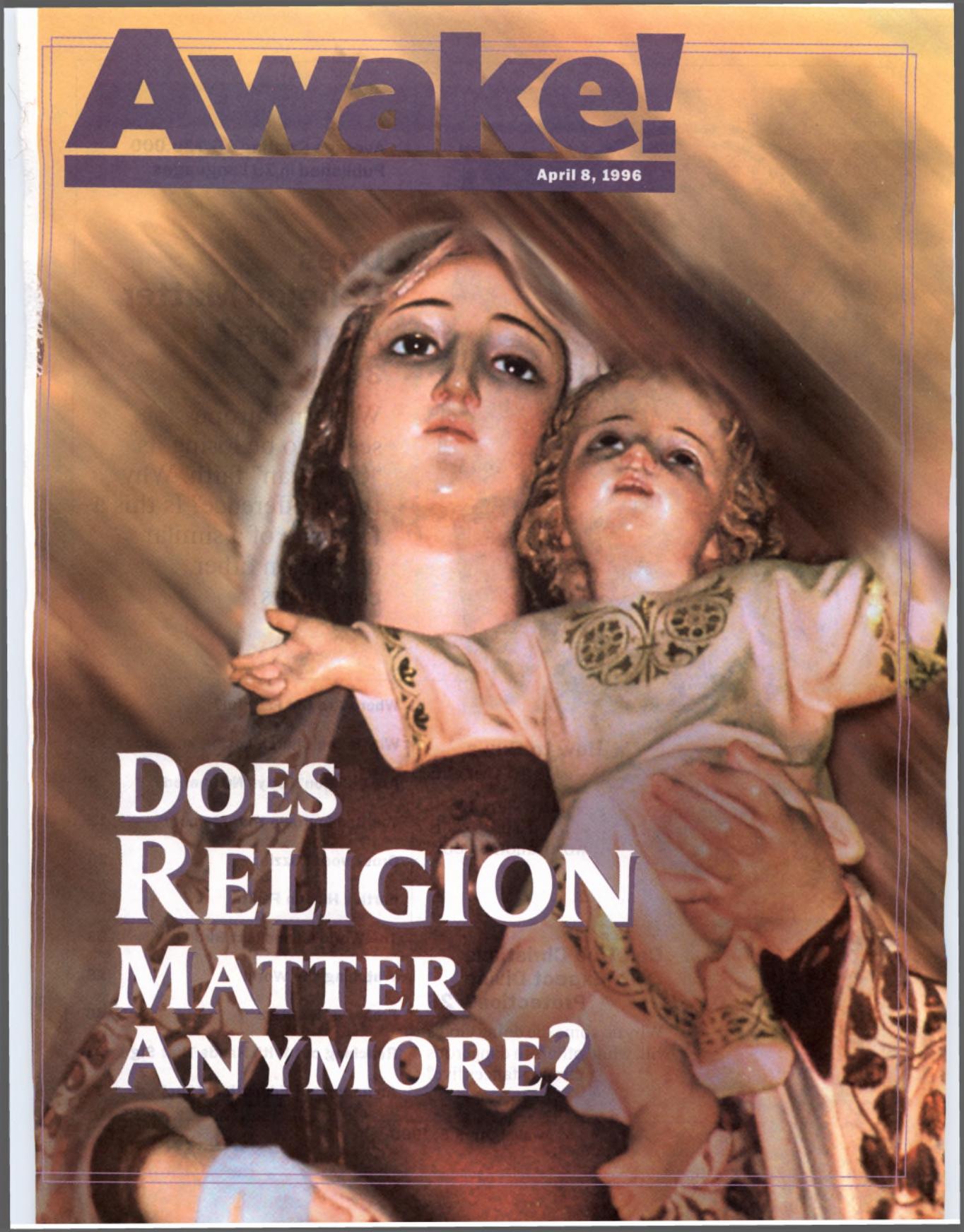


# **Awake!**

April 8, 1996



**DOES  
RELIGION  
MATTER  
ANYMORE?**

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Western Europe seems to be losing its "Christian" faith. Why the indifference? Is this a foretaste of a similar decline on other continents?

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# WHERE ARE THE FAITHFUL?

**"Nothing is so fatal to religion as indifference."**

EDMUND BURKE, 18TH-CENTURY  
BRITISH STATESMAN.

**O**N A windswept plain in the northern reaches of Spain lies the small town of Caleruega. The medieval town is dominated by an impressive Romanesque convent. It was erected 700 years ago in honor of Domingo de Guzmán, the founder of the Dominican order, who was born here. For seven centuries the convent has housed nuns who choose to live in silence and seclusion.

The convent's roof leaks, and the ancient walls are beginning to crumble. But the mother superior is concerned about a more pervasive decay—the crumbling of religion itself. "When I entered the convent nearly 30 years ago, there were 40 nuns here," she explains. "Now there are only 16 of us. There are no young ones. Religious vocation seems to be something of the past."

What is happening in Caleruega is occurring throughout much of Europe. There has been no wave of antireligious feeling, just a quiet, inexorable desertion. The great European cathedrals minister to the tourists rather than attract the local "faithful." The once indomitable church—be it Protestant or Catholic—is being overcome by apathy. Secular rather than religious concerns domi-

nate people's lives—a trend church spokesmen call secularization. Religion just does not seem to matter anymore. Might the religious climate in Europe be a foretaste of a similar decline about to sweep over other parts of the world?

## **What Is Happening to Church Attendance?**

This phenomenon is nothing new in northern Europe. Only 5 percent of Scandinavian Lutherans attend church regularly. In Britain a mere 3 percent of professed Anglicans go to Sunday services. But now, European Catholics in the south seem to be following the example of their northern neighbors.

In France, a predominantly Catholic country, only 1 out of every 10 citizens goes to church once a week. In the last 25 years, the percentage of Spaniards who consider themselves "practicing Catholics" has slumped from 83 percent to 31 percent. In 1992, Spanish archbishop Ramon Torrella told a press conference that "Catholic Spain does not exist; people go to Holy Week processions and Christmas Mass—but not [to Mass] every week." During a papal visit to Madrid in 1993, John Paul II warned that "Spain needs to return to its Christian roots."

The irreligious mood has infected the clergy as well as the laity. The number of newly ordained priests in France dropped to 140 in 1988 (less than half the figure for 1970), while in Spain there are some 8,000 who have abandoned the priesthood in order to get married. On the other hand, some who do continue to minister to their flocks are doubtful about their message. Only 24 percent of Sweden's Lutheran clergymen feel they can preach about heaven and hell "with a clear conscience," while a quarter of the French priests are even unsure about the resurrection of Jesus.

### Pleasure and Preference Before Piety

What is taking the place of religion? In many homes recreation has supplanted worship. On Sundays families head for the beaches or the mountains rather than church. "Going to Mass is boring," shrugged Juan, a typical Spanish teenager. Religious services cannot compete with soccer matches or pop concerts, events that draw crowds and fill stadiums.

The falloff in church attendance is not the only evidence of the religious decline. Many Europeans prefer to pick and choose their religious ideas. Nowadays official church dogma may bear scant resemblance to the personal beliefs of those who profess that particular religion. A majority of Europeans—be they Catholics or Protestants—no longer believe in life after death, while over 50 percent of French, Italian, and Spanish Catholics do not believe in miracles either.

The hierarchy seems powerless to prevent this ground swell of nonconformity. Nowhere has this been more noticeable than in the papal campaign against birth control. In 1990, Pope John Paul II urged Catholic pharmacists not to sell contraceptives. He claimed that these products "contravene natural laws to the detriment of a person's dignity." Likewise, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* insists that "conjugal love of man and woman thus stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity."

Despite these stern injunctions, the average Catholic couple blithely go their own way. Families with more than two children are now the exception in the Catholic countries of southern Europe. In Spain, condoms—which were almost a black-market product two decades ago—are regularly advertised on television, and only 3 percent of French Catholic women say that they adhere to the official Catholic ruling on birth control.

Clearly, Europeans are turning their backs on the churches and their teachings. Anglican archbishop of Canterbury George Carey graphically described the situation in his church: "We've been bleeding to death," he said, "and that is a very urgent issue we've got to face up to."

Not since the upheavals of the Reformation has the religious edifice of Europe looked so shaky. Why have many Europeans become indifferent to religion? What is the future of religion?

**Awake!**®

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# WHY IS THE CHURCH LOSING INFLUENCE?

**"Every Stoic was a Stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?"**

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, 19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN ESSAYIST AND POET.

**I**'M A Catholic—but not a practicing one," explains a young mother. "I couldn't care less about religion," a teenager adds. Their comments are typical of the younger generation of Europeans. Although their parents—or more likely their grandparents—are still churchgoers, religious faith has not bridged the generation gap.

Why have the religious habits held dear by generations of Europeans been abandoned?

## Fear No Longer a Factor

For centuries fear of hellfire or purgatory exerted a powerful influence on Europeans. Fiery sermons and graphic church paintings of an inextinguishable burning hell persuaded the laity that only pious church attendance could save them from damnation.

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Further, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "the Church obliges the faithful to take part in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days."<sup>3</sup>\* In rural areas social pressure was also considerable—everybody was expected to attend church on Sundays.

But times have changed. People now feel at liberty to do what they want. Fear is no longer a factor. Hell has been quietly swept under the carpet, since most European Catholics do not believe in it anyway.

In practice, the "sin" of skipping Sunday Mass is not taken too seriously. Tirso Vaquero, a Catholic priest in Madrid, Spain,

\* The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was first published in 1992 and is intended to be an official statement of doctrine for Catholics throughout the world. In the introduction Pope John Paul II describes it as a "sure and authentic reference text for teaching catholic doctrine." The last time such a universal Catholic catechism was released was in 1566.

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# The cult of leisure has conquered Christendom's heartland

admits: "If a Christian [Catholic] doesn't come to Mass on Sunday, we are sincerely sorry because he has lost this moment of communication with God and his brothers, not because he has committed a sin. That is secondary."

