

# Awake!

NOVEMBER 2010

IS  
**ATHEISM**  
ON THE  
MARCH?



# Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING **38,451,000**  
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## A Book You Can Trust —Part 1

This is the first in a series of seven articles discussing Bible history and prophecy. They are designed to help you see that the Bible is both accurate and trustworthy.

Photograph taken by courtesy of the British Museum



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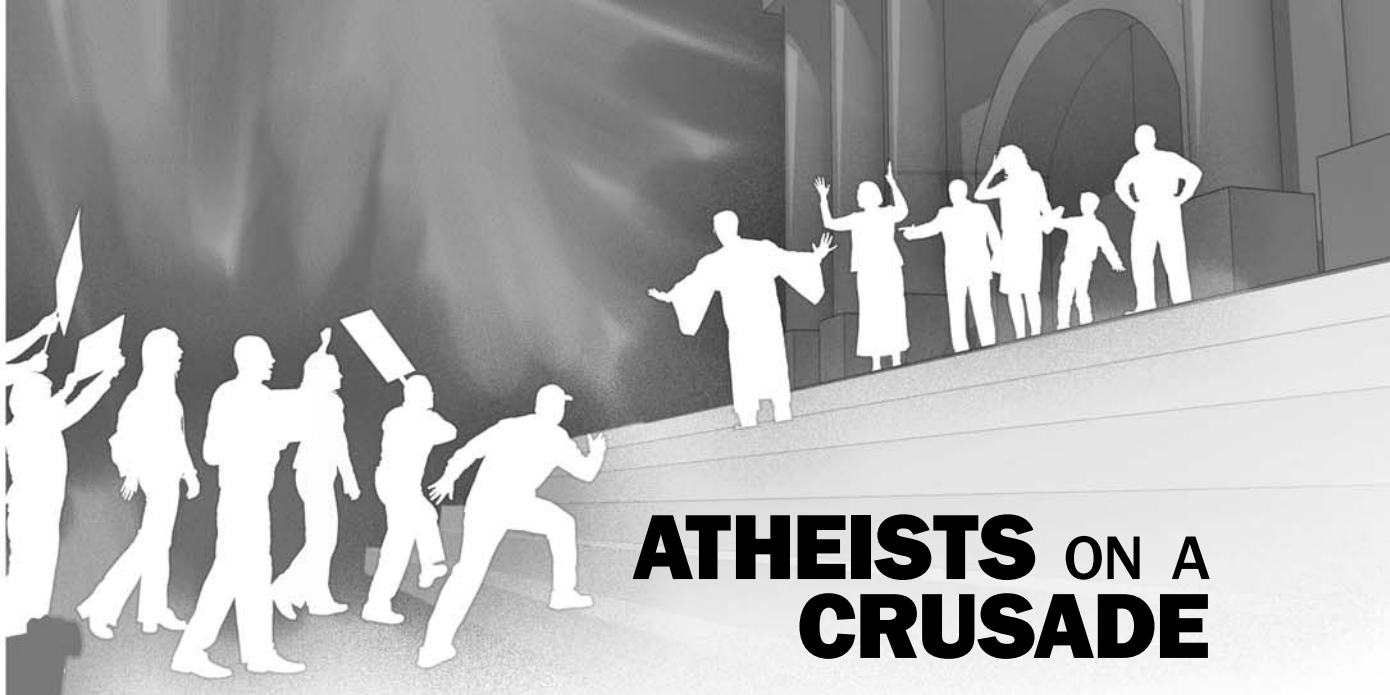
## Should I Quit School?

How soon should you leave school? What are your educational goals? May this article help you make wise choices.



## IS ATHEISM ON THE MARCH? 3-9

Some of the world’s leading atheists are on a mission: They want to convert you to their way of thinking. But is their reasoning sound?



