

Brazil News



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Editorial

Delilah

Samson is one of the most controversial and misunderstood characters in the history of God's people. When the writer to the Hebrews includes him on the honor roll of heroes of faith, together with, Gideon, Barak, Jephthae, David, Samuel, and the prophets, we must forcibly remind ourselves that everything that is written in the Bible is true.

As Samson grew to maturity, "the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times." But that wasn't all that began to move him. He was irremediably attracted to Philistine women.

Our first glimpse of him as a young man is when he tells his parents, "I have seen a woman . . . now therefore get her for me to wife." They try to dissuade him, but he knows what he wants. Grudgingly his parents accede.

To say that Samson's marital life was turbulent is an understatement. It was disastrous. The wise man asks, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" Not Samson. The wise man also says that a virtuous woman "will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." We don't read of one single good thing that Samson's wives did for him. Yet he was infatuated by them.

During the wedding reception (an extended affair back those days) of his first marriage, Samson proposed a strange riddle to 30 men, which included a wager. On the seventh day, recognizing the impossibility of answering the riddle, these men decided to solicit the help of Samson's wife. They said to her, "Entice thy husband."

They didn't have to ask her twice. If the ability to cajole and pout and insist is a virtue, then Samson's wife wasn't entirely void of virtue. She immediately put all her efforts and guile into the project and didn't give up until she was able to hand over to the 30 men the secret of her husband's riddle. Infuriated, Samson told his adversaries, "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." In

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a neighboring town, he vented his anger by killing 30 men and taking their clothes to make good the wager he had lost.

His next wife, Delilah, seems to have had no redeeming qualities. Her special gift was to do her husband “evil and not good all the days of her life.”

We won't take up space by repeating the story that even small children know. Suffice it to say that, as before, the Philistines got in cahoots with Samson's wife and said, “Entice him.” She did. Once again they plowed with his heifer.

Samson was born during a time in which God's people were dominated by the Philistines, who harassed them in every way possible. His special mission, for which he was chosen prenatally, was to break this odious yoke.

Even though Samson single-handedly slew many Philistines, a thousand on one occasion, in practical terms this only served to increase their ire against him. The Israelites were still in bondage.

When Delilah finally managed to discover the secret of her husband's strength, everyone – including Samson – must have believed his career was over. Sightless, he spent his days in prison, grinding at the mill, listening to the humiliating taunts of his captors.

As Samson walked round and round, turning the heavy mill, he noticed something interesting. Each day his work was becoming lighter. And his hair longer.

A new Samson begins to emerge. With no Delilah to entice him, he begins to exercise self control. Instead of picking up the heavy mill stone and blindly hurling it at one of his antagonizers, he makes sure no one realizes he is regaining his strength. Patiently he grinds, to the delight of his enemies.

Then one day the Philistines decide to have a summit meeting that will include all the mighty of the land, both men and women. For their entertainment they will call on Samson. Blind and “weak,” he is brought into the hall where they can scornfully gaze on their erstwhile enemy.

It is likely that Samson was acquainted with the structure of this hall from the days when he fearlessly roamed the land of the Philistines. He remembers the bold architecture, the two central pillars that support the weight of the entire ceiling. When the voices of the mighty become slurred, Samson knows that the copious amounts of wine being drunk have set the stage for his final performance. Ignoring the mockery of his tormentors, he leans over and asks his seeing-eye-boy, “Son, where are those two pillars in the middle of this hall? Take me to them, will you?”

Slowly they make their way to the very middle of the building. Finally the boy says, “We're here.”

Oblivious to what anyone might think, Samson falls to his knees and in a low voice makes a prayer. “O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.”

Suddenly there is a sharp crack. Glazed eyes look upward and in horror see the roof coming down upon them.

It was during these few seconds that Samson fulfilled his mission to liberate Israel from the hand of the Philistines. The victory wasn't in the amount of people killed, some three thousand, but in who was killed, the mighty of the land. His feat was equivalent to dropping a bomb on Washington DC.

We're not sure how we feel about Samson. Some of his feats strike us almost as funny. We have a hard time really taking him seriously. And one thing is sure, we don't identify with him, as we do with Joseph or David. When we think of Delilah, we feel sorry for him.

But wait. Before you get into an emotional quandary about this controversial man, let's think about his marriage just a bit.