So fear no longer instills devotion. What about the moral authority of the church and its leaders—can they command the loyalty of their flocks?

## A Crisis of Authority

The demise of religious fear has coincided with a marked deterioration in the church's moral standing. "For centuries we have had . . . so many teachers of morals and so few moral teachers," complains Italian historian Giordano Bruno Guerri. This lack of moral leadership was highlighted by the two world wars that devastated Christendom. The European churches were powerless to prevent believers from engaging in the bloodfest. Even worse, the churches became actively involved in the war effort—on both sides.

"The First World War, a civil war among the Christian sects, opened a period of tragedy and shame for Christianity," observes historian Paul Johnson. "The Second World War inflicted even more grievous blows on the moral standing of the Christian faith than the First. It exposed the emptiness of the churches in Germany, the cradle of the Reformation, and the cowardice and selfishness of the Holy See."

Vatican concordats with the Nazi regime of Hitler and the Fascist governments of Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain also

damaged the church's moral authority. In the long run, the religious price for such political expediency was a loss of credibility.

## Church and State—Untying the Knot

During the 20th century, most European countries have finally untied the knot binding Church and State. In fact, no major European country now recognizes Roman Catholicism as its official religion.

Although the dominant churches may still be state subsidized, they have lost the political influence they used to wield. Not all churchmen have come to terms with this new reality. Prominent Spanish Jesuit José María Diez-Alegria believes that "the leaders of the [Catholic] church think—many of them in all sincerity—that they cannot exercise their pastoral duty without a human platform of 'power.'"

But this "human platform of 'power'" has collapsed. Spain, which had a "national-Catholic" government until 1975, exemplifies this situation. In recent years the Spanish hierarchy has had a running battle with the Socialist government over church funding. The bishop of Teruel, Spain, recently complained to his parishioners that he feels "persecuted as a Catholic" because the Spanish government is not giving sufficient financial support to the church.

In 1990 the Spanish bishops announced that a "grave crisis of conscience and morality" was affecting Spanish society. Who did they blame for this 'moral crisis'? The bishops claimed that one of the principal causes was the "ambiguous mentality frequently promoted by the public administration [the Spanish government]." Apparently, the bishops expect the government to promote Catholic ideology as well as provide subsidies.

## Do Clergymen Practice What They Preach?

The enormous wealth of the Catholic Church has always been an embarrassment



**When faced with the choice of a sermon or a suntan, most Europeans unhesitatingly head for the beach**

to priests who work in impoverished parishes. It was even more embarrassing when the Vatican Bank was implicated in what *Time* magazine called "the worst financial scandal in postwar Italy." In 1987, warrants were issued by Italian magistrates for the arrest of an archbishop and two other Vatican bank officials. Because of the Vatican's special sovereign status, however, the accused churchmen avoided arrest. The Vatican Bank insisted that no wrongdoing had been committed but failed to erase the impression that the church was not practicing what it preaches.—Compare Matthew 23:3.

Highly publicized sexual misconduct has done even more damage. In May 1992 an Irish bishop, well-known for his endorsement of celibacy, asked his diocese to "forgive him" and "pray for him." He was forced to resign after it came to light that he was

the father of a 17-year-old boy and had used church funds to pay for his education. A month earlier a Catholic priest appeared on German television with his "companion" and their two children. He said he wished to "open a dialogue" on the matter of the clandestine liaisons that so many priests maintain.

The scandals inevitably leave their mark. Historian Guerri, in his book *Gli italiani sotto la Chiesa* (The Italians Under the Church), asserts that "for centuries the Church has scandalized Italians." One result, he says, is the "development of widespread anticlericalism, even among the faithful." Indignant Catholics may feel tempted to ask their clergy the same questions the apostle Paul put to the Romans: "You preach against stealing, for example, but are you sure of your own honesty? You denounce the practice of

adultery, but are you sure of your own purity?"—Romans 2:21, 22, *Phillips*.

### The Gulf Between Clergy and Laity

A less obvious but possibly more debilitating problem is the chasm between the clergy and the laity. Pastoral letters from the bishops seem to irritate rather than instruct parishioners. In a Spanish survey, only 28 percent of those interviewed "agreed with the bishops' statements." An equal number "couldn't care less," and 18 percent said they "don't understand what they [the bishops] are talking about." Archbishop Ubeda of Majorca, Spain, admitted: "We bishops must also accept our share of responsibility in the process of dechristianization—which is a fact."

The lack of a clear Scriptural message further alienates the laity. According to the *Catholic Herald*, "many priests [in France] have opted for political action in order to be 'relevant,'" even though most of their parishioners would prefer them to concentrate on spiritual matters. Italian priest and sociologist Silvano Burgalassi admits: "Perhaps they [young people] have withdrawn from God because of our bad example. We have given them a 'potpourri' of compromise, religion and business, selfishness and adultery." Not surprisingly, priests are losing their social status. "I'm a Catholic, but I don't believe in the priests" is an expression often heard from Spanish Catholics.

Some Catholics find it hard to confide in the clergy, and others have serious doubts about church doctrine—especially those teachings they consider unreasonable or impractical.

### Incomprehensible Doctrines

A glaring example is official Catholic teaching on the subject of hell. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity." Nevertheless, re-

cent surveys indicate that only a quarter of French Catholics and a third of their Spanish counterparts believe that hell exists.

Likewise, when it comes to moral issues, Europeans tend to be "do-it-yourself Christians." Mimmi, a teenage Lutheran from Sweden, believes that moral questions, such as having children out of wedlock, are "something to decide for oneself." Most French Catholics would agree with her. When faced with important decisions in life, 80 percent said they would follow the guidance of their conscience rather than that of the church.

In the past the authority of the church was sufficient to stifle any dissident voice. From the Vatican's viewpoint, little has changed. The *Catechism* adamantly states that "all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church." The authoritarian approach, however, finds little support. "The argument of authority reigns unchecked," complains Antonio Elorza, a Spanish professor of political studies. "The Church prefers to build a walled tower, consecrating the validity of her tradition in the face of history." Outside the "walled tower," the church's influence and its authority continue to wane.

Apart from spiritual decadence, social causes are another important factor contributing to religious indifference. The consumer society provides a host of entertainment and recreational opportunities—and most Europeans have the will and the way to savor them. By comparison, going to church seems a dull way to spend Sunday morning. Besides, church services rarely seem to come to grips with the spiritual needs of people.

It seems unlikely that traditional religion will regain its hold over the European flock. Is religion a force of the past—destined to go the way of the dinosaur?

# ARE RELIGION'S DAYS NUMBERED?

**"The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."**

ISAIAH, 8TH-CENTURY B.C.E.  
ISRAELITE PROPHET.

THE Hebrew prophet Isaiah thus predicted that one day everyone on earth will be united in worship of the Almighty God. Today, however, such a prospect may appear to be further away than ever.

Earlier in this century, for example, Communist revolutionaries in Russia believed that the destruction of religion was a necessary step toward freeing the proletariat. Atheism, they claimed, would 'liberate the working masses from the burden of prejudices and delusions of the past.' By 1939, Stalin had reduced the number of Orthodox churches open in the Soviet Union to 100, compared with over 40,000 before 1917.

Hitler also viewed religion as an obstacle in his path to absolute power. "One is either a Christian or a German. You can't be both," he once declared. He intended gradually to eliminate all forms of worship that he could not control. To that end, the Nazis developed their own quasi-religious prayers, festivals, baptisms, and even burial services. Hitler was their messiah, and the fatherland their god. Any atrocity could be committed if Hitler willed it.

## Last Days of Religion?

Neither Stalin nor Hitler succeeded in their drive to suppress religion. But now, apa-

thy seems to have taken over the role of tyranny. For Bible students this turn of events does not come as a surprise. The apostle Paul told Timothy that in the "last days" people would be "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."—2 Timothy 3:1-4.

Does the Bible teach that these "last days," marked by religious indifference, would be a prelude to the demise of *all* religion? No. Rather than predict the end of all religion, the Bible explains that *false* religion—which is given the symbolic name Babylon the Great—will come to an end.\* The book of Revelation says: "A strong angel lifted up a stone like a great millstone and hurled it into the sea, saying: 'Thus with a swift pitch will Babylon the great city be hurled down, and she will never be found again.'"—Revelation 18:21.

The disappearance of false religion, however, will not result in a godless world. On the contrary, Psalm 22:27 prophesies: "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn back to Jehovah. And all the families of the nations will bow down before you." Just

\* The Bible uses the ancient city of Babylon as a symbol of the world empire of false religion, for it was in this city that many unscriptural religious ideas originated. Over the centuries these Babylonish concepts came to permeate the principal religions of the world.

imagine a time when "all the families of the nations" will unite together in worshiping the one true God! Under the rule of God's Kingdom, that remarkable promise will find glorious fulfillment. (Matthew 6:10) When that time comes, religion—*true* religion—will matter greatly. But what about now?

### Filling the Spiritual Void

The spiritual void so prevalent in Europe today parallels the situation in the Roman Empire of the first century. Historian Will Durant describes how first-century Christianity successfully met the spiritual need of that time: "Into the moral vacuum of a dying paganism, into the coldness of Stoicism and the corruption of Epicureanism, into a world

sick of brutality, cruelty, oppression, and sexual chaos, into a pacified empire that seemed no longer to need the masculine virtues or the gods of war, it brought a new morality of brotherhood, kindness, decency, and peace."

The moral and spiritual vacuum in the lives of people in our time can be filled by the same powerful message preached throughout the Roman Empire by the early Christians. And there are hearing ears. Many Europeans, although outwardly not religious, still feel that God plays an important role in their lives. They may no longer attend traditional church services, yet some have filled their spiritual void elsewhere.

