It was a real sensation to know that what we were hearing was another technological breakthrough.

Anyway, finally before the machine did its final clack, it began spitting out a piece of paper with something printed on it. Dramatically Franklin tore off the printed part and showed it to us. There was absolutely no doubt about it. Times had changed. The fact that we didn't understand for sure what was printed on that paper didn't detract in the least from the historical importance of what just happened. (It was one small click for man, but a giant clack for humanity.)

Now we jump ahead to 1972, the year that Jake & Betty Loewen and children moved to Brazil. Before leaving the US, he purchased a pocket calculator (not really "pocket," because it was a little too big to fit in your shirt pocket) for, as nearly as he can remember, some 250 dollars. With a bluish green display, it had the numbers keys, with + and - on one key, X and ÷ on another, and that was about it. The big difference

between this machine and Franklin's was that this one would do more than his, but made no noise. It was no easy matter to not covet that machine of Jakes.

(Just a little sidelight to that calculator, Jake has it to this day and it still works, which is quite impressive. The life expectancy of most of those first machines was three to six months.)

The other day I went into one of our local stores to buy a pocket calculator. Among the many on display, the one that took my eye was a slim little machine in a plastic case. I asked the price, and it was something like four dollars. I told the fellow I liked it, but would prefer something in a flexible case, which I believed would give it more protection in case it fell to the floor. He held it up and dropped it on the counter, with no ill effects. I told him, "The problem is that when I drop it, it may just be on a cement floor." He said, "Let's try it." He held it up and dropped it on the hard floor and it worked just like new. I said, "I'll take it."

Yep, a lot of things have changed since we moved to Brazil. If when I was watching Franklin's machine do its thing, someone would have told me that someday in Brazil I would buy a calculator weighing only several ounces, with a percentage key, square root, memory, and the whole nine yards—for four bucks—I would probably have said, "Hold your horses..." ▲

Milking Cows

My neighbor, Milton Loewen, has a dairy and is installing a bulk tank. To you N American readers that's no big deal. To us it is.

When we moved to Brazil, there wasn't a single dairy in the Rio Verde area. True there were people who milked up to a hundred cows once a day, but probably didn't get over 70 or 80 gallons of milk. During the dry season when pastures were bad, that could drop to 40 gallons or less.

Let's visit an old-time "dairy farm" that milks a hundred cows. Our tour will begin at 2:00 p.m.

The cowboy has just finished saddling up his horse. As he swings up into the saddle, his faithful dog is out leading the way, knowing exactly where they are going and what they will be doing.

As the cowboy—let's call him Luiz—gets to the corral gate, the horse expertly swings into a parallel position to the gate, with his head next to the latch. Luiz reaches down, unlatches the gate and shoves it open enough for the horse to get through. Now on the outside, Luiz reaches out and gives the gate a shove, the horse sidesteps up to the gate so that it can be latched. Breaking into a slow lope, the horse takes Luiz to the pasture where the milk cows are spending the day grazing.

Luiz appears to be in no hurry. You get the impression he is out on a pleasure jaunt, but that's not really the case. He is wide awake, looking for telltale signs of trouble. He scans the sky—for buzzards. Circling buzzards mean something has died, or is about to

Brazil 8 News

die. If it happens to be the dry season, as he rides along streams he watches the swampy grassland that can usually be found on both sides. Since this grass stays green after the other grass has turned brown, cattle often venture into the swamps and get stuck. Unless rescued, they soon become buzzard chow.

Soon Luiz comes upon the herd. Grazing peaceably, as he rides up, gently calling them, “Aing...aing... aing... vaaaaaca...aing...aing...vom...aing...” Some of the cows he calls by name.

Slowly they turn and begin heading toward the ranch. They go slowly, grazing all the while. A good cowboy doesn't run his cattle. As they cross the ford in the stream, the cows take a deep drink. Patiently Luiz waits, his knee hooked over the pommel of his saddle.

By the time Luiz has the herd in the corral, it is nearly 4:00 o'clock.

Just a word on the corral; one side of it is built right up against the house. Notice, however, that the house has been built up on a high stone foundation and windows are more or less the height of the top of the corral. This is an interesting and most practical arrangement. While the men are working in the corral, the cook or lady of the house prepares some scalding hot cafezinho (strong, usually home-toasted and home-ground, coffee, served in tiny cups) and takes it to the windows. The cowboys come and have a quick break.

On the other hand, if the cowboys need some medications for a sick critter, they simply have to come to the window and ask for what they need. When they are milking, the milk intended for household use can be handed through the window.