When Samson married Delilah, they became "one flesh." The present day term of "the better half" certainly wouldn't apply in this case, so we'll call Delilah his "other half."

Samson's other half was not loyal to him. Rather, she was constantly in contact with her husband's enemies, who said to her, "Entice him." This she did. Without a doubt, Samson knew Delilah wasn't loyal, and yet he loved her wildly. It is this exact thing that baffles us. How could a man love a woman who did him "evil and not good all the days of her life"?

Have you ever tried to imagine what it would be like to be married to a woman like Delilah? No, you say, I just can't imagine.

But you can. You, my good reader, whether you are man or woman, are married to a "Delilah," which is your flesh – your other half.

Isn't it true that your flesh shows greater loyalty to the enemy than it does to you. And doesn't your flesh constantly try to entice you? Yet you live with this "Delilah" and by your first nature love her wildly in spite of all her unfaithfulness. Seen from this perspective, it wouldn't be hard to sit down with Samson and commiserate.

While grinding, each time Samson wiped the sweat off his brow and touched the ugly scars where his eyes used to be, he must have felt a great abhorrence for his wife and what she represented. So great, in fact, that he was willing to give his own life to have total victory over his enemies. And knowing what kind of woman Delilah was, there is a good chance she was in the hall, a heroine – until the roof caved in.

The apostle elaborates on this subject in Romans 7 and 8. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." He understood perfectly well the power of Delilah in his life and how that she sought to do him "evil and not good all the days of her life." He understood too that until the "roof" crashed down on his body of clay, he would have to struggle against her enticements. And so he said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after [Delilah], but after the Spirit."

Samson had his Delilah and you have yours. But let it not be said that the enemy plowed with your heifer. ▲

Colonization

Bolivia

Colonization and pioneering used to be full blood brothers. Today, in most cases, they are only distant relatives, if that. For an area to be considered viable for colonization, the RETS factor (roads, electricity, telephone, stores) is an unwritten must. This is understandable. Who doesn't place value on RETS?

It's understandable, but also unfortunate. It would be good if the relationship between colonization and pioneering could be elevated at least to the second cousin level again. The value we place on RETS may be blinding our eyes to real opportunity. Read on and decide if that is true.

On December 7, three Colony brethren left for Bolivia, where they spent almost a week. Two of them, John Unruh and Stanley Schultz are on the Brazil Colonization Board. The third, Daniel Holdeman, went along as a detached observer.

Obviously no one can become an expert on a foreign country by spending a week there. The brethren who made this trip recognize that some of their first impressions may not be entirely true to life. But, comparing their observations with what VEJA Magazine has to say about Bolivia (See BN no. 49), one cannot help but believe that they have gotten quite an accurate picture of the situation there.

It is approximately 700 miles from the Colony to Corumbá, Mato Grosso, the border town where they crossed over into Bolivia. Since there is good highway almost all the way, the brethren drove to the border in a pickup. The road to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, a city of 700 thousand inhabitants and the capitol of the state of Santa Cruz, in the center of the area to be checked out, is virtually impassable during the rainy season. There is another roundabout road that can be taken, but it is very bad, so the brethren parked their vehicle in the airport at Puerto Soares and boarded a plane for the 50 minute flight to their destination.

Founded in 1557, this quaint town reminds one of an old tree in which the rings tell a story. The center of town is a plaza that serves as the front lawn for a large catholic church. The first "ring" of this city is an annular street some eight blocks out from the church. The buildings in this ring are ancient with a decidedly Spanish architecture. The streets are narrow.

In the second ring, which begins some eight blocks from the first, the buildings are newer and the streets wider. Another eight blocks and the third ring begins. The architecture here is contemporary, bearing no resemblance to the inner circles. The streets are wide avenues. Mansions can be found in this section of town.

Spanish is the official language in Bolivia. In Santa Cruz, English is the second language, with occasional spurts of off-breed German from Mennonite colonists who do their business there. Most businesses and banks have someone who can speak at least tolerable English.

Since industry in Bolivia is negligible, most everything is imported. All of the

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vehicles are imported, with 90% being Japanese, 7% Brazilian and 3% American. The cars and pickups circulating seem to reflect the distinct ages of the city – some are ancient junkers, some in fairly good shape, and others modern imports.

