

Brazil News



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Editorial

Conviction

Conviction is a self-propelled belief. In Christian circles to say that someone is a “man of conviction,” is the highest praise that can be given. It is clearly understood that the beliefs held are pure, just and noble, and like Minutemen, ready to leap into action on a moment’s notice.

Within Christian fellowship, conviction is one of the most delicate graces. As a tight rope walker, its survival and effectiveness depends on perfect balance:

Conviction must be willing to stand alone, but never exult in doing so or try to be conspicuous.

Conviction must be grounded on sound principles, yet without becoming unprincipled or radical in expression.

Conviction must be a dominant force, however without becoming domineering or obnoxious.

Daniel was a man of conviction. When informed of the king’s foolish decree, he didn’t blame others. He didn’t stall for time to try and come up with a slip-through solution. He didn’t even have to go through a great struggle to find the Lord’s will. He knew perfectly well what the Lord’s will was. To live his conviction all he had to do was continue exactly as he had done in the past. This took him through the lion’s den, and then to the king’s side.

Unlike Daniel, when Joseph was suddenly faced with a choice between purity and pleasure in Potifer’s absence, he couldn’t maintain his routine. He had to flee – and fast. This decision led him to prison, and then to the king’s side.

As David beheld the sleeping form of the man who sought his life, his loyal friends, to whom he owed so much, encouraged him to take this “God-given” opportunity to once and for all rid himself of his implacable enemy and return to a normal life. Already anointed king and aware of his strategic place in God’s plan, David rejected his friends’

advice, appearing foolish, and remained a fugitive, until God himself placed him on the throne.

The conviction born out of a blinding light on the way to Damascus, placed the apostle Paul on death row, where he suffered many stripes, was stoned, shipwrecked, robbed, imprisoned, persecuted by the heathen and false brethren, enduring hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness. Brought into the presence of kings and rulers, he didn't hesitate to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, even knowing that he was sealing his own doom.

No, the way of conviction isn't an easy road.

As knowledge increases, conviction decreases. It shouldn't be that way, but facts are facts. So much of today's conviction isn't self-propelled. We're regressing into the old pull-type era. When called upon to make a decision, we look around for someone else in a similar situation to see how he is handling it. We stall for time. When we fall we excuse ourselves saying it all happened so suddenly, so unexpected.

Imagine what the Bible would have had to say about Daniel, Joseph, David and Paul if they would have felt the need of a concurring opinion when faced with a crisis. Browse through the Martyrs Mirror and notice that, contrary to modern agriculture, the self-propelled Christian was invented before the pull-type.

An airline pilot must find it comforting to know there is a copilot just to his right. Doubtlessly they discuss different situations, potential emergencies, pertaining to their flight. Yet in a cockpit where a moments hesitation can spell doom, a pilot cannot always solicit his colleague's opinion before making a decision.

Imagine a pilot in his final approach, close to touch-down, when he feels his craft being tugged by a violent down-draft. Should he look at his copilot and urgently ask, "Now what, Joe? What do you recommend? Shall we give it full throt . . . ?" Those are the last words recorded in the little black box.

It's not wrong to ask for advice. At times it's quite necessary. The problem is when we try to hitch a ride on our brother's conviction. Or when we commit spiritual plagiarism, that is, we watch our brother out of the corner of our eye and then imitate what he does because we don't have confidence in our own conviction, or haven't even been concerned enough to have developed an opinion. So we borrow his.

This isn't as far-fetched as it may sound. Did you know that when a vote is held in church – especially concerning a delicate issue –, song leaders must show more conviction than ushers. If you don't believe it, try it sometime. Sit right up front when a vote is to be held – so far up that you can't see how others are voting, and yet where everyone can see your hand when it is raised.

Now sit on the back bench. When the leader says, "Everyone who feels we should . . . raise your hand," you see few hands, so you don't raise your hand either. Then, "Everyone who feels we shouldn't . . . raise your hand." Now a lot of hands go up, and yours pops up too. It's the pop-up vote, the vote without conviction, or shall we say, the pull-type Christian's way of reaching a decision.

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(Ushers, we're not suggesting you have less conviction than song leaders. Just making a point at your expense.)

Before you write this little example off as being slightly facetious, take a second thought. How many times has your vote been a pop-up vote, unconsciously based on the vote of someone sitting ahead of you in whom you have a great deal of confidence?

