

Chapter 11

God's Authority

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. Luke 10:19

Martinha and the Devil

James 4:7

Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

We were in Brazil serving as missionaries. Brazil is a spiritist country which means a lot of witchcraft goes on. Eighty percent of the population has dabbled in the occult. We saw a lot of demonic activity in the Brazilian culture.

We were trying to plant a church in a little village in the center of a strong spiritist area. The young pastor leading the church was fighting against the demonic forces and casting out demons whenever necessary.

Living in the middle of Satan's territory had an effect on his family. Evil was like a thick darkness all around them. One night his little five year old daughter woke up screaming. She told her dad there was a monster in the room. She pointed, "He's up in the corner and he keeps looking at me and scaring me." Her dad went into the room thinking she was just having a nightmare. So, he came in the room and he sat down with her on the bed and assured her there was no little monster in the corner. He told her that she knows Jesus as her Savior and he would protect her. He talked and comforted her for ten minutes or so. Wanting to go back to bed he asked her to look up in the corner to see if there was still something there. She looked up in the corner and screamed, "Daddy, it's still there! That little creature is still up in there staring at me! It's mean it's going to come and get me. Make him go away!"

Her father thought it strange that she was now wide awake, but still seeing this evil thing. So he suggested they sing some songs they had learned in Sunday School. They rejoiced in the Lord singing a number of choruses. Another 15 or 20 minutes passed. Again he said, "Okay, honey. Look up in the corner. She looked up again and in terror cried, "No, daddy, he's still there and he's even bigger! It's coming after me, daddy help me." Later he told me he didn't know what to do. He said they don't teach this kind of stuff in Bible schools and seminaries. Finally, after praying again, he turned to Martha and asked, "Martha, what scripture verses did you learn in Sunday School? Let's quote them together.'

She had learned Matthew 19:14 and began to quote it with authority:

"Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for such is the kingdom of heaven."

As she uttered those words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for such is the kingdom of heaven," there was an audible pop in the room, like a balloon exploding. Her father heard it. She heard it. They both looked up in the corner and Martha shouted, "It's gone, daddy, it's gone! Thank God it's gone. The evil monster is gone."

Her father walked away from that situation amazed and discovered something new. Demons can torment children. Demons can attack Christians, trying to intimidate them. Even little children are susceptible to the enemy's attacks. That evil spirit was pestering and trying to gain access to her room and to her life. Even so, she could talk, quote scripture, pray and sing, but what made the enemy flee was the authority with which she stood on the word of God.

Jose Luiz Finds Freedom

1 John 2:14

I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning... young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

Let me tell you the story of a twelve year old boy, one of our first converts to Christ in Brazil. Jose grew up in a spiritist home. His parents were nominal Catholics but they also, like most people in Brazil, practiced various forms of witchcraft to protect their loved ones. Jose even as a young boy hated the spiritist practices of offering sacrifices or grain or a strangled chicken left at an intersection to turn away evil. He hated it. He knew it was wrong to try to appease evil with evil. He had experienced many night terrors because of it.

In the darkness of their wooden shack in a poor village he lay panic stricken, clutching his ragged night clothes, trembling, sweating, and cringing from the unseen evil he sensed haunting his room. His eyes scoured the night

searching for some ray of hope in his chamber of fear. His eyes scanned hopelessly the pictures of saints and fictitious spiritist guides which were to protect him. Even their faces seemed to turn into horrid ghouls grinning and taunting him. His hands trembled and fumbled for the charm bracelets of witchcraft in which so many trusted, but in his little hands they appeared to be chains tightening about him and shackling him to his fears. He screamed, throwing the fetishes across the room and burying his head deep in his pillow he sobbed, "Is there no one who can save me from this hell?"

His parents tried to help. His fears kept him awake so many nights they worried that his health would soon break down. They took him to doctors, to psychologists, to therapists, but they seemed as puzzled as the boy to find a cure for his chronic fear. Year after year his fears multiplied and his nights became dreaded battlegrounds.

