

Awake!

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November 8, 1996



IS
RELIGION
ON THE WAY
OUT?



Is Religion on the Way Out?

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ARE THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS NEAR THEIR END?

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT
IN SWEDEN

St. Peter's Square, Vatican City

DOES this title make you wonder: 'How can that be? Are not the world's religions quite vigorous and influential throughout the earth today?'

Yes, despite passing through a sea of troubles, they seem to be. In this 20th century, religion has been called into question and exposed more than ever before in human history. Astronomers have scanned the universe with their giant telescopes, and astronauts have crisscrossed space; and as a Soviet cosmonaut expressed it, they have seen "no God or angels." Physicists have split matter into smaller and smaller particles without discovering any divine

igniting spark. Biologists and paleontologists claim to have reconstructed life's long evolutionary chain, from amoeba to man, without finding the tiniest link of creative intervention anywhere along that chain.

However, secular wisdom and materialistic philosophy have failed to blot out religious sentiment from this planet, and atheistic political powers and philosophies have been no more successful. For over 70 years, totalitarian, atheistic Communism branded religion as superstition and "the opium of the people," removed religious leaders from office and banned their activities, destroyed or looted churches and temples, and brainwashed and murdered worshipers. Yet, such actions did not eliminate religious sentiment. As soon as those governments toppled, religion rose out of the dust with seemingly renewed vigor. In lands formerly Communist, people are again rallying to their old temples, kneeling down in

devout worship as their ancestors did before them.

Religious sentiment is still aflame in other parts of the world. Every year the city of Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, hosts millions of Muslim pilgrims from throughout the earth. St. Peter's Square in the Vatican is frequently crowded beyond capacity by Catholic believers seeking a glimpse of the pope and hoping to receive his blessing. Millions of Hindu devotees continue to stream to the hundreds of places of pilgrimage on the banks of "holy" rivers in India. Pious Jews flock to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem to pray and leave their written prayers in the crevices of the wall.

Yes, it seems to be impossible to eradicate

religion from mankind. "Man is by his constitution a religious animal," said the Irish-born statesman Edmund Burke. Statistically, 5 out of 6 individuals on earth are more or less associated with some religion. According to recent figures, there are about 4.7 billion adherents of established religion in the world, while there are just over one billion nonreligious and atheistic people.*

With this in view, is it reasonable to believe that the world's religions are near their end? And if they are, when and how will they experience it? Will there be any religion left? Let us consider these questions in the next two articles.

* "Nonreligious" includes: "Persons professing no religion, nonbelievers, agnostics, freethinkers, dereligionized secularists indifferent to all religion."

FALSE RELIGION RIDES TO ITS DESTRUCTION!

IN ORDER to find out if this world's religions are near their end, let us scrutinize one of the Bible's most dramatic prophecies. It is about the mysterious symbolic woman described in the Bible's last book, Revelation.

Can you visualize a woman who has reigned as a queen over the nations, influencing the lives of billions of people all through history—a wealthy woman who is gorgeously arrayed in purple and scarlet, richly adorned with gold, precious stones,

Awake!®

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and pearls? On her forehead is written a long name, a mystery: "Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth." She is unmistakably marked by her tough, promiscuous life, having committed "fornication" with the rulers of the world. Her sins have piled up to heaven. She is riding on a monstrous, seven-headed, ten-horned, scarlet-colored wild beast.—Revelation 17:1-6; 18:5.

If you can visualize this woman, you have an idea of the principal character in the prophetic drama that Jesus' apostle John saw in a vision given him through an angel. He vividly describes it in Revelation chapters 17 and 18. Read these chapters in your own Bible. You will be able to follow the sequence of events from the exposing of the identity of this mysterious woman to her fatal end.

Identifying the Harlot

A clue to understanding her identity is found in the two things on which the harlot-queen symbolically sits. At Revelation 17:18, she is described as "the great city that has a kingdom over the kings of the earth." This allows her to sit on "many waters," which mean "peoples and crowds and nations and tongues," as shown at Revelation 17:1, 15. According to verse 3 in the same chapter, she is also seen sitting on a seven-headed wild beast—beasts being commonly used in the Bible as symbols of worldly political powers, or organizations.

This indicates that the harlot, Babylon the

Great, is the embodiment of an exalted empire, one that dominates other authorities and their subjects. This can only be the empire of the world's false religions.

The influence of religious leaders on matters of state policy and politics is a well-known part of history. *The World Book Encyclopedia* states: "After the fall of the West Roman Empire [5th century], the pope had more authority than any other person in Europe. . . . The pope exercised political as well as spiritual authority. In 800, Pope Leo III crowned the Frankish ruler Charlemagne [Charles the Great] emperor of the Romans. . . . Leo III had established the pope's right to make an emperor's authority lawful."

The authority that the Catholic Church and its "princes" wielded over rulers was further exemplified by cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1475?-1530). He is described as "the most powerful person in England for many years." Under the rule of King Henry VIII, he "soon was the controlling figure in all matters of state. . . . He lived in royal splendor and reveled in his power." The encyclopedia account continues: "Cardinal Wolsey spent his great abilities as a statesman and administrator mainly in managing England's foreign affairs for Henry VIII."

Another outstanding example of Catholic authority over secular matters of state is Cardinal Richelieu of France (1585-1642), who "for more than 18 years . . . was the actual ruler of France." The previously quoted

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source states: "He was extremely ambitious and soon became impatient for higher office." He was made a cardinal in 1622 "and soon became the leading influence in the

Christendom's Bloodguilt in Africa

At Revelation 18:24, the Bible says that in Babylon the Great is found the blood of "all those who have been slaughtered on the earth." Think of the wars that have been fought because of religious differences and because of the failure of religious leaders to avert them. A recent example of this was evident in Rwanda's genocide, in which some 500,000 people were murdered—one third of them children.

Canadian author Hugh McCullum reports from Rwanda: "A Hutu priest in Kigali [Rwanda] says the failure of the church to provide moral leadership is inexplicable. The position of the bishops in Rwandese society should have been enormously important. They knew of the impending disaster long before the killings were unleashed. Church pulpits could have provided an opportunity for almost the entire population to hear a strong message that could have prevented the genocide. Instead the leaders remained silent."

After the worst massacre in 1994, Justin Hakizimana, a church elder, said at a small meeting held in a Presbyterian church in Kigali: "The church went hand-in-hand with the politics of Habyarimana [president of Rwanda]. We did not condemn what was going on because we were corrupted. None of our churches, especially the Catholics, has condemned the massacres."

Aaron Mugemera, a church pastor, said at another meeting in Rwanda after the genocide: "The church is in shame. . . . We have had killings here since 1959. No one condemned them. . . . We did not speak out because we were afraid, and because we were comfortable."

French government." Apparently, he was a man of action, for "he led the royal army in person at the siege of La Rochelle." The article adds: "Richelieu's greatest interest was in foreign affairs."

The Vatican's continued involvement with the political authorities is clearly seen by the constant announcements in the Vatican paper *L'Osservatore Romano* of foreign diplomats presenting their credentials to the sovereign pope. Evidently the Vatican has a network of loyal Catholics who can keep the pope informed on political and diplomatic developments worldwide.

Many more examples could be given to illustrate the powerful influence of religious leaders—both inside and outside Christendom—in the political affairs of this world. The fact that the symbolic harlot sits on all the "many waters" (representing "peoples and crowds and nations") and on the wild beast (representing all political world powers) also suggests that her influence over peoples, nations, and powers is of a different, loftier nature than mere political dominion. Let us see what kind it is.

Part of the long name on her forehead was "Babylon the Great." It is a reference to ancient Babylon, established some 4,000 years ago by Nimrod, who was "in opposition to Jehovah," the true God. (Genesis 10:8-10) Her bearing this name indicates that she is a magnified image of ancient Babylon, with similar facets. What facets? Ancient Babylon was permeated with mystic religion, debased traditions, idol worship, magic, astrology, and superstition—all of which are condemned by Jehovah's Word.

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology says that in the 18th century B.C.E., Marduk was made "the city god of Babylon, and so the head of the Sumerian-Accad. pantheon of some 1300 deities. It brought all the religious traditions into one

system.... In Gen. 11:1-9 the architecture of the giant temple of Babylon is stigmatized as the expression of human pride that wishes to storm heaven."

Thus, ancient Babylon was the focal point of false religion, which in course of time infected the whole world. Babylonish religious practices, doctrines, traditions, and symbols have permeated all parts of the earth and are reflected in the hodgepodge of the world's many thousands of religions. Political kingdoms and empires have risen and fallen, but Babylonish religion has survived them all.

Why Is Execution So Near?

As has been frequently explained in previous issues of this magazine, Bible prophecy and the world-shaking events since 1914 unmistakably indicate that we are now living in "the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 24:3) This means that the end of the beastly world system is quickly drawing near, as is the end of the ten-horned "scarlet-colored wild beast," on which the harlot is now riding. (Revelation 17:3) This beast evidently represents the political conglomerate of almost all the nations on earth—the United Nations. The foretold end means the elimination of divisive, ungodly political rule over mankind. But what about the harlot-queen riding on the beast?