We have here in Brazil, in our local congregation, used the "blind vote" a few times, when, because of the delicacy of the situation, members have been asked to vote with their eyes closed. It works beautifully, but if you consider this a bit far out, how about the lap-vote, when everyone would be expected to look at his own lap each time a raising of hands was requested?

True conviction is beautiful. Counterfeit conviction isn't. How can you tell the difference?

I have told the story before of the days when our currency was so worthless here that people would haul it to the bank in briefcases and large paper bags. Tellers would count their way through these huge stacks of money with an incredible speed, relying almost exclusively on touch, often looking around as the bills flew through their deft hands. On one occasion I especially remember, the teller suddenly stopped, pulled a bill out of the stack, held it to the light, and announced, "This one is counterfeit." It was. How did he detect it? By the feel.

Counterfeit convictions don't feel right. They aren't balanced. Often they are loudly announced, showing an implicit disapproval for those who don't share their feelings. Frequently of a very conservative nature, they are an unconscious cover-up for questionable or permissive attitudes. In a normal, spiritual congregation, a conviction that openly frowns on an established and accepted practice, probably would catch the teller's attention.

We need more self-propelled convictions. The kind that don't have to be stuck in the microwave oven and heated up for a few minutes before they can be used. We need the kind of conviction that, like a true Minuteman, springs to life at a moment's notice. And that like Joseph, works even when all alone with temptation.

Conviction is a self-propelled belief, the Minuteman that guards your soul. ▲

Colonization

Bolivia

Approximately seven years ago I was in the courthouse in a neighboring town getting a document. The fellow with whom I was dealing was curious about the Colony and asked a lot of questions. Then he began telling me about cheap land out in Bolivia. He claimed to know some high-up officials there and offered to go with us if we were interested in taking a look.

Some time ago a realtor friend from southern Brazil, Uwe Schmidt, mentioned the

possibility of some of us going with him to see cheap land in Bolivia. Then the April 12 edition of VEJA published a four page report on the Santa Cruz area of Bolivia, where some 200 Brazilians have bought farms in the last three years.

All this, together with other reports one hears, indicates there may be real opportunity in Bolivia. And it may just be a lot of smoke too.

What follows is based on the report in VEJA by Marcos Pivetta and statistics taken out of the Almanaque Abril.

Bolivia is a small land-locked country bordered by Brazil (north and east), Argentina and Paraguay (south), and Chile and Peru (west), with an area of 1.098.581 km² and a population of approximately 8 million inhabitants.

The Brazilians, who now own 1.25 million acres near Santa Cruz, are responsible for 30% of all the soybeans produced in Bolivia. Virgin soil, which must be cleared, is selling for approximately 80 US dollars an acre.

On the negative side of the ledger is the fact that Bolivia has no natural outlet for its products, part of which must be exported through the port in Santos, São Paulo.

This added freight, however is offset by a number of factors:

- > The cheap price of land.
- > The high fertility. No lime or fertilizer is needed.
- > Extremely level land. Once the land is cleared, it looks like western Kansas, except for the forest that can be seen in the background.
- > Low interest loans in Bolivian banks.
- > Economic stability. Inflation last year was 7.5%
- > Machinery, both new and used, as well as vehicles, can be imported duty free.
- > No restriction on the amount of land that can be purchased by foreigners, except for a 50 km. strip along the borders.
- > Bank accounts can be in national currency or dollars. All profits can be taken out of the country without any restrictions.
- > Foreigners are welcome.
- > The language. Spanish is rapidly replacing Dutch as the second language of the Holdeman people in N America. And for those who don't speak Spanish, it's one of the easiest languages to learn.

Too good to be true? Possibly. But it certainly does make a good story. Now let's listen to what a few of the people have to say that VEJA interviewed.

Daniel Netzlaff from Mato Grosso bought 22.500 acres in Los Troncos, which is 140 km. from Santa Cruz. Daniel's great-granddad migrated from Germany to the Ukraine toward the end of the last century. Some time later his granddad migrated to southern Brazil, where the family lived for 50 years. During the seventies, Daniel's dad decided to move to Mato Grosso. Three years ago he had a meeting with his children and suggested they sell all their holdings in Brazil and reinvest in Bolivia, which is what they did.