# ATHEISTS ON A CRUSADE

**A** NEW group of atheists has arisen in society. Called the new atheists, they are not content to keep their views to themselves. Rather, they are on a crusade, “actively, angrily, passionately trying to persuade the religious to their point of view,” wrote columnist Richard Bernstein. Even agnostics are in their sights, for these new atheists allow no room for doubt. To them, there simply is no God. End of story.

“The world needs to wake up from its long nightmare of religious belief,” said Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg. “Anything that we scientists can do to weaken the hold of religion should be done and may in the end be our greatest contribution to civilization.” One tool aimed at weakening that hold is the written word, which seems to be stirring up considerable interest, for some of the new atheists’ books have become best sellers.

Religion has aided the cause of the new atheists, as people have become fed up with the religious extremism, terrorism, and conflict plaguing the world. “Religion poisons

everything,” says one leading atheist. Moreover, that ‘poison’ is said to include religious beliefs in general, not just extremist views. Core dogmas, say the new atheists, must be exposed, abandoned, and replaced by rationality and reason. People must be unafraid to speak frankly about the “mountains of life-destroying gibberish” found in the Bible and the Koran, writes atheist Sam Harris. “We can no longer afford the luxury of . . . political correctness.”

While the new atheists reproach religion, they revere science, some even claiming that it disproves the existence of God. But does it? In fact, can it? “In the fullness of time,” says Harris, “one side is really going to win this argument, and the other side is really going to lose.”

Which side do you think time will vindicate? While considering the matter, ask yourself: ‘Is belief in a Creator intrinsically harmful? Would universal atheism make for a better world?’ Let us consider what some respected scientists and philosophers have said about atheism, religion, and science.



# HAS SCIENCE DONE AWAY WITH GOD?



**F**OR 50 years, British philosopher Antony Flew was highly respected as an atheist by his peers. “Theology and Falsification,” his 1950 paper, “became the most widely reprinted philosophical publication of the [20th] century.” In 1986 Flew was called “the most profound of the contemporary critics of theism” (the belief in God or gods). So it came as a great shock to many when, in 2004, Flew announced that he had changed his viewpoint.

What made Flew change his mind? In a word, science. He became convinced that the universe, the laws of nature, and life itself could not have arisen merely by chance. Is that a reasonable conclusion?

## How Did the Laws of Nature Arise?

Physicist and author Paul Davies points out that science does a wonderful job of explaining physical phenomena such as rain. But he says: “When it comes to . . . questions such as ‘Why are there laws of nature?’ the situation is less clear. These sorts of questions are not much affected by specific scientific

discoveries: many of the really big questions have remained unchanged since the birth of civilization and still vex us today.”

“The important point is not merely that there are regularities in nature,” wrote Flew in 2007, “but that these regularities are mathematically precise, universal, and ‘tied together.’ Einstein spoke of them as ‘reason incarnate.’ The question we should ask is how nature came packaged in this fashion. This is certainly the question that scientists from Newton to Einstein to Heisenberg have asked—and answered. Their answer was the Mind of God.”

Indeed, many highly respected scientists do not consider it unscientific to believe in an intelligent First Cause. On the other hand, to say that the universe, its laws, and life just happened is intellectually unsatisfying. Everyday experience tells us that design—especially highly sophisticated design—calls for a designer.

## Awake!®

**THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED** for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today’s problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator’s promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

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## Which Faith Will You Choose?

Although the new atheists like to wave the banner of science over their camp, the fact is that neither atheism nor theism rest purely on science. Both involve faith—atheism in purposeless blind chance; theism in an intelligent First Cause. The new atheists promote the notion that “all religious faith is blind faith,” writes John Lennox, professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford, England. He adds: “We need to emphasize strongly that they are wrong.” The question, therefore, is this: Which faith stands up under test—that of the atheist or that of the religious believer? Consider, for example, the origin of life.