The Bolivians aren't wild drivers like Brazilians, but because of the narrow streets in the center of town, there are a lot of fender-benders. The brethren report that on a trip to a Mennonite Colony some 50 miles out of town, the taxi driver had to constantly hold the gear shift in place on his Toyota car.

The town of Santa Cruz is quite clean. It has fairly large department stores, but apparently no malls. Even so, they carry a good variety of merchandise. Because of all the imported goods, Americans might just feel more at ease shopping in Bolivia than in Brazil.

The traditional Bolivian, the short, swarthy Indian wearing a flat, narrow brim black hat, has little place in the mainstream of society. Rather he has been relegated to a position of subservience. The European is the de facto Bolivian. Possibly this accounts for the fact that Bolivia welcomes foreigners with agricultural skills. Mennonites from Mexico, Belize, Canada and other places, living on 25 colonies, now number 26,000. Some have lived there for over 20 years.

Many of these Mennonites are of the horse and buggy orders. They are doing well on their small farms, in spite of their little quirks of not tolerating a motor and rubber tires on the same vehicle or implement, thus making it necessary to pull a self-propelled combine with a steel-wheeled tractor. Or pulling a motorless VW Kombi with a horse.

The Mennonites have been granted military exemption and the liberty to conduct their own schools. It appears that this last liberty is working against them. Lacking incentive to place the proper importance on education, their schools are gradually degenerating. Teachers are not preparing themselves adequately. Most of their classes are conducted in their German dialect, with occasional classes in Spanish. Most children study until they are 12 years old and then quit school.

According to Jake Friesen, the MCC worker in Santa Cruz, the number of households in a colony can be found by counting heads and dividing by eight. They maintain good relations with the government, probably on the basis of "leave us alone and we'll produce your crops." Ninety percent of the milk produced in Bolivia comes from Mennonite dairies.

Did the colonists visited show any desire for a deeper spirituality? No. But we must remember that only a few people were seen on only a few colonies. It is possible, indeed probable, that somewhere on those 25 colonies there is a cry for something deeper and better.

Jake Friesen, together with several other MCC workers, are fulfilling an interesting mission in Santa Cruz. Apparently they are the legal/economic/spiritual advisers for any Mennonites who run into problems. Several of the aims of the MCC are to help the Mennonite develop better farming techniques and improve their schools. Jake was very helpful to the three brethren during the time they were in Santa Cruz.

Confirming what VEJA reported, the brethren found the soil in the Santa Cruz

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area to be extremely fertile. In its native state, this land is in heavy timber. It must be cleared by large Cats. The clearing costs run from 200-220 dollars an acre. The land itself is selling for 32-40 dollars an acre. Good developed land can be bought for 480 dollars an acre. This is the kind of land that would be ready for cropping.

Once in production, this land requires no lime nor fertilizer and can be double cropped. The predominant crops are soybeans, corn, milo and cotton. An agronomist stated that with proper crop rotation, it should be possible to plant for 50 years without fertilization.

So far as prices, soybeans are selling for \$4.79 a bushel, corn for \$2.30-3.07 a bushel, milo for \$4.75 hundred weight and cotton for 86 cents a pound.

The land is flat. So flat, in fact, that water doesn't want to run off. The elevation is in the neighborhood of 1,300 feet. The rainfall is from 30-40 inches a year – less than half of what we get here in Rio Verde. They also have a dry and a rainy season. Due to high winds, up to 60 miles an hour, the land is cleared in approximately 150 yard strips, after which a narrow neck of woods is left to serve as a wind break.

As the Mennonites are proving, cattle are also a profitable activity. For beef, some of the Brahman strains from Brazil are raised, as well as crosses. For milk, Holsteins and brown Swiss seem to be the chosen breeds. Fat steers sell for approximately \$1.73 a pound on the hook.

VEJA reported that there is no duty on imported goods. This is probably the Brazilian version of how it works. The brethren were told there is a 27% import tax. This possibly has an explanation that we won't go into here, but for anyone who wants to be strictly law abiding, there is a good chance there will be an import tax.

Is there land for sale? Yes. The brethren found three plots of virgin timber of approximately 7,000 acres a piece. The price they are asking is in the neighborhood of 30 dollars an acre. Needless to say, for this land to be productive, it would have to be cleared, which would cost considerably more than the initial price of the land.