"It must be spiritual," his parents reasoned. "Perhaps an evil spirit has a hold on him. He will need to receive other good spirits to fight it off." They forcibly dragged him to the spiritist practitioners for help. First they prescribed several incantations and more bracelets, then a sacrifice of grain and candles to be left on a street corner at midnight to ward off the evil spirits. Still his fears remained. A blood sacrifice would be necessary to more powerfully appease the spirits. A chicken must be offered and left in the streets for the spirits to devour. Yet his fears remained. His parents had spent all they had to pay for such incantations, but seemingly to no avail. A final effort must be made at any cost. He must surrender his will to the will of the spirits and receive spirit guides to enable him to overcome this evil. He must be baptized in blood!

The costly sacrifice of a goat was made. He was locked in a shed in the back of the spiritist center where blood was poured over his head until it soaked his entire body. Then he was forced to remain sitting on the ground for three days, locked in a dark room, waiting for the spirit guides to enter. When he left the room, the spirit guides had manifested themselves and Jose left with an even greater fear of spiritism than he had of the dark. His fear of the dark continued. Sleepless nights were the norm. A light had to be left burning all night for him to get any sleep.

As he grew older, so did his hatred for the spiritist rites, for deep within he knew that they were cohorts with his fears. Then one day he heard of Jesus. Not the Jesus the priests spoke of, and not the Jesus the spiritists acknowledged, but the Jesus of the Bible, the loving, healing, living Jesus who brought peace.

It happened by accident. He was recovering from two broken legs he had received in a terrible bus accident. His parents had dragged him to those horrible spiritist centers offering sacrifices in hopes of healing him. He abhorred it all and tried to get away from home as much as possible. That is when it happened. He was hobbling on his crutches one Sunday afternoon, sulking in his misery when he saw other children running past him with smiles on their faces. "Where are you going?" he shouted. "The missionary is here! The missionary is here! At the school, come on," they shouted. So he did, just out of curiosity, of course. It was curious indeed. The missionary used puppets, taught songs and Bible verses, and told stories with his funny accent.

He could not help but laugh. But something else struck him profoundly. It was that Wordless Book that told of God's love, our sin, Jesus' death on a cruel cross, and how we could have a clean heart and peace with God. It was as if someone had turned on a bright light and he could see there was hope for his fears. He would come back. He must hear more!

He did return. Every Sunday he went to the school to hear the missionary. He found it in his thoughts all week long. Soon he was going to the missionary's little church too. This was great. It was what he always longed for. Finally, Jose realized that going to church was not enough to calm his fears. Jesus wanted to come into his life and live with him. One night, when the missionary gave the invitation, he prayed and asked Jesus to be his Savior. There was no dramatic happening, but just a new peace and joy knowing that Jesus was now the conqueror of all his fears.

Immediately Jose was interested in studying the Bible. He took home and soon finished all the studies we could give him. He began the Theological Education by Extension program and did very well. When challenged to do a memory contest he memorized 80 verses in two months! He brought his friends and family to church too to hear of Jesus.

Yet, as time went by we could tell that there was a problem. Jose could never pray out loud. At first we thought it was timidity, but even the most timid in the group could voice a simple prayer, but not Jose. When we'd give a time for prayer at a youth meeting, though everyone else would pray, he would remain silent. Once I thought I could trap him into praying. He was taking up the offering and when he came to the pulpit with it, I publicly called

on him to ask God's blessing on it. The silence of the moment spoke loudly of his problem. I waited, but he stood squirming, agonizing, yet not a word did he even mumble. I had to ask someone else to pray.