I doubt if there are many ranches left with this kind of arrangement, and although they defy the American concept of practicality, the corral attached to the house was a real success back when we first came to Brazil.

Now let's return to Luiz who has just brought the cattle into the corral and latched the gate. He goes up to the window, has a cup of coffee, and then begins to apartar as vacas (separate the cows). This requires considerable skill. Stationing himself at a gate that opens inward, he again calls the cows: “Aing...aing...aing...vaaaaaca...aing...”

The cows crowd to the gate, together with their calves. He must let the cows out, but keep the calves in. It's like chairing a meeting. If he loses control there may be a stampede. He must open the gate just enough for one cow to scrape through, and snap it shut before the trailing calf can get through. Pushing this calf out of the way, he repeats the process with another cow, and another... until finally only the calves are left in the corral. With a few backward moos, the cows head back to the pasture. The calves are herded into a large pen where they will spend the night—at least part of it.

Luiz does up the rest of the chores and then goes down to the spring to bathe. Returning to the house, Luiz heads to the kitchen and direct to the wood stove, where he serves himself a heaping plate of food. In a bit he is back for a second heaping. Cowboys burn a lot of calories.

Desert is a cup of scalding cafezinho. Luiz and the other ranch workers laze around for a while, discussing futebol (soccer) and the happenings of the day. Long about 7:30 he is hitting the hay.

Brazil News

At 3:30 sharp Luiz is dressing in the flickering light of a lamparina (small kerosene light with a round wick and no globe—often fueled with diesel fuel, which creates a cloud of smoke). The night is dark, but not silent. Outside a hundred calves are bawling, calling to their mothers who are waiting outside the corral gate. The cows are answering back. After being separated for nearly 12 hours, there are a hundred empty stomachs and a hundred full udders.

Luiz opens the gate and the cows eagerly shoulder their way into the corral. The gate is shut after the last cow has entered.

What kind of cows are we talking about? They are all of Brahma stock. Most are gado comum (common cattle), but there are some gir cows mixed in. The gir is an improved common cow, decidedly a better milk producer than a straight common cow. With long drooping ears, they are as beautiful as they are gentle. Today the gir has practically disappeared, replaced by better strains.

Let's get on with the program. It's time to start milking. Luiz has two helpers. Since he has more experience, he will end up milking around 40 cows and each of the others 30.

Milking equipment: Each cowboy has two ropes approximately six feet long strung over his shoulder and is carrying a milk bucket tapered in toward the bottom, that will handle a gallon of milk. The "bulk tank" is on a wall of the corral, a stand with three 50 liter milk cans on it.

Now, with the moon low in the sky, and the stars twinkling brightly, the actual milking begins. Luiz opens the gate to the calf pen and lets three calves into the corral. With unerring accuracy, each one heads directly to its mother. Each cowboy follows a calf.

While his calf greedily downs its first gulps of milk, Luiz takes one of the ropes strung over his shoulder and expertly flicks it around the cow's hind legs, crisscrosses the ends between the legs, draws them tight and ties the rope. Now he drapes the second rope over the calf's neck and deftly brings the ends around its nose in such a way as to form a halter. Still tugging the ends of the rope, Luiz wheels the calf around until its head is next to the cow's front leg, to which he ties the rope.

Why all this rigmarole? Some kind of voodoo session? Nothing of the kind.

Brahma cows won't let down their milk unless they are first primed by the calf. (I realize that the pragmatic American mind has a bit of difficulty accepting something so devoid of apparent logic.) Now, with the calf securely tied to the front leg of the cow, Luiz hunches down, holding the pail between his knees, and begins milking.

The idea is to milk as much as possible without shorting the calf. After all, the little bit it drank priming the cow isn't enough to satisfy it after a 12 hour fast.

After the proper amount has been milked, possibly a quart or two, or maybe a gallon, if the cow is a top producer, Luiz stands up, releases the calf by giving the rope a quick jerk. With another jerk he removes the rope from the cow's hind legs. After dumping the milk in the can on the stand, he repeats this process by releasing another calf.

A light appears in the ranch house window over the corral. Someone, maybe the

housewife, maybe the cook, is stirring. Soon there is a pot of hot cafezinho on the windowsill. Luiz and his helpers take a quick break.

When they finish the last cow, day is breaking. The cows and calves are turned out to pasture.

