

Brazil News



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Editorial

A Discussion

We have a lot of discussions. In Sunday School, in Bible Study, in business meetings, in committees, in Annual Meetings and Conferences, in informal Sunday afternoon gatherings.

In a discussion, each person is like a cog on a gear in a transmission. When the gears mesh as they should, power produced by the motor is transferred to the wheels, and the vehicle becomes a useful item. When the gears don't mesh, they grind. They sometimes strip. After so much time, about all that is left is reverse.

Basically, a discussion consists of pooling the thinking of different individuals to come up with a constructive conclusion. It's true that a committee discussion is somewhat different than a Bible Study discussion, for example. In the first there many times needs to be a decision. In the latter, an attempt is made to throw light on a subject. Even so, there are some basic rules that apply to both:

Make the issue simple. There are complex issues that need to be discussed – both spiritual and natural. Many times we are overwhelmed by this complexity and try to discuss it as a whole. We soon bog down.

When a patient comes into the emergency room all covered with blood and dirt, the medical team doesn't try and do everything at once. They work with priorities. The vital signs are checked. Is the patient breathing? How is the pulse? Is there any hemorrhaging? No point in talking about multiple fractures if the patient is bleeding to death, if he's going into cardiac arrest. Or if he isn't breathing.

Next comes cleaning up the patient to see the extent of the injuries. It's positively amazing how removing the blood and dirt simplifies the rest of the procedure. Once again priorities are followed by the medical team in treating the patient.

To make an issue simple, we should follow hospital routine, that is, tackle the issue according to priorities. Unfortunately, many times we do just the opposite. We have an

issue that is quite simple, but by the time we finish, we have complicated it to where everyone is totally bewildered. It goes something like this:

A: “I feel we need a sidewalk between our church and the school.”

B: “I do too. When it rains people get their shoes muddy.”

C: “I would rather tear the school down. We’re needing a new one badly. Then we wouldn’t need the sidewalk. I suggest we build a new school.”

D: “There’s a new place in town that specializes in sidewalks. I understand they’re quite reasonable on their prices.”

E: “Unless we make that sidewalk six feet wide, I’m against it. I detest narrow sidewalks.”

F: “I feel like we need to do some landscaping first.”

Etc. Etc.

Twenty minutes are spent complicating the issue. A simple vote: “Do we feel we need a sidewalk between the church and the school?” taken right in the beginning, would have shown that only twenty percent of those present really saw the need of the sidewalk. The matter could have been dropped.

However, if a majority would have been in favor, then the other issues could have been addressed, one by one, to see if the project was practical, if it could be afforded, etc.

We have somewhere come up with the strange idea that it’s proper to have more than one motion on the floor at the same time – a beautiful formula for complicating things. Notice:

Chair: “OK, we have four motions to vote on: 1) Do we paint the church white? 2) Do we paint it green? 3) Do we rip off the old siding and put on new, or, 4) Do we leave it as is?”

Why not begin with one motion: “Are we satisfied with the exterior church walls the way they are?” If the answer is no, the next logical step would be, “Do we feel the present siding needs to be replaced?” If that answer again is no, then we get to the paint, “Would we like to paint the church?” Then, and only then, should the color of paint be discussed. It involves more voting, but less time and confusion.

Now let’s apply the same principal of confusing an issue to Sunday School, Bible Study, and other similar discussions. We at times have the same tendency to complicate discussions. Let’s notice some of the ways this is done:

What if... Very few things are more harmful to a good discussion than a far-out what if question – something that very likely has never happened, and if it has, will probably never again occur.

The discussion is on giving. How much should we give to the church? Then it comes, “But what if the church would have all the money it needed and it was just stacking up? Could we slack up on our giving then?” It’s a question that simply has no merit. And yet it can take up five precious minutes, or more, of a good discussion.

Pet ideas. There’s nothing wrong with having a pet idea or two (we all have them), the same as there’s nothing wrong with having real pets. The problem begins when we

want others to feel about our pets like we feel about them. We may feel a real intimacy with faithful old Shep and enjoy it when he jumps up and licks our face. But others seldom feel that same surge of affection.