The situation finally came to a head one day. Jose was in the church listening to Christian music as he often did. I was outside dealing with a spiritist man, a man possessed by demons. When I walked back into the sanctuary, the Holy Spirit prompted me to ask Jose if he had been involved in spiritism. (Up to this time I knew little of his life story.) He looked up at me shocked and said, "Why do you ask?" I related that I had just spoken to a spiritist and the Holy Spirit prompted me to ask. He walked over to the cassette tape player and turned it off. I knew then I had touched on a sore spot, he never willingly turned off the music. He said, "Pastor, let's talk. It's a long story."

He proceeded to describe to me his childhood fears and his involvement in spiritism with all the terrifying details. I began to understand his inability to pray. I had been reading about spiritism and demon possession and had discovered the true meaning of "baixar no chao", the blood baptism ceremony. It was a total surrender of one's life and mind and soul to the occult. It was a selling of one's soul to the devil! This, of course, brings about captivity to Satan and occult oppression or possession, depending on the individual case. Jose, even though a Christian, was chained to the past by that blood sacrifice in which his parents sold his soul. The devil was refusing to let go, and gradually tightening the chains of his usurped ownership.

I shared with him the meaning of blood sacrifices, what happened to him in the spiritual realm when he surrendered to the occult. Then with scripture I shared how wonderfully Christ has set us free by his blood and broken all the covenants left standing, that we by the exercise of our faith in Jesus and by the word of our testimony, must break those bonds of Satan's claims and rebuke him, his efforts, his allegiance, and his parent's allegiance once and for all.

That afternoon, standing at the front of a little wooden plank floored chapel, leaning over the pulpit, Jose said, "I want to pray now." With tears rolling down his face he confessed Jesus as the only Lord of his life and in prayer broke every covenant with Satan. He was finally free – totally and visibly free, to serve Jesus. The changes weren't immediate but Jose began to blossom. He could pray!

Dona Iris, Freed From Bondage

Luke 10:19

*I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions
and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.*

The complete story of Dona Iris I cannot tell because we were not directly involved with her over a long period of time. But we were acquainted with her from the work in Jardim das Palmeiras in Porto Alegre. Dona Iris came to Porto Alegre from the city of Belo Horizonte, where she was raised. Her husband worked with marble cutting and the work possibilities are what drew him to the south. Dona Iris had been an influential leader in spiritism in Belo and was well known for her powers. She had attained to the position of "Mãe-de-santo" which is, "mother of saints", so designated because she was a priestess of *Umbanda* and could contact the spirit world. In other words she was a very powerful medium to communicate with spirits who communicated through her.

She rarely spoke specifically of her exploits because at the time of her mediumship, she entered into a trance and could remember nothing from when she was in that state. She only heard of her own exploits from others who accompanied her and were eye witnesses. They had related that at the midnight services in which they were to go to a cemetery as a group to offer sacrifices, perform rituals, etc. she would approach the chained and locked gates, go into a trance, and by some amazing feat would pass through the gates and lead them into the cemetery.

Dona Iris first came in contact with the Gospel when her neighbor, the Jardim das Palmeiras pastor's mother, invited her to a Bible study in her home. Iris attended and listened, carefully asking questions. It was the first time she had ever heard the message of God's love and salvation through faith in him. When the pastor asked if anyone wanted to receive Christ, she was one of the first to raise her hand. She prayed the sinner's prayer and received Christ as her Savior. Immediately she began attending the Alliance Church and learned more about Christ. Her questions were many and sincere, even though often difficult to answer, because her entire orientation throughout life had been spiritist. Many of her questions were reflective ones. Learning a new Bible truth she would question, "Why do the spiritists say...(such and such)?"

The oddity in her story is that there was no power encounter, as one would expect when a medium comes to Christ. The struggle seemed to be a physical one, wherein she was sickly from the time she became a Christian. The only experience of "deliverance" as one would expect, came after church one evening. She had been feeling down and ill for some time and doubts were plaguing her mind. For some unknown reason, after church she was overpowered by something and began writhing and struggling as if in a wrestling match. The evil spirit spoke out and claimed her to be his possession.