Evolutionists readily acknowledge that the origin of life remains a mystery—although there are many conflicting theories. A leading new atheist, Richard Dawkins, claims that by virtue of the vast number of planets that must exist in the universe, life was bound to appear somewhere. But many reputable scientists are not so sure. Cambridge Professor John Barrow says that the belief in “the evolution of life and mind” hits “dead-ends at every stage. There are just so many ways in which life can fail to evolve in a complex and hostile environment that it would be sheer hubris to suppose that, simply given enough carbon and enough time, anything is possible.”

Keep in mind, too, that life is not just an assortment of chemical elements. Rather, it is based on an extremely sophisticated form of information, which is encoded in DNA. Hence, when we talk about the origin of life,

we are also talking about the origin of biological information. What is the only source of information that we know of? In a word, intelligence. Would chance accidents produce complex information, such as a computer program, an algebraic formula, an encyclopedia, or even a recipe for a cake? Of course not. Yet, when it comes to sophistication and efficiency, none of these even begin to compare with the information stored in the genetic code of living organisms.

## Luck as the First Cause —Good Science?

According to atheists, “the universe is as it is, mysteriously, and it just happens to permit life,” explains Paul Davies. “Had it been different,” say atheists, “we would not be here to argue about it. The universe may or may not have a deep underlying unity, but there is no design, purpose, or point to it all—at least none that would make sense to us.” “The advantage of this position,” notes Davies, “is that it is easy to hold—easy to the point of being a cop-out,” that is, a convenient way to avoid facing the issue.

In his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, molecular biologist Michael Denton concluded that the theory of evolution “is more like a principle of medieval astrology than a serious . . . scientific theory.” He also referred to Darwinian evolution as one of the greatest myths of our time.

To be sure, the appeal to luck as the first cause does smack of myth. Imagine this: An archaeologist sees a rough stone that is more

**Languages:** Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional)° (audio Mandarin only), Chitonga, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,° Danish,° Dutch,+° English,+° Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,° French,+° Georgian, German,+° Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,+° Japanese,+° Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Korean,+° Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Norwegian,+° Polish,+° Portuguese,+° Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,+° Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,+° Swahili, Swedish,° Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

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° Audio recordings also available at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).

## Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study?

Please send your request to Jehovah's Witnesses, using one of the addresses below. For a complete list of addresses, see [www.watchtower.org/address](http://www.watchtower.org/address). **America, United States of:** 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. **Australia:** PO Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Bahamas:** PO Box N-1247, Nassau, NP. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** Am Steinfels, 65618 Selters. **Guam:** 143 Jehovah St, Barrigada, GU 96913. **Guyana:** 352-360 Tyrell St, Republic Park Phase 2 EBD. **Hawaii:** 2055 Kamehameha IV Road, Honolulu, HI 96819-2619. **Jamaica:** PO Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **Japan:** 4-7-1 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa-Pref, 243-0496. **Puerto Rico:** PO Box 3980, Guaynabo, PR 00970. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

or less square. He may attribute that shape to chance, which would be reasonable. But later he finds a stone that is perfectly formed in the shape of a human bust, down to the finest details. Does he attribute this item to chance? No. His logical mind says, 'Someone made this.' Using similar reasoning, the Bible states: "Every house is constructed by someone, but he that constructed all things is God." (Hebrews 3:4) Do you agree with that statement?

"The more we get to know about our universe," writes Lennox, "the more the hypothesis that there is a Creator God, who designed the universe for a purpose, gains in credibility as the best explanation of why we are here."

Regrettably, among the things that undermine belief in God is evil perpetrated in his name. As a result, some have concluded that mankind would be better off without religion. What do you think?

## A WORLD WITHOUT RELIGION—AN IMPROVEMENT?

**T**HE new atheists envision a world with no religion—no suicide bombers, no religious wars, and no televangelists fleecing their flocks. Does that vision appeal to you?