And the milk. Depending on the distance from town, the cans will be loaded on a horse cart and one of the workers will head in to run a door-to-door milk route. As he approaches each house where a customer lives, he calls out, “Óooo leeeeeeeeite!” The housewife, or one of the children comes out into the street with a pitcher or some kind of container. With a long-handled galvanized one-liter dipper, the proper amount of liters are measured out.

And if the distance to town is too great? Then the cowboy’s wives will probably make cheese to be sold in town.

I suppose there are still places in remote areas where a similar system is used, but locally things have changed. There are a lot of good Holstein cows being milked. The gir/Holstein cross—called girolanda—is found on many fazendas. Milking machines and bulk tanks are coming in...and yes, you guessed it, with the Holsteins it isn’t necessary to tie the calf to the cow’s front leg. ▲

The Colony

Nosso Pesqueiro

Nosso Pesqueiro means “Our Fishing Hole.” As you come into the Monte Alegre end of the Colony, you see a sign that says “Nosso Pesqueiro”, and underneath that, “Léo” That’s Leo Dirks.

We have mentioned before that different ones have fish ponds here on the Colony. Naturally you are wondering if they are making any money. So am I.

It hasn’t been a get-rich-fast project, that I’m quite sure of. There are two reasons for this: First, we haven’t had a dependable outlet for our fish. During Lent, they sell like hotcakes, but during the other 320 days of the year it’s a different story. Second, fish ponds have been a sideline activity. Our people haven’t depended on them for a living. Necessity isn’t only the mother of invention, but also of dedication.

Right now the local rage is Pay-by-the-Pound fish ponds. So much so that some operators aren’t able to keep up with the demand. They are having to buy from other raisers, including here on the Colony. It’s a way of getting rid of fish, but not necessarily of making money, since the buyer is wanting to make a profit on what he buys.

That brings us to Nosso Pesqueiro, Leo’s project. He has turned his ponds into a pesque pague (fish-by-the-pound). He too is having to buy fish from others, at least for the time being, until his project is in full production.

The advantage of this kind of setup is that there is no middleman and it isn’t necessary to clean fish. Furthermore, it requires only a small acreage. The

disadvantage—at least for some—is the influx of people. Leo tells me his customers are an outstanding bunch of people. On Saturdays and holidays there are enough people there to where the Dirks family sells snacks and drinks. They are building a shelter that may eventually develop into a sort of restaurant. More power to them.

For Leo this project is rapidly becoming his main activity, which explains its success. Another factor in his favor is that he is using water diverted from the creek that borders his place. All of his ponds are gravity fed.

I understand that some days there are up to 15 or 20 cars parked near his ponds. That can mean a lot of kilos of fish, which he sells for R\$3.50 a kilo (US\$2.10), actually more than they would have to pay in the supermarket in town. But since life's luxuries usually aren't free, fishing in Leo's pond isn't either.

The other Saturday I visited Nosso Pesqueiro. I was impressed by the fact that it isn't a simple matter of throwing in a hook and pulling out a fish. It takes some skill.

In fact, it can take some real skill. A fellow hooked a fish and tried to reel it in, but it flat wouldn't come. The thing had to be mighty big, or mighty something. Then the fisherman noticed that another fellow, sitting on the bank on the other side of the pond, was having a similar struggle with a fish. He couldn't reel his in either. Elementary, my dear Watson. Both had hooked the same fish, from opposite sides. Once it was decided who would reel in and who would reel out, the mystery was solved. That's Nosso Pesqueiro for you. They catch you coming and going. ▲

To Brazil by Van

From Peru to Bolivia

Here in this settlement we checked out our brakes and found a man that would fix them if we had the pads. We didn't have any brake pads along, so he told us that in the next big town we could get them fixed. So now we are going to the next big town and the border is not far away and the road blocks are more thickly populated. I want to add what some of the girls wrote in their diaries.

“It is 5:00 p.m. and we have reached a little bit a town called San Luisa. Its about the cleanest place we've been to in two days. I know God works miracles. Right when we reached this town, our tire went flat. We had to go about a fourth of a mile and we reached a shop. There is a restaurant right across from it.

“Rebecca said that her head was so full of air that she could air up the tire. We are so terribly dirty, especially our hair. But we want to get to the border line of Bolivia. We are about to go in and eat. Dad ordered fried chicken and salad. We had a great supper. We also had fried potatoes . We had seven flats.