But a word of warning. Have a good lawyer check out the title. On most frontiers titles are a royal mess. The same was true in Rio Verde when we moved here. Our lawyer did an excellent job and no one ever lost any land that was purchased.

What kind of taxes are paid by the colonists? From what they could understand, farmers with up to 250 acres pay no tax. Above that there is a 2% production tax that progressively increases up to 15% for someone who farms 1,500 acres or more.

The highways that exist are good. But out to the colonies all the roads are dirt – and very bad. A 28 mile stretch that can be driven in an hour and a half was described as a “good” road. Of another road it was said that “it can take between three to 13 hours to drive it.”

The brethren were impressed by the banking system. Very modern, any one can open an account in bolivianos – their currency – or in dollars. Apparently they don't make loans for land purchases, but after someone has lived on his farm for five years, they make loans for improvements.

What was the sentiment of the brethren who visited Bolivia? I'm sure they would

feel more investigation should be done before giving a yes or no answer. But for the first trip, they seem to have been favorably impressed. John Unruh listed some of the advantages and disadvantages.

Disadvantages. The RETS factor. The roads from Santa Cruz to the land that is available are muddy and slick. There is no electricity. Apparently, like in Brazil, people must pay for their own line, which is very expensive. No telephones, although with cellular technology, that may not be as far away as electricity. No stores close by. Heavy woods to clear. Also, wells are deep, from 240 – 600 feet. During the dry seasons the roads are very dusty.

Advantages. Easy visas for Americans. Rich soil. Cheap ground. Easy dollar transfers. Enough English is spoken so that there would be no real language barrier, and for those who speak Spanish, there would be none.

What kind of people should consider this kind of move? People with conviction. People who adapt to change and are willing to rough it. For such there seems to be opportunity in Bolivia. In this case colonization and pioneering will be first cousins. Double first cousins.

Do you believe the Lord may be opening another door in South America for His people?

In the hotel, during the first night being spent in Bolivia, Daniel Holdeman randomly opened his Bible, trusting thus to find a message suitable to the mission they were on. This is what his eyes fell upon in Jeremiah 32:41-44:

Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.

And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, it is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD. ▲

Reader Input

The Missing Day

[Earl Litwiller, our centenarian brother from Michigan, sent me the following article written by Mr. Harold Hill, president of the Curtis Engine Company in Baltimore, Maryland. He feels it is something people should read. Thank you Earl. Here it is.]

I think one of the most amazing things that God has for us today happened recently to our astronauts and space scientists at Green Belt, Maryland. They were checking the

position of the sun, moon, and planets out in space where they would be one hundred years and one thousand years from now. We have to know this so that we don't send a satellite up and have it bump into something later on in its orbit. We have to lay out the orbit in terms of the life of the satellite and where the planets will be so the whole thing will not bog down.

They ran the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries and it came to a halt. The computer stopped and put up a red signal, which meant there was something wrong either with the data fed into it or with results as compared to the standards. They called in the service department to check it out and they said, "It's perfect."

The I.B.M. Head of operations asked, "What's wrong?"

"Well, we have found there is a day missing in space in elapsed time." They scratched their heads and tore their hair out. There was no answer.

One religious fellow in the team said, "You know, one time I was in Sunday School and they talked about the sun standing still." They didn't believe him, but they had no other answer, so they said, "Show us."

So he got a Bible and went back to the book of Joshua. "Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee." Joshua was concerned because he was surrounded by the enemy and if darkness fell, they would overpower them. So Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun stand still. That's right! "The sun stood still and the moon stayed . . . and hasted not to go down about a whole day."

The space men said, "There is the missing day."

Well, they checked the computers, going into the time it was written and found it was close, but not close enough. The lapsed time that was missing back in Joshua's day was 23 hours and 20 minutes – not a whole day. They read the Bible and there it read, "about [approximately] a day."

These little words in the Bible are important, but they were still in trouble because if you cannot account for 40 minutes, you'll be in trouble a thousand years from now. Forty minutes had to be found because it can be multiplied many times over in orbits.

Well, this religious fellow also remembered somewhere in the Bible it said the sun went backwards. The space men told him he was out of his mind. But they got out the book and read in 2 Kings chapter 20 how that Hezekiah, on his deathbed, was visited by the prophet Isaiah, who told him that he was not going to die. Hezekiah did not believe him and asked for a sign as proof.

Then Hezekiah said, "It is nothing for the sun to go ahead 10 degrees, but let the shadow return backward 10 degrees."