For 11 years the gaúcho (someone who lives in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul) Ari Strejevitch ran a farm store in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso. What he couldn't

figure out was that his customers from Bolivia would always buy corn seed, but never fertilizer. And the varieties they bought were those that would only yield properly in very fertile soil. Finally the truth sank home that they simply didn't use fertilizer.

When Collor became president of Brazil several years ago and confiscated practically all savings, Ari's business hit the rocks. He sold the 750 acre farm he owned in Mato Grosso do Sul and bought five times more in Bolivia. He likes to brag that the soil on his place is so good that it can be sold in Brazil as fertilizer.

Adolfo Valério, from the southern state of Paraná, moved to Mato Grosso where he built up his farm to where he owned 12.500 acres. When he hit a bad streak and couldn't pay up, the bank foreclosed on him. He got himself a job as the foreman on a large farm in Mato Grosso. Soon someone offered him a job as foreman in Bolivia. To make the deal more attractive, they threw in 750 acres of land. The Lord willing, he says, he will once again become rich in Bolivia.

Uwe Schmidt hopes to come to the Colony shortly and give us a report on land in Bolivia and in the northeastern state of Piauí here in Brazil, where there is an area referred to as the Nile Valley of Brazil. According to Uwe, the wells are artesian. That's material for another article. What it all adds up to is this: There is still opportunity for farmers – and for people who would like to pioneer. ▲

Brazilians Write

More on the Little Engine that Could

Call it coincidence if you will. But when I went to work on Mensageiro number 277 this week, I found I had two articles on my desk that illustrate how all gifts are useful.

The first article, *Eternal Flames*, is written by Paulo David, an educated brother who teaches school in Rio Verde. The second article, *How God Healed My Son*, was written by sister Isabel Aniceto Barbosa, from the Goiânia mission. Isabel is semi-illiterate.

Paulo tackles a deep subject, something Isabel wouldn't even dream of doing. And yet I find her article just as inspiring as Paulo's. How does she do it? She tells an experience. It's a very simple experience, but it rings clear as a bell.

Eternal Flames

Do you believe that hell is real? Would a loving God cast His creatures into a lake of fire, there to suffer through all eternity? Couldn't scriptures that deal on this subject be interpreted figuratively? Couldn't hell be . . . ?

How many of us haven't been approached by someone with similar questions? Or maybe even at some time or another had a few of them float around in our mind? Why is it so hard to accept the idea of eternal punishment? In the gospel of Luke we

read about the time when John the Baptist asked the multitudes that followed him, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Luke 3:7).

There is something in our carnal nature that rejects this truth. Secular religion and worldly churches, built upon the foundation of humanism, would never consider questioning the eternal beatitudes, but when the subject is eternal punishment and the perdition of ungodly men, their attitude changes. Their theologies have produced purgatories, reincarnations, millenniums, universal salvation, predestination, eternal security in which it is impossible for the saved to again fall into sin, and even the doctrine which teaches that those who never believed will be annihilated.

Uppermost in all this is an effort to appease the carnal mind, deceiving those who don't love the truth or who believe that somehow they will escape judgment to come (see 2 Timothy 4:3). “It's all a matter of interpretation,” say the false teachers. They resort to Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, or anything else for that matter, to prove that fire isn't fire, judgment isn't judgment, eternal isn't eternal. They openly declare that when God speaks of hell in His Word, “That isn't what He means.” It's as though God uses hell as a threat to coerce man to obey Him. Or like telling a child, “You better not go out outside or the big, bad wolf will eat you.” In other words, it's as if God were telling a little white lie to shake man up enough so he'll listen.

They purposely forget that “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19).

In the following comments we don't intend to try and dig up all the verses that deal with this subject, because the conviction we hold concerning this truth isn't limited to only those scriptures. Rather we would like to concisely present four fundamental truths that prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that there will be a final judgment, an eternal reward and an eternal punishment, and that all men will receive one or the other, according to the condition of their soul. These truths are:

What God is.

What sin is.

What man is.

What Christ did on Calvary's cross.

What God is. “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly” (Isaiah 33:14-15).

“For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.” (Deuteronomy 4:24).