God's angel explains: "The ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire. For God put it into their hearts to carry out his thought, even to carry out their one thought by giving their kingdom to the wild beast, until the words of God will have been accomplished."—Revelation 17:16, 17.

Thus the prophecy shows that shortly before the political wild beast goes off into destruction, it will begin to hate its rider and

This "harlot" affects the whole world



turn against her. Why? Rulers and governments will evidently feel that their power and authority are being threatened by organized religion operating within their boundaries. Suddenly, urged by an impelling force, they will carry out God's "thought," his decision, by executing his judgment on the adulterous, bloodstained world empire of false religion.*—Compare Jeremiah 7:8-11, 34.

The end of this world's false religions will come while they are still seemingly vigorous and influential. Yes, the prophecy shows that just before the harlot is destroyed, she will still be saying in her heart: "I sit a queen, and I am no widow, and I shall never

* For a detailed consideration of these prophecies, see *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, chapter 33, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

see mourning." (Revelation 18:7) However, her destruction will come as a surprise to her billions of subjects. It will be one of the most unexpected and catastrophic events in human history.

Ever since the emergence of ancient Babylon, false religions have exercised a tremendous influence on humanity through their leaders and supporters; their doctrines, traditions, and practices; their numerous imposing buildings for worship; and their incredible riches. They will certainly not disappear unnoticed. Therefore, the angel entrusted with conveying the message of judg-

ment upon the harlot does not mince words when he declares: "In one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine, and she will be completely burned with fire, because Jehovah God, who judged her, is strong." So Babylon the Great's end will come like a bolt from the blue and will pass by quickly, as if "in one day."—Revelation 18:8; Isaiah 47:8, 9, 11.

The angel's strong words lead to the question, Will there be any religion left at all, and if so, which one and why? What does prophecy show? This will be dealt with in the next article.

ONE RELIGION WILL REMAIN

IMAGINE what it would be like if all people on earth were united in one religion, in one pure worship of the only true God. What a source of unity that would be! There would be no more religious contention, strife, or war. Is this only a dream? No. The apostle John's vision of the destruction of the harlot, the world empire of false religion, indicates that one form of worship will remain after her destruction. Which one?

The voice that John heard from heaven gives us a clue: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues." (Revelation 18:4) It is evident that God himself is here speaking to his people. Note that he does not command his people to mix in with the harlot in an ecumenical effort to save her by helping her to

adjust to a decent life. No, there is no remedy for her. Therefore, he commands them to get out of and stay away from her in order to avoid being contaminated by her gross sinfulness and to avoid eventually being judged and destroyed together with her.

The heavenly command to "get out of her" also helps sincere truth seekers to identify God's people. They may ask themselves, 'Which people on earth today have heeded this command by resigning from any religion, organization, or body of worshipers connected with "Babylon the Great"?' (Revelation 18:2) Which people on earth today have thus freed themselves from all Babylonish doctrines, creeds, practices, and traditions? Who else could it be but Jehovah's Witnesses? Among the more than 5.2 million Witnesses in upwards of 230 lands, all who

had been associated with some Babylonish religion, either by birth or conversion, have expressly resigned from it—sometimes in spite of protests and opposition from relatives, friends, and religious leaders.

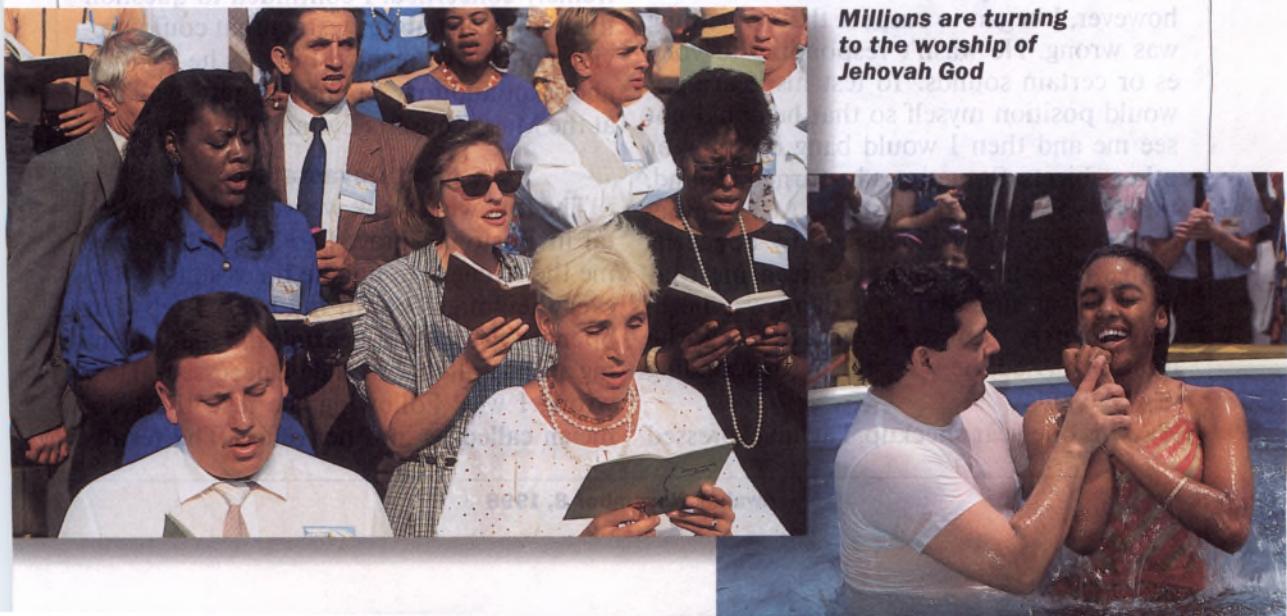
One example is Henry, a South African man, who was the treasurer of his church and was deeply attached to it. But he was searching for the truth, and one day he accepted a free home Bible study with Jehovah's Witnesses. In time, when he decided to become a Witness, he told his pastor, who was also his close neighbor, that he wanted to resign from the church.

The pastor was shocked and later took the moderator and other members of the church to visit Henry. They asked why he had left their church to become a member of a religion that, according to them, does not have God's holy spirit. "At first, I was afraid to answer them," said Henry, "because they had always had great influence over me. But I prayed to Jehovah for help, and he enabled me to make this defense: 'Of all international religions, which is the only one that regularly uses God's name, Jehovah? Is it not Jehovah's Witnesses? Do you think God would allow them to bear his name and not also give them his holy spirit?'" The church officials were unable to refute this reason-

ing, and Henry is now one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

So when the voice from heaven commands: "Get out of her," there is somewhere to go. (Revelation 18:4) There are people, worshipers of the true God, Jehovah, to whom you can flee. Millions have fled. Known as Jehovah's Witnesses, they make up an international Christian brotherhood, organized in over 78,600 congregations, and are now experiencing the largest growth in their history. They have baptized over 1,200,000 people in the past four years! Before baptism, all of these had completed a spiritually stimulating course of Bible study, enabling them to make a personal, well-founded decision to resign from all former attachment to any other religion.—Zephaniah 2:2, 3.

If you have not as yet attended a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses at one of their Kingdom Halls, why not do so this week? You may well be favorably impressed with what you see and hear. And if you want to understand the Bible, why not ask one of Jehovah's Witnesses to study it with you, as millions of others have done? If your prayer is for the true understanding of God's Word along with a way of life that is in harmony with that Word, you will find the answer to your prayer.



**Millions are turning
to the worship of
Jehovah God**



To Reach My Child, I Learned Another Language

THE birth of our son, Spencer, in August 1982 was one of the happiest moments of our life. He was a perfect baby! My husband and I had planned a five-year waiting period before having our first child. As the months passed after his birth, what joy we had in watching him grow! The routine monthly checkups at the doctor's office were always good. I thanked Jehovah for such a wonderful blessing.

By the time Spencer was nine months old, however, I began to suspect that something was wrong. He wasn't responding to voices or certain sounds. To test his hearing, I would position myself so that he could not see me and then I would bang on pans or other objects. Sometimes he turned around, but it was never consistent. At his nine-month checkup, I discussed my concerns with his doctor, but he assured me that my son was fine and that there was nothing to worry about. Nevertheless, as the months passed, he was still not responding or vocalizing.

At his one-year checkup, I again expressed

my worries to the doctor. Once more, he found nothing wrong, but he referred us to an audiologist. I took Spencer there for testing, but the results were inconsistent. I returned for a second and a third time, only to be told that the results were still inconsistent. The doctor felt that as Spencer grew, he would achieve better test results. The first three years of a child's life are critical for language development. I was becoming extremely concerned. I continued to question the audiologist about testing that could provide conclusive results. Finally, he told me about an auditory brain-stem test available at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

I Felt Devastated

The following week we went to the hospital in Boston. I prayed to Jehovah to give me the strength to handle the results, whatever they might be. In my heart I felt that Spencer was hard of hearing and that a hearing aid was all that would be necessary. How wrong I was! Following the test, the technician called us into her office. The results

were conclusive: Spencer had a profound sensory-neural hearing loss. When I asked exactly what that meant, she explained that my son was unable to hear speech and most other sounds. This was not what I had expected to hear; I felt devastated.

Immediately, I wondered, 'How could this have happened? What could have caused it?' I thought back to my pregnancy and delivery. Everything had gone fine. Spencer had never had an ear infection or any major colds. I was overwhelmed with emotion! What was I to do now? I phoned my family and a few friends and told them the test results. One Witness friend encouraged me to view this as a challenge; I would just have to teach Spencer in a different way. I was thankful to Jehovah for the needed strength.

What Would Be Best for Spencer?

I knew nothing about raising a deaf child or what it meant to be deaf. How was I to raise my son and communicate fully with him? So many thoughts and worries ran through my mind.

The following week we returned to the hospital, and the technician discussed our options. She explained that one method, the oral approach, focused on the development of speech and lipreading skills. Another method was to use sign language, which is the language of deaf people. There was a program that would provide instruction in sign language and would later incorporate lipreading and speech skills. The technician also recommended the use of hearing aids to amplify what residual hearing my son had. We then visited a local audiologist, who fitted Spencer with ear molds and hearing aids. During our visit the audiologist suggested that Spencer would be a very good candidate for the oral method.

What would be best for Spencer? I thought about what was truly important. Jehovah wants us to communicate with our

children; this is vital if we want to have a successful family life. We could pursue the oral method and focus on the development of speech and lipreading skills. It was possible that Spencer would develop his speech skills to the point where others could understand him. But that wouldn't be known for years! What were we to do now? We decided to use sign language.

The following month Spencer was enrolled in what was then called a total communication program. Both Spencer and I were learning basic sign language, and Spencer was also given instruction in spoken English and lipreading. I was shown how I could teach my son. The months passed, and Spencer was progressing very well. I still had moments, however, when I felt overwhelmed. I became discouraged when I noticed other children saying "Mommy" or learning how to say "Jehovah." But then I would wonder, 'Why do I feel this way? My son is happy and healthy.' I prayed to Jehovah to help me appreciate the privilege of having such a fine child.

When Spencer was two years old, we made arrangements to attend a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses where the program would be interpreted into American Sign Language (ASL). I discussed my feelings of discouragement with a couple who had worked with deaf Witnesses for many years. They told me of the monthly ASL meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses that were held in Massachusetts and encouraged me to go.

I followed their advice, and both Spencer and I began to attend. There we had an opportunity to meet and interact with deaf adults. At our English congregation, Spencer had benefited little from the meetings. He would cling to my side, as I was the only one with whom he could communicate. His frustration during such meetings increased as he grew older, and his behavior

'I couldn't bear to think of him growing up without ever having a relationship with his parents'

deteriorated. When we attended meetings conducted in sign language, however, this was not the case. He was able to interact freely with everyone without having to go through his mother as an interpreter. He developed much needed relationships with people in the congregation. Both of us improved in our use of sign language, and I learned how to be a better teacher at our home Bible study. How wonderful it was! Now, for the first time, at the meetings I could be with my son and just be his MOM rather than his interpreter!

A Big Turning Point for Me

With my husband's approval, when Spencer was three, I enrolled him in a program for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, located in a public school. Group meetings were offered to educate parents, and I took advantage of this opportunity to learn more. At one meeting a panel made up of deaf adults and teenagers addressed the group. The panelists explained that they had little or no communication with their parents or families. When I asked them why, they responded that their parents had never learned sign language, so they were never able to communicate fully with their parents about life, their feelings, or their interests. It seemed that they did not feel a part of their families.

This was a big turning point for me. I thought about my son. I could not bear to think of him growing up and leaving home without ever having a relationship with his

parents. I was more determined than ever to continue improving my skills in sign language. As time went on, I realized more and more that the decision to use sign language was the best for us. His language was continuing to develop, and we could discuss any topic, such as, "Where do we want to go on vacation?" or "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I realized how much I would have missed if I had tried to rely on speech for communication.

At the age of five, Spencer was placed in regular school classes with hearing children and a teacher who could sign. He stayed with this program for three long years. He hated school, and it was not easy to see him go through such great difficulties. Thankfully, I could communicate with him as we tried different ways to cope with his frustrations. In the end, however, I concluded that this program in the public school was not good for his self-respect or his educational development.

In 1989 my marriage ended. Now I was a single parent with a six-year-old son whose sign-language ability was increasing rapidly. Although I could communicate with him, I knew I needed to improve my skills in ASL in order to maintain and strengthen the communication between us.

Time for a Move

I investigated many programs for deaf children in several states and found a school in Massachusetts where both ASL and English were used in what is considered a bilingual approach. In addition, I was told that there would soon be an ASL congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Boston area, and a friend suggested that we move there. As a single parent, the thought of moving away from our home and family and friends in rural New Hampshire to a metropolitan area was difficult to accept. Spencer too enjoyed living in the country. There were two things,

however, that I had to consider. Spencer needed to be in a school where teachers and students all communicated freely in sign language, and I felt it would be better to be in a congregation with other deaf Witnesses.

We made the move four years ago, when Spencer was nine years old. Shortly thereafter, the Sign Language Congregation in Malden, Massachusetts, was formed, and since then, Spencer has made tremendous progress. His behavior has improved greatly, and he enjoys being at the meetings. I find much joy in seeing him communicate and form relationships with others. The deaf brothers and sisters in the congregation are wonderful role models for my son, helping him to realize that he too can achieve spiritual goals. And this he has done. He now gives talks in the Theocratic Ministry School and is serving as an unbaptized publisher. He has expressed his desire to be baptized.

What pleasure I have in the ministry, watching him express his faith to other deaf people, in sign language! His self-respect has grown tremendously. Spencer has told me how he feels about the congregation. He said: "We belong here. The brothers and sisters can communicate with me." No longer does my son beg me to leave immediately after meetings. Now I have to tell him that it is time to leave the Kingdom Hall!

At his present school, Spencer can communicate easily with the other deaf children. His discussions with them have helped him to see the difference between the world's view of children and Jehovah's view of them. Spencer and I communicate freely and have a close relationship, in harmony with Bible principles. When he comes home in the afternoon, we do his homework together. We go to our meetings and in the house-to-house ministry together. Spencer, however, can see that not all the children at his school have this close relationship with their parents.—Colossians 3:20, 21.

"We Can Talk About Anything"

About a year ago, I noticed Spencer looking at me as if he wanted to tell me something. I asked him if he needed anything. "No," he replied. I asked him a few questions about how everything was in school and so forth. I could tell that there was something he wanted to tell me. Then, during our family *Watchtower* study, he said, "Did you know that some of the parents of students at my school don't know sign language?" I looked at him in surprise. "I'm serious," he said. "There are parents who can't communicate with their children." He explained that some parents had visited the school and that he had seen them pointing and acting out what they wanted to say, in an attempt to communicate with their children. "I am so fortunate that you learned sign language. We can communicate. You don't just point; we can talk about anything."

How this touched my heart! Many of us don't appreciate the efforts of our parents until we are grown. But here, at the age of 12, my son was telling me how thankful he was that we could enjoy meaningful communication.

One of my goals as a mother was to have a good relationship with my son and to be close to him. This probably would not have happened if I had not learned sign language. My dedication to Jehovah motivated me to consider my responsibilities as a parent seriously; this made important decisions regarding communication easier. Both of us have benefited spiritually as a result of these decisions. How important are the words at Deuteronomy 6:7, where parents are instructed to communicate the commands of Jehovah to their children 'when they sit in their house and when they walk on the road and when they lie down and when they get up.' I am truly grateful that Spencer and I can communicate freely about "the magnificent things of God." (Acts 2:11)—*As told by Cindy Adams.*

BROLGA, CASSOWARY, EMU, and JABIRU

By *Awake!* correspondent in Australia

ARMED with fearsome claws, the flightless cassowary, described as the world's most dangerous bird, can leap, kick, and rip, with overwhelming force. Similar in profile, and equally well armed, its relative the emu needs no wings—it runs like the wind. In dance, the brolga proclaims the genius of its Creator and Choreographer. And wading by, tall and lean, the jabiru is a model of avian dignity and poise. The wedge-tailed eagle, whether on the wing or guarding a kill, sports the lines of a consummate aerial hunter. Yes, each of these magnificent birds is truly a marvel of creation. With pleasure, then, we introduce . . .

The Colorful Cassowary —Friend of the Rain Forest

Weighing between 70 and 130 pounds, the southern, or double-wattled, cassowary of the lush rain forests of northeastern Australia and of New Guinea is a beautiful but solitary bird. Standing about six feet tall, the female is larger than the male and—unusual for a bird—is slightly more colorful than the male, who outside the mating season wisely keeps out of her way. After mating, the female lays a clutch of lustrous green eggs, but then she just wanders off, leaving the male to incubate them and care for the brood. She then mates with other males and leaves each of them with a clutch to care for!

Deforestation, however, is taking a toll on the cassowaries. In an attempt to increase their numbers, the Billabong Sanctuary near Townsville, Queensland, has instituted a captive-breeding program aimed at releasing birds back into the wild when they are old enough. Although omnivorous, cassowar-

ies primarily eat fruit, which they swallow whole. Thus, seeds of over a hundred species of plants travel undigested through the bird's gut and get widely dispersed throughout the forest in a protective and nutritious dollop of fertilizer. This, say the sanctuary experts, may make the cassowary a keystone species, in that considerable secondary extinction would follow its disappearance. But is the bird dangerous to humans?

Only to foolish persons who get too near. In reality, humans are a far greater threat to the cassowary than it has ever been to them. In the murky shadows of the rain forest, the bird will sound a deep guttural rumble to warn you it is near. Take the hint; go no closer. In all likelihood, it will charge off through the undergrowth, using its tough casque, or helmet, to protect its head. But when cornered or wounded or when protecting its young, it may attack if you get too near.

The Emu—Nomad and National Emblem

Closely related to and slightly taller than the cassowary, the emu is found in most parts of outback Australia. Of birds, only the ostrich is bigger. The skittish emu has long, powerful legs capable of bursts of speed of about 30 miles per hour, and like the cassowary, each of its feet sports three lethal claws. Unlike its territorial relative, however, the emu is a nomadic wanderer and is rarely aggressive. It will eat practically anything—caterpillars, cabbages, even old boots! Once the female emu has laid her dark green eggs—usually between 7 and 10, but at times up to 20—she, like the cassowary, delegates incubating and parenting to the male.

Some of Australia's Strange Birds

Meeting Europeans was tough on the emu. Settlers quickly eradicated it from Tasmania. And on the mainland its taste for wheat earned it the title vermin and made it the victim of bounty hunters. Yet, in spite of unmitigated slaughter, emu numbers showed a remarkable resilience, so much so that in Western Australia an outright declaration of war was served on the bird in 1932. The government literally called in the army and two Lewis machine guns! Although not renowned for its intellect, the emu won this battle. The "war" was a public farce and a political embarrassment; ten thousand rounds claimed, at most, a few hundred birds. But in the subsequent war of attrition—emu versus the double-barreled attack of bounty on the birds and government-sponsored free ammunition for farmers—emus were no longer able to hold their own.

Nowadays, however, the emu is a national symbol. It stands proudly facing a kangaroo on Australia's coat of arms and wanders the bush in safety. Drought is its worst enemy. Emus are even being bred and farmed experimentally for a wide range of products: totally fat-free meat; strong, durable leather; feathers; and oil that is obtained from a slab of fat on the bird's chest. This localized fat store is the reason the flesh is completely fat free.

Do You Like to Dance?

Perhaps not, but the brolgas certainly do. At their waterside "ballroom," "any number [of these gray cranes], from a pair up to a dozen or so

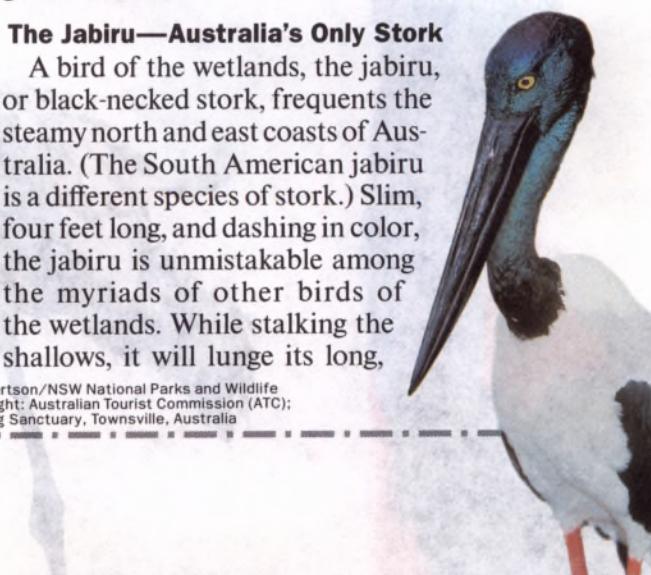
birds," says the book *The Waterbirds of Australia*, "will line up roughly opposite each other and start the dance. They prance forward on their stilt-like legs with wings half-open and shaking. Bowing and bobbing their heads, they advance and retire, gurgling and fluting softly. Now and then a bird will stop and, throwing back its head, trumpet wildly. The birds may also leap a few feet into the air and parachute back to earth on broad black and grey wings. Pieces of twig or grass are flung about and the Brolgas make attempts to catch the pieces or stab at them with their bills as they fall." An inspiring performance, especially considering the size of the birds, which stand over three feet tall and have about a six-foot wingspan!

While many species of birds perform elaborate courtship displays during breeding season, the brolga, one of the largest of all cranes, is an incurable all-year-round dancer. In fact, its name comes from the Aboriginal legend of a famous female dancer named Buralga. She refused the attentions of an evil magician. He, in response, turned her into a graceful crane.

The Jabiru—Australia's Only Stork

A bird of the wetlands, the jabiru, or black-necked stork, frequents the steamy north and east coasts of Australia. (The South American jabiru is a different species of stork.) Slim, four feet long, and dashing in color, the jabiru is unmistakable among the myriads of other birds of the wetlands. While stalking the shallows, it will lunge its long,

Left: Graham Robertson/NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Australia; right: Australian Tourist Commission (ATC); top: Billabong Sanctuary, Townsville, Australia



powerful bill into the water so forcefully that it has to jerk its wings partially open to counteract the force.

And how mighty those wings are! Stretching its wings some six feet from tip to tip, with primary feathers spread like fingers, the jabiru soars in lazy circles until it is just a small cross in the sky. Indeed, the airborne jabiru, with its long wings, neck, and legs silhouetted against the huge red ball of the setting equatorial sun, is a cherished symbol of the wetlands of Australia's north.

The Wedge-Tailed Eagle —King of the Skies

A stone's throw out from the rocky summit of a mountain in Victoria, and in the face of a

biting gale that drove all other birds from the sky, a wedge-tailed eagle played. Writer David Hollands witnessed the aerobatic show of a lifetime: "The eagle hung there," he writes, "virtually motionless and completely at home in this wild medium.... As I watched, it dropped, closing its wings to plunge vertically. For a hundred metres it fell and then the wings opened ever so slightly, sending it rocketing upwards to regain most of the height that had been lost in the fall.... It levelled out with a half roll, then soared higher [and] repeated the dive again and again, hurtling dramatically into the valley floor and up again in a sustained and thrilling display."

With an eight-foot wingspan and a distinct-



Cassowary



Brolga

Eagle chicks and emu head: Graham Robertson/NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Australia; flying eagle: NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Australia; emu with young and jabiru: Australian Tourist Commission (ATC)

ly wedge-shaped tail, this graceful and powerful monarch is impossible to confuse with any other bird in the Australian skies. Its talons can clamp with a force of three tons! For a time, however, the only "proper" way to see a wedge-tailed eagle was down the barrel of a rifle. Like its relative the American bald eagle, which was shot mercilessly to protect the salmon and fur industries, this Australian eagle was persecuted for occasionally taking a lamb. "Few other raptors [birds of prey] in the world," says the book *Birds of Prey*, "have been persecuted as severely as the Wedge-tailed Eagle . . . For almost 100 years it was considered vermin . . . , and monetary bonuses were paid for proof of slaughter."

Over the years, however, the charges were dropped. Its main diet proved to be feral rabbits and occasionally native animals, including wallabies up to twice its own weight. This revelation, at long last, earned the eagle amity with man as well as legal protection.

Yes, what an astonishingly complex, beautiful, and vital part of earth's web of life birds are! We may learn this in time, but often wisdom comes too late—after greed and ignorance have taken their toll. But how comforting to know that if we pay attention, even now our ears can thrill to gurgling, chirping, whistling, honking, fluting, quacking, and squawking in the skies, forests, and wetlands of this beautiful planet!



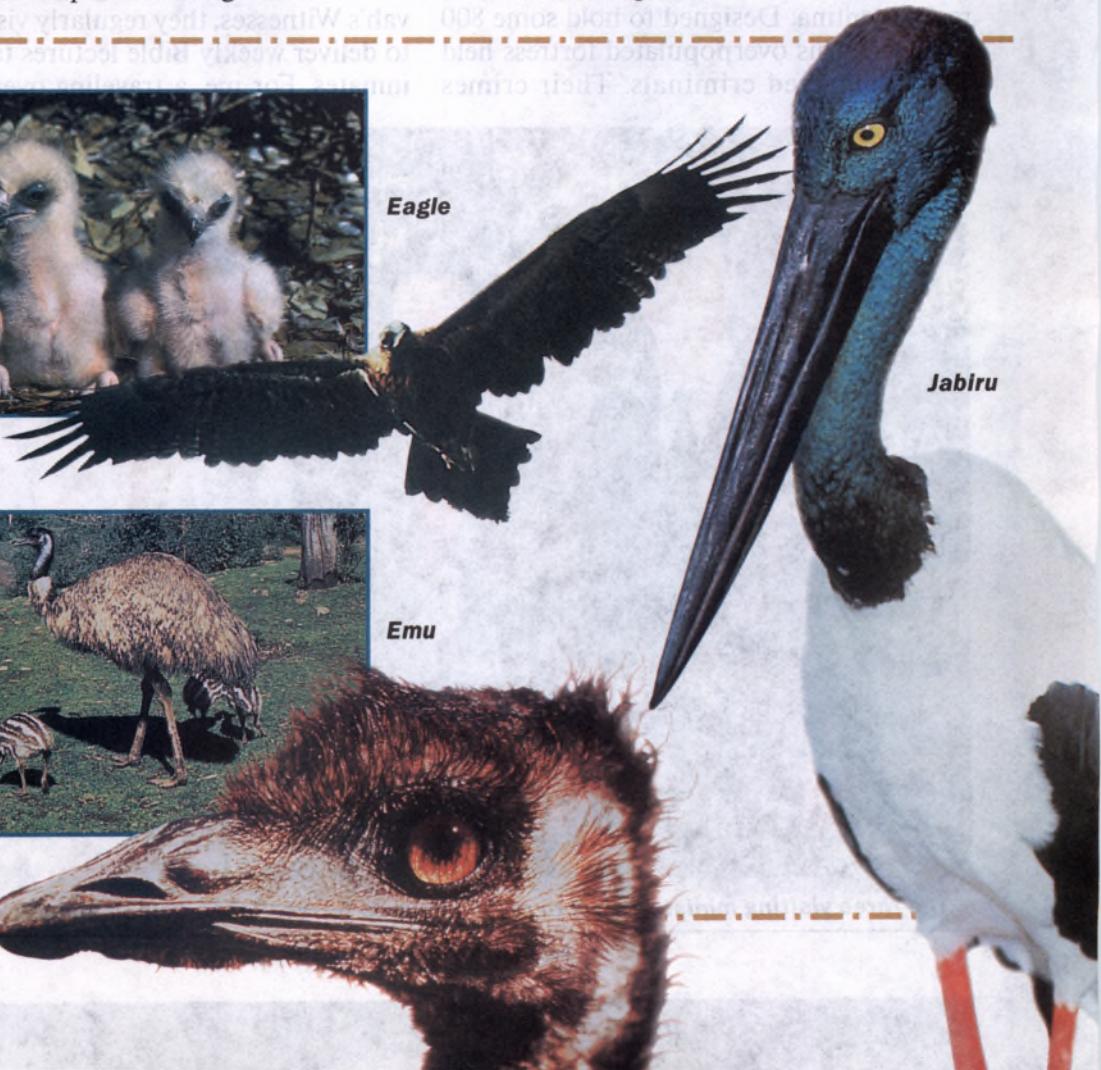
Eagle



Emu



Emu



Jabiru

We Were Hostages During a Prison Uprising

AT ABOUT three o'clock in the afternoon, on Saturday, March 30, 1996, Edgardo Torres, Rubén Ceibel, and I arrived at the Sierra Chica Maximum Security Prison, in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Designed to hold some 800 prisoners, this overpopulated fortress held 1,052 convicted criminals. Their crimes

ranged from robbery to serial murder. We were there as visitors.

For Edgardo and Rubén, this was one of many Saturday trips to this famous prison. As elders in a local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, they regularly visited there to deliver weekly Bible lectures to some 15 inmates. For me, a traveling overseer, this



The three visiting ministers (left to right): Edgardo Torres, Rubén Ceibel, and Dario Martín

was a rare opportunity, as I had never presided over a meeting in a prison.

The prison has 12 cellblocks laid out in the shape of a fan. As we entered the facilities, we saw at a distance four prisoners waving at us enthusiastically. These inmates had progressed in their Bible studies to the point of becoming unbaptized preachers of the good news of God's Kingdom. We were quickly escorted to cell-block 9, where we were to hold the meeting. There, a room had been painted and decorated with curtains, giving it a dignified appearance.

The Uprising Begins

Something was not right, though. There were only 12 prisoners in attendance instead of the usual 15. We all wondered why. The meeting started as usual, with song and prayer. After a few minutes, we were jolted by the sound of loud gunshots followed by bursts of machine-gun fire. Then we heard shouts and screams. A prison uprising had just begun!

Several hooded prisoners armed with makeshift knives stormed into our meeting room. They were surprised to find us —three visitors! We were quickly escorted down a smoke-filled hallway. There were mattresses burning, prisoners running in disarray, and a wounded guard lying on the floor. The guard tower located at the center of the prison grounds was engulfed in fire from a homemade bomb. We were taken outside and forced to stand about 150 feet from the main fence. Looking straight ahead, we could see policemen and prison guards outside the fence, pointing their guns at us. A group of prisoners were hiding behind us, holding their knives to our throats. They were using us as human shields.

Several hooded prisoners armed with makeshift knives stormed into our meeting room

More Hostages

Five hours later, after sunset, the ringleaders allowed a medical doctor to enter the prison to treat the wounded. The doctor too became a hostage. Finally, about nine o'clock in the evening, we were taken to the prison hospital. There we joined a group of guards who were also held as hostages. Now the rioters forced all of the hostages to serve in shifts as human shields.

After a short while, a judge and her secretary were permitted to meet the rioters, in an attempt to settle matters peacefully. But the crisis escalated when the prisoners brazenly detained both of them as hostages.

There was sporadic fighting all night long. We tried to sleep, but it seemed that every time we dozed off, a loud scream would jolt us out of our slumber. Then, in the very early hours of the morning, our turn to pose as living shields came up again.

The Violence Escalates

On Sunday, March 31, the second day of the uprising, the situation got worse. The ringleaders could not agree on their demands. This created an atmosphere of anger and violence. Bands of rioters went on a rampage, destroying and burning everything in their paths. Old disputes were settled by violence and murder. A number of prisoners who refused to join the riot were

executed. Some bodies were burned in the bakery oven.

All sorts of rumors and conflicting reports about our release circulated inside the prison. It was an emotional roller coaster for us hostages. Sometimes we were allowed to watch the news on television. We were amazed to see how far from reality the television accounts were. It was discouraging.

How did we cope? We focused on praying, reading the Bible, and speaking to others about Bible promises of a happy future. That was the key to our emotional strength during the ordeal.

On Monday, the ringleaders agreed to begin negotiations with the authorities. It seemed as if an end to the uprising was near. The rioters were using Edgardo and several prison guards as shields when a gunfight erupted among some prisoners. In the ensuing confusion, the police, under the assumption that hostages were being shot, fired their weapons. Edgardo survived the barrage of bullets, but some of the captive guards were shot.

Death Seemed Imminent

They took us hostages up to a roof to show the authorities that we were still alive. But the police kept shooting. This enraged the rioters. Everyone started to shout at

the same time. Some yelled: "Slaughter the hostages! Slaughter them!" Others pleaded: "Not yet! Let's wait!" Death seemed imminent. Rubén and I looked at each other as if to say, 'Until the new world.' Then we both offered a silent prayer. Immediately, we felt an inner calm and peace of mind, which, under the circumstances, could only have come from Jehovah.—Philippians 4:7.

Suddenly, the police stopped shooting, and one of the ringleaders called off our execution. The young prisoner who was holding me was ordered to walk me to and fro on the roof, as a warning to the police. He was extremely nervous. Right there and then, I was able to start a conversation that calmed us both. I explained that human suffering was instigated by Satan and his demons and that soon Jehovah God would put an end to all such suffering.—Revelation 12:12.

When we were taken back to the prison hospital, we found that many of the hostages were panic-stricken. We tried to share our faith in Jehovah's promises with our fellow hostages. We talked to them about our Bible-based hope of a future in Paradise on earth. Some of the hostages began to call on Jehovah by name. The doctor manifested special interest and asked a number of specific questions. This led to a lengthy Bible discussion with the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*.

Celebrating the Memorial

Tuesday, our fourth day in captivity, was the anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ. On that day millions of Jehovah's Witnesses and interested persons worldwide would meet to commemorate this event in obedience to Jesus' command. (Luke 22:19) We too made arrangements to celebrate the Memorial.

One corner of the room was selected for

The rioters were using Edgardo and several prison guards as shields

privacy. There was no unleavened bread or red wine to use as emblems. But the three of us enjoyed singing praises to Jehovah, praying, and reviewing the Bible's account about Jesus' final night and other events surrounding his death. We felt very close to our families and our spiritual brothers and sisters as they celebrated the Memorial simultaneously throughout the entire country.

The Ordeal Ends

An atmosphere of tension, fear, and suspense prevailed during the following four days. Yet, we were comforted by numerous letters from relatives and friends, which the prisoners allowed us to receive. On one occasion we were even permitted to contact our families by phone. How refreshing it was to hear their voices and to read their expressions of love and concern!

On Saturday, our eighth day in captivity, the rioters reached an agreement with the authorities. We were told that the following day we would be released. Sunday, April 7, at 2:30 in the afternoon, we received the news: "Get ready to leave!" The prisoners organized a 'guard of honor' to escort us to freedom! As we were leaving the hospital, the spokesman for the ringleaders approached Edgardo and said: "Brother, I am so impressed by your conduct. I promise that from now on I will attend your Saturday meetings in prison. You will still hold the meetings even after what happened here, right?" Edgardo smiled and answered: "Of course!"

A surprise awaited us outdoors. As soon as we exited the building, the entire inmate population burst into applause in our honor. This was their way of showing that they were sorry for what had taken place. It was an emotional moment. No doubt our Christian conduct during the preceding nine days had impressed them all, to Jehovah's credit.

The prisoners organized a 'guard of honor' to escort us to freedom!

Outside the prison fence, we met our families and about 200 of our spiritual brothers and sisters. We embraced one another with a great sense of relief. We had survived! One of the hostages approached my wife and told her: "I think Jehovah has reached my heart and wants me to serve him."

Edgardo, Rubén, and I learned in a very special way that Jehovah can sustain his servants, even during the most terrible adversities. We experienced how marvelous it is to pray to Jehovah and to be heard by him. Like the psalmist, we can say: "I shall exalt you, O Jehovah, for you have drawn me up and you have not let my enemies rejoice over me. O Jehovah my God, I cried to you for help, and you proceeded to heal me. O Jehovah, you have brought up my soul from Sheol itself; you have kept me alive, that I should not go down into the pit." (Psalm 30:1-3)—*As told by Dario Martín.*

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**Removing Misconceptions
About Jehovah's Witnesses**

**The Pilgrims and
Their Struggle for Freedom**

**Our Best Friend
Is in the Spirit Realm**



Portrait Photography

How to Get It Right

Few items are more cherished than portraits of beloved friends and family members. After all, a quality portrait is more than a mere snapshot; it is an image that is intended to capture the very essence of someone's personality!

The problem is that professional portraits tend to be expensive—beyond the reach of some of us. And when you try to make portrait shots yourself, you soon discover that far more is involved than just pointing and shooting. This is because a good portrait includes not only the subject but also the lighting, the background, the setting, the pose, the facial expression, and the color.

Even so, if you have a camera and are willing to apply yourself to learning a few basic techniques, you can make satisfactory portrait shots. How? To answer, we will ask some questions of a professional portrait photographer who has over ten years of experience in this field.

- *First of all, what is the secret of getting someone to smile for the camera?* Make sure that your subject is in the mood to be photographed! Let us say, for example, that you want to take a portrait shot of a little girl. If she is tired or hungry, she will be difficult to work with. Besides, fatigue will cause tension in her face and eyes, which will detract from the picture. So encourage her to take a nap and have a light snack before the photo session begins.

It also helps to interact with the person. Be upbeat and cheerful. Relax her by conversing, but don't try to get her laughing hysterically. This causes the eyes to squint and brings blood to the face. Try photo-



graphing a variety of facial expressions. The more photographs you take, the better your chances are of getting the look that best characterizes that person.

- *What about dress and grooming?* In group portraits, color harmony is desirable. If, for example, you are taking a picture of a family, suggest that they wear compatible colors. Or perhaps have them all wear the same colors. Remember, though, that large people look best in dark colors and that thin people look best in light colors.

You must also pay attention to detail: Does the clothing hang straight, with a minimum of wrinkles? Does the necktie hang straight? Is the hair neat? Your eye may not spot stray hairs, but the camera will! If the subject is a woman, is her makeup properly applied?

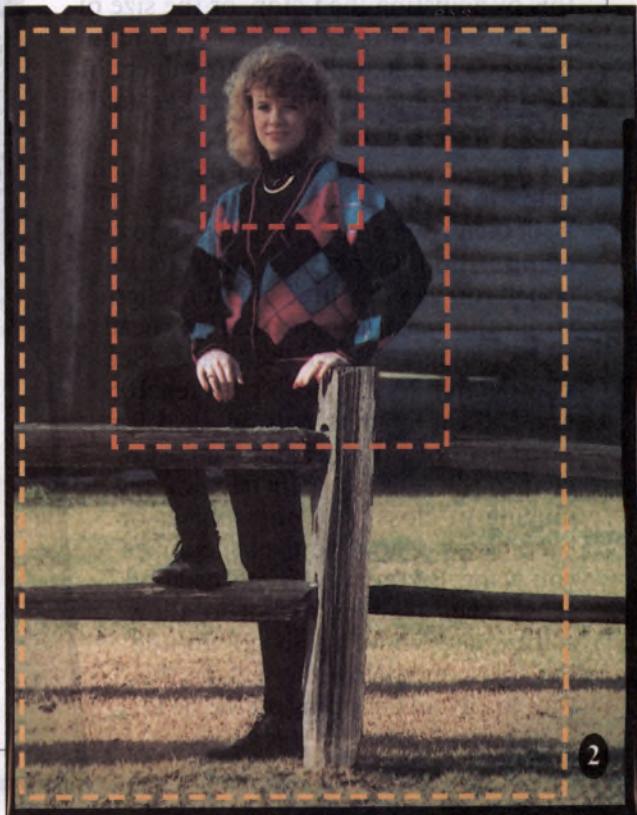
- *What about people who wear glasses?* Because of glare, this can be a problem. First, look through your viewfinder to see if there is any unwanted glare. If so, have the subject turn the head slowly until the reflection moves away from the center of the eye or disappears. Sometimes, having the subject lower the chin will

help—but be careful not to create a double chin!

- *Does it matter what appears in the background?* Absolutely! A busy background cluttered with power lines, roads, or automobiles will only detract from your photo. So look for a background that might enhance or add interest to your subject, such as a tree, a flowering bush, a wood fence, or even the side of an old barn.

- *What if you are taking the picture in an indoor setting?* You might try seating the subject on a chair or a sofa in front of a light-colored wall or an indoor plant. It is particularly interesting to portray the individual at work or engaged in a favorite hobby or activity, with tool bench, desk, or sewing materials in the background.

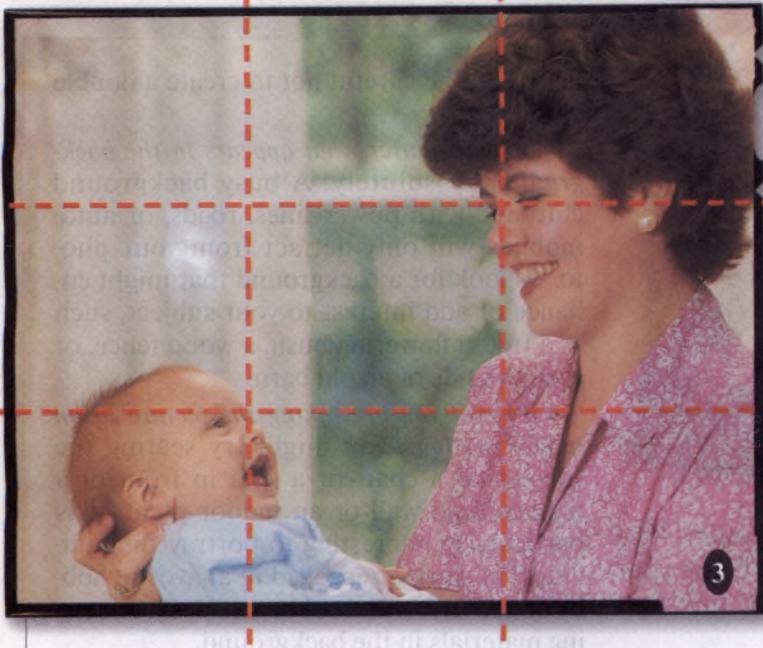
- *What if you can't find an attractive background?* Try putting the background out



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3

of focus. This works best in outdoor portraits where you can place the subject at a distance from the background. You do this by adjusting the f-stop, or the size of the lens aperture. A lower f-stop number, such as f5.6, will put your subject in clear focus but will blur the background.

—See photograph 1.

• *Any tips on composition?* First of all, it helps to mount your camera on a tripod; then you can concentrate more on composition. Generally, portraits are either full-length, three-quarter length (from the waist up), or close-up (head and shoulders or just the head). (See photograph 2.) Any lens between 105 and 150 millimeters will be ideal for portrait shots. If you cannot adjust or change the lens on your camera, try moving in closer to your subject or backing away until you get the image you want. By the way, it makes good sense when framing a shot to allow some space above the head, around the sides, and below the feet. In this way you avoid chopping off the head,

the feet, or the torso should you have the photograph enlarged. You see, the more you enlarge, the more of the image may be lost, depending on the photograph's frame size.

One handy guideline is what is called the rule of thirds. This involves placing your subject's face or eyes one third of the distance from the top, bottom, or side of the picture. (See photograph 3.) However, sometimes it does work well to have the eyes in the center of the portrait.

• *What about posing the subject?* Have your subject face the camera in a relaxed position, either sitting, standing, or reclining, but turned slightly to the side. If the face



4

seems too round, have the model turn the head or body slightly so that only half the face is illuminated. The half in the shadows should be the closest to the camera. This will make the face look narrower. On the other hand, if you want to make the face appear fuller, have the person rotate the head or body until the light illuminates the whole face.

Pay particular attention to the hands. They should seem relaxed and should be in a position that is natural for your subject, such as resting gently on the chin or the side of the face. If the person is standing, avoid the all-too-common mistake of having the arms hang by the side with the hands pointing straight down. It's better to have the hands holding something or resting in a natural pose.

• *Any tips for photographing couples?* Try having them tilt their heads slightly toward each other. It is usually best to avoid having them both at the same level. You could try to place them so that the eyes of one person are at the level of the other person's nose. —See photograph 4.