Pet ideas should be kept at home where they won't disturb others. Don't bring them to Sunday School, or any other discussion for that matter. Not even on a leash.

Sermonettes or long experiences. Some churches have the sermon before Sunday School. Some after. And others during. We admit that there are rare exceptions when a sermonette or long experience may fit into a discussion, but they're rare.

No explanations are needed. Strong winds wreck buildings. Long winds wreck discussions.

What is a good discussion?

A good discussion is coming with a dime and going home with a dollar. Not coming with a dollar and making everyone else go home with a nickel.

A good discussion is saying, "I never thought of that before." ▲

Culture

Christmas

In the sisters (>40) Sunday School class that I teach, we were discussing Christmas. One of them, who was to Conference, told of how she enjoyed the Christmas atmosphere she felt all over. Another sister said that was idolatry.

They both had a point. I know exactly what the first one was talking about. Christmas is tangible in the US. You see it. You hear it. You smell it. You feel it. You buy it. And yet very little of it has anything to do with Christ's birth.

Christmas in the US is hypnotic. It gets in your system. It induces one to spend. It's bad enough to where we condemn it, but attractive enough to where we love it.

For a Christmas to really be Christmas, it should be white. It's amazing how hard it is for some to feel the "Christmas spirit" in a tropical country. Especially visitors feel they are being deprived of something when they can walk about outside in shirtsleeves on December 25.

Not everyone feels like that. We spent last Christmas in the US. The other day I heard Sylvia, our 17 year old daughter, remark to someone that it just didn't seem like Christmas in the US with all the cold weather. She associates Christmas with balmy weather, with having our Burns gathering outside – not inside.

The larger Brazilian cities make a valiant effort to duplicate the American spirit, right up to winter scenes with artificial snow and sleighs. Doubtlessly it is a commercial success. Otherwise they wouldn't do it.

It appeared that this year Rio Verde wouldn't have any Christmas decorations – not even on the main avenue. The merchants became alarmed. Sales weren't coming up to expectations. They jumped the mayor and got him to put up some lights on Avenida

Presidente Vargas. According to the O Popular, our Goiânia paper, sales picked up in Rio Verde with the Christmas lights – even though they were really quite shabby.

Here on the Colony, the North American Christmas atmosphere has lost much of its force. Most of our youth were born here. Our Brazilian members obviously weren't ever exposed to this aspect of the N American culture.

I feel it is a privilege to live in a culture that doesn't go to extremes during this season. If, as was said, the way Christmas is observed in the US is really idolatry, then we must agree that surely it is the sweetest and stickiest idolatry around. By the time Christmas is over, we look like a child that has devoured a striped candy cane. Whether you like it or not, it gets to you.

Christmas should be celebrated. It's proper to celebrate Christ's birth. But someplace there is a line that is crossed – a line that divides between Christ's Kingdom and the world. When is that line crossed?

That line is crossed . . .

When we become unwise stewards of our money. When we spend that which we don't have for that which we don't need.

When our children evaluate their Christmas by the gifts they received. Gifts should be small, symbolic. If son needs a new bike, don't wait until Christmas to give it to him as a present. Give it several months before or after. Don't let him confuse a bike with Christ's birth.

When we wonder if our nerves will take it. When we are thankful that Christmas is over, it's very possible we haven't celebrated Christ's birth.

When we give our house or yard a Christmas air, by purchasing or making icons of what the world uses to make the season, a line has been crossed.

When, after the season is passed, we realize we have not announced the tiding of joy to anyone, if we have not been angels (God's messengers) to someone, reminding them of Christ's birth, then we have missed the spirit of Christmas, have we not?

I enjoy Christmas in the States. I enjoy the sights, the sounds, the smells, the feeling, the loaded shelves. I wish I didn't. So I am thankful that I live in a culture that doesn't saturate me with Christmas.