God's attributes are infinite. He is loving, kind and merciful. He is righteous, unchanging, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, sovereign, wise, holy... It is wrong to believe that God is not everything at the same time. For example, that when he is loving, He can't be just. Or that when he is just, He can't be merciful. The truth is that God is always everything that he is. “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14). His justice is also loving, wise, holy and merciful. His love is just and holy, a consuming fire.

It is before this glorious God that one day we are going to appear (See Revelation 20:11-13).

Isaiah asks, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?” (Isaiah 33:14). David also asks, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?” (Psalm 24:3). He answers his own question: “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (vv. 4-5).

This brings us to the effect that sin had on the soul, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

What sin is – What does it mean to come short of the glory of God? By the Word of God we understand that man in the Garden of Eden was in perfect communion with his Creator. He was surrounded by God’s glory. And since he was clothed in glory, he was like the bush Moses saw in the wilderness – it burned but wasn’t consumed (see Exodus 3:2).

When the Lord walked through the garden, His glory, which is like a flame, did them no harm. Rather, to them it was glorious. But when man sinned (see Genesis chapter 3), something happened in his soul, for now he was afraid of God’s presence. Why? Because after sinning, the fire which before was glorious, now became a consuming fire. That which before was wonderful and brought happiness, now became terrible and filled man with fear.

It is exactly this that sin does to the soul of man – it makes it totally incompatible with the divine nature. When every living soul will have to stand before the Lord, what effect will this glorious presence have on the impenitent, on those who weren’t cleansed of their sin? Will they feel peace, joy and happiness? No! They will feel pain, fear and torment; they will cry out and gnash their teeth.

Let’s just suppose that hell didn’t exist and that God would take everyone to heaven, the redeemed and the impenitent, to spend eternity there. Would the wicked who made it to heaven find eternal happiness? Absolutely not! We must understand that the saved won’t be happy simply because they’re in heaven, nor will the lost be in torment because they are in hell. Heaven and hell are only places prepared for the saved and lost. The true happiness of the saved lies in the fact that their souls were redeemed from all sin and that God dwells in their heart. The lost will suffer because their souls continue with the stain of sin. This sin will doom them to the torture of the eternal flame. Even if the lost could go to heaven, they would still be in torment, because heaven would then be a place of sin and torment. This is impossible for God has never planned it this way. Sin will never enter heaven, a place of peace and happiness.

But someone may ask: Doesn’t a consuming fire destroy? Won’t it consume the soul of the unrighteous? Again the answer is no. Why? Because of human nature, the way man is made.

What man is – The Bible teaches us that man was made in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26). “The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). Because of this breath of life, this spirit which came from God, man became immortal. He was created a living soul, that is, a soul with life. The eternal touched the earthly and it became immortal. If death extinguished the life of a human soul, then man would be an animal and sin could be redeemed by death, simply because the soul would no longer exist and sin would be destroyed.

What meaning, then, would the plan of salvation have? In this case the effects of sin would only be temporal. God could then undo what he had done and begin everything afresh.

But since man was created immortal, what was done cannot be undone, but rather saved. Therefore, if we’re not redeemed, we will have to suffer the consequences of sin for all eternity, because in eternity the immortal will stand before the eternal, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44).

What Christ did on Calvary’s cross – Now we can understand why Jesus did what He did. He left His glory, being like unto a man, yet without sin, and offered himself a sacrifice so that by His blood, not only could we be forgiven for the offense committed against God, but could also be cleansed of sin and follow peace and holiness, “without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

The soul stained by sin cannot endure the presence of God and therefore will suffer eternally. Only the precious blood of the eternal Son of God has power to remove the stain of sin. The price paid for this was the death of the Son of God. We believe that if there would have been another way to save mankind, God’s Son wouldn’t have died. But if His beloved Son died, it’s because there was no other way. God has “no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezekiel 33:11), nor in their eternal suffering. To save the sinner, he paid the highest possible price. He gave all that He had – and He had everything – when He lovingly gave himself for us.

Let’s take advantage of the opportunity we have while in this tabernacle of clay and repent of our sins, looking in faith to the cross of Calvary where Christ was crucified. May we receive His pardon. May He cleanse us with the precious blood of Christ before this tabernacle is dissolved and we will stand before the glory of God, the eternal flames. ▲

How God Cured My Child

When I was reading the experience [translated out of the Nigerian Messenger] about how God brought back to life a sister in Nigeria who had died, I felt I should tell an experience I had.