• *Let's talk about lighting. When is the best time of the day to take outdoor photographs?* Late afternoon. The air is usually calm, and the color of the light is warmer. Try positioning your friend so that the sun's light illuminates one side of the face, with just a triangle of light showing on the side of the face in shadow. This will prevent the person from squinting. If you want to take a profile shot, move your camera position to the shadowed side of the face. By the way, make sure you shade your camera lens from the sunlight.

• *What if the light is too harsh?* Try placing your friend so that the sun is behind him.

• *Won't that put his face in the shadow?* Yes, but you can use your flash to fill in the shadowed areas. Some cameras do this automatically. Another solution is to have a friend



act as an assistant. He or she can hold up a reflector or a large piece of white cardboard and bounce some diffused sunlight onto your subject's face.

• *What about indoor lighting?* You can use natural light by posing your subject next to a window. A sheer curtain can serve to diffuse the light. If necessary, you can use flash fill-in or a cardboard reflector to brighten up areas of the face that seem too dark. —See photograph 5.

• *What if there isn't enough available light?* In such situations you will have to use your flash. Try placing your subject in an area that has a white side wall. Tilt your flash so that light bounces off the side wall. With the light coming from the side, you will have more control over how much of the face is illuminated.

Admittedly, it will take some trial and error to get good results. But the basic principles of portrait photography are simple. With careful planning and attention to detail, you can, even with the simplest of cameras, create a good portrait—one that you and your loved ones will cherish for years to come!

Whose Guidance Can You Trust?

IT'S time to go!" announces the father to his five-year-old son. The father extends a hand, and without hesitation the son reaches out and wraps his small hand around his father's fingers. Wherever the journey may lead, the child trusts in the guidance of his parent and follows with confidence. Come what may, the child's firm grip remains unbroken.

Living in these days of economic, political, and personal uncertainty, would you not welcome a guiding hand from a source you could trust implicitly? Yet, we live in a time when unscrupulous people take advantage of inexperienced ones. Thus, there is good reason to be cautious as to whom we trust. Perhaps you have been sorely disappointed in the past when someone you relied on for guidance let you down.

Nonetheless, the Bible encourages us to put our trust in God. "For I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, the One saying to you, 'Do not be afraid. I myself will help you,'" recorded the prophet Isaiah. (Isaiah 41:13) And the apostle Peter advised: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God,

that he may exalt you in due time; while you throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you."—1 Peter 5:6, 7.

Still, you may well ask, 'What reason do I have to place my trust in God for guidance?' The following sound reasons are found in the record of the ancient Israelites.

The Hand of God Directs His People

The series of events that culminated the night of Nisan 14, 1513 B.C.E., broke the will of the despotic taskmaster Pharaoh and of the Egyptians, so that they released God's people, the Israelites, from slavery. (Exodus 1:11-13; 12:29-32) On Nisan 15, the jubilant nation of Israel headed toward the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. The most direct route was to the north of Memphis, along the seacoast of the Mediterranean, close by the land occupied by the feared Philistines, and on into the Promised Land. However, God had in mind another route.—Exodus 13:17, 18; Numbers 33:1-6.

God provided a visible guide to the ancient nation of Israel, which appeared as a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire during the



night. (Exodus 13:21, 22) Along with this supernatural phenomenon, Jehovah used as his earthly representative the faithful man Moses. (Exodus 4:28-31) There was, therefore, indisputable proof that God's hand was guiding the Israelites.

At their second campsite, Etham, "at the edge of the wilderness," Jehovah directed Moses to turn back and camp on the shores of the Red Sea, at Pihahiroth. (Exodus 13:20) This seemingly inexplicable move prompted Pharaoh to conclude that the Israelites were "wandering in confusion in the land." Emboldened, Pharaoh had a change of heart. Now determined to reenslave the Israelites, he gathered his army and set out in pursuit.—Exodus 14:1-9.

By taking the nation in a different direction, into what was evidently a low plain leading down to the Red Sea, Moses, it seemed, was positioning the Israelites to be trapped by the mountains on either side of the camp at Pihahiroth, the Red Sea, and the advancing army of Pharaoh. It appeared that the Israelites had become an easy target for quick subjugation or annihilation.

What effect did this have on them? Would they demonstrate trust in the guidance of Jehovah? To all outward appearances, the situation was hopeless. Therefore, some became panicky. Still others began to murmur against Moses. Some were even ready to give up and return to Egyptian slavery! —Exodus 14:10-12.

Hold Fast to the Hand of God!

In this situation the Israelites needed to display a childlike trust in the Almighty. Unknown to the nation as a whole, Jehovah had good reason for instructing Moses to cross the Red Sea at Pihahiroth. By initiating the Israelites' passage into the Promised Land south of the land of the

Philistines, Jehovah showed loving insight. After 215 years in Egypt, there was little doubt that the Israelites were unprepared for warfare with a nation of fierce warriors. Therefore, Jehovah selected a route that would avoid such a conflict.*—Exodus 13:17, 18.

The deliverance of the nation and the defeat of Pharaoh and his army at the Red Sea bear marvelous testimony to the saving power of God. Furthermore, how thankful were the Israelites who, although not comprehending the reason for God's guiding them in a particular way, did not forsake the hand of God! They held fast and saw the miraculous parting of the Red Sea as well as the annihilation of their enemies. Their trust in the guidance of Jehovah was rewarded.—Exodus 14:19-31.

Again, let us consider the example of a child holding the hand of a parent. When a child becomes anxious, how does he respond? Rather than letting go or relaxing his grip, the child will tighten his little hand around his parent's fingers. In doing so, he demonstrates unwavering trust that the parent will provide unfailing guidance and strength during difficulties.

Similarly, when we experience distress in our life, we need to tighten our grip, trusting even more in God's guidance! His Word, the Bible, can become our guiding light. (Psalm 119:105) Also, remember that along with trust comes patience. Therefore, we must give Jehovah time to work things out, even if for some period of time we may not fully understand why he is guiding us in a certain course. Yes, we can trust in God's guidance.—Exodus 15:2, 6; Deuteronomy 13:4; Isaiah 41:13.

* For further information on Pihahiroth, see *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, pages 638-9, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

WATCHING THE WORLD

The Holy Scriptures in 2,123 Languages

Hannah Kickel-Andrae, press secretary of the German Bible Society, recently announced that the Holy Scriptures can be read in more than 2,100 languages, according to the *Wetterauer Zeitung*. It is estimated that mankind speaks about 6,000 languages and dialects. That means that at least parts of God's Word are available in more than a third of all spoken languages. According to the magazine *Bibelreport*, the complete Bible is now published in 349 languages. The "New Testament" is available in an additional 841 languages, and other portions of the Bible in 933, for a total of 2,123 languages. Most translation teams need about four years for the translation of the "New Testament" and about eight for the "Old Testament." Work is proceeding on 600 other translation projects.

Toxic Whale

The newspaper *International Herald Tribune* relates that a sperm whale found dead in busy shipping lanes off the northern coast of Denmark contained so much "mercury and cadmium that its intestine had to be buried at a special site for hazardous waste." The source of these toxic metals is not as yet known. *Time* magazine, in discussing the same incident, added that while some see this as a clear indication of serious pollution of the seas, zoologists suggest natural causes. Cetologist Carl Kinze, of the Copenhagen Zoological Museum, points out that sperm whales feed mainly

on octopuses, some of which have naturally high levels of cadmium.

Gambling's Heavy Toll

In the Australian state of New South Wales, a government-sponsored survey revealed some shocking statistics regarding the effects of gambling. According to *The Sunday Telegraph*, close to 40 percent of those surveyed said that they gamble weekly. Of those, more than 2 out of 10 admitted to spending over \$100 a week on the habit. "Young single males who preferred gambling machines or racing" were



the group most likely to develop gambling problems. Other high-risk groups included "people who earned less than \$20,000 a year and the retired or unemployed." Moreover, the survey revealed that "almost 15 percent of NSW [New South Wales] families have experienced difficulties with excessive gambling." In addition, it is estimated that "gambling addicts are costing NSW \$50 million a year in lost productivity, bankruptcy and divorce costs."

Catholic Untouchables?

Over the centuries in India, many of those born into the caste of the so-called untouch-

ables have become Catholic converts in hopes of escaping the Hindu caste system. "But that did not mean they were able to shake off the trappings of their caste," says the Paris newspaper *Le Monde*. High-caste Indian Catholics have continued to treat low-caste Catholics like untouchables. "As a result," says *Le Monde*, "when low- and high-caste Catholics go to church to pray, they sit in separate pews."

Fictitious Titles

In the United States, the titles "nutritionist," "physician," and "dietitian" are often used by self-proclaimed, unqualified people. According to the *Tufts University Diet & Nutrition Letter*, in many states "anyone, regardless of education, can claim to be a nutritionist without fear of legal recourse." Recently, researchers examined telephone directories in 32 states and discovered that "less than half of the so-called professionals listed under the headings 'nutritionists' and 'physicians' are reliable sources of sound, scientifically based nutrition information." In the yellow pages (commercial telephone listings), about 70 percent of the nutritionist "Ph.D.'s" listed were found to hold fictitious degrees or to offer fraudulent information.

Child Power

"Brazilian children are in command at home, influence their parents' decisions, and spend nearly \$50 billion (U.S.) a year," reports *Veja* magazine.

"Children choose TV programs alone because the adults are occupied with other things. They go to school camps without the supervision of the father or the mother. . . . They are left at parties and sleep in friends' homes." Today, many parents "prefer confident and independent children, even if they are less obedient than children of former generations." But according to mental-health professional Alberto Pereira Lima Filho, "abandoning their role as educators, [parents] cannot provide clear limits for their children." It may come as no surprise that a study shows that "40 percent of the children admire soccer players more than their parents."

Voodoo Receives Government Approval

The West African country of Benin has given "official recognition" to the "practice of voodoo," reports *The Guardian* of Nigeria. According to the newspaper, it was the "first time any government" has granted official status to an "African traditional religion." Such recognition means that practitioners of voodoo have a legal right to build temples in which offerings can be made to worship and appease unseen spirits. It is estimated that 70 percent of the people in Benin practice voodoo.

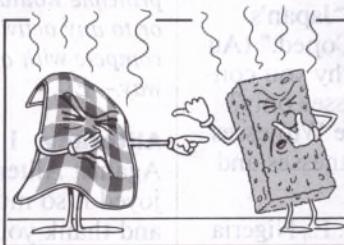
Expensive Disarmament

"Between 1985 and 1994, military expenditures dropped worldwide by about 30 percent, to 'only' 800 billion U.S. dollars," according to German researchers. The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) published these facts

in their first yearbook, entitled *Conversion Survey 1996*. Of 151 countries, 82 reduced their military outlay, while 60 increased it. According to the German magazine *Focus*, the "hope for 'peace dividends,' that is to say, the redistribution of billions of dollars for the development of aid and social programs, has as yet gone unfulfilled." BICC experts stated: "The reduction of military equipment has created expenses that cancel out the money that was saved in the sector of armaments."

Dishcloths Can Make You Sick

Scientists have found significant amounts of harmful bacteria in used dishcloths and kitchen sponges. According to the *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter*, a recent study revealed that of 500 wet cloths and sponges examined, "two-thirds contained bacteria



that can make people sick." About one fourth "contained salmonella or staphylococcus, two leading causes of food-borne illness" in the United States. Experts recommend that sponges be replaced regularly and that dishcloths be washed often. "You can put dishcloths and sponges in the dishwasher with your dirty dishes, or in the washing machine," says the *Wellness Letter*. After they come in contact with raw meat, surfaces can be cleaned up with paper

towels rather than with reusable cloths or sponges.

Open-Heart Video Surgery

A Paris hospital recently achieved an international first by performing open-heart video surgery on a 30-year-old woman, reports the Paris daily *Le Monde*. Conventional open-heart surgery requires an approximately nine-inch opening of the thoracic cage along the sternum. This new technique, however, only requires a two-inch incision, while another small hole allows for a fiber-optic camera to guide the surgeon. In this case blood loss, postoperative shock, and the risk of infection were reduced considerably. The patient was able to leave the hospital just 12 days after the operation. Each year, about one million people undergo conventional open-heart surgery worldwide.

Tuberculosis Scourge

"A third of the world's population is infected by TB [tuberculosis]," and the disease is expected to kill 30 million people this decade, reports *The Times* of London. The World Health Organization stresses that the new plague, as it terms it, will be more widespread and devastating than AIDS, likely infecting 300 million people in the next ten years. The fact that the bacilli are airborne means that TB is therefore much more contagious. TB is already epidemic in parts of Russia. Drug-resistant strains of the bacillus have emerged because many TB patients have not completed their six-month course of antibiotics, reports a British medical relief agency. As a result, bacilli develop immunity and survive.

FROM OUR READERS

Travel Sickness I am ten years old and want to thank you for the item "Travel Sickness" in "Watching the World." (January 22, 1996) I tried the suggestions in the article, and they worked! Please keep publishing such articles.

J. C. S., Brazil

Near Death I am writing regarding the article "Doctors Learned From My Near Death." (December 22, 1995) Is not erythropoietin buffered with a small percentage of albumin, a blood protein?

R. P., United States

In some cases, yes, and each Christian must personally decide whether or not to accept medications that contain small amounts of albumin. For a detailed discussion, please see "Questions From Readers" in the October 1, 1994, and June 1, 1990, issues of "The Watchtower."—ED.

Earthquake I read the article "Japan's Sudden Disaster—How People Coped." (August 22, 1995) I am wondering why you confined your relief efforts to Witnesses only? One would have thought that the Witnesses would have extended love to Witnesses and non-Witnesses alike.

V. C. E., Nigeria

Actually, many non-Witnesses were helped. Oftentimes, channeling the relief supplies through congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses proved to be the fastest way to get the supplies to those in need. In one case two vans full of food supplies were sent to a local refugee center. Many similar examples could be cited. Naturally, Witnesses gave priority to congregation members, since in the Bible we are exhorted: "Work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Galatians 6:10)—ED.

Sports Competition Your article "Is Competition in Sports Wrong?" (December 8, 1995) was very confusing to me, in

that it used Galatians 5:26. What does the book of Galatians have to do with sports and games? Paul is speaking about spirit versus flesh and freedom versus slavery. The *King James Version* renders that verse: "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another."

P. O., United States

It is true that the apostle did not specifically have in mind athletic competition when he penned those words. However, some Christians were evidently making unfair comparisons with one another. This gave rise to 'fleshy' attitudes such as 'enmities, strife, jealousy, contentions, and divisions.' (Galatians 5:20, 21; 6:3, 4) Paul thus cautioned Christians not to be "stirring up competition with one another." According to "The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon," the Greek word rendered "competition" means "to challenge to a combat or contest with one." This principle would certainly apply to sports activities or to any activity that could cause Christians to compete with one another in an unwholesome way.—ED.

Aliteracy I read the article "Guard Against Aliteracy" (January 22, 1996) and enjoyed it so much that I was moved to write and thank you for the informative reading material you provide. Reading gives us the opportunity to know the Creator of the universe through his precious Word, the Bible. There is thus a connection between spiritual weakness and aliteracy.

R. R., United States

Although I have been a baptized Christian for 28 years and a regular reader of the Society's publications, I would procrastinate and I felt I was losing the desire to read. Your article identified my problem! Your reasoning on this subject gave me the incentive to read so as to benefit myself.

A. O., Canada

WE WERE staying at a friend's cozy house in the woods, and we slept downstairs in her semibasement apartment. Thus, the windows were at eye level for us inside and at ground level outside. The first morning, at about six o'clock, I woke up to a strange double tapping sound that seemed to come from different parts of the apartment. Intrigued, I got up and wandered out to the kitchen to see if the refrigerator or the heater was making the noise. Neither was. Puzzled, I suddenly heard the sound coming from the family room. I walked in quietly, and to my amazement, I saw a brilliant red bird outside, a cardinal, attacking the windowpanes! It flitted from window to window around the house—the bedroom, the bathroom, the TV room—wherever there was a ground-level window. I was mystified.

As I quietly drew closer to the window, I found a clue to the mystery—a female cardinal outside, just a few inches away, contentedly pecking at seeds. But why was the male attacking the windows? Apparently, it kept mistaking its own reflection for a rival cardinal and was trying to scare it away! It was fooled by appearances.

I later confirmed that this was the motive for the bird's strange conduct. In her book *The Cardinal*, June Osborne states that the male cardinal "goes to great lengths to ensure that his block of land is safe from all other intruding males of the species. . . . Not only does [he] chase away these interlopers, he has been known to . . . bump against his own reflection in hubcaps, car mirrors, or picture windows and sliding glass doors." Then she adds a thought with which we could identify: "This can be quite disruptive to the peaceful life of a homeowner." We found that out, early each morning.

What can be done to stop this compulsive male conduct? Writer Osborne suggests: "Sometimes it becomes necessary to cover shiny surfaces to restore peace and quiet . . . , to say nothing of trying to keep the bird from harming itself in these near-suicidal attacks."

—Contributed.

Don't Be Fooled by Appearances



"IN SEARCH OF THE GREATEST ARTIST"



That was the title carried by the *Awake!* of November 8, 1995. The subject brought a favorable reaction from readers all over the world.

Amang wrote from Douala, Cameroon: "The articles had quite an effect on me because I love art, especially fine paintings. Now I appreciate that there is an Artist greater than Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Da Vinci, and others—none other than Jehovah God himself."

From St. Barthélemy, in the French West Indies, Frederick said: "I read it four times, and each time I was filled with gratitude for the beautiful things our Creator gave us."

Assunta wrote from Italy: "It aroused in me the desire to paint. It deepened my enthusiasm for God's new world." And Irena, from the Czech Republic, said: "When we visit museums, we have to pay to see works of art,

whereas the Creator of all natural beauty offers it to us gratis, every day." Aline wrote from Brazil: "Although we frequently have articles to help us appreciate Jehovah's personality, these touched my heart. They gave many details about creation that enhance our appreciation of Jehovah's love."

From the winter cold of Wisconsin, U.S.A., Anne wrote: "It really helped me appreciate the beauty of creation. Sometimes in winter it's hard to find. The same day I read the article, I went outside and noted the frost on a branch, a snow-covered leaf, animal tracks in the snow. Thank you again for the reminder of how we can appreciate 'the Greatest Artist!'"