When down deep we hope Christ won't choose the Christmas season to return to earth, have we not crossed a line? ▲

Politics & Economy

What Does it Mean?

Doubtlessly the single most important political happening in the last decade was the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, symbolizing the fall of communism. What gave this event a special significance was the fact that no one believed, or predicted, that it would happen.

Brazil 5 News

Likewise events today are unfolding in Brazil that very few believed would happen. For this South American country, they could easily end up being the most important happening in the last century. Way out, at the end of the tunnel, Brazilians are beginning to see a light.

If you will remember from previous articles on this subject, the problem that has plagued Brazil practically from day one has been dishonesty and corruption. Over the years – centuries – this problem has been a constant scourge. The rich have become richer and the poor, poorer. And proportionally more numerous.

Everyone, both the privileged and underprivileged, by now were quite sure the status quo would be maintained.

When Collor was removed from the presidency, this was regarded as the solution for a problem, not for the problem. When PC Farias, Collor's henchman, was placed in the line of fire, it was regarded as a problem between political factions. When José Carlos, the ex-budget director, was arrested and charged with the murder of his wife, it was supposed that it would be a soon forgotten incident. But...

But when João Carlos decided to soltar os cachorros – turn the dogs loose, as we say in Portuguese, that is, spill the beans, this apparently unimportant incident became screaming headlines after he told his story to VEJA Magazine.

Since then there has hardly been a day gone by in which it hasn't made headlines. Congress has decided to take the bull by the horns and clean house. They have spared no one, including the Speaker of the House, who had to appear before the Congressional Ethics Commission and explain his personal finances.

Heads of three congressmen have rolled and it appears another 10-15 may lose their congressional seat. Three governors have been called in for questioning, including the governor of the Federal District, where Brasília is located.

To understand better what is happening, we must remember the biblical truth that God raises up whom He will and puts down whom He will. And we can add, when He will.

Some time ago I mentioned that Communism, seen by us as the curse of the nations, may have played an important place in God's overall plan. Had the countries that composed the Communist bloc developed under democratic, capitalistic principals, the world today would certainly be different than it is. The thought is that God possibly restrained many potentially great nations for the greater part of a century, through communism. This permitted others, including the US, to be the virtual world leader. There was a reason for this.

Now to Brazil. If what is now in course succeeds, if corruption is brought to tolerable levels – there is no such thing as eliminating corruption in governments – you'll probably be reading and hearing a lot about Brazil in the near future, if time continues.

Don't take what I say here on the future of Brazil as a prophecy. It isn't. Only

God knows the future. Take it as an observation based on the following facts:

- Brazil is a large country, approximately the size of the continental United States. It has vast areas that can still be developed.

- Brazil has one of the most favorable climates in the world so far as agriculture is concerned.

- Brazilian industry, now unshackled from xenophobic laws which for decades barred the importation of advanced technological machinery and goods, now is stretching its muscles. There is no reason why Brazil can't compete with Japan or any other industrialized nation.

- Give a Brazilian a chance and he will succeed. Brazilians are hard workers. They are pliable. If the anti-corruption campaign succeeds in high levels, its implantation will follow in lower levels.

- Brazil has no desire to be a world policeman. Its military budget is diminutive, which means that but a small percentage of its GNP will be designated for this area.

- Also as mentioned before, Catholicism has suffered shipwreck in Brazil. For all practical purposes, it has become a social institution, a club, if you will.

What does all this mean? It means that the stage could easily be set for Brazil to rise into a position of world leadership. And if it does, there will be a reason for it.

Much more is on the balance in Brazil today than what is seen in the headlines. It bears watching. ▲

A Brazilian Story

Christmas in the 6th Precinct

[Mário de Moraes tells us another story, this one on Christmas.]

It was Christmas Eve and Police Commissioner Cicero Brasileiro, responsible for the 6th Precinct (in the State of Guanabara, now part of Rio de Janeiro), was about to go off duty. Then a group of people came in.