“6:40 p.m. Another disaster has happened. These people have places to stop, but some are closed. The first on the way had a long saw horse which we didn't see until we were right on top of it. The next one had a chain across the road and we ran right

over it. We jerked out the concrete posts holding the chain. To make matters worse, this happened at the aduana (customs), where they check your papers and let you out of the country. So we were almost out of Peru. It was horrible. I was sitting in the passenger seat and I didn't see it until we were on top of it.”

This chain they had across the road was to stop the people for whatever they may be crossing with. So when we were coming from the one side they had this big bus stopped on the other side and it seemed he had some mighty bright lights shining in our eyes while the custom house and chain area was pretty dark. So we just came in there like we owned the place, but they didn't like what was going on. As mad as that cop seemed to be, there was nothing funny for the moment. We got by with 25 dollars. There is a small souvenir scar on the corner under the lights above the bumper, where the chain caught and another just below the hinges of the side door, where the metal post hit, beside there is not much to be seen. The Lord is kind and protects more than we realize.

Thankful, we drove on to the nearby town and found a place to sleep. In the morning I went with a taxi to look for a mechanic. Amazing as it may seem, these people don't have to have the highest tech in tools to do their job. This taxi man took me to a place that would not give much expectation, but he knew just what to do. He put new liner or brake padding on my plate and we were ready to brake again for 40 dollars. When I got back the family was ready.

We were leaving Peru in the early afternoon. Somehow it took very long to get our stuff together so we could keep on going. About all anybody was concerned about, was that we go, go, go...

It was already mid-afternoon or later by the time we were leaving the border. Before we left the border we found out that fuel was scarce until we would reach La Paz, so we looked around a little while for gas, but it was not getting us anywhere. We had gone just a little ways when this elderly man came hurrying toward the road, flagging us down. He was dressed much like an Amish and looked so, we stopped and gave him a lift. There seemed to be something major going on in the community with so many people going in the same direction all dressed up. We asked this elderly man what was going on and he told us that it was the festival of St. John.

As we drove along we also asked about the possibility of buying fuel and, oh yes, he knew just where some was. A few hundred yards from the main road and toward the way he was headed there was a settlement and one of the stores sold fuel. So he helped us and we helped him.

We were traveling dirt road again, but not nearly as rough as the one a few days earlier. At La Paz, an hour or so later, we were again on asphalt. We stopped in La Paz for supper. We had a good supper, but it was already dark, so we didn't get to see too much. It was a little amusing that we ate the guy's food all up where we stopped to eat, so when we left, he closed up.

Now we were ready to leave La Paz and head for Cochabamba. We didn't get very far before we had another flat. This time we had a tube along so we put a tube in and were again ready to go at 10:00 p.m.

I got sleepy so Rebekah drove for a while and while she was driving she missed the road to Cochabamba, so we had to backtrack and find the right road. It wasn't so bad, other than a few odd things that are sure to happen when you are driving at midnight in a strange country.

Our first direction givers were two drunk guys, then a taxi driver came by and helped us, but with the confusion of the two tipsies, he led us out the wrong way. Then when I got out to pay him, I wanted to make sure I knew where to go, so I was talking with him and he realized that he had led me out the wrong direction. We finally got it all straight.

Early in the morning we were out in the depth of rugged mountains. We bought a little something to eat along the roadside. We were happy we did not try to drive this part of the road at night, because it was under repair and you just had to keep an eye open for these big square holes they had dug out about four feet deep, where they then would fill back up and pack the asphalt. Again we were protected by a mighty God. At night this would have been bad.

We ate a late dinner, or early supper, in Santa Cruz, where we then turned off on a dirt road toward Paraguay. ▲

Book Review

Visions of Heaven and Hell

By John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*. I have just finished translating this booklet into Portuguese and must admit that it isn't a book that can easily be shaken off. The message is powerful.

Bunyan relates the experience of a certain Epenetus, who was convinced by an evil companion that God didn't exist. This brought such darkness to his life that, as he puts it: "I took a resolution to destroy myself, and in order to do this, went out one morning to a nearby woods, where I intended to act this bloody tragedy. But methought I heard a secret whisper saying, 'O Epenetus, plunge not thyself in everlasting misery to gratify thy soul's worst enemy. That fatal stroke thou art about to give, seals up thine own damnation. For if there be a God, as surely there is, how can you hope for mercy from Him when you thus willfully destroy His image?'..."

"Whence this secret whisper came I knew not, but believe it was from God; for I am sure it came with so much power it made me fling away the instrument with which I had intended to do violence to my own life..."