The young pastor was startled by all this and began to pray, pleading the blood of Jesus, and rebuking the evil spirit. Her condition worsened as she was being overpowered and the evil spirit would not leave. At that point a young Chilean woman, recently converted, stepped up to her and putting her hands on Dona Iris, rebuked the evil spirit in Jesus' name and told him to get out. Immediately the evil spirit left her and she returned to her normal state. We do not understand all of this or why her case seemed so different, but in any event, she was delivered and by a mere child in the faith who didn't stand there trembling with fear, but in simple faith commanded the situation as she knew we have the right to do.

How often we shake and tremble in fear at such manifestations of evil spirits, but Paul exhorts the Philippians (1:28) *"In nothing terrified by your adversaries."* We must recognize our safety in Christ and our position with him. Jesus said, *"I give you authority over all the powers of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*

Delivered from Demon Possession

Mark 5:9

*Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"
"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."*

Working in the little village of Vila Elsa had been a real battleground for many months. These last few months had been very discouraging. One of our new believers had been forbidden to attend our services by her husband. Another had become depressed and attempted suicide on several occasions. Another teenager had been hospitalized in serious condition with a strange skin infection which covered his body. Another recent convert denied her faith.

We had a wonderful deliverance ministry of a man who was a warlock (a male witch) and a medium. Alair received the Gospel of John we had distributed house to house and loved what he read. It was strange when he showed up at the church. The service was already in session and we were worshiping. As he walked in the door suddenly everyone got quiet. He came in with his dog as well, which is not unusual in this little village.

As we were concluding the service and serving communion I began to serve the grape juice and speak of the blood of Jesus. Immediately his dog stood up and ran forward growling and snarling and showing its teeth at me. It was a strange experience, almost a physical attack.

After the service I asked Delfino, our lay pastor, who that man was and why everybody got quiet. It seemed everyone knew Alair. He told me that Alair was a powerful spiritist warlock for the whole northern part of *Porto Alegre*. He was a *Pai de Santo*, (father of saints) a priest of *Umbanda* and *Candomble*, a medium and the head of spiritism and black magic for thousands of people in the northern region of Porto Alegre.

Alair came back to church several times. After every service he would tell me that he received the Gospel of John and read it all the way through. He said he loved reading it. He loved hearing about Jesus. He wanted to thank us for giving him the Bible. But each time I would try to tell him about Jesus, he would get nervous and irritated.

One day as I stood by my car speaking with him I determined to clearly present Christ to him and invite him to receive Christ. As soon as I started speaking about Jesus he became angry and agitated. I was determined to pray over him whether he liked it or not. So, without his consent, I started to pray. At that point he actually took his fist and smashed into the side of my car, denting it.

On another occasion he came by the church again and talked to me about loving the Bible he had received. I told him that it was nice that he liked the Bible but he needed Jesus. He said he wanted to receive Jesus, but each time I talked to him about Jesus he would get angry and he didn't know why.

That night the youth service was over so we put everyone out of the church and asked Alair to come into the

church to pray with us. Steve Renicks, my missionary colleague, and I did this because we believed that there was going to be a demonic encounter and we didn't want our young people influenced by it.

For two and a half hours we talked, shared Christ, prayed, pled the blood of Jesus, and claimed the victory in Jesus' name, all to no avail. Each time we would tell Alair that he needed Jesus he would begin to pray then would gag and choke, fall on the floor, and writhe in pain. At times he would lose control of himself and become violent. He couldn't hurt us or release himself from the circle of prayer (we held our hands around him as we prayed). Though he was a strong 36 year old man he couldn't break our hold. Finally, after one particularly difficult demonic outburst, he passed out on the floor.

Twice more he raged overturning pews and smashing the pulpit. Then he'd awaken from passing out and would ask what happened. We told him that he was trying to pray, but demons would not let him. We told him that the demons he had received in spiritism and witchcraft could not stop him from receiving Christ as his Savior because demons could not block his will.

We were exhausted. We wanted to be done with this ugly business. At one point Alair managed to pray confessing his sins. We were overjoyed by this. I remember Steve saying, "Good! We're done here! Let's go home." But I sensed he wasn't free at all. Then the Holy Spirit prompted me to tell Alair to not only confess his sins, but invite Jesus to come into his heart. He tried over and over again, but couldn't get the words out, as he would gag, choke, become violent and then pass out.

Finally, in exhaustion, Steve and I didn't know what to do. We had tried everything we knew how to do. They don't teach you this stuff in Bible School or seminary. So we picked up a hymnal while Alair raged and we began to sing praises. As we sang Alair melted to his knees in front of the cross that was hanging on the wall.

This time he came back to his senses very upset that someone broke the church furniture. We again told him what was going on, and again he said he really, really wanted to receive Jesus. This time, however, when he prayed he started to choke, but forced the words out, "Jesus... come...into... my...heart..." As soon as he said, "Come into my heart" he suddenly burst into joyful tears, confessing his sins and praising God for his forgiveness. He was free!!!

Edu & Jandira Released from Bondage

Matthew 28:18

*Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying,
All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

Edu and Jandira got saved in a home visit. After a few weeks of discipleship they decided to burn all their fetishes and things that belonged to spiritism and witchcraft. They were terrified about doing this. Edu, a tall, gentle, very black semi-literate man with a deep voice said he was afraid, "I'll go down" meaning he'd be overpowered by demons that would make him pass out. We encouraged them that the Lord was stronger than demons and we would be there with other believers to pray for them. We planned a fetish burning service in the church front yard the following Sunday.

We were really concerned about this because our congregation was very small. Most people were new believers. We prayed and asked the Lord to stand with us as they took this huge step of faith. Normally our attendance was around 40 people. That night as we waited for the service to start little by little people began to trickle into the church. No one knew that this burning of fetishes was going to take place because we had no way of telling them. But God was calling people together on that special night. I was surprised to see that people came from the other side of the city traveling by bus an hour and a half to get there, because God told them they needed to be there. That night we had 63 people gathered together in a large circle around a huge bonfire in which the fetishes were burned. An odd thing happened as we started to burn those fetishes.

First, we doused all of them with alcohol. Alcohol is very flammable but safe. And then we lit matches and threw them on the alcohol. But the alcohol wouldn't ignite. We tried three times. Then we prayed and asked the Lord for help. This time the alcohol ignited and the fetishes burned with a huge plume of black smoke. As we did so we sang, prayed and held hands in a circle. Edu did not "go down." That night they were delivered from the power of Satan's kingdom.

Their daughter, Carmen, attended with them that night and when she saw what God had done, she confessed Christ as her Savior and brought her fetishes to be burned. They remained faithful in the Alliance Church until the last few years when they changed churches. We were not in Porto Alegre when Edu died, but here is the story we were told.

He was in the hospital (I think he had suffered a stroke). One day he looked at Jandira and said "Honey, I want you to bring my suit to me." Jandira asked why and he told her that he was going to a banquet. She said, "Edu, you are not going to a banquet without me" and he responded, "This time I am." She brought him his suit and put it on him. Sometime later, Edu raised his hands in the air and said, "The angels have come to get me." He dropped his hands and died. Talk about the Lord preparing him for his home going! What a wonderful way to enter the presence of God.

Mr. Andre Walks Away

Matthew 13:7-8

But when the sun rose, the seeds were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the seedlings. Still other seed fell on good soil and produced a crop—a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.

Seu Andre (as they called him, Mr. Andrew as we would say) was a big man with a protruding stomach that sagged some inches below his belt buckle. He walked slowly for a man of his age, as if he always had sore feet, from prolonged gout. His wide face seemed generously creased with wrinkles from years of frowning. His cheeks sagged and he always appeared to be chewing, or at the least hiding something in his mouth. His speech was slurred through yellow-stained teeth due to years of chewing tobacco. He was a *gaucho*, the rugged masculine prototype of the pioneer cowboy of southern Brazil. His accent, his habits, his walk, his mannerisms and his attitudes all betrayed that he was long reared in the deep interior of the State and steeped in *gaucho* traditions. He had come to the big city of Porto Alegre, the capital of the south, to establish himself in some business earlier in life. But in his typical manner he refused to break any of the *gaucho* lifestyles that he had developed in his beloved town of Caçapava. His every greeting made the new acquaintance acutely aware of his heritage and he made it a conspicuous point of introducing himself as "Seu Andre, of Caçapava," not a native of this city, only a resident, a passer through, who soon proposed to return to the land of real men.

How Seu Andre came in contact with the Alliance church in Jardim das Palmeiras was a casual happenstance in his search for healing of a long-term ailment. He made it clear that the "missionary" (or divine healer) who cured his ailments would certainly have his respect and allegiance. It was through a simple black spinster with a worse speech impediment than his that he first heard of the Alliance. (She had become a Christian despite her strongly antagonistic spiritist mother, but that's another story.)

While cleaning his home one day, she mentioned the fact that her church believed in divine healing. He had no respect or time for such "blacks" in the true spirit of *gaucho* machismo and racial prejudice, but the healing question deserved investigation. He would at least hear what these evangelicals had to say and see if they had the power to heal his afflictions.

For several months he frequented the services when he felt like it. His wife, a staunch Catholic, followed along giving lip service to the Gospel, but making it quite clear she needed nothing more. She was a Christian Catholic and certainly a better person than any in the church. Andre remained callous to the Gospel and was obviously interested in being healed more than in becoming a Christian. Or could it have been that he wanted more proof of the claims of Christ? After all, Brazil is full of religions and cults, all of them claiming to be the truth. What makes Christianity any different?

One night Andre dreamed of a great chasm between two mountains and an airplane, passing overhead that had engine trouble and went crashing into the rocks below. He awoke and thought nothing more of the dream. The following day, a missionary still in language school came to the church and was to be the speaker. Andre went as usual, speaking to the new missionary and everyone else of his desire to be healed of his gout. The service was quite normal and he enjoyed the lively music and the accordion accompaniment.

When the new missionary stepped to the platform and began in his faltering speech, Seu Andre settled himself back in his seat expecting at most to have a humorous time listening to this foreigner err in his Portuguese, and perhaps to be able to get a quick nap.

But the missionary did the unusual. He used an illustrated message and unfolded a large poster on which there was a picture of a plane flying through treacherous mountains. Andre jumped to the edge of his seat to see more clearly. It was the exact picture of what he had seen in his dream. As the missionary spoke, Andre grabbed at every word, realizing for the first time his separation from God and the necessity of the Savior, or else face certain death and eternal damnation. Tears welled up in his eyes. When the missionary closed the sermon and gave the invitation Andre was already shuffling down the wood plank floor to give his heart to Jesus. He told them of his dream and how fearful it had made him of dying. He cried out for mercy to be saved and recognized Jesus as his only Savior who could deliver his soul from death and give him peace.

Now he spoke of the church as his church. He was a Christian. He forced his wife to go with him and all but pushed her down the aisle each time an invitation was given. But she resisted stubbornly insisting on her own good deeds as proof of her genuine Catholic Christianity. Seu Andre became even more ardent in his pursuit of healing for his gout ridden legs, since now he was a Christian. Surely, God would work this miracle for him.

My meeting with Seu Andre came just after I was appointed to serve in Porto Alegre, but before I had finished language school. I was invited to be the officiating ordained minister at his baptism. Since no one in the church had room for visitors, I stayed in his home for three days. He was eager to please the missionary and perhaps this one would be able to heal his legs.