I feel we should talk more about the healings that God brings about in our midst. The Church of God in Christ isn’t Pentecostal. When God heals us it is often through a simple prayer offered within the walls of our own house.

My experience. My oldest child had bronchitis. One day he became very sick and I,

as a mother, became quite worried. It was already night and so I knelt down and prayed. I asked God to show me what kind of medicine to give my child so he would get well. The next morning I went out into the backyard. There I felt an urge to make some ginger tea and give it to my child. But I decided to go to the grocery store first and buy some macaroni and make him some soup.

When I got to the supermarket, without saying a word, the owner, a lady, began telling me how to make ginger tea. I felt sure this was God's answer. I went home and made the tea and gave it to my child and soon he was better.

Life in Brazil

O Pecuarista

The Brazilian pecuarista – rancher – is an envied species. With good management, he can make a good living. With medium management, he can make a medium living. With poor management, he can usually make at least a poor living. That's more than you can say for farming and a lot of other pursuits.

A rancher's success depends largely on genetics (both his own and the herds'). A born rancher has a way with cattle. And that's that. He may not have a way with people. He may not have cost the government a lot in education. (In fact, the only degrees most ranchers can rightfully claim must be understood in Fahrenheit or Celsius.) He may wear clothes that are two sizes too big and three years too old. He may know the exact date his best cows were born, and yet turn red as a beet when asked when his wife or children were born. He may not carry a calculator in his shirt pocket, but when trying to close a deal with him, don't ever get the idea you can pull a fast one. He may complain a lot, but down deep there isn't another thing he would rather do.

Ranching is a virus with no known cure. I believe I have written before about a local rancher whose dad wanted him to be a doctor. Shortly before graduating, his dad died. The young man finished his schooling, got his diploma, but never wrote a prescription. Today, possibly in his early sixties, he is a very successful rancher. Another local rancher is an orthopedist who exchanged operating rooms for corrals early in his career.

Obviously most ranches are small. But not all.

In the town of Uberaba, population 280,000 (the hometown of João Souto, who married Charlene Loewen), there is a yearly Brahma cattle show that lasts almost three weeks. With 300,000 visitors from all over Brazil and even a few foreigners, the place literally bursts at the seams. There isn't a single vacancy in any of the town's hotels. Some locals vacate their own houses and rent them to groups for up to two thousand dollars a night. Others spend the nights in Uberlândia, a larger town 100 km. from Uberaba.

A trip to Uberaba during this time would prove there can be big money in ranching. The city becomes infested with expensive imported cars. In the airport there are rows of executive jets. Money flows freely.

During the last cattle show, a four and a half year old Brahma cow named Corvina da Terra Boa was sold for US\$110,000. In the 28 auctions held during this period, 1,800 animals were sold for a total of 6.6 million dollars. Together with sales made between individuals, approximately 10 million dollars changed hands.

The Brahma cattle raised here are ideal for a tropical climate. Originally imported from India, the predominant strain today is the Nelore, strictly a beef animal.

Milk cows today are an interesting breed called girolanda, a cross between Gir and Holstein. Fed little or no grain, they will produce an average of two gallons a day – figures which certainly won't impress N American dairy farmers. But remember that it's something that requires almost no investment. Most are milked right out in the corral.

Taking into consideration all the cows milked in Brazil, which probably includes even some Neloeres, the average yearly production per cow is 1,600 lbs.

Beef cattle still have a long way to go so far as carcass yield. At present a thousand kilos of carcass dresses out to 230 kilos of meat. But that isn't all bad. The meat has a much better flavor. (For you Americans living here that don't agree with me, remember: Gosto não se discute.)

Up until now there has unquestionably been more money in farming than in ranching. But I have a suspicion that on the Colony right now if people could, with the wave a wand, transform their farming operation into a ranch, a number would do so.

Should everyone on the Colony think of going to cattle? Of course not. Only those who have ranching in their genes should consider a gradual migration. ▲

Remembering Out Loud

Home is the Sailor

"This be the verse you grave for me:

Here he lies where he long'd to be;

Home is the sailor, home from the sea..."

-R. L. Stephenson

When Reno Hibner was laid to rest, just as the sun sank below the horizon on June 7, each one stood immersed in his own reverie. Those of us who spent a quarter century in the shadow of this courageous sailor, found silence more sacred than words. Our heart acknowledged what our mind resisted, that truly home was the sailor, home from the sea.