Juan José, a young man from Palma de Mallorca, Spain, was educated in a Catholic school and served as an altar boy until he was 13 years old. He attended Mass every Sunday with his family, but he stopped going to church when he became a teenager. Why? "For one thing, going to Mass bored me," Juan José explains. "I knew the liturgy by heart. Everything seemed to be a repetition of what I had heard before. Furthermore,

### A Tale of Two Buildings

Spain is replete with religious buildings, but the fervor that once sustained the construction of costly cathedrals seems to have evaporated. For example, in Mejorada del Campo, on the outskirts of Madrid, an impressive Catholic church is under construction. Justo Gallego Martínez, a former Benedictine monk, began the project some 20 years ago. But the building is still a hollow shell. Martínez, the lone builder, is now in his 60's, so it seems unlikely that the church will ever be finished. However, 200 miles to the south, a different story unfolded.

"Faith Moves Mountains" was how the local newspaper described the two-day construction of a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Martos, Jaén, Spain. "How is it possible," asked the local newspaper, "that in this present world based on selfishness, volunteers from various regions [of Spain] unselfishly travel to Martos in order to erect a building that has broken all records for speed, perfection, and organization?" In answer to this question, the article quoted the words of one of the volunteers: "The merit simply lies in the fact that we are a people taught by Jehovah."

**Mejorada del Campo**



**Kingdom Hall  
in Martos**

our parish priest often treated us altar boys harshly. And I thought it wrong that humble people should have to pay the priest to conduct a funeral service.

"I still believed in God, but I thought I could serve him in my own way, outside the church. Along with a group of friends, I tried to enjoy life as best I could. I suppose you could say that entertainment became the first thing in my life.

"But when I was 18, I began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. What did they have to offer me that I had not found in the church? A definite faith based on the Bible rather than tradition and 'mysteries' that I could never understand. My new beliefs meant big changes for me, however. Instead of spending every weekend organizing parties at discotheques, I began going from house to house in order to share with my neighbors my newfound faith. Being actively involved in helping others gave meaning to my life. For the last seven years, I have been a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses."

It is not only young people who are seeking to fill their religious void. Antonia, an elderly woman from Extremadura, Spain, spent most of her life "searching for God," as she puts it. During her teenage years, she went to Mass every day and eventually entered a Catholic convent, since she believed "that if God cannot be found in a convent, he can't be found anywhere." But three years later she left the convent, feeling even more disillusioned and empty than before.

Finally, when she was in her 50's, she became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. "I was so happy when the Witnesses visited me and answered my questions from my own Bible," she explains. "Since I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, my life has had a purpose. I have my problems, but I can cope with them because now I have found the true God."

These two experiences are not isolated ones. Bucking the religious trend, increasing

numbers of people are associating with Jehovah's Witnesses and have found that living by their faith and preaching about it to others gives meaning and purpose to their lives.

### **True Religion Matters More Than Ever**

Although we are living at a time when many are rejecting religion, it would be unwise to judge all religion as irrelevant. True, in the 20th century, people are discarding empty ritual and outdated and unscriptural dogma, and they scorn churchgoing that is just for the sake of appearances. The Bible, in fact, recommends that we steer clear of hypocritical religion. The apostle Paul foretold that during the "last days," some people would 'have a form of godly devotion, but they would prove false to its power.' Such people maintain a facade of religion, but their conduct denies its validity. How should we react to such religious hypocrisy? "From these turn away," Paul advised.—2 Timothy 3:1, 5.

But Paul also said that "religion does yield high dividends." (1 Timothy 6:6, *New English Bible*) Paul was not talking about just any sort of religion. The Greek word translated here as "religion" was *eu·se'be·i·a*, which means "devotion or reverence toward God." True religion, authentic godly devotion, "holds promise of the life now and that which is to come."—1 Timothy 4:8.

As the above-mentioned examples demonstrate, true religion can give meaning to our lives and help us face problems with fortitude. More than that, true religion guarantees an eternal future. That form of worship is worth pursuing, since we are assured it will eventually 'fill the earth.'\* (Isaiah 11:9; 1 Timothy 6:11) No doubt about it, now is the time when true religion matters more than ever.

\* For a discussion of how to identify the true religion, see chapter 5, "Whose Worship Does God Accept?" of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published in 1995 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

# You Can Improve Your MEMORY

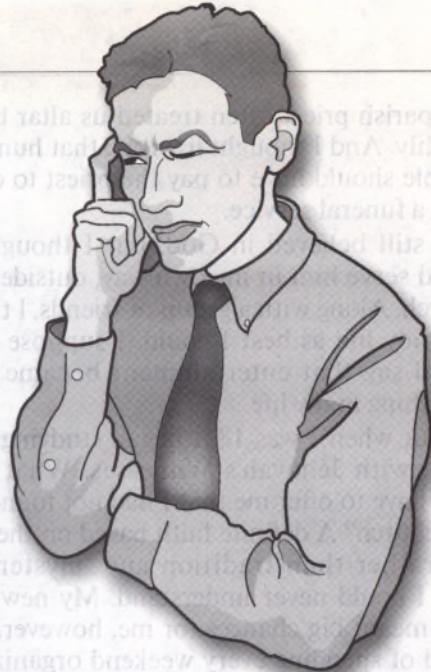
*"I have a terrible memory." Have you ever said that? If so, do not despair. A few simple tips and a little effort can bring surprising improvement. Do not underestimate your brain. Its abilities are astonishing.*

**H**OW does the brain perform its amazing feats? In recent years the brain has been scrutinized as never before. But while insight is growing, we still know very little as to how the brain actually accomplishes the things it does.

How we learn and remember information is not clear, but researchers are trying to unravel this mystery. Involved in learning and remembering are an estimated 10 billion to 100 billion nerve cells, neurons, in the brain. But there are at least ten thousand times that many connections between neurons. One theory is that as the connections, or synapses, are strengthened by use, learning occurs.

As we grow older, mental ability may decline; our reactions may slow down. Brain cells do not renew themselves, and adults evidently lose some continually. But to the extent that we use our brains, we may preserve our mental abilities for a longer time.

Our mental attitude influences the brain. An optimistic, cheerful outlook improves the brain's function at any age. Some stress may be beneficial, but chronic, undue stress



hampers the brain's efficiency. Physical exercise can help to relieve mental pressure.

Encouraging as this may be, we may still forget important matters, regardless of our age. Can we improve? One area where most have difficulty is in remembering the names of people we meet.

## Remembering People's Names

A few simple suggestions can greatly help you to remember names better. Interest in the person helps. A person's name is important to him. Often we cannot remember the name because we did not get it right to begin with. So when introduced, get the name clearly. Ask the person to repeat it if necessary or even to spell it. Use it several times in your conversation. When you say goodbye, address the person by name. You will be surprised how these few points will help.

Another tip that can further boost your memory for names is to associate a person's name with something you can picture in your mind. If you can put action into the picture, so much the better.

For example, one person had difficulty

remembering a casual acquaintance's first name, which was Glenn. So when he saw this individual, he thought of the meaning of the word "glen," that is, "a secluded narrow valley." He pictured the man in this valley, viewing the beautiful surroundings. It always worked; the name Glenn popped into his mind.

Many names may have no meaning to you, so you will need to substitute a word that resembles the name. It does not matter if your substitute word does not exactly match the sound of the name. Your memory will be better able to recall the name from the association. When you make up your own words and pictures, the impression is much stronger.

For instance, you have been introduced to a Mrs. Bettina Auchincloss. You might substitute *button organ-gloss*. You visualize a button playing on a shiny organ.

You need to practice this diligently for a while, but it really works. Harry Lorayne explains this method in his book *How to Develop a Super-Power Memory*, and he has used it on many public occasions. He says: "Many's the time that I've had to meet one hundred to two hundred people in fifteen minutes or less, without forgetting a single name!"

### How to Memorize Lists

How can you improve your ability to remember a list of unrelated items? A simple method is called the link system. Here is how it works: You form a visual image for each item in the list and then associate the image for the first item with the image for the second item, then do the same for the second and third items, and so forth.

For example, you have to get five items at the supermarket: milk, bread, a light bulb, onions, and ice cream. Start by linking milk to bread. Imagine pouring milk out of a loaf of bread. While the picture may be quite ri-

diculous, it will help impress the items on your memory. Also, try to get action into the mental scene that involves you in pouring the milk.

After associating the milk with the bread, move on to the next item, the light bulb. You might link the loaf of bread to the bulb by picturing that you are trying to put the loaf of bread into a light socket. Then link the light bulb to the onion by visualizing yourself peeling a large light bulb and crying as you do it. Of course, it is better if you make the association yourself. Can you form an association between the last items, onions and ice cream? Maybe you can imagine eating onion ice cream!

See if you can recall the list. Then test your memory with a list of your own. Make it as long as you like. Remember, to make the association more memorable, you can make it humorous or even ridiculous or out of proportion. Try to put action into the picture, and substitute one item for another.

Some may object that this method takes longer than simply memorizing the list. However, it takes longer to explain than to use. Once you have some practice, you will form associations quickly, and your recall, as well as speed of learning, will be much better than if you try to learn without a system. When 15 persons were asked to remember a list of 15 random items without

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**When Wars Will Be No More**

**Ruled by Faith in God in a Communist Land**

**AIDS in Africa  
—To What Extent Is Christendom Accountable?**

using a system, their average score was 8.5. Using the system of linking visual associations on another list, the same group averaged 14.3. Of course, if you remember to take a written list of these items when you go shopping, that would give you a score of 15—100 percent!

### **Remembering What You Read**

In this age of prolific information, another area where most of us need help is in studying efficiently. Study is essential in school, in business, for personal improvement, and in preparation for public speaking. In addition, a Christian must set aside time for personal Bible study.—John 17:3.

'But I have difficulty remembering what I have studied,' you may say. What can be done? Learning to make your study time count can help you to remember what you read. Here are some suggestions.

When you study, personal organization is important. Have books, writing materials, and paper within reach. Try to study in a pleasant area with few distractions and with proper lighting. Turn off the radio and the television.

Have a regular time for study. For some, studying each day for short periods may be more effective than using a large amount of time at one sitting. It is good to divide your time into sections. Instead of studying non-stop for two hours, it may be better to break the time into sessions of from 25 to 40 minutes each, with short intervals of a few minutes in between. Research has shown that this contributes to a higher rate of recall.