Before answering, ask yourself this, 'Is there any evidence that universal atheism would lead to a better world?' Consider: As many as 1.5 million Cambodians died in the Khmer Rouge effort to establish a godless Marxist state. And in the officially atheistic USSR, Joseph Stalin's rule resulted in tens of

millions of deaths. Granted, those evils cannot be directly attributed to atheism. But they do show that the rule of atheism does not ensure peace and harmony.

Few would deny that religion has caused much suffering. But is God at fault? No! He is no more at fault than a car manufacturer would be for an accident caused by a driver using a cell phone. Mankind's suffering has many causes, one of which is more fundamental than beliefs. The Bible identifies it as

### GOD'S VIEW OF RELIGIOUS ATROCITIES

The land given to ancient Israel was inhabited by Canaanites, a depraved people who practiced sexual immorality—including incest, sodomy, and bestiality—as well as ritual child sacrifice. (Leviticus 18:2-27) The book *Archaeology and the Old Testament* states that excavations "have uncovered piles of ashes and remains of infant skeletons in cemeteries around heathen altars, pointing to the widespread practice of [child sacrifice]." The Canaanites would worship their gods through immoral in-

dulgence and also sacrifice their firstborn to the same gods, says a Bible handbook. It adds: "Archaeologists who dig in the ruins of Canaanite cities wonder that God did not destroy them sooner than he did."

God's destruction of the Canaanites is a sober reminder for us today that he will not forever put up with evil perpetrated in his name. "[God] has set a day in which he purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness," says Acts 17:31.



*Church support for Hitler*



*Skulls of Khmer Rouge victims, Cambodia*

## Both the religious and the irreligious have committed atrocities

inherent imperfection. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3: 23) This sinful inclination tends to foster selfishness, undue pride, a desire for moral independence, and violence. (Genesis 8:21) It also causes people to rationalize and to gravitate toward beliefs that excuse wrongdoing. (Romans 1:24-27) Jesus Christ rightly said: “Out of the heart come wicked reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornications, thieveries, false testimonies, blasphemies.”—Matthew 15:19.

### A Vital Distinction

At this point, a distinction must be made between true worship—that is, worship that is acceptable in God’s eyes—and false worship. True worship would help people to fight against base inclinations. It would encourage self-sacrificing love, peace, kindness, goodness, mildness, self-control, marital loyalty and fidelity, and respect for others. (Galatians 5:22, 23) False religion, on the other hand, would tend to cater to popular trends—‘tickling people’s ears,’ as the Bible says—by condoning some of the bad things Jesus condemned.—2 Timothy 4:3.

Might atheism contribute to the same moral ambiguity or confusion? ‘No God’ means no accountability to a divine authority, as well as “no objective values which we are obligated to respect,” says law professor Philip Johnson. Morality thus becomes relative, with each person determining his own standards—if he chooses to have any. No doubt such thinking makes atheism an appealing philosophy for some people.—Psalm 14:1.

The fact is, however, that God will not forever tolerate untruth—atheistic or religious—and those who promote it.\* He promises: “The [morally and spiritually] upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it. As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it.” (Proverbs 2:21, 22) The result will be something that no human, no human philosophy, and no human institution could ever bring about—universal peace and happiness.—Isaiah 11:9.

\* A sound Biblical explanation for God’s temporary toleration of wickedness and suffering can be found in chapter 11 of the study aid *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

▲ AP Photo

# "I WAS RAISED AN ATHEIST"

**P**ROFESSOR František Vyskočil of Charles University, Prague, is internationally known for his research in neurophysiology. Once an atheist, he now firmly believes in God. In an interview with *Awake!* Professor Vyskočil explains why he changed his viewpoint.