This was my first experience actually being cut off from English and having no one to help fill in where I lacked knowledge of the Portuguese language. Their hospitality was exceptional, treating me as royalty, serving me the most delicious delicacies of their cuisine, and standing close alongside me watching my every reaction to the strange new tastes, waiting for my first words of praise. Often it was all I could do to smile and say it was good, as I gagged to make it go down. Since I liked it so well, Mrs. Andre heaped another serving onto my plate, to be sure I had enough and watched carefully to see if I downed it all. If I was unable to clean it up, she eyed me suspiciously, saying, "You didn't really like it, did you?" I responded politely that it was good, but I was full. "Well, why didn't you say so," she retorted, "I'll just save you a plateful for later!" How often I was tempted to retreat to the bathroom or outside with the hope that I'd get sick and regurgitate it all. At least the bathroom was a comforting solitude from this island paradise on which I was stranded.

Throughout those days they pumped me with questions about Christianity, the Bible, the church, and America. I had the impression that to them, those four things were inseparably intertwined, and to become a Christian was somehow to become an American ally. (Many Brazilians believe evangelical Christianity or Protestantism to be an American product, a religion invented by Americans.)

While speaking to the question of divine healing and God's will, I mentioned in passing that our daughter Aimee had asthmatic bronchitis and although she had prayed, trusted and been anointed for healing, God in His sovereignty had not seen fit to heal her yet. Andre could not conceive of such a thing and instead of being edified by this example, he pitied me. This poor ignorant suffering American missionary didn't know the cure for asthma. He hurried to his room saying he had the cure for Aimee. A few minutes later he returned with a typewritten sheet and declared in his wrinkled grin, "Here is how to rid her of asthma. I guarantee it. It worked for my son." I took the piece of paper and read it slowly in my imperfect Portuguese. Here is what it said:

Cure for Asthma

*If thou art plagued with Asthma
In the secret of thy closet
Prepare thyself a vessel.
Half full of milk you should fill it
Upon the first full moon
Thou shalt make thy way stealthily
to the nearest fig tree
(Be sure no eyes see thee)
There at the foot of the fig tree
Bury the bottle bottom side up
(So as to drain it completely).*

*Thence thou shalt say these words:
"Away with thee oh asthma
Away with thee forever*

*As this milk that disappears
So shalt thou ne'er reappear
In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior,
God the Father. Son and the Holy Ghost,
And the blessed Virgin Mary. Amen."*

Do this for three consecutive nights with seven "Hail Marys" and your asthma will be gone.

I immediately responded that I could not do something like this because it is non-Biblical and un-Christian and it was clearly a spiritist magical incantation. He became very indignant and said he would not do something spiritist either. He was a Christian. Then he pointed out that it used Jesus' name, just as any of our prayers. "It can't be wrong, it's done in Jesus' name, and after all, the padre (the Catholic priest) was the one who gave it to me!" I insisted on it being nothing like anything we find in the Bible for healing and it was more like superstitious magic. He refused to see it as anything but God given and I heard him mumble as he walked away. "What does a young preacher like you know anyway, it worked didn't it?"

Shortly after moving to Porto Alegre the church received a mission loan of \$12,000 to purchase land in a more visible location. (They had been meeting in a back yard where a plywood portable chapel had been built.) The church was facing serious financial difficulties and needed to have each member tithing. The lay pastor asked me to come and preach on tithing in relation to the church's needs because he felt if he would speak on the subject they would misunderstand his motives. I did so laying out clearly the Biblical command and promises for tithers and the national church's statement on it and the obvious necessity of the church. Seu Andre took this as a personal offense since he was dead set against giving regularly to the church.

From there he left the church and moved. The last we heard he had turned spiritist, seeking again the cure for his gout from Satanic sources.

*As when a dog goes to his own vomit,
and becomes abominable, so is a fool who
returns in his wickedness to his own sin.
Proverbs 26:11 & 2 Peter 2:2*