Determine what material you want to cover during your study period. This aids concentration. Before starting a book, take a few minutes to preview it. Look at the title. Examine the table of contents, which summarizes the book. Then read the foreword or the introduction. Here the author's aim and viewpoint may be stated.

Before starting to read a chapter, preview it. Look at subheadings, illustrations, charts, summaries, and opening and closing paragraphs. Skim the first sentence of each paragraph. These sentences often contain the main line of reasoning. Get the overall picture. Ask yourself questions: 'What did the writer set out to prove? What can I gain from this material? What are the main arguments?'

Concentration is important. You should become totally involved. The secret is to make your study time as active as possible. Kindle enthusiasm by considering the practical aspects of the information. Visualize. Use the senses by imagining smell, taste, and touch if the material lends itself to this.

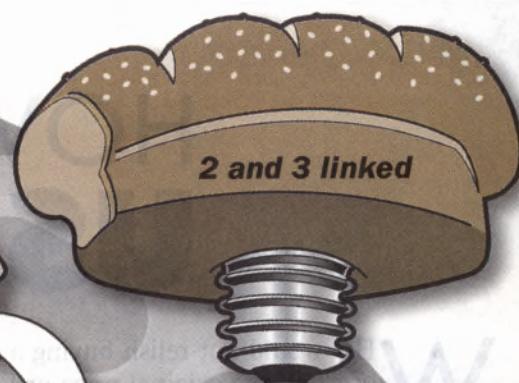
Once you have got the drift of the material, you are ready to take notes. Efficient note-taking can speed up your understanding and recall of the information. Notes need not be entire sentences but should be key words or phrases that help you recall the main ideas.

Understanding information does not necessarily mean that you will be able to recall all of it in the future. The truth is that within 24 hours of learning, as much as 80 percent of the information may be forgotten, at least temporarily. That sounds discouraging, but some or much of that 80 percent can be regained by reviewing the material. After each study session, review for a few minutes. If possible, review again a day later, then a week later, and then a month later. Your applying these points may assist you in getting the most out of your precious study time and remembering what you have read.

So do not underestimate your brain. Your ability to remember things can be improved. One scientist referred to the brain as "the most complex thing we have yet discovered in our universe." It is a tribute to the awesome wisdom and power of its Creator, Jehovah.—Psalm 139:14.



**1 and 2 linked**

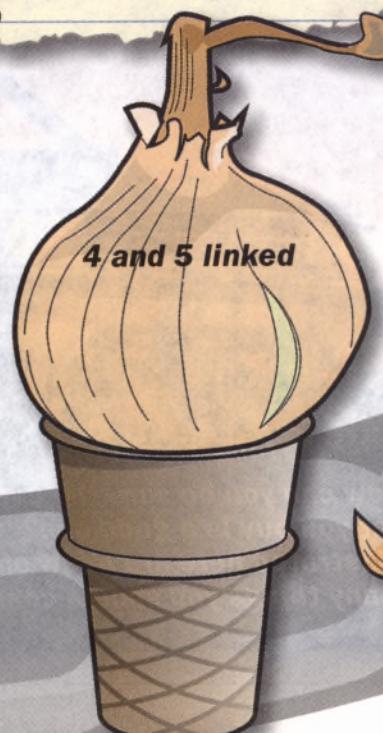


**2 and 3 linked**

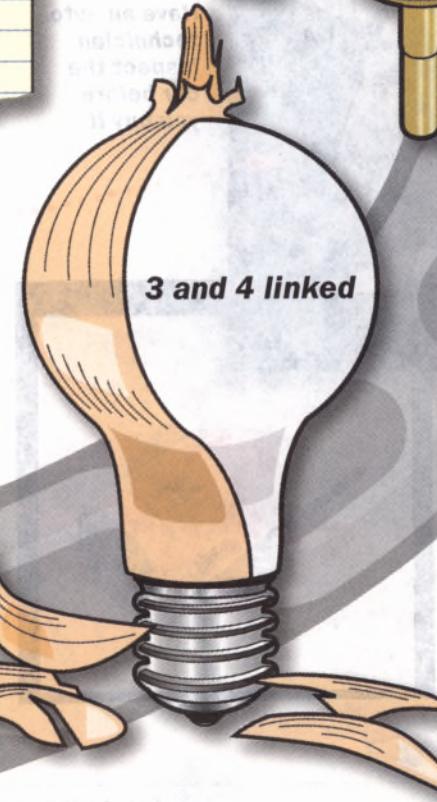
To remember lists, use the link system: Form a visual image for each item. Then associate the image of the first with the second, and so on

**Shopping list:**

1. Milk
2. Bread
3. Light bulb
4. Onions
5. Ice cream



**4 and 5 linked**



**3 and 4 linked**

# HOW TO BUY A USED CAR

**W**HOMO would not relish buying a car for half the original price or less? "Is that really possible?" you ask. Yes—if it is a previously owned automobile, better known as a used car. The problem is, many fear that a used car is not a good deal. Cars, like other machinery, wear out. Thus, the value of a car decreases with age, mileage, and use.

May I introduce myself? I have been an auto technician for more than 15 years. So let me pass on to you some of the things I've learned. The following are a few questions to ask yourself before buying a used car.

## How Much Can I Afford to Spend?

First, figure out how much your budget will allow you to spend on a car. Newspaper ads can then give you an idea of the year and



*Have an auto technician inspect the car before you buy it*



*Have the oil and the oil filter been changed regularly?*



*How can you be sure the used car you buy is a good one? Illustrated here are a few of the many things you should consider*

model of cars that fall into your price range. In some countries, banks, loan institutions, and some libraries have monthly guides listing the prices of used cars. Be sure to calculate not only the price of a car but also the expense of taxes, registration, and insurance. Also plan to have some money for unexpected repairs the car may require after you buy it.

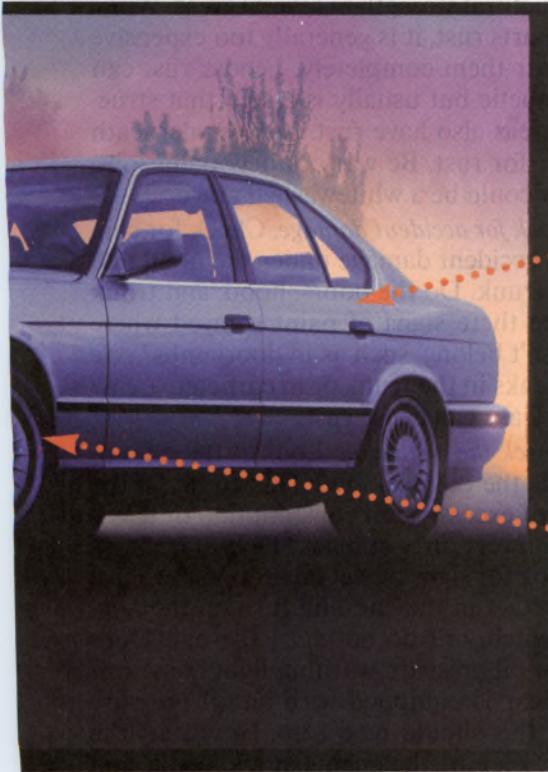
#### What Kind of Car Do I Need?

When deciding what you need, determine what is important to you. Consider your family size and what activities the car will be used for, such as driving to work, transporting your children to school, and going in the Christian ministry. Will the car be used for local trips or long-distance ones? Don't limit yourself to a specific make and model; rather,

look for a car that has been maintained well and is in good shape. Get a car that is easy to service. All cars will need parts eventually. Is there a supplier for the appropriate parts? Parts for cars over ten years of age can be hard to obtain. If you are on a limited budget, steer clear of luxury or imported specialty cars, as parts and service will no doubt be more expensive. Although such cars may be very reliable, they can also be very expensive to own.

#### Is It a Good Car?

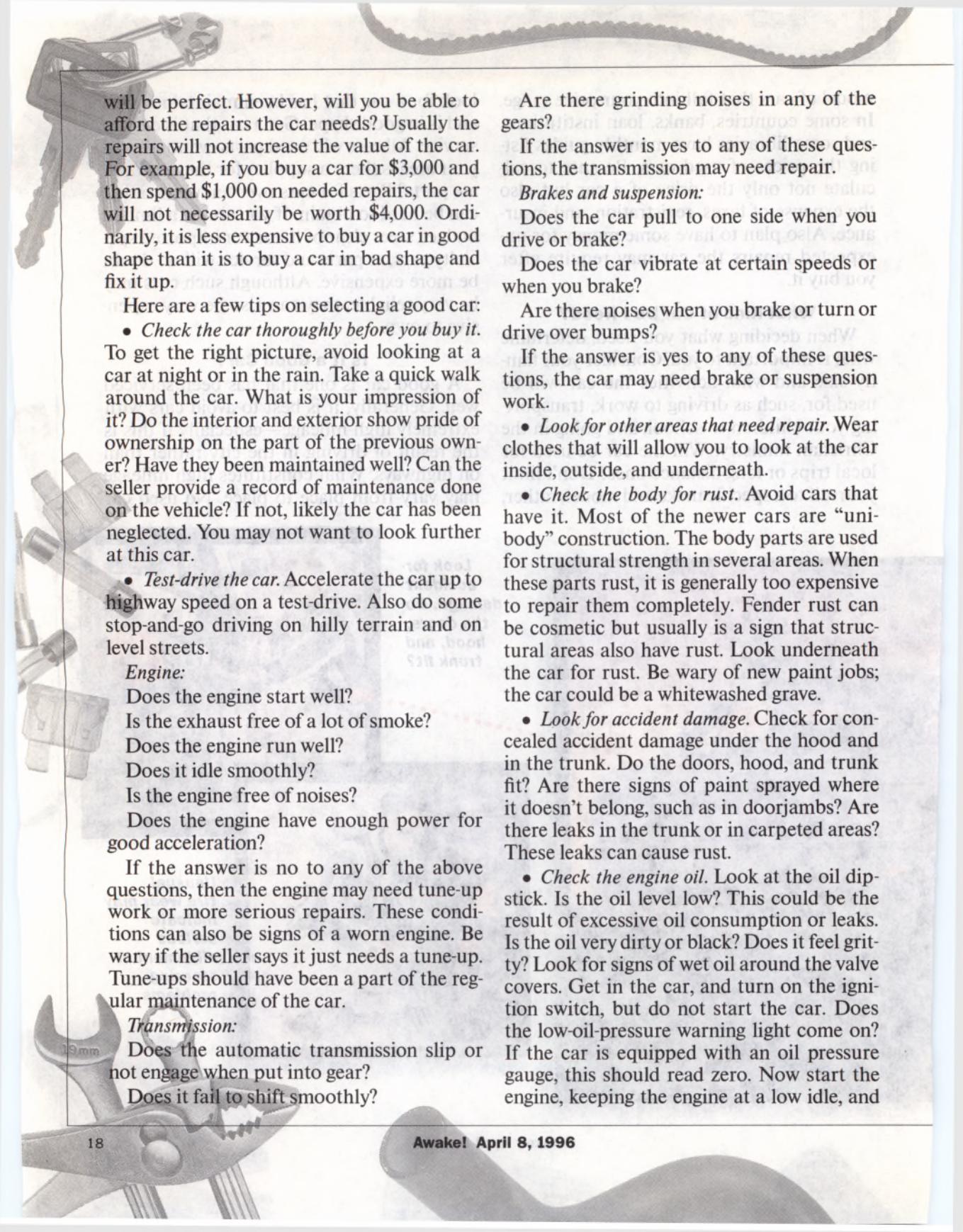
A good car is one that has been serviced well. Generally, it is best to avoid cars with extremely high mileage—especially if this is the result of driving in the city rather than on highways. What constitutes high mileage may vary from place to place. No used car