If Reno could be described in two words, they would be "Do it!" He was a man of action who knew that the best way to get something done is to do it. No problem was too small for Reno to give his full attention to.

Nearly 25 years ago I was teaching school. The Colony was in its infancy and times were hard. My two children and I rode to school each morning on a bike (our only

transportation). Then one day opportunity knocked. A neighbor across the river had a 60 kg. bag of eating beans for sale. The price was good, but my pocketbook wasn't.

Finally I decided to talk to Reno, who was on the school board. I explained the whole situation, how that it would be enough beans for the entire year, but that without an advance on my next months pay I couldn't swing the deal.

He made the advance (I think out of his own pocket) and I bought the beans. He didn't give me the go-around. He didn't toss me the money, like we sometimes disdainfully do to beggars. He didn't tell me to try and get the neighbor to give me time. He didn't suggest someone who might be able to help me. No. He saw my problem in the exact dimension that I saw it. And that is exactly what we appreciated in Reno. If he knew the solution, he didn't mess around.

We also looked to Reno when the problems were big – really big. When Pete Loewen and Denton Burns were killed in an automobile accident 22 years ago, the small group reeled as one who has been struck a mighty blow. On the day of the funeral, the church was jammed, with many outside. In a beautiful act of solidarity, the mayor, his councilmen, doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, businessmen, a priest and some nuns, neighbors and friends came to pay their last respects. When Reno rose to speak to this incongruous audience, our grief was lessened by the knowledge that the death of our loved ones was giving many souls the chance to clearly hear the truth for the first time. What he had to say exactly fit the occasion.

Also many years ago, a serious problem arose in the church involving some brethren who had become members, but could see only faults in the brotherhood. We were puzzled. What was behind it all? Until one day Reno identified the problem with just a few words out of the Bible. What he said was so obvious that in retrospect one wonders why no one thought about it sooner.

When a preacher and an interpreter work together for quite a length of time, an interesting affinity develops. It isn't that the interpreter knows what the preacher will say next, or that he can necessarily outguess him. But – and this computer operators will understand best – a virtual RAM memory is developed that has stored in, for quick retrieval, the persons speaking style, his vocabulary and most used phrases.

I interpreted for Reno for approximately 20 years. In the beginning it wasn't easy. Or to say it just the way it was, for several years it was very HARD. For several reasons. First of all, back those days we interpreters were anything but proficient. Portuguese was still a very foreign language to us. Secondly, anyone who ever heard Reno preach knows he didn't waste time. To have an interpreter systematically interrupt was tremendously hard on him. And on the interpreter.

However, once we got our act together, it was a memorable experience to interpret for Reno. And this brings us to an interesting little detail on his funeral. Due to his inactivity in the ministry, it was probably four or five years since I last interpreted for him. However, during the funeral as I interpreted the sermon for Min. Elias Stoltzfus, I had the distinct feeling I was interpreting for Reno. I appreciated this last chance.

Home is the sailor . . . The ship sails on. Reno no longer treads the deck. But we, who journeyed with him for many years, will miss him . . . *home from the sea.* ▲

Predated Checks

Adaptability. I doubt if there is any single word that describes a Brazilian better than adaptability. He can adapt to most any situation you can imagine. Or to paraphrase the old saying, in Brazil “Necessity is the mother of adaptation.”

This ability to adapt can be seen anyplace you look: in mechanic shops, in factories, in hospitals, in farm operations.

Many of the textile looms used in Brazil come, I believe, from England. The operating manuals come in English, which to many of the workers is Greek. I read an article in which a certain supplier says he can’t get over how in no time flat the Brazilian has the loom in operation, without the aid of operating manuals. Where they don’t have what it takes, or are unacquainted with the conventional way of doing things, they improvise, they adapt to the situation.

If you want to spend an interesting evening with Jake Loewen (who I believe is in the US right now), ask him to tell you what happens when an imported gear breaks and a replacement can’t be found in Brazil. They make it. So accurately you can’t tell it from the original part. But that’s not what this article is about.

With the chronic high inflation that plagued Brazil for decades, as usual people learned how to adapt. One of the most interesting adaptations has been the cheque predatado.