"And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz."

Ten degrees is exactly 40 minutes. Twenty-three hours and twenty minutes in Joshua, plus 40 minutes in 2 Kings, makes the missing 24 hours the space travelers had to log in the log book as being the missing day in the universe. ▲

Paulo David's Column

History, Culture, Education and Work

I want to briefly review some of the ideas I present to my history students when lecturing on the origin of current problems in Brazil.

The question: Why should an enormous country, rich in natural resources and with an abundance of strong arms, be bogged down in the fringes of the capitalist world?

We have a history of economic and political instability, of social problems, which include malnutrition, misery and unemployment.

Within this country there coexist two opposing realities, two Brazils. The first is a rich and technologically modern Brazil, benefiting the minority of the population. The second Brazil is poor and backward, the home of the majority of the Brazilians. If we pay attention we will notice that the riches of the first Brazil are the fruit of the exploitation by the second Brazil.

Before the Civil War in the United States, there were two United States, or one great "Disunited" States. One was the urban, or industrialized United States; the other was rural America, built around large plantations and slave labor. With the victory of the North over the South, the nation was drawn together into one economic plain which placed value on free enterprise and the contribution of each individual.

This value placed on the workman in the United States is rooted in the colonization process when the Puritans, fleeing religious persecution, founded the New England Colonies. Based on the Calvinistic principal that material increase is proof of divine election, they established a society in which hard work and personal initiative would become trademarks of that nation.

The value placed on work and personal incentive right from the beginning, explains why American democracy is not merely a political concept, but economical and social as well.

This wasn't our case. Brazil was colonized under the philosophy that positively every aspect of economic development should be by the state. The key word wasn't development, but exploitation. We weren't settled by Calvinists wanting to work hard and accumulate riches to prove they were divinely chosen. Brazil was settled by bankrupt Portuguese noblemen who were sent to Brazil and given enormous tracts of land as a second chance. After all, Portugal had nothing to lose with this. Slaves were purchased and ex-convicts hired to be their masters. Any goods produced had to return to the crown.

During the colonial period of Brazilian history, and even after its declaration of independence, slave labor was the order of the day. In other words, during the first four centuries of our history, work and slavery were synonymous. The whip took the place of personal incentive. The two Brazils were clearly outlined: White Brazil and Black Brazil.

As time went on, England began to pressure Brazil to switch to a system of salaried

workers, knowing this would create a market for their manufactured goods. Slowly slave labor was substituted for “free” labor. However, the mentality of the aristocratic slave holder didn’t change. People immigrating to Brazil quickly found that to the aristocracy they were nothing but alternate slaves. Manual labor was seen as low down. This mentality has been maintained throughout our history.

On the other hand, the aristocrats placed a high value on “paper,” which could be a land title or title of nobility. This has become an important part of our cultural heritage. This explains why the value of work is determined by the “paper” (diploma) held by the worker. Instead of education being a means of preparation to do a certain job, it has become a means of elimination, so that only a selected few are considered qualified to do the job.

Today a diploma has the same function that a title of nobility had in colonial times. And the great majority, who don’t have a diploma, tend to occupy by default the position once held by slaves.

What does this mean? It means that within this mentality, the majority of Brazilian employers subscribe to the idea that the worker should barely earn enough to be able to keep on working. This same mentality causes the worker to believe that his boss is responsible for his welfare. Without this guarantee, he doesn’t want to work.

Because of this, little value is placed on work done and even less on individual initiative. It is hoped that the worker won’t be able to grasp the overall operation in which he is involved.

This mentality, a carry over from our colonial past, is one of the principal hindrances to progress in this country. More importance is placed on increasing holdings than on increasing production. Today we still have enormous tracts of unproductive land. Instead of increasing production, Brazilian industry increases prices. Banks increase their gains by upping interest rates.

The employer doesn’t believe in production, but in property. The worker doesn’t believe in work, but in his job. For this mentality to change, the old colonial mentality will have to go.

We need to make sure our children have a proper vision of work. They must understand that what they have should be the consequence of what they are and what they do. ▲

Education

Church Schools in Brazil

We hasten to explain that this article isn’t about the two Colony church schools. We are referring to mission posts, some of which are quasi congregations. Read on and notice what our Brazilian brethren are facing. (And we.)