*Look for  
accident  
damage. Do  
the doors,  
hood, and  
trunk fit?*



*Unusual  
tire wear may  
indicate  
serious  
alignment or  
steering  
problems*



will be perfect. However, will you be able to afford the repairs the car needs? Usually the repairs will not increase the value of the car. For example, if you buy a car for \$3,000 and then spend \$1,000 on needed repairs, the car will not necessarily be worth \$4,000. Ordinarily, it is less expensive to buy a car in good shape than it is to buy a car in bad shape and fix it up.

Here are a few tips on selecting a good car:

- *Check the car thoroughly before you buy it.*

To get the right picture, avoid looking at a car at night or in the rain. Take a quick walk around the car. What is your impression of it? Do the interior and exterior show pride of ownership on the part of the previous owner? Have they been maintained well? Can the seller provide a record of maintenance done on the vehicle? If not, likely the car has been neglected. You may not want to look further at this car.

- *Test-drive the car.* Accelerate the car up to highway speed on a test-drive. Also do some stop-and-go driving on hilly terrain and on level streets.

#### *Engine:*

Does the engine start well?

Is the exhaust free of a lot of smoke?

Does the engine run well?

Does it idle smoothly?

Is the engine free of noises?

Does the engine have enough power for good acceleration?

If the answer is no to any of the above questions, then the engine may need tune-up work or more serious repairs. These conditions can also be signs of a worn engine. Be wary if the seller says it just needs a tune-up. Tune-ups should have been a part of the regular maintenance of the car.

#### *Transmission:*

Does the automatic transmission slip or not engage when put into gear?

Does it fail to shift smoothly?

Are there grinding noises in any of the gears?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, the transmission may need repair.

#### *Brakes and suspension:*

Does the car pull to one side when you drive or brake?

Does the car vibrate at certain speeds or when you brake?

Are there noises when you brake or turn or drive over bumps?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, the car may need brake or suspension work.

- *Look for other areas that need repair.* Wear clothes that will allow you to look at the car inside, outside, and underneath.

- *Check the body for rust.* Avoid cars that have it. Most of the newer cars are "uni-body" construction. The body parts are used for structural strength in several areas. When these parts rust, it is generally too expensive to repair them completely. Fender rust can be cosmetic but usually is a sign that structural areas also have rust. Look underneath the car for rust. Be wary of new paint jobs; the car could be a whitewashed grave.

- *Look for accident damage.* Check for concealed accident damage under the hood and in the trunk. Do the doors, hood, and trunk fit? Are there signs of paint sprayed where it doesn't belong, such as in doorjambs? Are there leaks in the trunk or in carpeted areas? These leaks can cause rust.

- *Check the engine oil.* Look at the oil dipstick. Is the oil level low? This could be the result of excessive oil consumption or leaks. Is the oil very dirty or black? Does it feel gritty? Look for signs of wet oil around the valve covers. Get in the car, and turn on the ignition switch, but do not start the car. Does the low-oil-pressure warning light come on? If the car is equipped with an oil pressure gauge, this should read zero. Now start the engine, keeping the engine at a low idle, and

notice how long it takes for the oil pressure light to go out or for the gauge to read normal engine pressure. More than a couple of seconds for the light to go out or for the gauge to read normal pressure could indicate major engine wear. On some newer cars in the United States, a "Check Engine" or "Service Engine Soon" light should come on when the key is on but the engine is not running. The light should be off when the engine is running. If the light stays on with the engine running, this usually indicates an engine problem, perhaps with the emission control system or the fuel delivery system.

- *Check the automatic transmission fluid.*

Is it low or burned? Look for leaks under the transmission. These conditions can indicate a need for major transmission work. If the car has front-wheel drive, look underneath it to see if the rubber constant velocity joint boots are torn. If so, the grease can be thrown out, and this can cause rapid damage to the joints, which are expensive to replace.

- *Check all four tires.* If they are severely worn, count on replacing them. If there is an unusual wear pattern on the tire tread, it may be that there is a need for alignment or replacement of steering parts.

- *Check the power-steering system.* Does the fluid appear burned or low? Start the car and turn the steering wheel several times from side to side. It should require equal pressure to turn right or left. Is there any grabbing motion as you turn the steering wheel? Operation of the power steering should be fairly quiet. Any problems with operation could mean costly repairs.

- *Other checks.*

Check the condition of the belts and the hoses.

Check the operation of the parking brake on a hill.

Check for an unusual amount of wear on the brake pedal.

Check the condition of the exhaust system. Is it noisy? Is it loose?

Check shocks and springs. Does the car sit low, or when you push down on each corner in turn, does it bounce more than three times?

If there is an air conditioner, does it work on all blower speeds?

Do the lights, wipers, horn, seat belts, and windows work?

Check underneath the rear of the vehicle for any telltale signs that a trailer hitch was installed. If so, caution is recommended, as towing may have put excessive strain on the transmission.

If you are unsure of any of the checks mentioned in this article, it might be wise to have the car assessed by a professional mechanic before buying it. Ask him to look the car over and make a list of the following:

1. The repairs the car needs immediately and an estimate of the cost of parts and labor.
2. The repairs the car may need in the next year and an estimate of the cost of parts and labor.

This inspection by a professional mechanic should take less than an hour. While this may cost you the price of labor for an hour, the expense is small compared with the unknown cost of needed repairs. Find out from the seller what work has recently been done on the car. Ask to see service records. Were the oil and the oil filter changed regularly? Has the automatic transmission ever been serviced? When was the last time the car was tuned up? Remember, a good car is one that has been maintained well and does not need a lot of work.

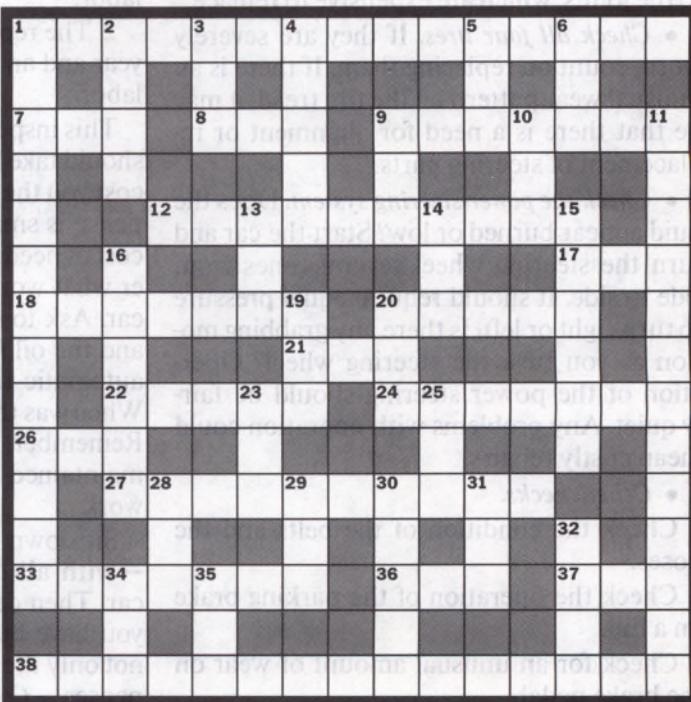
Sit down and calculate the expense first—with all the facts and figures about the car. Then decide if the car is worth it and if you have budgeted enough money to cover not only the purchase price but also other expenses.—Contributed by an auto technician.