I mentioned some time ago how that in cattle auctions the sale doesn’t only depend on the price, but also on how much time will be given on the check. The buyer yells, “I’ll pay what you’re asking, if you’ll hold my check for 20 days.” Or 30 days, or whatever. There’s a good chance the buyer already has the money available, but by applying it on the financial market for 30 days, depending on inflation, he may make another 50%, thus bringing way down the price of the cattle purchased.

When I opened my store in town, I was soon initiated to how this works. Most businesses have two prices on their product: cash and time. Since everyone demands a discount, the second price would be given first. Then the buyer would insist, “But if I pay cash, what’s your price?” I would tell him. And then would come the glorious question: “And how much time do you give on cash?” In other words, for how long would I hold his check and still give him the cash price?

By law a check is the same as hard cash. However, in the last several years the courts have been ruling that a predated check is actually a type of loan. This opened the door for an entirely new kind of financial operation. Some banks accept a predated check, charge interest for the amount of days until the check is to be good, and put the remainder in the customer’s account. On the stipulated day, the bank runs the check through the normal channels. I might mention that the president has temporarily suspended this operation, as well as many other types of credit, in an effort to reduce spending.

In N America service stations put on price wars to attract customers. Here we have time wars. One station gives five days time on a check. Another follows with 10 days.

Now big signs go up informing the public that at station so and so, they are giving 15 days on the check. Someone else gives 20. I think the most time being given in Rio Verde right now is 25 days. People love it.

How is a check predated? Down in the bottom righthand corner, underneath the signature, someone scrawls in, “Bom para 09/06/95.” – “Good on June 9, 95.” Or a piece of paper is stapled or clipped to the upper righthand corner. Most businesses even have little slips of paper printed up specifically for this.

To hold a check is a matter of honor. To deliberately deposit a check before the agreed date is a grave infringement of this honor. Few things are harder on a persons credit rating than for word to get around that he cashes predated checks before the due date. A lot of friendships have been lost on account of this, and doubtlessly, some lives lost.

When someone accidentally deposits a check before the agreed time, he will feel honor bound to rush to the one who gave him the check, tell him what happened, and offer to deposit that amount in his account for the duration of their agreement. When this sincerity is shown, people are very understanding.

Even now with inflation at a record low of one percent per month, people can't shuck this habit.

And no, Quality Printing does not hold checks on BN subscriptions. ▲

The Day I Forgot

I used to sell feed to a local supermarket that raised its own fryers. The secretary would give me a check and I would take it to the supermarket for Luís, the owner, to sign.

On one occasion Luís had his secretary make out the check, but asked that I hold it for several days. However, when making my daily deposit, I slipped up and deposited Luis' check too. When I realized what had happened, the bank was closed. I beat it to the supermarket and said, “Luís, I did a terrible thing. I deposited that check you gave me.” He didn't seem perturbed. Suddenly he laughed, “I didn't even sign that check. Don't worry, the bank won't pay it.”

But the bank did pay it and apparently Luís had plenty of money to cover it. Just for kicks, however, he had the bank give him the check, which he showed to the teller who didn't do her job. She almost fainted. By law, she would have had to pay the check if Luís had insisted. ▲

This & That

May 16 was the Rio Verdinho School end of the year program.

Dan & Mary Holdeman from Clarksville, TX sent me a clipping of an article that was originally published in the New York Times, entitled “Farms' mechanization

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has helped make Brazil a world 'food power' ” Our neighbor Douglas Ferrell was interviewed by James Brooke, who zeroed in on his farming operation. A few excerpts: “Out here in Brazil’s big sky country, where the cows outnumber people and the billboards tout weed killers . . .” Quoting Doug, “You can make 40 percent on your investment out here . . . I have been planting for 13 years, and I have never had a crop failure. Some of the Mennonites have been here almost 30 years, and they have never had a crop failure.” “One of his Mennonite neighbors recently cautioned that Mr. Ferrell was getting a ‘big head.’ ”

The John Kramer and Dan Kramer families came out from Mato Grosso to be present at Roger & Sherilyn’s wedding.

On May 19 was the Monte Alegre School end of the year program.

Walt & Alberta Redger and Craig & Monica Redger, with son Dallin, are spending some time here.

On May 22 we had graveside services at the Monte Alegre Congregation for sister Francisca Oliveira. She was a member in the Rio Verde Congregation, where they had the funeral. She was in her middle fifties.