There were five people. One of them was tall and well built. He wore dark glasses and was the first to speak. He brought with him a thief, a frail young man. He now explained that the thief was caught snatching a lady's purse on Carioca Street. Besides the lady, there were three witnesses, which made up the group of five.

After listening to the story of the man who caught the thief, he asked the lady to tell her version of what happened. Quite agitated, she explained that she was walking down Carioca Street, looking at the store fronts, when it happened. She admitted part of the blame. She was trying so hard to make a decision that she didn't hang onto her purse tight enough. If she bought the doll that she wanted for her daughter, there wouldn't be enough money left over to buy a tricycle for her little boy.

While trying to figure out how to solve this problem, someone grabbed her purse out of her hands.

Totally shocked by what happened, she hollered at the top of her lungs and began running after the thief, who was wearing a knit shirt. Different ones realized what had happened and came to her aid. When they finally caught the thief, he was near the Tiradentes Praça.

A small group formed around the thief. Somehow the lady managed to make it to where they were holding him. There, inside the circle of men, lying on the sidewalk, she saw the young man with the knit shirt. With his hands over his face, he implored his captors not to beat up on him. The lady's face shone as she thought of getting her purse back. Suddenly, however, she became sober. Where was the purse? It was nowhere to be seen. Just possibly, to rid himself of the evidence, the thief had thrown the purse away. She had no desire to see this frail young man penned up in jail. What she wanted was her purse. She wanted her Christmas money so that her children could have their presents. The man with the dark glasses pulled the thief to his feet. Beneath him, lying on the sidewalk was the lady's purse, which he had hidden in a last desperate attempt to conceal the goods.

So it was that these five people made their way to the 6th Precinct. The thief was in the powerful clutch of the muscular man with the dark glasses.

While the Comissioner's secretary took note of what the lady had to say, she constantly glanced at the thief, sitting in a corner and quietly weeping.

She couldn't help but ask a question: "Why did you steal my purse?"

The room was in silence, everyone wanting to hear his answer. Finally, between sobs, he managed to tell his story. This was his first theft. He had never before been in a police station. He was a weaver by profession, but the factory where he worked shut down. He had three little children and they had had nothing to eat for the last two days. Tomorrow was Christmas. He decided that for that special day there would be bread on the table, even if he had to steal to be able to put something on the table in the shack where he lived. Even his attempt at stealing was a failure.

Some of the policemen who heard the story did a quick check to see if the young man was telling the truth. Everything checked out.

The spirit of Chistmas suddenly settled on the 6th Precinct.

The Comissioner, Cícero Brasileiro, was the first to act. He got out his wallet and placed a bill on the table.

The others followed his example. Veteran policemen, hardened by years of work with criminals and used to hearing every kind of story imaginable, all put their contribution on the table.

Then Cícero Brasileiro gathered up the bills and handed them to the unemployed young man. He no longer wept. In his eyes there was a new sparkle.

There would be bread on his table on Christmas day. ▲

Wildlife

Wolves That Like the Front Door

Children sing, “If the wolf ever came to our back door, he’d have to bring a picnic lunch.” That’s the American version of wolf behavior.

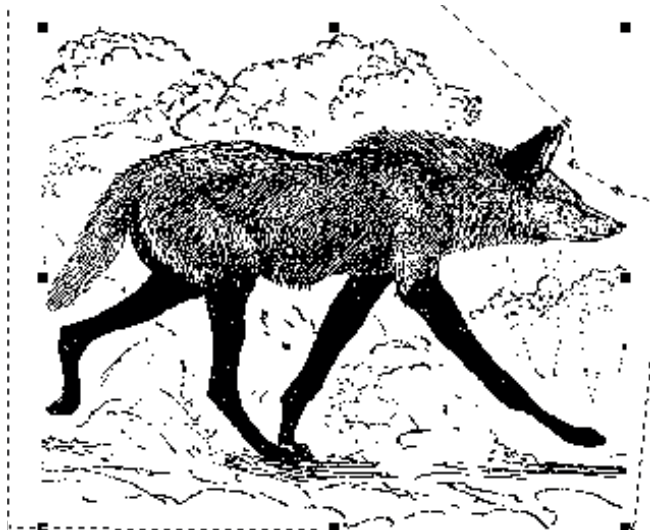
Here in Brazil we would have to sing, “When the wolf comes to our front door, he leaves with a picnic lunch.”