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### Clues Across

1. What the apostle Paul advised Timothy to do regarding his ministry [2 words] (2 Timothy 4:5)
  7. Greasing the head of a guest with this was considered an act of hospitality (Luke 7:46)
  8. "—has fallen! Babylon the Great has fallen" (Revelation 18:2)
  9. The wisdom that espouses bitter jealousy, contentiousness, and lying against the truth is of this type (James 3:14, 15)
  12. In Jesus' illustration, ten virgins went out to meet this person (Matthew 25:1)
  17. The Devil promised Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" if Jesus would do one — of worship to him (Matthew 4:8, 9)
  18. Chief assistant of Bezalel in constructing the tabernacle (Exodus 31:6)
  20. Because Jesus had already died, the soldiers did not break his legs, but one jabbed his side with this (John 19:34)
  21. When told he was of this, the Jews knew that the blind man given sight by Jesus must have been at least 20 years old (John 9:21, 23)
  22. A man who was of the tribe of Judah and was the son of Chelub (1 Chronicles 4:11)
  24. This Shaalbonite was one of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:32)
  26. Expression of derision (Psalm 70:3)
  27. The place to which earth's combined military powers are marching (Revelation 16:16)
  33. Part of a sacrificed animal that was given to the priest (Deuteronomy 18:3)
  36. Waterproofing material (Genesis 6:14)
  37. Used figuratively to represent the ability to exert strength (John 12:38)
  38. Because he is their Creator and Source, Jehovah is called the "Father" of these [2 words] (James 1:17)
5. Forbidden by the Philistines to have smiths, the Israelites were forced to pay them this in order to have an agricultural instrument sharpened (1 Samuel 13:21)
  6. A place for sheltering travelers and their goods (Luke 10:34)
  9. An animal whose repulsive habit is used to illustrate those who abandon righteousness to return to their former defiled state (2 Peter 2:20-22)
  10. The place to which Sanballat tried to lure Nehemiah in order to do him harm (Nehemiah 6:2)
  11. What Paul foretold would be here in the last days [2 words] (2 Timothy 3:1)
  13. A name shared by two of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:26, 38)
  14. To slash or tear open (Matthew 7:6)
  15. Among the women that Jesus "loved" (John 11:5)
  16. A city that David visited while a fugitive and to which he later sent gifts (1 Samuel 30:30)
  19. Achan stole a gold one weighing 50 shekels (Joshua 7:21)
  20. Perceive (James 2:24)
  23. A city in southern Judah (Joshua 15:29)
  25. When the Jews returned from Babylonian exile, this city was one of their most westerly settlements (Ezra 2:33)
  28. Clearly directed intent (1 Thessalonians 4:11)
  29. Symbol of humiliation (Lamentations 4:5)
  30. Praise highly (Psalm 107:32)
  31. Used to propel a boat (Ezekiel 27:29)
  32. Birthplace of Goliath (1 Samuel 17:4)
  34. The Arabic name for this night bird of prey means the "mother of ruins" (Psalm 102:6)
  35. Few households in ancient Israel were without this animal (Deuteronomy 22:4)

**Crossword Solutions Page 22**



### Clues Down

1. Part of the sign of the last days [2 words] (Mark 13:8)
2. Beautiful flower (Hosea 14:5)
3. It is said that all of God's promises have become this by means of Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20)
4. A set of fundamental beliefs



## Earth's Hidden Faults

ON August 18, 1994, at least 171 people died in Algeria as a result of a powerful earthquake. Hundreds were injured, and thousands were left homeless. Several weeks earlier Bolivia, Colombia, and Indonesia were also hit by major earthquakes, with a combined loss of several hundred human lives.

Were you aware that these major disasters occurred? Likely not, unless you were personally affected by them or lived in a neighboring country. On the other hand, when major earthquakes hit the California, U.S.A., area, the news seems to spread like wildfire, and scientific data about the quakes becomes available almost instantaneously.

The reason is that no other region has been studied as thoroughly by scientists as southern California, where more than 700 seismometers document earthquakes with a magnitude as small as 1.5. The large concentration of seismologists in that area explains the abundant flow of earthquake information from the region.

### A Recent Discovery

This extensive research has undoubtedly helped scientists in many countries to understand earthquakes and even to attempt to predict them in time to prevent casualties. Such technology is vital, since every year about 40 earthquakes of significant magnitude ravage various parts of the world. There are also smaller earthquakes that are virtually harmless but still large enough to be felt. These strike between 40,000 and 50,000 times yearly!

Most earthquakes are apparently the result of large slabs of underground rock breaking and snapping into new positions when under stress. Usually these disturbances occur along fractures in the earth's outer shell. These fractures are known as faults.

For the most part, scientists are able to map the locations of these faults, thus pinpointing earthquake-prone areas. Why do we say "for the most part"? Because scientists have recently

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## Is Los Angeles Shrinking?

An extensive network of faults and folds located under Los Angeles, California, makes this region extremely unstable. The Los Angeles basin appears to be absorbing much of the compression caused by a nearby kink in the San Andreas Fault. (See the July 22, 1994, issue of *Awake!* pages 15-18.) Local geologists estimate that the folding due to this compression may be decreasing the land area of the Los Angeles basin by one quarter acre per year.

learned that their maps are not as comprehensive as they once thought. For example, scientists are disturbed by the recent revelation that the majority of measurable earthquakes in California occur along *hidden* faults—in many cases in areas that geologists formerly considered to be relatively free of earthquake danger.

According to earth scientists Ross Stein of the U.S. Geological Survey and Robert Yeats of Oregon State University, "gently rolling or folded terrain is perhaps the least forbidding landscape, evoking slumber rather than danger." Nevertheless, their studies have identified active earthquake faults beneath folded arches of rock, many of which have been exploited for their trapped stores of oil. Why have these underground faults been able to elude discovery, and just how much of a threat do they pose?

### A Threat Not to Be Ignored

Geologists have long recognized that rocks could be squeezed and folded like a crumpled rug. But it was generally thought that this was a gradual, steady process. However, recent studies of active folds of rock show that they surge upward in sudden spurts—by as much as 16 feet in just a few seconds! This folding motion compresses the rock-mass beneath. The resulting stress cracks the rock deep beneath the fold, and one piece of the rock starts to ramp over the other. These seemingly harmless folds with their buried active faults become earthquakes-in-the-making before seis-

mologists have a chance to detect them. Such underground fault activity can produce strong earthquakes just like the more prominent faults, which are visible on the earth's surface.

The January 17, 1994, Northridge earthquake in the Los Angeles area is one recent example of what a hidden fault can do. The earthquake was caused by very deep fault activity that occurred between 5 and 12 miles underground. Before the earthquake, scientists had no knowledge of the fault's existence. This hidden fault caused massive destruction of property, injuries to more than 9,000 people, and death to 61.

Scientists suspect that hidden faults are the cause of a number of major earthquakes, not only in California but also in Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Canada, India, Iran, Japan, New Zealand, and Pakistan. Over the past few decades, thousands have died in these lands as a result of earthquakes that could have been triggered by hidden faults.

Scientists now face the challenge of discovering where these active folds occur and predicting their potential earthquake threat. In the meantime, they no longer underestimate the destructive power of a seemingly harmless rolling hill.

### CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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# The World's Loneliest Bird

## BY A WAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN BRAZIL

**I**F YOU think the spotted owl and the bald eagle are in trouble, you haven't heard the tale of the Spix's macaw. This Brazilian bird gives an entirely new meaning to the notion of "endangered species." However, to give you the whole story of the world's loneliest bird, we'll start in the 17th century.

Back then, George Marc Grav, a Dutch settler living in Brazil, recorded for the first time the existence and a description of this bird. Before long, the local population called it *ararinha azul*, or little blue macaw—a plain but fitting name. The bird is dressed in blue and a bit of gray. Measuring 22 inches, including its 14-inch-long tail, it is also the smallest of Brazil's blue macaws.

"Later, in 1819," relates biologist Carlos Yamashita, Brazil's foremost expert on parrots, "scientists came up with the bird's official name: *Cyanopsitta spixii*." *Cyano* means "blue" and *psitta* stands for "parrot." And *spixii*? That addition, explains the biologist, gives credit to German naturalist Johann Baptist Spix. He was the first to study this species in its natural habitat, a few tree-lined creeks in northeastern Brazil.

## The Countdown Begins

Granted, flocks of Spix's macaws have never darkened the sky. Even in Spix's days, their calculated number was only 180, but since then, their situation has steadily worsened. Settlers destroyed so much of the

woodlands where the birds were living that by the mid-1970's, fewer than 60 macaws were still hanging on. Bad as that was, though, the countdown had merely begun.

What settlers did not accomplish in three centuries, bird trappers managed to do in a few years—they virtually wiped out the entire population of Spix's macaws. In 1984, only 4 of the 60 birds still survived in the wild, but by that time aviculturists were willing to pay "last-of-a-kind prices"—up to \$50,000 for one. Little wonder that in May 1989, *Animal Kingdom* magazine announced that a year had passed since researchers had seen the last free-flying birds. A few months later, it was reported that trappers had snatched all remaining birds. The Spix's macaw, mourned *Animal Kingdom*, had received the "final coup de grace."

## **Surprise and Hope**

Biologists had hardly closed the chapter on the Spix's macaw, however, when people living near the birds' habitat said that they had seen an *ararinha azul*. More reports of sightings followed. Could there still be a surviving bird? In order to find out, in 1990 five researchers packed their camping gear, binoculars, and notebooks and headed for the territory of the Spix's macaw.

After combing the area for two months without success, the researchers saw a flock

of green-colored *papagaios maracanás*, or Illinger's macaws, but noticed something unusual. One of the flock members was different—larger and blue. It was the last of the wild Spix's macaws! They observed it for a week and learned that the Spix, a socializer by nature, was tagging along with the Illingers to cope with his loneliness and to find a mate. Now, the green birds didn't mind adopting this persistent blue fellow as a friend—but to mate with him? Of course, there *are* limits in polite Illinger's macaw society!

So, turned down, the Spix's macaw parted from his companions at sundown each day and flew to the tree where he and his former Spix's-macaw mate had roosted together for years—that was until 1988, the year that trappers grabbed his lifelong partner and sold her into captivity. Since then, he sleeps there by himself—a tiny, lonely bundle of blue feathers perched on a high, barren branch. Now, barring a miracle, it is just a matter of time before the last Spix's macaw with the know-how to survive in the wild will go the way of the dodo—unless someone finds him a match. That idea caught on, and in 1991 the *Projeto Ararinha-Azul* (Spix's-Macaw Project) got under way. Its aim? Protect the surviving male bird, find him a mate, make a match, and hope that they will repopulate the neighborhood. Is it working out?