Since we have our own Colony schools, the problem at hand is a Brazilian problem.

Yes, we are very interested in the problem and we would like to solve it for them. And this is where we are having to watch ourselves. Schools must be born of conviction. And it can't be someone else's conviction. If our Brazilian brethren are to have schools, they must have this vision and conviction. Should we try and loan them our convictions, they will want us to loan them buildings, teachers, transportation and books. We can suggest, we can show the need, but the initiative must come from them.

To many of our Brazilian brethren, a church school for them is a new idea. And it is very understandable. A number of us got our education (or at least part of it) in a one-room country school. And who doesn't have fond memories of those days? We know that it's possible for one teacher to handle a multi-grade classroom. We know it's possible to learn under that environment.

Brazilians do not have that concept. The few rural schools here have been just a wee bit better than nothing. When we talk about a multi-grade classroom, their first reaction is to roll their eyes heavenward as they conjure visions of a totally inoperative school. They don't want that for their children. We wouldn't accept what they are thinking about for ours either.

Since all of the school would be one room, multi-grade schools, except maybe for Rio Verde, it's understandable why there is a resistance to the idea.

There is the problem of a small congregation that has only two or three families with half a dozen school age children. Who will build a school or pay the rent for a room? Who will buy the furnishings? Who will pay the teacher? Who will buy the books? In public schools they don't have to worry about any of this.

What would be the quality of the education in their own schools? Brazilians are looking at this. In public schools the environment isn't good, but their children are getting a relatively good education. They see our own schools as a big step downward.

There is the nagging question of the legality of what we are proposing. By law children must go to school. Parents who don't send their children to school can be prosecuted. Will our little schools meet legal standards? Or will parents suddenly find themselves in the hands of the law?

By experience we know it is virtually impossible to "tell" someone how to be a multi-grade teacher. It's a concept that just doesn't make sense. For a Brazilian who has studied in our Colony schools, this is no problem. We have Brazilian teachers who have worked together with American teachers and picked up the concept. But what about the mission field that has a young brother or sister who would like to be the teacher? Will we have to set up a training center? Will they have to teach on the Colony for a year first?

What about books? In N America you have been able to come up with good courses that don't conflict with our faith. Almost all of our books were produced by Catholics for Catholics, many with a leftist slant to them. Evolution is just taken for granted. So where do our books come from?

The odds are formidable. We recently published a Mensageiro that zeroed in on the school issue. The article by Errol Wedel, published in Chalk Talk, was revealing to

both Americans and Brazilians. We, and they, saw some of the difficulties in setting up a church school system in N America.

Maybe it's not time to do something here. Do you remember the article published in BN no. 52, entitled "And Their Children . . . ?" We mentioned that most of our Brazilian parents are losing their children to the world. Could this be one of the reasons? And if it is, wouldn't it be past time they do something?

Our General Annual Business Meeting has been set for January 2. This will be a special occasion in that it will be an afternoon and evening affair. An effort will be made to have as many of the Brazilian members present as possible. A special invitation has been sent to the members on the mission fields. The evening session will be largely dedicated to the school issue. If the Brazilian brethren see the urgency of the issue and decide they want their own schools, then what?

That's the big question. Then what? Does God send conviction without means?

If you have a moment to spare in some of your prayers, remember the Brazilian school issue. ▲

A Brazilian Story

Mário de Moraes

The Telephone Booth

[Just a word of explanation before Mário tells his story. Contrary to your telephone booths in N America, which usually are small cubicles with a door, here in Brazil they resemble a large egg that has part of the shell cut away. (See diagram.) They give a bit of protection from the elements and afford a minimum of privacy.]

The person who sent me this story signed his name merely as V.D.L.

V.D.L.'s favorite pastime on Sunday is to get up early and catch the bus that stops in front of his house. He rides it to the final station, where he gets off, walks around a bit, and catches another bus back home. According to him, this gives his brains a good airing out and helps him forget that on Monday he will have to be on the job again.

It was during one of these trips that he got off at the last stop in Pinheiros, a suburb of São Paulo, and noticed a crowd of people in front of an orelhão [literally, "big ear," the name given to the phone booths we have described]. Curious, and having time on his hands, he got up closer to see what was going on. He soon saw the problem. An unidentified man, whose face was hidden by the egg shell, was taking his time on the public phone.

The line of people wanting to use the phone was getting longer. It was said that the fellow had been talking for over half an hour. V.D.L. walked up even closer to hear what the people were saying.

“Some people are so dense they simply don’t catch on,” was the opinion of a fat lady. “This fellow is chatting with his girlfriend and couldn’t care less how many people are waiting on him under this hot sun. It’s too bad there’s no real man in this line to grab him by the collar and drag him out of this orelhão.”

“Lady, it’s not that there aren’t any men in this line,” said a gentleman from Paraíba. “But it would be better to call that cop over there to settle this. Then there won’t be a fight.”

It happened there was a patrol car parked on the corner. “Keep my place for me,” the fat woman said to the man from Paraíba, “and I’ll go ask one of those cops to help us out.”

In just a minute she was back with the cop. By now V.D.L. was really interested in what would happen, so he got up right next to the orelhão to try and see what the fellow looked like. Even though he was right next to him, he couldn’t hear a word. There was no doubt, the man was listening to something very interesting his girlfriend had to say.

The cop politely tapped the man on the shoulder.

“What do you say Buddy? Isn’t it about time to hang up?”

The man in the orelhão didn’t pay the slightest attention to the cop, a mistake.

Grabbing him by the arm, he loudly asked, “Buddy, do you know who’s talking to you?”

The man in the orelhão fell backwards into the cop’s arms, who tried to keep him from falling to the ground. Imagine everyone’s surprise when they saw that their “man” in the orelhão was actually a mannequin that had been propped up against the phone.

Some began to laugh. The owner of a bakery right in front of the orelhão came out and told his version of what happened.

“When I got to the bakery early this morning there were a number of college students out here. I know some of them. They must have stolen the mannequin some place and, in hopes of having a little fun, propped it up here in this orelhão.”

Life in Brazil

Walmart

Walmart is more than a business. It’s a phenomenon, a philosophy. No town or neighborhood is quite the same after Walmart drives in its tent stakes. If that is true in N America, it is much more so in Brazil. We now read about the efeito Walmart – the Walmart effect. It’s past time that Brazilian business be given a first hand demonstration of how capitalism works. All too often when sales go into a slump, businesses increase their prices enough to maintain their previous profits. Walmart has a few lessons to teach to people who subscribe to this philosophy.

Brazil 14 News

On the day the store in Osasco, São Paulo opened, it broke all single day sales records for Walmart stores everywhere. It is estimated that this store is selling a million dollars a day. On the 24th, plans were to stay open 12 hours. In six hours the shelves were so empty they had to shut down.

Competitors are crying foul. They accuse Walmart of dumping, of selling some of their goods up to 40% below cost. Although company officials deny it, it is believed that Walmart has 100 million dollars earmarked for publicity. However, instead of spending this money in radio and TV announcements, they are selling below cost and letting the customer do the advertising. It works. One day the front doors had to be closed three times to control the influx of customers.

The Walmart effect is being felt by suppliers. Instead of asking how much their product costs, Walmart informs them how much they will pay. Take it or leave it. Rather than lose a sale, suppliers begin trimming the fat off of their operation so they can close a deal.

No, Brazil will never be the same after Walmart becomes firmly entrenched.

Farming

We have at different times told of the difficulties farmers have been going through in Brazil. Everything indicates that 96 will be a better year. Let's notice:

For those who were unable to pay their debts in the bank, the government has set up a plan whereby they can pay off over a seven year period at low interest.

The acreage planted this year has dropped by approximately 15%. For the 85% who planted, this is good news.

Soybean buyers are offering excellent prices for delivery at harvest.

The weather is excellent. The crops are looking beautiful.

All signs point to better times. This, of course, is good. But not entirely. Our tendency will be to settle into a rut and forget that we need urgently to diversify. We have almost all our eggs in one basket.

A small industry geared to the farmer's schedule would be an option. We have sufficient engineering talent on the Colony to where we could build pieces of equipment that are in demand here in Brazil. This would take some personal incentive. And cash. But it would do wonders for the Colony if people could get a temporary job when short on cash.