We still have wolves here in Brazil. In fact, quite often in the evening we can hear them howling right close by. Howling isn’t really the right word. It actually sounds more like someone with a deep voice clearing his throat at regular intervals.

Here is what an animal encyclopedia has to say about these pseudo-wolves:

The Fox That Walks on “Stilts”

Strange in appearance – it looks like an oversized stilt-legged toy dog – is the Red or Maned “Wolf,” *Chrysocyon*, which ranges in the open brush lands of Brazil, Paraguay, and neighboring countries. It is almost as large as a timber wolf but in other respects suggests a fox. The slender head and long neck make the short body seem curiously dwarfed. Its large erect ears seem out of proportion with the comparatively short tail and only add to its odd appearance.



The Guara or Aguará-guazú, as the red wolf is locally known, feeds on rodents, birds, and some fruits. It is large enough to kill sheep, and hunts them alone, not in packs.

When Darren & Ramona were here to visit his folks, Tim & Deanna Burns, they saw a wolf on the new literature center front porch.

Bradley & Joleen, who are temporarily living in what used to be John Penner’s house, came over all excited. A wolf was snooping around their front door. Why was it so tame? Did it have rabies?

The answer was no, it didn’t have rabies. The Brazilian red wolf is naturally tame.

When we first came to Brazil, we raised Indian chickens. They roosted out in the trees. The setting hens, of course, made their nests on the ground. Because of the abundance of predators, it wasn’t safe to let them hatch their chicks in the tall grass by the spring. We made a little pen in the front yard where we kept the hens while sitting on eggs.

One night, around 9 o’clock, we heard a commotion out front. The chickens began to squawk. By the time we got there to see what was going on, the hen population was one less.

The wolf had simply ripped a hole in the wire enclosure and appropriated a setting hen.

The next evening, about 9 o'clock I got out the gun and waited just inside the front door. Right on time, the big bad wolf showed up. This time the wolf population was one less.

Several weeks ago Faith and I went on a walk up the road toward the church. We heard two wolves talking with each other. When we got back Sylvia and Otávio were all excited. They saw one of them on the road in front of our house.

These ungainly wolves pose no danger to human beings. And since we no longer raise chickens loose, even if they come to our front door, they won't leave with a picnic lunch. ▲

History of the Colony

The Colony Grows

April of 1973 – Jonas & Frances Schultz, together with four of their children and grandson Darren arrived with permanent visas. They set up temporary quarters in Glenn Hibner's little shed, which he used as a shop.

Emma Burns harvested 838 bags of rice.

The mayor of Rio Verde, Eurico Veloso, donated 20 desks to our school.

Richard Mininger bought land from Natalício, a brother to Aristote, from whom the Hibners and Loewens bought their land.

May of 73 – Approximately a 40 km. stretch of road between Rio Verde and the entrance to Santa Helena, a neighboring town, was completed. This was the first paved road to come to Rio Verde.

Emma Burns and Fanny Kramer met a policeman in Goiânia by the name of Valdeci. He showed interest in our people and later on made different visits to the Colony. Then he moved to the States. Today he is known in the Winton Congregation as brother Wally. (More on Wally in This & That.)

June of 93 – Clifford and Naomi Warkentin and his brother Ervy were here for a visit.

Duane & Frances Holdeman, with their nine children, arrived on permanent visas.

July of 93 – Richard & Edith Mininger were here for a visit.

August of 93 – Daniel Kramer finished Jonas Schultz' house.