### Birds Behind Bars

An estimated 30 Spix's macaws are living in captivity. More than a dozen of these Brazilian birds were bred by an aviculturist in the Philippines and still live in that Asian country. The remaining captive birds are living in Brazil, Spain, and Switzerland. However, all these birds behind bars lack a quality that only Severino has—the know-how to survive in the wild.

Progress has been made. The Brazilian Post Office put the fate of the planet's most endangered bird into the spotlight by issuing a stamp in its honor. At the same time, biologists successfully rallied the 8,000 inhabitants of Curaçá, a town near the bird's habitat in northern Bahia, to side with the surviving Spix's macaw. With the townsfolk guarding "their" bird, which they nicknamed Severino, trappers now risk being caught red-handed. This strategy is paying off. Severino is still flying around. The next obstacle has been tackled as well—to persuade breeders to part with one of the six captive birds still living in Brazil. (See box.) One owner agreed, and in August 1994 a young female bird, nabbed by trappers as a nestling, was flown to Curaçá to be released and live in her natural habitat again.

### Getting in Shape and Getting in Touch

This female macaw was placed in a large aviary located right in the male bird's habitat and was put on a back-to-basics diet. To get her in shape for life in nature, her caretakers weaned her from sunflower seeds—her customary food in captivity—and served her pine seeds and the local thorny fruits that grow in the wild. Her stomach adapted well.

Daily workouts became another part of the training program—and for good reason. Expecting a bird raised in a cage to keep up, from one day to the next, with a partner that likes to fly some 30 miles a day is like asking a couch potato to run a marathon. So to build up her muscles, the biologists looking after the captive bird encouraged her to fly around in the aviary as much as possible.

It did not take long for Severino to discover the aviary. After spotting the female, he screeched, called her, and came within 100 feet of the aviary. "The female," says Marcos Da-Ré, a biologist working with

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ypaep

**AMÉRICA**  
ARARINHA-AZUL

ETIENNE DEMONTE

the project, responded and "showed great excitement" when she noticed her male visitor. Her excitement, he says, "filled us with hope."

#### Teacher and Father . . .

Finally, the big day arrived: the aviary door swung open. After hesitating for half an hour, the female flew out and landed in a tree some 1,000 feet from the aviary. But where was Severino? He was 20 miles away, chasing the Illinger's macaws again. Why had he left? Well, after he had waited around for months, when the breeding season finally arrived, his would-be mate was still behind bars. He must have thought, quips biologist

**Preserved  
—at least on  
a stamp**

Da-Ré, that "a free *maracanã* was worth more than a captive *ara-**rinha*." This time, Severino's persistence paid off. One female Illinger's macaw gave in and accepted him as a companion.

When the mating season is over, though, the biologists hope Severino will end his courtship, return to his own habitat, discover the liberated Spix's macaw, and take her as his mate. After that, he is expected to take on a double role—teacher and father. Since he is the only Spix's macaw in the world that knows how to survive in the wild, he has to teach his partner how to find food and shelter and stay alive in one of Brazil's most barren regions.

#### . . . And History Maker

So when the breeding season starts again, the biologists of the Spix's-Macaw Project will be rooting that Severino will give up his pursuit of Illinger's macaws and will concentrate on finding a hollow tree that can serve as a nest for his partner. If everything goes well, the Spix's-macaw female will lay two small eggs, and a few months later, Severino will be teaching survival techniques to a class of three. Will it go that far?

"It'll take time to know that answer," says biologist Yamashita, "but this project may be the only way to avoid the wild Spix's macaw's becoming another turned page in history." It is now up to Severino to seize the opportunity and write a new chapter. If this union works, nature lovers—and Illinger's macaws—will heave a sigh of relief.

# Can True Christians Expect Divine Protection?

**T**O DELIVER relief items to fellow worshipers, Christians, after prayer, traveled in a convoy over a war-torn area where they were likely to be killed. They made it through safely, much to the amazement of the warring armies. Did God's angel protect them?

A Christian couple who had served as ministers for many years were killed when an airplane crashed to the ground where they were evangelizing from house to house. Why didn't God's angel direct them or the airplane somewhere else at that particular moment?—Compare Acts 8:26.

Comparing these events, we might ask: Why do some Christians die while doing God's will, whereas others, often in very dangerous circumstances, live? Can Christians expect divine protection, especially in these critical "last days"?—2 Timothy 3:1.

### The Purpose of Divine Protection

Jehovah God has promised to bless and protect his people. (Exodus 19:3-6; Isaiah 54:17) He did so outstandingly in the first century, when the Christian congregation was in its infancy. Miracles of every kind abounded. Jesus multi-

plied food to feed thousands; he and his followers cured every sort of disease and infirmity, expelled superhuman spirits from the demon-possessed, and even raised the dead. Under divine direction the fledgling congregation grew and was firmly established. Yet, for all of God's obvious backing, many faithful Christians suffered what might be called untimely death.—Compare Psalm 90:10.

Consider the cases of James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Chosen as apostles, they, along with Peter, were among Christ's closest friends.\* But James was martyred in the year 44 C.E., while his brother John lived to the end of the first century. Both were obviously doing God's will. Why was James allowed to die, while John lived?

Almighty God certainly had the ability to save James' life. Indeed, shortly after James' martyrdom, Peter was rescued from death by Jehovah's angel. Why hadn't the angel delivered James?—Acts 12:1-11.

\* Peter, James, and John witnessed Jesus' transfiguration (Mark 9:2) and the resurrection of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-24, 35-42); they were nearby in the Garden of Gethsemane during Jesus' personal trial (Mark 14:32-42); and they, along with Andrew, questioned Jesus about Jerusalem's destruction, his future presence, and the conclusion of the system of things.—Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:1-3.



## Used in the Outworking of God's Purpose

To understand why divine protection is given, we must understand that it is given not simply to enable individuals to live longer but to protect something far more important, the outworking of God's purpose. For example, the survival of the Christian congregation *as a whole* is guaranteed because it is closely linked with the fulfilling of that purpose. However, Christ plainly told his disciples that they *as individuals* could face death because of their faith. After stating this, Jesus stressed, not miraculous deliverance, but 'endurance to the end.' (Matthew 24:9, 13) The fact that some individuals were protected, while others were not, does not indicate that God is partial. God simply used the person who was in the best position to accomplish his purpose, which ultimately will benefit all mankind.

Since untimely death in God's service is a real possibility, Christians should have the same balanced attitude as the three faithful Hebrews who were sentenced to death for worshiping God. They told the king of Babylon: "If it is to be, our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. Out of the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king, he will rescue us. But if not, let it become known to you, O king, that your gods are not the ones we are serving, and the image of gold that you have set up we will not worship."—Daniel 3:17, 18.

Jehovah preserved the lives of Peter and John because of their key role in the outworking of his purpose. Peter was used to "strengthen" the congregation by doing a shepherding work, which included the writing of two inspired Bible books. (Luke 22:32) John wrote five Bible books and was a 'pillar' in the early congregation.—Galatians 2:9; John 21:15-23.

How Jehovah determines just when and in what manner he will intervene in the lives

of his servants is impossible to foretell. All that can be stated with certainty is that Christ promised to be with his followers "all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:20) In particular, he will be 'with us' through the angelic direction of the preaching work. (Matthew 13:36-43; Revelation 14:6) Other than these broad indications, we cannot anticipate exactly *how* divine help will be manifested or *who* may receive divine protection. What if a Christian feels that he has had God's protection and guidance? Since this cannot be conclusively proved or disproved, no one should judge the sincere claims of such a one.

## Is God Callous?

Does the fact that God allows the death of Christians show that he is somehow callous? Not at all. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Jehovah is working to preserve our life not just for a few years or even decades but *for eternity*. From his superior vantage point, he maneuvers events for the everlasting welfare of each individual who loves him or comes to him. (Compare Matthew 18:14.) The fulfillment of his purpose will mean the complete removal of anything we have suffered in this system of things—even death. So intricate and perfect are God's dealings that the apostle Paul was moved to exclaim: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are!"—Romans 11:33.

Since nothing can separate us from God's love, the question each Christian should ask is not 'Will I have divine protection?' but 'Do I have Jehovah's blessing?' If we do, he will give us eternal life—regardless of what happens to us in this system of things. Compared with an eternity of perfect life, any suffering—even death—in this system will seem "momentary and light."—2 Corinthians 4:17.

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Child Guerrillas

Children have become commonplace among guerrilla armies around the globe. According to the *International Herald Tribune*, children quickly learn how to kill, and their sense of right and wrong is not as strong as their desire to be accepted by whatever military group has become their family. "In Rwanda and other places, the perpetrators of some of the worst atrocities were children," said a United Nations spokesman. "They want to belong and be praised, and their only peer approval may come from being even more brave or barbarous than the adults." In one African conflict, boys as young as eight were trained and forced to commit atrocities, such as shooting their own parents and slitting their throats. Kidnapped girls were made to cook, clean, and provide sexual amusement for the men. "Estimates of how many children are currently at war range from 50,000 to as high as 200,000 in 24 conflicts," says *Newsweek* magazine.

### Cycad Security

Many botanists consider the cycad *Encephalartos woodii* to be the world's rarest plant. So when South Africa decided to send a specimen of this palm-like tropical plant to London's Chelsea Flower Show last year, they took the precaution of burying in its stem an antitheft microchip coated in antibacterial cream. All cycads transported in South Africa are now protected in this way, reports *New Scientist*. To combat thieves South African conservationists

are now protecting wild cycads similarly, with the aid of a satellite tracking system.

### Missing Manhole Covers

Over 200 residents of Beijing fell down open manholes in 1994, reported the *Economic Daily* newspaper. The reason? Thieves had stolen over 2,000 manhole covers from the



streets of China's capital during the year. Most were said to have been stolen by migrants, called China's floating population. Theft of the covers has been on the rise during the last decade along with the growth of the city's migrant population. The 132-pound covers can be sold for over 100 yuan (\$12, U.S.). The injured residents included both pedestrians and cyclists.