**What was your view of religion before you started your career in science?**

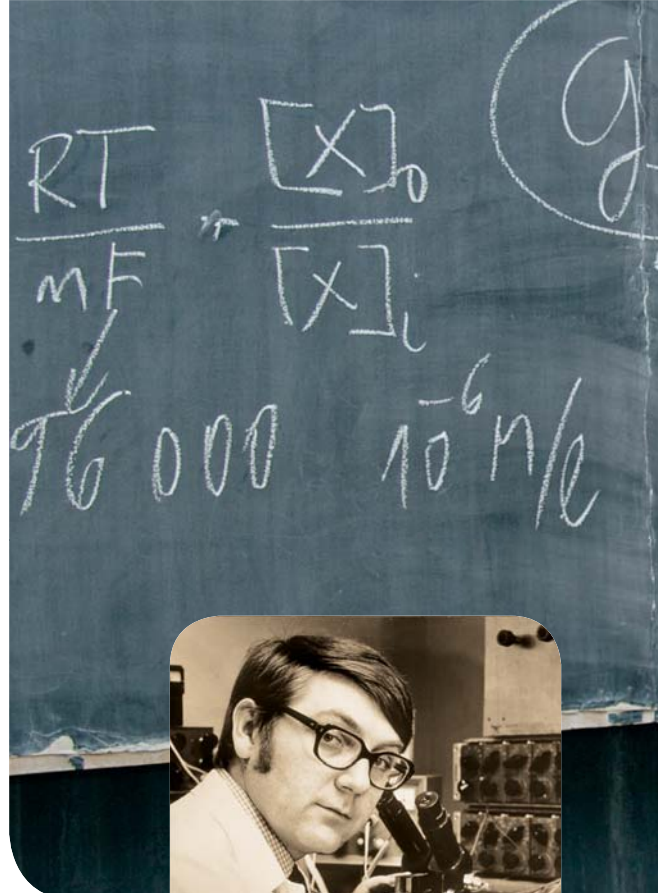
I was raised an atheist, and my father often made fun of the clergy. I graduated from college in 1963 with degrees in biology and chemistry. In my school years, I believed that the theory of evolution explained life's diversity.

**Tell us a little about your career in science.**

In my postdoctoral work, I studied the chemical and electrical properties of nerve synapses. I also studied neurons, membrane pumps, transplantation, and drug desensitization. Many of the results have been published, and some articles have been selected as classical. In time, I became a member of the Learned Society of the Czech Republic, a community of scientists chosen by their peers. After the December 1989 "Velvet Revolution," I became a professor at Charles University and was allowed to travel to the West to meet with colleagues, some of whom were Nobel laureates.

**Did you ever think about God?**

In a sense, yes. At times, I wondered why many highly educated people, including

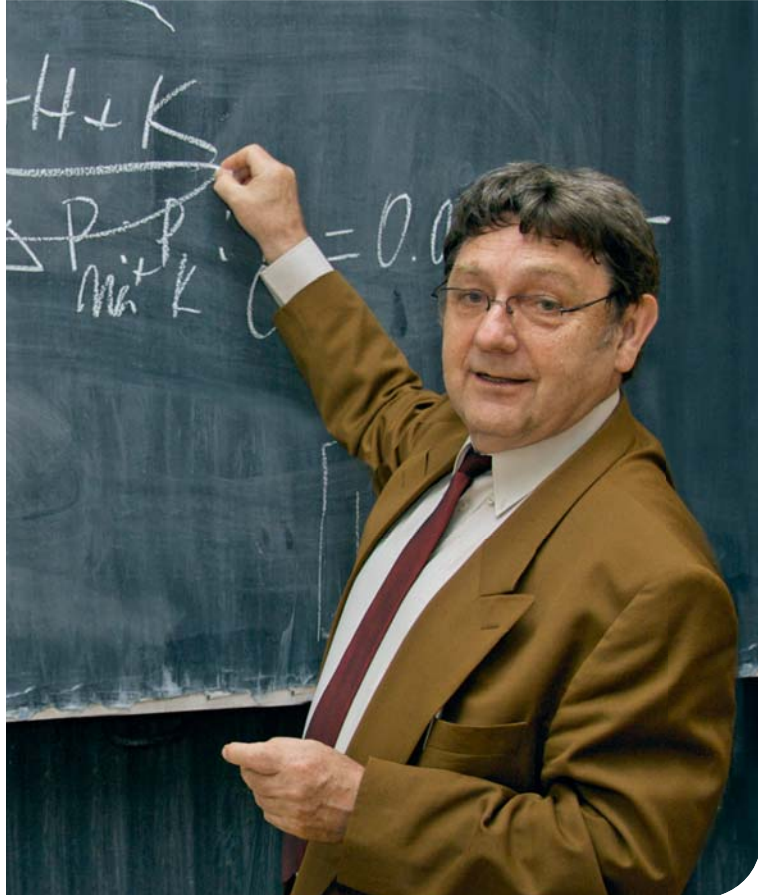


some of my professors, believed in God—albeit quietly because of the Communist regime. To me, however, God was a human invention. I had also been outraged by atrocities committed in the name of religion.

**How did you come to change your view of evolution?**

My doubts about evolution began when I was studying synapses. I was deeply impressed by the amazing complexity of these supposedly simple connections between nerve cells. 'How,' I wondered, 'could synapses and the genetic programs underlying





## I and not a few other scientists ask ourselves, 'How did God design this?'

or four billion years, the time that many scientists believe life has existed on earth." The Bible book of Genesis, he felt, made much more sense.

### How did the professor's comments affect you?

His observations, along with my own nagging doubts, moved me to discuss the subject with several religious colleagues and friends, but I found their views unconvincing.

Then I spoke to a pharmacologist who

was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. For three years he explained the Bible to me and my wife, Ema. Two things amazed us. First, traditional "Christianity" actually has little in common with the Bible. Second, the Bible, though not a science book, actually harmonizes with true science.

### Has your change of view hindered your scientific research?

Not at all. Every good scientist, regardless of his beliefs, must be as objective as possible. But my faith has changed *me*. For one thing, instead of being overly self-confident, highly competitive, and unduly proud of my scientific skills, I am now grateful to God for any abilities I may have. Also, instead of unfairly attributing the amazing designs manifest in creation to blind chance, I and not a few other scientists ask ourselves, 'How did God design this?'

them be products of mere blind chance?' It really made no sense.

Then, in the early 1970's, I attended a lecture by a famous Russian scientist and professor. He stated that living organisms cannot be a result of random mutations and natural selection. Someone in the audience then asked where the answer lay. The professor took a small Russian Bible from his jacket, held it up, and said, "Read the Bible—the creation story in Genesis in particular."

Later, in the lobby, I asked the professor if he was serious about the Bible. In essence, he replied: "Simple bacteria can divide about every 20 minutes and have many hundreds of different proteins, each containing 20 types of amino acids arranged in chains that might be several hundred long. For bacteria to evolve by beneficial mutations one at a time would take much, much longer than three



# HOT MEALS

## FROM HOME TO OFFICE

# MUMBAI STYLE



**Y**OU travel to work each day, leaving home as early as five o'clock in the morning. At lunchtime you would welcome a home-cooked meal spiced just the way you like it. For thousands who work in Mumbai, India, that is a reality, thanks to the *dabbawalas*, who deliver India's home-cooked meals.\*

### Seeing an Opportunity

Toward the end of the 19th century, Mumbai, then called Bombay, was an expanding commercial center with both British and Indian businessmen traveling considerable distances to their offices. Transport was slow, and restaurants were few and far between. A home-cooked lunch was very desirable, so servants were employed to carry cooked lunches from their employer's home to his

office. Seeing a business opportunity, a far-sighted entrepreneur brought in unemployed youths from villages and started a regular delivery service from homes to offices. From this small start, a booming business began.

The desire for home cooking has not diminished. Granted, there are more restaurants now, but home-cooked food is still economical and popular. Moreover, many people have health problems and need to adhere to a special diet. Others have religious restrictions. Some people, for example, abstain from onions, while others reject garlic. Many of these items are added to restaurant food, so home-to-office delivery eliminates dietary issues.

### A Most Reliable Service

The relatively simple delivery system has changed little over the years, except in scale.

\* *Dabba* means "container"; *wala* refers to the person who performs the service. The spelling varies.



**Loading “dabbas” onto a train for delivery**

Nowadays, more than 5,000 men, as well as a few women, transport more than 200,000 lunches a day from homes in their own local area to offices scattered around this urban agglomeration of over 20 million people. Covering the area within a radius of about 40 miles (60 km), some *dabbawalas* walk—perhaps transporting their 30 or 40 pails in hand-carts—while others use bicycles or suburban trains. Whatever the case, they make the right delivery to the right person and right on time. In fact, they are said to have an error rate of 1 in 6 million deliveries! How do they maintain such an outstanding record?

In 1956 the *dabbawalas* were registered as a charitable trust, with an executive committee and other officers. Groups of workers, along with a supervisor, function as separate entities. However, all are partners and shareholders in the organization—and this, they claim, underpins the success of the service. In fact, they have had no strikes since the service began more than 100 years ago.

*Dabbawalas* carry an identity card and are easily recognized by their distinctive white shirt, loose pants, and white cap. If they fail to wear the cap, are late or absent without good reason, or are caught drinking alcohol on duty, they risk being fined.

**A “dabba” has separate compartments that stack together for easy carrying and transport**







**Many businesses have learned from the efficient delivery system of the “dabbawalas”**

### The Daily Routine

By 8:30 a.m., someone at a client’s home, perhaps the wife, has prepared and packed a meal in a lunch, or tiffin, pail—a *dabba*. *Dabbas* have several compartments that fit on top of each other and are held together by metal clasps. The *dabbawala* collects several pails from an area, loads them onto his bicycle or cart, and proceeds quickly to the railway station, where he meets others in his group. There they sort the containers according to their destination, like postmen sorting mail.

Each pail has an alphanumeric color code showing the residential location where the food originates, the nearby railway, the destination station, the building name, and the floor number. Containers intended for each area are merged and loaded onto long wooden frames that hold up to 48 pails. When the train arrives, the containers are loaded into a special compartment next to the driver’s cabin. Then, when the train reaches a major hub station, the pails are sorted once again and taken to the destination station. There they are re-sorted for final delivery to the client by bicycle or handcart.

These modes of transport are not only efficient but also inexpensive. Moreover, the *dabbawala* does not get caught in traffic jams, since he pedals down side roads or between lines of cars. As a result, the food is deliv-

ered to the correct office by 12:30 p.m. Then, between 1:15 and 2:00 p.m., after the hard-working *dabbawala* has had his own lunch, he rounds up the empty pails, and they are returned to the owner’s home, where a family member washes them, making them ready for the next day. From beginning to end, the whole exercise is swift and efficient, like a relay race!

### A Humble Service, Highly Praised

The excellent record of the *dabbawalas* has not gone unnoticed. Other organizations have analyzed the delivery system, in order to apply in other areas of business the lessons they have learned from them. Documentary films have been made about the *dabbawalas*. *Forbes Global Magazine* awarded them a Six Sigma certification in view of their near-perfect record. They have been mentioned in *The Guinness Book of World Records* and in case studies at Harvard Business School in the United States. The *dabbawalas* have even had visits from dignitaries, including a member of Britain’s royal family who was so impressed with their work that he invited some to his wedding in England.

Today *dabbawalas* use computers and mobile phones to take orders and keep accounts. But their mode of delivery remains the same. As lunchtime approaches, many hungry office workers in Mumbai are reassured to know that a warm home-cooked meal is about to arrive at their desk—and not a minute late!