It now became possible to make long distance phone calls out of Rio Verde. To make an international call, I once spent eight hours in the telephone office waiting for it to go through. We finally got our Sunday School quarterlies. They were late, so we could use only three of the lessons.

Fanny Kramer and her boys moved into Glenn's shop, now that the Jonas Schultz family moved into their new house.

Edna Loewen moved into her new house.

Frank & Joleen Burns came for a visit.

September of 93 – Alvin & Erla Schneider were here and bought a place from Onício, Aristote's brother-in-law.

October of 93 – Duane Holdemans moved into their shed. I might mention that in the beginning it was custom to build a large shed with living quarters at one end. It was economical and very functional. Once a permanent house was built, the old living quarters were turned into additional shed space.

December of 93 – Ike & Rosalie Loewen and children arrived with permanent visas.

Daniel & Betty Martin and their two children arrived on permanent visas.

Alfred Koehn from Wisconsin was here and purchased a tract of land.

Dan & Clara Coblentz were here for a visit.

January of 74 – We began having school in the new school building. Maxine and

Charlene Loewen were the teachers, with more or less 60 students.

Ike Loewens moved into Edna Loewen's shed.

February of 94 – Don Litwiller and Elmer Koehn here for a visit. They were staying in

Don's shed on a piece of land he purchased during a previous visit. During the night of the 15th, Don suffered a heart attack and died.

Even though Don didn't have permanent residency and hadn't spent much time on the

Colony, to us he was a very special person. His death, less than a year after Pete and Denton's death, was another hard blow.

We had revival meetings. Sylvester Unruh and George Penner were the evangelists.

March of 94 – Virginia Kaminski and her two daughters came on a permanent visa.

May of 94 – Will & Ann Miller and their family arrived with permanent visas.

The Jesse Scroggie family arrived on tourist visas. The way I remember the story, The

Scroggie family learned to know the Harold Dirks family in Idaho. They found out about the settlement in Brazil and decided to come and take a look.

They set up housekeeping in a rented house in Rio Verde. Apparently a fine family, they seemed to adapt quite well to Brazilian life – especially the children.

They spent about three months here and left for the US. Something, it seemed, wasn't quite right on a family level. A number of years later we got word that Jesse was serving a life term in prison for murder.

October of 94 – After living in Don Litwiller's shed for some time, Will Millers moved into their new house.

Missions in Brazil

Missionary Conference in Pirenópolis

This section may occasionally appear in this little paper. It should not be taken as competition with our official paper, The Christian Mission Voice. It isn't.

As we have mentioned before, Brazil is a big country. On a little map (see following page) distances look short. And yet from Rio Verde to Acaraú by car is a three day trip, one way, on roads that can really shake a person up. By plane it is a matter of hours from Goiânia, on a ticket that really shakes a person up. The mission in Patos is a bit

closer. Goiânia and Pirenópolis are next door. The Mirassol mission, in São Paulo State, is less than a day from Rio Verde by car.

Not only do these distances make it difficult to visit some of the missions, but worse, it makes it extremely difficult for the missionaries to have much contact with each other, except for Goiânia and Pirenópolis.

Visits from the Mission Board in N America usually ended up being hectic affairs as they tried to make five different mission visits, plus Rio Verde, of course, fit into a tight schedule.

This time the two members of the General Mission Board did it differently. Ben Giesbrecht and Jesse Friesen came directly to Rio Verde. A joint mission meeting of all three congregations was held. It was explained that Brazil will be given the same status as other countries with established and functioning congregations. That is, we should come up with our own missionaries and support them financially. Obviously this will be implanted over a period of time, and until then the General Mission Board will continue to carry part of the load.

After this meeting, the General and Brazil Mission Boards headed for Pirenópolis for a missionary conference. All the missionaries were present, plus several others.

I have never been to Pirenópolis. But those who have tell me it is a beautiful place. It must be. The O Popular, our Goiânia paper, runs frequent articles on scenic and historic aspects of the town.

Most of those present stayed in a clean little hotel with eight rooms. Meals were taken in a restaurant about a block from there where one of the brothers from Pirenópolis works.

Some of the missionaries stopped by Rio Verde for several days after the conference. I was impressed by the positive outlook they have of their work. They seemed every bit as enthused about their work as a farmer does about his. That's saying a lot.

After the conference, John Unruh and Jesse Friesen visited the Acaraú and Patos missions, and Elias Stoltzfus and Ben Giesbrecht went to the Mirassol mission, from where Ben went on to the airport to catch his plane. ▲

Religion

God, Faith and Politics

[Following are excerpts from a article written by Roberto Campos, a well-known Brazilian statesman. Campos has spent years in congress, has been the ambassador to England, has served as Minister of Finances, and is a respected authority on economy.]

The peculiar way in which Brazilians look at religion defines very well the nature of this country. Religion here is kept on the back burner. People in this country consider themselves sure-enough Catholics, but the only time they go to church is for the missa

do galo – a special Christmas Eve mass, and even then, drug by their wife. People don't have a severe concept of sin. They decide which of the Ten Commandments they want to observe (which evidently never include the sixth and ninth commandments). They decide what they are going to believe in (always mais ou menos). They feel no great compulsion to have a religion that adds up.

But so far as being religious, indeed the Brazilian is. It's a religion without a lot of pitfalls or fear of death. We don't have the Spanish fervency, the practicality of the Anglo-Saxons, or the depth of the Germanic peoples. We can prove with facts that our people become less involved in their religion than other western cultures. In Anglo-Saxon countries, for example, prayer before meals, be it as a family or in public, is a habit that is practically non-existent in our circles. We don't have rigid religious groups, like the Puritans, the Quakers, the Mormons and the Amish, in which their social and political behavior is totally molded by their religion. We have a great need for more missionaries. Brazil imports – not exports – missionaries. Last but not least, we have a serious lack of saints who meet the requirements for canonization, which, like it or not, is an embarrassment to Brazil, the largest Catholic nation in the world.

We have a buddy religion. God is almost a member of our family. He's a tolerant Father, always busy with a lot of other things, but to whom we go when we get into a pinch. The German poet Heine, understood well this Latin sentiment: "God will forgive me, for that's His job." Saints are "acquaintances" from whom we can borrow money, and then, conveniently, forget to pay. We're never very far removed from the spirit of making a deal. A vow is made for everything imaginable: to win in the lottery, and, worse yet, in the name of religion to look upon someone else's wife. We inherited from our Portuguese forefathers a religion which is confidential, sweet, and superficial, which the loving worship of the Baby Jesus illustrates so well . . .

Religion in Brazil must be different, for we don't worship the tragic Jehovah of the Jews, nor the vindictive God of the Puritans. So we have a different vision too of "divine punishment" and of the biblical plagues. "Divine punishment" just doesn't fit into our nature. A Brazilian doesn't think in terms of cause and effect. . . ▲

This & That

Just a little addition to the Wildlife column. Richard Mininger just called me and wanted to know if I could tell Tim Burns (who lives close by) that the wild hogs are eating his corn. Here's your chance, folks. If you are a straight shot (I didn't say big shot), Tim can use you on the safari.

The Monte Alegre School Christmas program was held the evening of December 22.

Because of the rainy weather, the program was held in the church building, instead of out in front of the school, as usually is done. The children will return to their classes on January 3.

The Leo Dirks family from Vinagre spent Christmas here.

Brazil ¹³ News

Rosella Yoder and her son James are here to spend several(?) months. Rosella has kept up her permanent visa since she left here. This is done by returning at least once every two years.

Anthony & Wynelle Koehn had a little girl on December 27. According to Grandma Koehn she looks just like Uncle Ben (Anthony's brother). Take a good look at Ben and decide for yourself if Loralee is cute.

Except for the Carman Loewen family, everyone has returned from Conference.

Where isn't a mistake a mistake? In Brazil News, when showing what kind of reasoning too many of our children use when trying to solve a math problem.