Falling upon his knees, Epenetus prayed to God, recognizing His sovereignty and thanking Him for sparing His life. Walking to a nearby river, he sat down on the bank to ponder all that had just taken place. He says that "while my thoughts were taken up thus as I sat upon the bank, I was suddenly surrounded with a glorious light, the exceeding brightness of this was such as I had never seen anywhere like it before..."

Realizing that he was in the presence of a divine being, he exclaimed, “Oh, how utterly unworthy I am of all this grace and mercy!”

The beautiful answer to this confession was: “The divine Majesty does not consult, in showing mercy, thine unworthiness, but His own unbounded goodness and vast love...”

The heavenly visitor then told him, “That you may never doubt any more the reality of eternal things, the end of my coming to you is to convince you of the truth of them; not by faith only but by sight also.” Thus they began to rise. A moment later, possibly hundreds of thousands of miles into space, his conductor said to him, “That little spot that now looks so dark and contemptible, is that world of which you were so recently an inhabitant. Here you may see how little all that world appears, for a small part of which, so many do continually labor, and lay out all their strength and time to purchase it. Yea, this is that spot of earth, to obtain one small part whereof so many men have run the hazard of losing, nay, have actually lost their precious and immortal souls; so precious that the Prince of Peace has told us that though one man could gain the whole, it would not recompense so great a loss. And the great reason of their folly is, that they do not look to things above...”

As they glide through fields of stars, Epenetus comments to his conductor about the greatness of God. “You shall see far greater things than these. These are all but the scaffolds and outworks to that glorious building wherein the blessed above inhabit, ‘that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,’ a view of which (as far as you are capable to comprehend it) shall now be given you.”

When they reach heaven, Epenetus meets the prophet Elijah, who gives him a tour of the eternal realm of the blessed. He speaks with other saints.

Next Epenetus is conducted to the depths of hell. Here he is able to speak with different condemned souls, including the infidel who wrote the book which contributed to his own unbelief on earth.

Possibly the greatest contribution of *Visions of Heaven and Hell* is its ability to show that all of God’s judgments are true and just. It becomes vividly clear that the degree of condemnation is directly proportional to the knowledge had on earth. Thus it can be inferred that the hottest spots in hell will be reserved for those who knew and practiced the “faith once delivered to the saints” and then turned their backs on the Savior and His doctrine. To be lukewarm in God’s church would seem much less serious than to be a serial killer out in the world. If the message of this book is true, which surely it is, then the one who rejected the faith once delivered to the Saints will have a hotter place in hell than a serial killer, and who knows, maybe than Nero or Hitler.

Read this book. It will do something for you. This & That

The Rio Verdinho and Monte Alegre congregations have a joint worship service the first Sunday evening of each month. Instead of the normal opening, the youth sing for 25 minutes. The first Sunday evening of this month they took the entire evening to give us an Easter program.

Edinei & Janete Alves, the missionaries on the Mirassol, São Paulo mission, had a

Brazil ¹⁵ News

little boy, Gabriel Otávio, on the 15th. On the 2nd the Jair Costa family and Adriana Soares took Lucélia Duarte (Janete's first cousin) to help out during this time.

The evening of the 16th we had the Annual Meeting report in English at the Monte Alegre Congregation. The evening of the 21st the report was given in Portuguese in town at the Rio Verde Congregation.

Eugene, Ileen Koehn's son, is spending some time in voluntary service at the Grand Forks unit in North Dakota.

Carlos & Nita Becker are remodeling—no, remaking—the larger house on their place. The house they are living in now is bursting at the seams. Quite a few showed up on the 27th and 29th for workdays, when most of the masonry work was done.

Lynnette, Eldon & Bonnie Penner's daughter is here from the US for a visit.

What about the Colony land levelers? They have been without work for several months. And it isn't for lack of work. The municipal and state governments agreed to foot the bill for the land leveling on the Perdigão poultry and hog project. However when the incumbent party was voted out this last election, it put things upstairs in a turmoil. It appears the new government is getting its act together. Also, a bypass is to be built all the way around Rio Verde to keep the heavy traffic out of town. This in itself will be a Herculean task. Needless to say, our men hope to get in on some of the work.

Sérgio & Katrina Alves had a boy on the 26th, Conrad Daile.

There are going to be Mennonites galore from Brazil visiting N America the months of May, June and July. ▲

Brazil 16 News

Brazil News

Brazil 18 News

Brazil ¹⁹ News

Brazil 20 News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil²³ News

Brazil 24 News

Brazil News

Brazil²⁶ News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil News