

Brazil News



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Editorial

That First Reaction

“What was his first reaction?” We often ask this question when someone has been exposed to a novel or trying situation. Psychologists analyze their patients by asking questions and carefully observing their first reaction. In dealing with others, our conclusions are often based on first reactions.

That first reaction is tremendously revealing. When four messengers came to Job in rapid succession, each ending his ill tidings with, “And I only am escaped alone to tell thee,” he knew that not only had he lost all of his vast holdings, but his family as well. We see his first reaction: “Then Job... fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said... the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Our first reaction gives others a quick glimpse of who we really are. Realizing this, there are those who cultivate the art of hiding their true emotions. This in itself, however, is a reaction – one that in the end arouses more suspicion than an outright show of feelings. Interestingly, folks who have nothing to hide seldom feel the need of masking their emotions.

This doesn't mean that we say everything that comes to our mind. David prayed, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” Never will we reach a level of perfection where we don't have to watch our words.

Neither does this mean that we will never suffer an outburst which will have to be corrected. This too is part of our humanity. What we're discussing here is a pattern, a predictable first reaction, which causes people who know us to remark, “That's what I figured he'd say – or do.”

When this predictable first reaction comes from a sanctified heart, it is beautiful. When the worldling looks on and compares this reaction with what he knows his own would have been, it becomes a powerful witness.

With each new situation that arises, we have only one chance for a first reaction.

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You are standing in line in the supermarket, when someone with an overflowing cart edges in ahead of you, acting as though he didn't realize you were in line. What doctrine (or doctrinal weakness) does your first reaction reflect?

Around you, shoppers stop and watch to see what will happen. You don't know any of them and they don't know you. But when they leave the supermarket, they feel like they know "those Holdeman people" just a little better than they did.

In true Biblical fashion, those whose first reaction is sanctified, often forget the incident. ("Lord, when saw we thee an hungred . . . or thirsty . . . a stranger . . . or naked . . . sick, or in prison . . .?") But when it isn't, there follows a session of self-justification. In a singular display of incoherency, we judge our fellowmen by their first reaction, but eloquently justify our own.

Maybe an hour or two later, or the next day, we do feel a twinge of conscience and admit we were sort of out of place in what we did or said. We may even wish it wouldn't have happened like that. The onlookers in the supermarket aren't aware of this.

A properly wired house will have a breaker box. Electricians carefully calculate the potential load of each circuit and install breakers of a suitable amperage. Should there be a short or an overload on that circuit, the breaker will immediately trip. Not an hour or two later, or maybe the next day. It's almost distressing to know that maybe our house has a more efficient wiring system than we do.

God doesn't expect us to install an elaborate breaker system in our heart. That would be hypocrisy. Jesus says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

An elaborate breaker system is a humanistic solution. The function of a breaker is to interrupt the current. This means that at the exact moment in which we need a double dose of grace to be a proper witness, we have a blackout. Without power, not only do we stifle the negative reaction, but also the positive reaction in which our witness lies.

Jesus talks about another kind of people who will ask, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" And he will answer: "When standing in line in the supermarket."

Have you ever felt discouraged (hungred or athirst) and then, seeing your brother's reaction to a difficult situation, suddenly felt like you were fed by an invisible hand? Like you were handed a cup of cold water drawn from Emanuel's well?

One of the most eloquent first reactions is humble silence. (This silence shouldn't be confused with a flipped breaker.) "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not."

On the job we try to witness to our co-workers. When opportunity comes we steer the conversation to the subject of salvation. This is good. But what we don't know is that possibly in just one short minute or less, when we face a difficult test, our reaction does more to convince these men or women of the truth than all the conscious efforts we have made over a period of months or years.

For someone learning to ride a bike, just to remain upright is a real struggle. As the bike tilts one way, a conscious effort is made to lean the other way. It's tiring. But as proficiency is gained, so is balance. Now the challenge is to go someplace, to put the bike to use.

The same is true for us. As our heart is established in grace, spiritual balance should be a fruit. In other words, so long as we must constantly struggle to not say or do something that is out of place, we probably aren't going any place on our spiritual bike. We're going in little circles, feeling bad every time we fall and congratulating ourselves when we manage to keep our balance for several rounds.

We do not sanctify our heart by carefully controlling our reactions. Rather a sanctified heart gives us control over our reactions.

Do you sometimes ease your conscience by blaming others for your unchristian first reaction? Do you believe that after you have felt bad about the supermarket incident, the Lord will go back and clear up the Holdeman name with those who saw your reaction?

Your first reaction may be someone's last chance to be convinced of the truth, so "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" ▲

This Month on the Colony

Min. John N. Penner

1916 – 1996

Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

–Zechariah 4:6

When John & Alma Penner moved to Brazil in July of 69, together with their son Eldon, they were the third permanent family to join the small group that constituted what now is the Colony. He was the first minister.

The Penners got in on some real pioneering. The RETS (roads, electricity, telephone, stores) factor was zero. With only a fisherman's trail part of the way to Rio Verde, depending on the weather, the nearly 25 miles we had to drive could take two hours or more. Our only contact with the outside world was telegraph. Because of infrequent trips to town, it could easily be a week before an urgent message was received.

The Penners lived in a little wooden house for several years before building their permanent house in the Monte Alegre area, where they lived until several years ago, when they moved to the Rio Verdinho area.

The biggest challenge John & Alma faced wasn't the RETS factor, but helping establish the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite in South America. This was no easy task.

Even now, nearly 27 years later, visitors will occasionally shake their heads and say, "It must have taken some strong-willed people to get this place going."

Few will argue this point. But how did John Penner, a gentle, quiet, mild-mannered man, fit into this scene?

On his knees.

John preached no thunderous sermons. He seldom emphasized his words with gestures or illustrations. He didn't raise his voice. But there was a total harmony between what he preached and what he lived. When John was needed, he was available. Uncomplainingly he carried out his duties, though at times they seemed to literally bow his back.

John won't be remembered as a man of great might or power, but as one who was full of the Holy Spirit. His intercessions, when all alone on his knees, probably did much more for the church in Brazil than what he said when in the pulpit.

It was often a thankless job. He would graciously step aside so that others could exercise their talents. Indeed, his heart was warmed when newer talents would develop and surpass his own. He possessed that beautiful virtue of finding greater pleasure in the growth of the church than in his own.

In this he was rewarded. He saw the congregation he so dearly loved progress from childhood to adulthood. He saw a fundamental change in the ministry. Today Min. Richard Mininger from the Rio Verdinho Congregation is the only staff member in Brazil who wasn't ordained here. Each ordination was a balm to John's soul.

Several days after Rio Verdinho's meetings came to a close, John was out taking a walk, when he fell and broke his hip. He underwent surgery, but it soon became evident that there wouldn't be strength for his body to mend. On February 7, he quietly passed away in his home.

The Funeral

I have mentioned before that here in Brazil we have our funerals within 24 hours after the death. During this time the death must be registered, the casket purchased, the grave dug and the vault installed, funeral arrangements made, the obituary written, pamphlets made up to be distributed after the service, songs practiced, the quick alert set into action, acquaintances notified in town, and increasingly, arrangements made to have the service phoned to N America.

It's amazing how smoothly this all goes. Everyone knows ahead of time what his job is and simply gets it done.

Since John died at 10:00 a.m., the funeral normally would have been held the next morning at 9 o'clock. But since the Inman Congregation, where John was originally from, wanted to have the service phoned in, that would be 5 o'clock in the morning over there, a most inappropriate time.

Because of this it was decided to have the funeral at 5:30 that same afternoon. That gave less than eight hours to get everything in order for the funeral. But everything went smoothly, including the transmission to the US.

Since John & Alma had spent most of their years at the Monte Alegre Congregation, the service and burial was over there.

Linguistics

The Powerful Monosyllable

Read this little poem by Sergeant Joyce Kilmer.

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree;
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

All but 11 words of this poem are monosyllables. You may not find this very impressive. You should. If you enjoy singing, especially the beautiful old hymns found in our Christian Hymnal, you should feel deeply indebted to the lowly monosyllable.

It is because of these little one syllable words that English language poets and composers are able to compress so much into so small a space. Let's notice the lovely hymn Does Jesus Care? Pay attention to the number in superscript at the end of each word, which indicates how many syllables it contains.

Does¹ Jesus² care¹ when¹ my¹ heart¹ is¹ pained¹
Too¹ deeply² for¹ mirth¹ and¹ song¹;
And¹ the¹ burdens² press¹, and¹ the¹ cares¹ distress²,
And¹ the¹ way¹ grows¹ weary² and¹ long¹?
Oh¹, yes¹, He¹ cares¹, I know¹ He¹ cares¹!
His¹ heart¹ is¹ touched¹ with¹ my¹ grief¹;
When¹ the¹ days¹ are¹ weary², the¹ long¹ nights¹ dreary²,
I know¹ my¹ Saviour² cares¹.

Now notice the Portuguese translation from the hymnal we use:

Importará⁴ ao¹ Senhor² Jesus²
Que¹ eu¹ viva² no¹ mundo² a¹ ter¹

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O1 meu1 coração3 cheio2 de1 aflição3?
Sentirá3 meu1 triste2 viver2?
Oh! sim1, eu1 sei1, Jesus2 bem1 vê1
O1 que1 eu1 estou2 a1 sofrer2.
Em1 cruel2 peleja3, pavor2, inveja3
Jesus2 me1 quer1 valer2.

Notice the amount of words with two and three syllables. Even with the best of translators, seldom does the message come through with its original force and beauty.

To get a better idea of why it is so difficult to come up with a good translation from English to Portuguese, we'll note how many syllables some key words have in both languages. You readers from N America who write poetry or compose songs, try and imagine what it would be like to work with words with this many syllables.

Bible2	Bíblia3
blood1	sangue2
church1	igreja3
city2	cidade3
day1	dia2
die1	morrer2
grace1	graça2
grave1	sepulcro3
heart1	coração3
hope1	esperança4
hour1	hora2
joy1	gozo2
life1	vida2
live1	viver2
Lord1	Senhor2
love1	amor2
merciful3	misericordioso7
mercy2	misericórdia5
night1	noite2
path1	caminho3
rest1	descanso3
sad1	triste2
save1	salvar2
Saviour2	Salvador3
son1	filho2
soul1	alma2
spirit2	espírito4
star1	estrela3

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time1
word1
world1

tempo2
palavra3
mundo2

Some of the most beautiful poetry ever written is found in the hymns we sing in church. Notice:

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

And:

No mortal eye hath seen that land
Across the distant sky
That waits the faithful 'til they stand
Before the throne on high.
Its beauties far outshine what here
We see upon the earth;
There all things will be right and clear,
Of great and noble worth.

And:

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for His own abode:
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

Today we are rushed. We no longer have time to fine tune our work. We're impatient. Before the ink is hardly dry on what we have written, we are urgently knocking on the printer's door.

To see if a song that has been written or translated is ready for the press, do a simple test. See if it will stand alone as poetry. If it inspires without music, how much more it will when surrounded by notes.

There is a saying: "Poems are never finished; they are abandoned." In other words, the poet doesn't get to the place where he is truly satisfied with what he writes, so he finally just calls it quits and sends it to the printer.

There is all too much truth to that today. But it used to be different. In the reading

books used at the turn of the century by our grandparents, there are poems that weren't abandoned. In our Christian Hymnal, as well as other books, there are songs that were finished. Remove the notes and the poetry remains.

One good poem or song that has been finished is worth more than several hundred that have been abandoned. ▲

Wildlife in Brazil

To Make a Short Story Long (Continued)

The artificial lake in front of Earl Schmidt's place was created by damming up the Pirapitinga Creek, whose headwaters are found on the far end of Richard Mininger's farm. This initial stretch of creek seems to have become a wild pig sanctuary.

A ray of hope! The minister's wives who just drove up are in John Unruh's car. And he knows that there is supposed to be a key to the back door of the literature center in his car.

The long tusks that protrude upward from a wild pig's lower jaw are kept razor sharp by constantly rubbing against the incisors on the upper jaw. Possibly the hideous clicking sound they make as they attack is a final honing to their tusks, to be prepared for battle.

Imagine the surprise of the minister's wives when they got out of the car and the top section of one of the plate glass windows opened and someone yelled, "Please hand me the keys."

Wild pigs don't bite. They slash. A quick upward thrust of the head is all it takes to open a six inch gash. And it only takes half a second to reload and administer another slash, and another, and another

With the door unlocked, one would imagine that the ministers and deacons would come rushing out of the literature center in an attempt to flee from the tusks of the wild pig.

In a recent pig hunt near the Pirapitinga Creek, some inexperienced dogs were placed on the trail. Several of the dogs, beagles I believe, felt that a live coward is better than a dead hero, and so, like an intelligent Marine, they did an about face and advanced away from the enemy.

But no. They invited their wives right into the pig's den.

But the other dog, a large bulldog belonging to Jeff Kramer, didn't share the beagles' philosophy. Running through a soybean field, he saw action ahead. Three wild pigs were waiting for him – or for any other dog or human who might feel to show up uninvited.

They took their wives right to the middle of the center, to the lunch area, and there was the wild pig.

In 15 seconds those three pigs were able to slash Jack, the bulldog, 45 times, leaving him mortally wounded.

There was the wild pig, in a cardboard box, making little snorting noises.

On this very day some of the Kramer's hired men were in a soybean field along the Pirapitinga Creek, when they noticed some wild pigs, which took out running. But one of them, just a baby, wasn't able to run in the dense vegetation and the men caught it. Myron Kramer put it into a box, and then, thinking the revival ministers might like to see a wild pig first hand, took it to the literature center, where he too got locked in.

What would have happened if the ministers' wives wouldn't have come to their rescue? I suppose they would have had to use the phone and call for help. But really, it made a better story this way, didn't it? ▲

A Brazilian Story

Mário de Moraes

A Grateful Mother

In September of 57, I was doing up an article to be used on Children's Day, which would revolve around a mother with 12,038 children. (I don't know how many she had since.) Hold it, folks! That number is right on. In her heart she was a mother to that many children, because she brought them into this world.

Leonor is no longer alive. Between the time of the interview and her death, I don't know how many more infants cried for the first time while in her hands. But I can still see her, a gentle woman smiling at us as though we had been friends all our lives.

A Carioca [someone from Rio de Janeiro] of Portuguese descent, she became a midwife when 18 years old, which explains why she ushered so many children into the world. When I interviewed her, she was 76 and was the head nurse of the Pro-Matre Maternity Hospital in Rio de Janeiro. She never did retire and woe unto anyone who made the mistake of suggesting such a thing to her.

Curious, she got her start by hanging around her mother and grandmother, who were also midwives, although neither one had a diploma to prove it. At 20 she did her first delivery, but it wasn't until she was 32 that she graduated from the Maternidade-Escola [Maternity School].

After all these years, Leonor remembers perfectly that first delivery. "It was in a casa de saúde [rudimentary hospital] on Marquês de Abrantes Street. The mother was a pharmacist from São Paulo who had lived in Rio only a short time"

The interview took place in the Pro-Matre Maternity Hospital in Rio (of which she was the founder). She had just finished a delivery. The father, who worked for the mayor, was beaming with joy (even though he had ordered a girl).

Leonor told us, "This is the fourth child I have brought into the world for this lady."

During her busy life she learned to know a lot of people, both rich and poor, great and small. She also had the privilege of working with some top notch Brazilian doctors.

"I took care of President Wenceslau Braz's sister. When Raul Soares was the Minister of the Marines, I delivered his wife's baby. He lived in Santa Teresa. Every day I would

go to his place and bathe the baby. He would have a street car waiting for me, in which I would be the only passenger. It made me feel quite important.”

For 22 days Leonor lived in the president’s palace taking care of President Wenceslau’s wife, who was sick.

Leonor had eight children, and she explained this to us: “Of the total of 12,038 deliveries I did, seven were my own. I had a doctor for only the first one. The rest, with God’s help, I did by myself.”

As can well be imagined, Leonor’s life was full of interesting happenings. She told us about one that to her really stood out.

“One day a very poor woman, a foreigner, showed up here at the Pro-Matre. Her husband was a portrait artist who worked in the plaza. There were complications in the delivery and the lady needed a blood transfusion. Back those days people were reluctant to donate blood. The doctors tried to get the lady’s sister to give blood, but she was scared and refused. The woman was dying. So I held out my arm and told the doctor to use my blood, which soon was flowing through the patient’s veins. She began to get better. A few days later when she was dismissed, she came to my office with her little baby. She was crying. As an expression of gratitude, she gave me a flower, a camelia. Even though it is all dried out, I have that flower to this day, because it reminds me of that grateful mother...”

Agriculture

The 1996 Crop – What To Expect

Farming didn’t use to be a science.

Before modern times, a “tractor” had exactly one horsepower. Implements consisted of a walk-behind plow for breaking up the soil, and a planter, which was a bag carried by the farmer, from which he retrieved handfuls of grain and scattered them manually. Needless to say, these “planters” had no fertilizer attachments.

No time was spent trying to decide what variety of wheat or corn to plant. Generation after generation, it was seed saved back from the previous harvest. No inoculants, herbicides or insecticides were used. No top dressing.

The combine – self-propelled – was the farmer walking up and down his field swinging a scythe. The grain was threshed by flailing or treading on the heads.

Droughts, flooding, locusts, diseases, were frequently associated with a wrathful God, a punishment for wrong doing (which at times may have really been the case). With no long range weather forecasts or ASC office to consult, decisions had to be based on the phases of the moon.

It wasn’t necessary to sell grain to come up with cash for necessary purchases, for the grain in itself was a currency.

All that has changed. Drastically. In many ways agriculture, due to its many

variables, is one of the most difficult sciences to master. But it has been done. Several decades back alarmists were predicting that agricultural production wouldn't keep up with demographic growth. In certain locations the population would be decimated by famine. In vivid contrast to these doomsday predictions, today we are still plagued by surpluses.

The modern farmer doesn't find his answers in the moon. He is interested in knowing the pH of the soil he will be farming. He speaks of micro-elements. He listens carefully to the technical specifications of new seeds, herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers. He is interested in what farmers are doing around the world. He watches the Chicago stock market.

And beside all this, he enjoys spending time at the implement dealer seeing what is new on the market. He purchases a combine that in a day can do more work than a man with a scythe could do in a lifetime.

There is no doubt. Modern agriculture is a science. And where there is science, there must be scientists.

Enter David W. Burrows, Ph.D., an agronomist and resident of Wisconsin, who used to work for the US Department of Agriculture, and now operates his own Crop Information Services. He travels extensively in South American countries, checking crops and reporting what kind of yields can be expected. Recently he spent several days on the Colony.

Dr. Burrows has graciously permitted me to publish his report. I believe you farmers in the US will find it interesting. He writes:

Summary

I am fully convinced that the size of the Argentinean and Brazilian crops are lower than they are currently being evaluated. I earlier stated that these reports were to be qualitative rather than quantitative. Percentages when given will be an estimate of what I have seen in the better of previous years. The overall conclusion is that the soybean and corn crops seen this year do not compare favorably with those seen in other years that were considered to have good production.

How should this information be used? Information is of no value until such time as it is reported from another source. As such because of the inexactitudes of the area I visited I suggest that the information contained in this report be used as a possible scenario that will later be reflected in some manner. Any immediate expectation that Argentinean and Brazilian grain handlers, producers and agronomists are going to study their crops closer than from the highway is not going to happen. It will be fortunate should they even drive the highways through the areas where the crops are produced! Close observation occurs rarely in the U.S., why should it be any different there? It is likely that Argentina will reflect lower production earlier than Brazil, not because conditions are worse, but because reality (as recognized in the US and Europe) has more viability in Argentina than in Brazil.

My overall pessimism regarding Argentinean and Brazilian crops is based upon the

considerable amounts of late seeded soybeans in Argentina and southern Brazil that do not now have, and are not expected to develop the necessary structure to produce anywhere close to a normal crop, and in northern Brazil, (northern being defined as north of a line extending from Campo Grande to Uberaba), podding that is exceedingly variable with a majority of fields having much lighter than usual pod production. Low pod production has been explained to me as a result of lack of fertilizer use and the use of new varieties resistant to diseases that have become prevalent in the last several years. These newer varieties are not as high in yield as the previously seeded, now susceptible, varieties.

Indications of higher than anticipated production are indicated from Paraguay and Bolivia. For example the best area of Brazil extends along the western border of Paraná and the southern production area of Mato Grosso do Sul, this completely borders the Paraguayan production area that extends inland from the eastern border about fifty kilometers. Bolivian production increases are based upon information received relative to comparative land values in that country and newly developing areas of Mato Grosso do Norte, and of increasing demand of specially designed soybean planters for the flat areas around Santa Cruz. Bolivian cleared land values are indicated a third higher than newly cleared northern production areas of Mato Grosso.

Argentina

The best production area for both corn and soybeans extends across southern Santa Fe province from the Cordoba border to Rosario and does not extend north more than about eighty kilometers. Outside of this area corn is severely hurt with fields already being chopped to provide some feed for cattle.

Corn is usually seeded in August with pollination occurring mid-December. Heat this year at pollination and dry weather earlier has decimated the corn seeded at this time and the crop in appearance is similar to the Illinois crop of 1988. Some corn was delayed seeding until soil moisture was more adequate and this portion of the crop at the time of my visit was still pre-tassel. The lateness of this portion of the corn crop would indicate lower than usual yields.

Main crop soybeans in Argentina have declined as a percentage of the overall area from about sixty percent several years ago to an estimated forty percent this year. (Information provided by an agronomist with a US agrochemical company). This portion of the crop has generally good growth and always excellent color. Its weakness is that the number of nodes is frequently very low and branching poor. The fields were either flowering or close to it. At best it is estimated that this portion of the crop will yield at eighty to eighty-five percent of a normal crop.

The larger portion of the soybean crop this year followed wheat and as of late January looked very much like the poorly developing 1988 Illinois soybean crop. The best fields were a foot to fifteen inches tall with incomplete ground coverage. Many fields had plants no more than six inches tall and some fields were just germinated. There is no way that these fields will produce at the levels of the last several years and

with continued reports of below normal precipitation for Argentina and forecast higher than normal temperatures, yields could still be indicated as low as fifty percent of normal. Assuming the best of conditions from the time I saw the crop in January until harvest the production would not exceed three-quarters of the norm.

It was also reported to me by a seed company employee that acreage seeded to soybeans had been reduced this year by an estimated four to six percent.

Crops that appear in good shape are sunflowers that have increased in area throughout much of Buenos Aires province and peanuts that are increased in area in southern Cordoba Province. Sunflower harvest was just beginning as of the end of January while peanuts were at early flowering with the first fruits being buried.

Brazil

Goiás: Variability of podding continued all the way across southern Goiás. Early fields were harvested or close to harvest and those inspected had small seeds but normal podding for early fields. The fields with variable podding were uniformly of good height, good color, and had every indication of good production until the individual plants were examined and podding frequently found to be poor. Visiting with producers at Rio Verde I was informed that local production agronomists were reducing the crop over a quarter below that produced last year even though last year's crop had been hurt by diseases. Part of the reduction was based upon area seeded but the bulk of the reduction was based upon lack of input and poorer yielding varieties. I was informed here that most of the northern crop, including areas farmed in Mato Grosso were seriously lacking fertilizer, because prices had increased radically and were about six fold US per nitrogen unit. Varieties had had to be switched because of susceptibility to a disease that was described to be similar to Brown Stem Rot, these varieties were described as being substantially lower in yield to those they replaced.

I was informed that rice production was substantially higher in Goiás because of its lower input requirements, this was not able to be confirmed by what I saw. Corn production was noticeable on a substantially larger acreage than I had previously experienced especially towards the Mato Grosso border. I was also informed that soybean fields being harvested or to be harvested early would be seeded with either corn or sorghum. Sorghum is a new crop in this area.

Although rains have fallen frequently there are still some pockets of dry soils. I was told my estimate of a ten to fifteen percent reduction of yield was too small. To this would have to be added the reduction in area.

Mato Grosso: The Rio Verde farmers informed me that soybeans to the north of Rondonópolis (actually north of Cuiabá), were reduced by several percentage points but of greater importance fertilizer applications were seriously lower and the crops were demonstrating this deficiency. To the south of Rondonópolis the area seeded appeared comparable with previous years but the pod variability demonstrated in Goiás continued. There are no indicated areas of soil dryness. I would estimate this area down in yield from the norm by ten to fifteen percent.

Paulo David's Column

My Vision of a Little White Church

Recently my family and I spent a few days in Pirenópolis visiting the brethren. We feel a strong attachment to this congregation because it was begun by the few brethren who left the old church together with my wife and me.

On Sunday morning we attended church services with the little group. Before the meeting started, I watched the different members arrive. Some walked, some came by car, and a few even came with a horse and cart. As I saw this scene, I suddenly realized I had seen this same scene many years before.

Almost nine years ago we were still living in Pirenópolis, where I was the pastor in the church we formerly attended. I already knew about the Church of God and felt God was asking me to become part of His people. I tried to transmit this vision of the true church to my members, but hardly anyone showed any interest. This to me was a great letdown, because of that group of over a hundred people, only four accepted the truth.

But the Lord sustained me with the letters I received from brother Calvin Hibner, who at the time was responsible for the tract work in Brazil, and with the visits different brethren made here in Pirenópolis. In my visits to Rio Verde, I also received good instructions.

That morning as I stood outside of the church watching the brethren arrive, I remembered especially the conversations I had with Daniel Kramer during the two visits he made here in Pirenópolis. Those are memorable times I will never forget. He told me how he found the true church of God and of the experiences he had since. He shared with me many things that the Lord taught him as he searched the Scriptures. Our conversations ranged from Genesis to Revelation. I had the impression that I learned more in those short visits with Daniel than in the 15 years I had spent studying the Bible.

That was my impression back then. And even today when I sit down with Daniel to discuss the Scriptures, that same feeling comes back.

It was during my conversations with Daniel that the idea came up of someday there being a congregation in Pirenópolis. In my mind's eye I began to see a church in the valley where this little town is nestled. It was a little white church. I saw men, women and children coming to the services. Some came in a car, some on foot, others on bikes, and even some with a horse and cart. I saw a happy and holy people.

In my imagination it seemed that the majority of these worshippers lived on tiny farms in the countryside around Pirenópolis, although some of them had jobs in town.

Most of those who lived on small farms didn't have modern machinery. Because of this they weren't slaves to the banks. They raised their own food and had some to sell, just like our brother Antônio is doing, making his living selling strawberries.

What I saw was a quiet, simple life. I really believe that many of our Brazilian brethren would fit into this type of lifestyle better than they would into the way of life



on the Colony. This is no reproach on the Colony. It's just that for many of my people it's a way of life that is unattainable.

Once again I hold up brother Antônio's little 30 acre farm as a pattern to be used by other Brazilian brethren. I believe that in time these little farms may become the trademark of the Brazilian Holdeman.

But rather than take my word on this, make an effort to visit Pirenópolis. Take a look at the little white church. Visit brother Antônio's farm. Also the farm where brother Luiz works. I sincerely believe that before too long there will be more little Holdeman farms around Pirenópolis.

As I looked at the little white church that Sunday morning, I remembered that vision and my emotions were stirred. When I left Pirenópolis seven years ago, there was only a vision. But today we have a congregation of the Church of God there. The little white church in the valley now exists, and before too long I believe the farms will too.

I invite you to visit Pirenópolis. ▲

This & That

Now for the good news. Do you have trouble going to sleep at night? Try reading BN in bed. One of my readers here in Brazil claims it puts her right to sleep. Because of these therapeutic qualities, it's totally correct to say that you prescribe to BN. And no, there will be no increase on the prescription price, even if you read this little paper in bed. What other paper gives a free supply of sleeping pills with each issue?

Rosella Yoder and son James are spending some time in the US to be with her children, whose baby is ill.

Devern Koehn and Dale Becker from Gospel Tract were able to spend a few hours in Pirenópolis before they returned to the US.

Cláudio & Susan Silva opened a cute little snack bar in Rio Verde. The speciality is grilled hamburgers. This is a novelty in town.

Jeff Kramer has returned from the US, where he attended the boy's preparatory class at Hillsboro, KS.

Evelyn Penner is spending some time with her sister Vera, Mrs. Dennis Loewen.

We went off of daylight saving time on February 10. As mentioned last month, we are now three hours ahead of CST. Once you go on DST, there will be only two hours difference.

Walt & Alberta Redger are here to help keep things on an even keel while their children Errol & Karen are in the US.

Wendy Penner is taking Sheila Rosa's place in the tract room on Tuesdays. Sheila will be getting married to Jonathan Coblentz on the 10th of March. The other worker is Raquel Garcia.

Jesse & Delores Loewen and daughter Lisa, and Duane and Regina Miller are in Tennessee with Enos & Clara Miller. Enos is having health problems.

Carnival is a national disgrace in Brazil. Derived from the word carne – flesh – it is indeed a celebration of the flesh. Coming just before lent, it is a three or four day affair in which people have a final fling before going into a 40 day period of supposed penitence. Rio de Janeiro is the epicenter of this moral quake which shakes up Brazil once a year. Most cities and towns have some kind of doings. As usually happens, a number of our members living in Carnival-prone areas spent that weekend on the Colony. I guess that is about the only positive result that comes out of this satanic holiday.

Dennis & Vera Loewen, and her sister, Evelyn went on a little trip to Iguaçu Falls.

Luiz Duarte and his family are out from Mato Grosso. There is talk that they may be staying out here for some time.

The William Coblentz family, the missionaries from Mirassol, São Paulo, are out. They, together with his dad, Dan Coblentz, and Dennis Kramer, are spending a few days in Mato Grosso, where they own land.

On Friday afternoon, the 23rd, the Rio Verdinho School students had a tea and invited the grandmothers. Luella Palmer was also invited.

Dwayne & Adeline Warkentin and two children from Canada, are spending some time with Clifford & Naomi. Dwayne and Clifford are brothers.

Microsoft chairman, Bill Gates made a quick visit to Brasil. In an interview with Exame Magazine, he lists Brazil, India, Russia and China as the four countries they consider to have the greatest potential for growth.

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso paid Ernesto Zedillo, Mexico's president, a visit during Carnival. Things got somewhat tense. Without warning Zedillo began suggesting to Cardoso that Mexico would like to become a member of the Mercosul, a common market which includes Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay

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and Uruguay. Mercosul members believe they are being used in a lover's quarrel between Mexico and the US.

Heavy rains in Rio de Janeiro caused landslides on the morros – hills – around town where the poor class lives. At least 65 lost their lives, 31 are missing and 6,500 are homeless.

Last year 3.8 million tourists visited Argentina, 2.2 million visited tiny Uruguay, and a mere 1.8 million visited mammoth Brazil. Why so few? The number used to be much higher. Violence, especially in Rio, brought it way down. A real effort has been made to clean up this mess and slowly this number is coming back up. But through it all Brazil has lost billions in tourist dollars.

Clinton Unruh told me today that during the month of February over half of the tracts leaving his office went to members (missionaries, tract tours, etc.) for distribution. Even though this may not be repeated for a while, it still shows a positive trend in the work. I am hoping that someday, like Mexico, we can do most of our own distribution.

Marlys Wickey returned to the US after spending a month here during the time of her dad's illness and death. We're glad the family could all be together during this difficult time.

About 26 years ago when the Harold Dirks family came to Brazil, they drove all the way, except for stretches where they had to load their pickup and camper on a ship or a flatcar. I mentioned some time ago that their diaries would be published in BN. Why wasn't it done? I realized that without Harold here to fill in gaps, it wouldn't make a lot of sense. So they will be working on them in the US, and hopefully we can publish them when they finish.