This is a different year so far as the weather is concerned. The rains came early and so farmers planted early. Then the rains stopped. Finally we began to get scattered showers, and then it began to rain. And rain. And rain. We even got some hail. Several small fields got rather severe damage. It's still raining enough to hamper cultivating. In spite of it all, the crops are looking quite good.

We try to fall in line as much as possible with the established order of the church in N America. I thought we were doing fairly well, but Sylvia says one of her students wrote about Christian and Deverment programs we have on third Sunday evenings. Do you folks up north have anything like it?

While Darren and Ramona were here from the States, they, together with his folks, paid a visit to both Leos and Kramers in Mato Grosso.

Newell & Retha Mininger from Barron, Wisconsin were here to visit the Cameron Goertzen family in the Goiânia mission. Deb is their daughter. They also spent some time on the Colony with his brother, Richard Mininger.

Kay Ann Dirks from Barron, Wisconsin arrived to teach Lamont, Cameron & Deb's son, in the Goiânia mission.

Paula Schultz from Michigan will be teaching Dean & Vivian's children on the Mirassol mission. Paula has the additional advantage of having a permanent visa, which eliminates red tape on coming down and staying.

On the afternoon of December 18, the Rio Verdinho youth went Christmas caroling in the town of Jataí. The Monte Alegre youth caroled in Rio Verde. It's interesting that – locally at least – there is no word to describe caroling. So the Brazilians use serenata. Call it what you will, they seem to enjoy it immensely. The hardest thing to get across is that in caroling we come, we sing, we go. Their culture would require that we come, we shake hands, we come in, we talk, we sing, we talk some more, we drink coffee and eat some refreshments, we shake hands, we go.

Roseane Penner from Manitoba was out to pay Denise Litwiller, the schoolteacher in Pirenópolis, a visit. They both came to the Colony for several days.

Dean & Vivian Penner from the Mirassol mission were out for a short visit with Vivian's sister and her husband, Jim & Donna Boehs.

The Rio Verdinho School is in session again after an extended Conference recess. They had a Christmas program on the 21st.

The youth from the Monte Alegre and Rio Verdinho congregations spent several

evenings caroling to their respective members.

Christmas evening the Burns clan went to Rio Verde and caroled for different acquaintances. At the home of one of our sisters, her husband, who is not a member, came out to welcome us in. This was fine, except for the fact that he was very much under the influence of strong drink. Our sister tried to smile and act cheerful, but behind the mask there was sorrow and disappointment.

In the last issue, describing the first funeral we had here on the Colony, I mentioned people came in "...cars, jeeps...and yes, by plane." The unusual thing wasn't that someone went to a funeral in an airplane – it happens all the time –, but that the plane landed on the road close to church, and not in some airport.

Our new literature center is finished. I understand that Gospel Tract will be moving in on January 1. It will probably be at least a month before the translation and publication work are moved over.

Corrine Isaac returned to Canada over the holidays to pick up her temporary visa, so that she can continue teaching in the Monte Alegre School.

Things are changing fast in Brazil. Our local Co-op has gone to bar codes. The other supermarket in the mall should soon follow suit. In the larger cities they are coming up with fancy models with large color monitors. One supermarket has 64 checkout stands equipped with bar readers.

On the 29th we had a Conference report at the Monte Alegre congregation for all those who understand English. On the 31st they had another one in the town congregation for those who speak Portuguese. Separating the languages isn't discrimination. It's simply that everyone gets a lot more out of the report when done like this. The Brazilians themselves voted to have separate meetings.

We are temporarily taking care of a 12 year old boy. When he was two his dad killed his mother. He was the sole witness. Three years later his dad committed suicide. Then he went to live with his brother, who was on drugs and was totally unable to take care of him. Finally he was placed in an institution. Then the Children's Counsel called and asked if we could try and help find a home for him. He seems to be a nice boy. I asked him in what grade he was in school. He answered that he never made it through the first grade. We don't realize how good we have it in this life.