On May 23 the Errol Redger family left for the US.

Folks, listen to this one:

Dear Editor,

Not being one to pass up an opportunity – and since I am unable to sidle up to you in church and airily question some improper grammar used in BN, I wish to submit the following: How do the staff and board members keep from getting wet when they are in (on) the isle in the tract storage room? I suppose if worse comes to worst they could use a boat to get to the small island.

Respectfully yours,

A distant relative

A distant relative nothing. That sounds quite first-cousinish to me. I’d appreciate it if some good reader would send me a listing of any potential distant relatives of mine who reside within driving distance of the Columbus, MS post office. Look at it like this: If tracts are stored on isles in the Philippines, why can’t we do the same in Brazil? Big deal.

On Thursday, May 25 the Rio Verdinho and Monte Alegre Congregations had their annual Thanksgiving services, exactly six months later than the N American event.

Corinne Isaac, who has taught in the Monte Alegre School for the last several years, returned to Canada, where she plans on teaching the next school term. Anytime she decides to exchange minus 25°C weather for a balmy 25°C climate, she knows where to go.

On May 28 Roger, son of Glenn & Elizabeth Hibner, and Sherilyn, daughter of Paul & Rachel Yoder, were married in the Monte Alegre church.

On May 29 the Sam Coblentz family returned to their mission post in Patos, Paraíba, after spending their vacation on the Colony with his folks and other relatives.

Because of a child they are in the process of adopting, it isn’t practical to leave the

country at this time, which accounts for taking their time off here.

The Leo Dirks family from Mato Grosso was out for a week.

Corrine Koehn, who has been teaching in the US, is spending several weeks here with her family. When she returns, she will be staying with her grandma, Rose Koehn from Wisconsin.

Maxine & Keleda Loewen are spending several months in the US.

Valéria Gold is spending some time with Cris, Mrs. Clarence Giesbrecht.

Enos & Clara Miller have returned to the US for an indefinite period.

On June 4 there was yet another wedding, this time at the Rio Verdinho Congregation.

Sérgio Alves & Katrina Schultz. Sérgio is Edinei's brother, who got married several weeks ago. Katrina is Stanley & Mary Schultz' daughter.

Carolyn Dirks, Leo & Mim Dirks' daughter was baptized at the Monte Alegre Cong. on the morning of June 4.

People from both the Georgia and Ithaca, Michigan Congregations wanted to listen in on Reno's funeral service. The closest phone, of course, was the one we use in the literature center, about 150 feet from the church. Stephen Kramer, our tract superintendent believed it could be done. He went to town and solicited the help of a fellow by the name of Maurício, an electronics genius. He immediately agreed to come and help us out. A line was strung to the church p.a. system. And in the tract packaging room (not in the room with the small isles where the tracts are stored), on a table, the man fixed up a makeshift somethingorother to hook into our cellular system. It worked. How about at least one of you readers who sat in on the service there writing and telling how the reception was. Maurício says he can adapt an ordinary phone so that we can do this type of thing anytime there is occasion for it.

On July 5 Calvin & Donna had a little girl, Sharla Deanne. That means Calvin is now outnumbered six to one in his own house.

The last several months there has been some interesting activity in the literature center. Stephen has been in contact with the Ukraine tract office by phone, fax and field secretary, helping them set up a new application on their computer in the work there. It has been the Cyrillic alphabet used there that has really complicated the task. Stephen, how about a report for the next issue of BN?

exactly what presidents did in the past when the going got tough. But the solution was artificial. The farmer was bailed out with money that didn't exist. Or like one minister of finance said some years ago, "It's easy to print more money." But it's exactly this kind of money that the dragon of inflation feeds on. And in the long run it's inflation that does people in.

So now what? At this point it's hard to know what will happen to the farmer who owes the bank. All I can tell you for sure is that people on the Colony are going to think twice before taking out another bank loan.

Nely Caixeta, a senior editor who works for Exame magazine (a second cousin to VEJA), recently spent a few days on the Colony. In her work she rubs shoulders with everyone from the president on down (in fact, in the last issue of Exame she has

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a lengthy interview with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso). I asked her what the feeling of the top brass is on our economic plan. She answered that it is one of optimism. True, right now the country is going through a painful post-operative stage, but for those who survive, there are better days ahead.