### New Bible Translations

"An explosion of new editions of the Bible in updated English is hitting bookstores," notes *U.S. News & World Report*. Bibles have been produced for children, athletes, the elderly, stay-at-home mothers, fathers, and other groups. One, the *Black Bible Chronicles*, "uses slang and drama to liven up biblical narratives for African-American teenagers." Another, *The New Testament and Psalms:*

*An Inclusive Version*, attempts a gender-neutral language. God is called the "Father-Mother," and the Son of man becomes "the human one." To avoid offending left-handed individuals, the translators call the right hand of God his "mighty hand," and because of racial overtones, darkness is no longer equated with evil. And a third, the *New International Reader's Version New Testament*, is described by its publisher as the "first-ever Bible written at a 2.9-grade reading level, the lowest on the market." The article concludes: "In all, there now are over 450 versions of the Bible in English alone. With all the new editions hitting the shelves, odds are the Bible won't soon relinquish its perennial spot on the all-time bestseller list."

### Name Problems

China, with over 1.2 billion people, is facing a shrinking pool of surnames. According to researchers, only 3,100 surnames are now being used there, compared to some 12,000 in the past. About 350 million people—similar to the combined populations of the United States and Japan—share the five most common surnames: Li, Wang, Zhang, Liu, and Chen. Additionally, the same first names are also commonly used. In Tianjin, for example, over 2,300 people share the name Zhang Li and write it using the same characters, while many more use the same pronunciation but write it with different characters. As a result of the confusion, a number of wrongful arrests have

been made, bank accounts have been emptied in error, and operations have been performed on the wrong individuals at hospitals. The Republic of Korea shares a similar problem. A 1987 survey showed that 1 out of every 5 persons there is surnamed Kim. Marriages between persons with the same surname were forbidden in order to protect against inbreeding. This resulted in thousands of couples living together but not registering their marriages, thus becoming ineligible for insurance and other benefits. However, the country's highest court has now ruled that such same-name marriages will be considered legal if the couples first get married abroad.

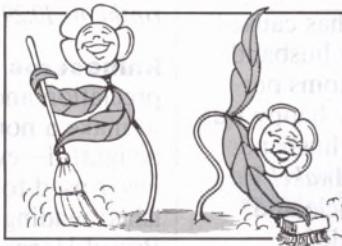
#### Rwanda's Women Accused

Women, as well as men, must bear responsibility for the slaughter of at least 500,000 people in Rwanda in 1994, claims the London-based organization Africa Rights. "Thousands of women were killed by other women," their report says. "The extent to which women took an active role in the killings is unprecedented. This is not accidental. The architects of the holocaust sought to involve as much of the population as possible—men, women and even children as young as eight. They set out to create a nation of extremists bound together by the blood of genocide." Many of the women involved were in positions of trust—cabinet ministers, regional administrators, nuns, teachers, and nurses. Some actively participated in the slaughter, using machetes and guns, while others acted in support roles by cheering the male killers on, by allowing them access to homes

and hospitals, and by looting the houses and stripping the dead.

#### Natural Cleanup Agents

Some flowering plants demonstrate an amazing ability to cleanse and regenerate oil-contaminated desert soil, reports *The Times* of London. Scientists have discovered that where the oil is less than 10 percent of the sand by weight, these plants can flourish and their roots remain completely clean. The reason? Millions of bacteria living around the plants' roots ingest oil and degrade it into inoffensive products. These plants come from one of the largest plant families, the Compositae, which includes daisies, asters, and many weeds. Scientists recommend that these



be planted to speed up desert cleansing in Kuwait. Four years after the war with Iraq, about 20 square miles of desert still remains polluted.

#### Using Their Heads

"African women walk for miles with heavy jugs of water or pots of food as if they weren't carrying anything," says *Discover* magazine. "Researchers have found that the women can carry enormous loads without using *any* extra energy." Some Kenyan women can carry up to 20 percent of their weight without extra effort. How do they do it? By carrying "their burdens much more efficiently than

people carrying heavy backpacks or people who have not been trained to use their heads," answers *New Scientist*. "The researchers believe the secret lies in the women's pendulum-like motion." When we walk, we are like a pendulum that is swinging, carrying some of the energy over into the next step. For Europeans, the efficiency of this energy transfer decreases as the load gets heavier. But with the African women who carry loads on their heads, the efficiency actually increases, so that their muscles do not have to do any extra work. However, the technique takes years to perfect.

#### The "Jerusalem Syndrome"

It is "an affliction of tourists who, overwhelmed by the city's intense spiritual evocations, have become convinced that they are the Saviour, or some other biblical figure, or that they have been given a special message or mandate by God," says *Time* magazine. "Most have a history of mental problems." A bearded Italian, found wandering in the hills near Bethlehem dressed in a sack, claims to be Jesus. A naked, sword-wielding man, running through the Old City, says he has a mission to heal the blind. A burly Canadian says he is Samson and "proves" it by ripping off the metal grille from the window of his hospital ward and escaping. Those afflicted with the syndrome are usually taken to Jerusalem's Kfar Shaul Psychiatric Hospital—not to be cured but to be calmed down so that they can return home for treatment. The hospital sees about 50 such patients a year, mainly from Western Europe and the United States.

## FROM OUR READERS

**PMS** I must express my sincere thanks to you for publishing the article "Premenstrual Syndrome—Myth or Reality?" (August 8, 1995) I have prayed for such an article, as I did not understand why I had such distressing feelings every month. Reading the article, I gave a sigh of relief; now I realize that my problem is not due to spiritual weakness.

Y. E., Jamaica

I have suffered from PMS for as long as I can remember, but I always dismissed it as just something I had to cope with. This article helped me to realize that PMS is a real problem, one deemed worthy of discussion.

Y. M., England

For about 12 years, my PMS has caused real distress to my child and my husband. This article explained my symptoms perfectly! What made me especially happy was the reaction of my non-Witness husband, who usually is quite critical of *Awake!* He showed great interest in the article and said, 'I'm glad we have this article.'

K. O., Japan

**Adultery** Thank you very much for the article "The Bible's Viewpoint: Adultery—To Forgive or Not to Forgive?" (August 8, 1995) After years of mistreatment, I obtained a Scriptural divorce from my husband. Nevertheless, some people made me feel guilty for doing so, and I had to fight this feeling for many years. I even thought Jehovah had rejected me. However, this article expressed many of my feelings, and it has greatly encouraged me.

A. K., Czech Republic

**African Masks** Your article "The Meaning Behind the Mask" (August 8, 1995) was most enlightening. You stated therein that

true Christians would not keep such masks. But what of masks that are produced as mere souvenirs or that have never been used for religious purposes?

J. A., United States

*Our article dealt specifically with masks that were made for false religious purposes. We acknowledged that "there is a big difference between masks used in worship and the replicas carved for the tourist industry." In Western lands, such commercially produced masks may have no religious connotations at all but may generally be viewed as decorative art. Individual Christians would therefore have to make a personal decision as to whether to display such masks, keeping in mind the effect that doing so might have on the consciences of others. (1 Corinthians 10:29)—ED.*

**Rhinoceros** I wanted to express my appreciation and admiration for your ability to make a nonessential bit of information delightful—even for someone like me who never used to read for pleasure. I just finished reading "The Animal Under Those Prized Horns." (August 8, 1995) I usually begin reading articles like this out of a sense of duty. In the end, however, I am always amazed at how enjoyable they are to read!

J. M., United States

**Story of Celeste Jones** I have been reading your magazines for 17 years. After reading the experience of Celeste Jones in the article "How I Benefited From God's Care" (June 22, 1995), I had to write and express my appreciation.

M. M., Colombia

*Celeste Jones died on October 27, 1995. Before her death she received many letters from readers around the world thanking her for sharing her experience.—ED.*



## Reaching Out With Hands That Sign

BEGINNING June 1995 and continuing throughout the summer, Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States branch territory held 181 district conventions with the theme "Joyful Praisers." At two of these—one in the east and the other in the west—the entire program was presented directly in American Sign Language. Thus the clarity of the program was greatly enhanced—for direct presentation to the deaf in sign language is much more understandable than interpretation from the spoken word.

Delegates were present from the 11 sign-language congregations and some 30 sign-language groups across the United States. But also present were delegates from Britain, Canada, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Puerto Rico, and Russia. Hence, there was an international atmosphere.

Video monitors were set up so that the program could be viewed on closed-circuit television. However, a number of delegates were both deaf and blind. How would these persons benefit from the program? It was truly moving to observe over a hundred volunteers taking turns

to communicate each day's program to them by means of tactile (touch) interpreting.

At these two conventions, 36 symbolized their dedication to Jehovah God by baptism. Another highlight was the drama, *Honoring Worthy Ones in Their Older Years*. How thrilling it was to have this drama presented entirely in sign language, allowing deaf members to have a major share in the presentation!

Then came the release of the new Bible study aid, *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. The conventioners were especially happy to learn that a sign-language version of this book was being made available on videotape! Volume 1, released at the convention, contains the first three chapters. Five more volumes will follow. "How thankful we are for this new video," remarked a delegate from Ohio. "It will help us to speed up the work in the deaf territories."

The 2,621 in attendance at these two conventions went home spiritually refreshed. As never before, they were determined to echo the words of the psalmist: "Every breathing thing—let it praise Jah. Praise Jah, you people!" —Psalm 150:6.

# AN IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL TOOL

A member of parliament in the country of Sri Lanka wrote to "The 'Awake!' Editor." His letter is reproduced below:

"Dear Sir,

"It must be said that though the *Awake!* magazine you publish is a small one, it is extremely important and timely. Every single article helps the youth of today to differentiate clearly between good and bad.

"I have read all the articles. My impression is that every schoolteacher, student, and parent should definitely read this magazine.

"I deeply appreciate the fine work in which you are engaged. I wish you continued success in your endeavors."