This & That

Listen to this one. Several Sunday mornings back, the phone at Glenn Hibner's place gave a feeble little ring. Glenn picked up the receiver and heard what sounded like the phone ringing at the other end of the line. Soon a sleepy voice came on,

“Hello.” Totally bewildered, Glenn asked to whom he was speaking. It was his grandma Litwiller (Mrs. Earl Litwiller) from Michigan. Had she called him? No. It was 5:00 a.m. there. Her phone rang and she simply answered. No one had called anyone, and yet there they were talking together on an international hookup. According to Glenn the probable explanation is this: The night before he called his grandpa Litwillers and talked to them for a while. The phone he used has a redial feature, which some 12 hours after making the call must have suffered a mental collapse and in an act of desperation decided to do a redial stunt. So folks, if Glenn Hibner calls you, be prepared for a second call in the middle of the night some 12 hours later.

Elias was to the Homeworth Congregation in Ohio for revival meetings.

Elaine Toews and Margaret Penner were here to visit relatives.

Luiz & Maria Duarte’s daughter Lucélia, from Mato Grosso, is spending some time on the Colony.

Jeff Kramer is in the US attending preparatory class.

On December 7 the ladies from both congregations had sewing together at the Rio Verdinho church. They sewed bedding to be used on the missions.

Mark & Mary Troyer and children were here for a visit. They spent a short time visiting the Mirassol, São Paulo mission. Together with the missionaries, William & Miriam Coblentz, they made a quick trip to the Iguaçu Falls.

Darren & Ramona Schultz are here to spend Christmas with his folks, Tim & Deanna Burns, and other relatives.

Myron & Martha Kramer spent a few days visiting the Patos, Paraíba mission. Martha’s mother, Rosella Yoder, who had been visiting her children there, came back with them.

Eldon Penners took Marlys Wicke, Alma Martin and Ann Miller to Brasília to catch their plane to the US.

On December 13 the youth and a number of couples planted trees and shrubs around the literature center. This, together with the nice lawn we now have, will really spruce the place up.

Tim & Deanna Burns and Darren & Ramona Schultz made a quick trip to Mato Grosso to visit the Leo Dirks family.

People all over on the Colony are putting up sweet corn.

Several months back we mentioned that a man by the name of Edir Bossoni from southern Brazil was out to see the church first hand. He has now returned with his wife, Maria Helena, and their three small boys. They seem very interested. I’m hoping to have a chance to interview Helena, who is a Peruvian, about her country.

Stephen & Dete Kramer and Dave & Marta Kramer are spending a short time on their farms in Mato Grosso.

Roger & Sherilyn Hibner from Mato Grosso are spending some time on the Colony.

On December 20 the Rio Verdinho School had its Christmas program. On the 21st the Monte Alegre School had its program. They were inspirational.

Leonardo & Cláudia Neves have purchased a small tract of land from Daniel

Kramer, upstream just a bit from where we live, and are now building a house. We're looking forward to having them as neighbors.

Richard Mininger has a problem. A herd of wild pigs are damaging his corn. He calculates that last year they destroyed at least 500 bushels of corn. I think some have gone hunting, but haven't heard if they got any. Pigs aren't the easiest animals in the world to hunt. In fact, without trained dogs it is a real challenge. Any of you folks in the US ready to pack your bows and arrows and do some hunting here?

Glenn & Charlotte Schultz are visiting their mother, Frances Schultz, and other relatives. Their daughter Regina and her husband Ron Shultz came with them.

Stanley & Mary Schultz and Jair & Connie Costa took their visitors on a short trip to Iguaçú Falls.

On December 27 Staven & Adeline Schmidt had a baby boy. When, shortly after birth, complications began to set in, it was flown to Goiânia for specialized treatment. Having lost their first two children at birth, they, as well as the entire Colony, are understandably anxious that everything work out OK.

The youth and other couples went out caroling before Christmas. This is always appreciated. An interesting development are the small informal groups that go caroling in town for people they know. This seems to leave a real witness.

The Leo Dirks family from Mato Grosso was out for Christmas.

Believe it or not, our annual business meetings in church are much more pleasant affairs now that inflation has been brought down to a tolerable level. When inflation was 30% per month, or more, our financial reports didn't mean a thing. So an effort was made to convert them to US dollars, but unless each transaction was converted daily by the current exchange rate, nothing would come out. So one by one the treasurers would arise and dutifully read their reports which no one could possibly understand. Sometimes not even they. When it was moved and seconded to accept the report as read, it was a bit of a farse. Really when we raised our hand in support, we were saying we believed the brother who just read the report was an honest fellow. That was all.