1. The lions. 2. The angel. 3. Levi. 4. He left everything behind.

ANSWERS TO PAGE 31





# NATURAL GAS

## ENERGY FOR THE HOME

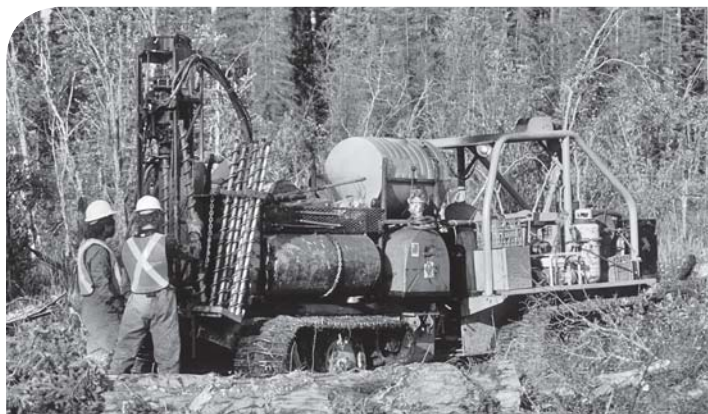
**N**ATURAL GAS supplies more than 20 percent of the world's total energy requirements. What is the source of natural gas? How clean is it? And how much is left?

Many scientists believe that aeons ago natural gas was formed from the decay of plant and animal remains, including plankton. According to this theory, over long periods of time, microbes, together with pressure from the accumulating sediment above and heat from deep in the earth below, converted the organic debris into fossil fuels—coal, gas, and petroleum. In time, much of the gas found its way into porous rocks, sometimes forming vast reservoirs, or gas fields, that were sealed beneath a layer of impermeable rock. Some gas fields are huge, containing trillions of cubic feet (cu m) of gas. How are gas deposits found?

### Searching for Natural Gas

Remote sensing satellites, global positioning systems, reflection seismology, and computers have taken some of the guesswork out of gas exploration. Reflection seismology is based on the principle that sound reflects from layers of rock within the earth, thus giving scientists an acoustic picture of what lies below. The sound sources are man-made, usually involving small explosives or vibrators fitted to special trucks. The resulting shock waves travel into the earth's crust and are reflected back to waiting instruments, which help scientists generate three-dimensional computer models of rock formations. These models, in turn, may indicate potential gas deposits.

In offshore exploration, sound waves are made by special guns that shoot compressed air, steam, or water into the sea. The resulting pressure waves penetrate the seabed and reflect back to hydrophones attached to a long



**Special equipment is used to create sound waves, which are reflected back to waiting instruments**



**Geologists analyze three-dimensional models generated from the sound waves**

Top: © Lloyd Sutton/Alamy; bottom: © Chris Pearsall/Alamy

cable towed behind the survey ship. Here, too, researchers use the signals to form computer models for analysis.

To justify the cost of extraction, a field must have sufficient gas. Hence, geologists have to ascertain both the pressure and the volume of a reservoir. The pressure can be measured quite accurately with gauges. The precise volume, however, is harder to determine. One method involves reading the initial pressure, releasing a measured amount of gas, and then taking another pressure reading. A small drop in pressure indicates a large reservoir; a large drop, a small reservoir.

### **Making the Gas Ready for Use**

After being extracted, natural gas is piped to refineries for the removal of unwanted chemicals, such as carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, and sulfur dioxide, as well as water vapor, which can corrode pipelines. Natural gas is then distilled at very low temperatures to remove incombustible nitrogen and to recover valuable helium, butane, ethane, and propane. The final product is essentially pure methane, which is colorless, odorless, and highly combustible. Because the methane is a natural product, it is also called natural gas.

To make natural gas safe for domestic use, manufacturers add tiny amounts of pungent sulfur-containing compounds so that leaks

can be readily detected and safely stopped before an explosion occurs. Nevertheless, natural gas is a much cleaner fuel than other fossil fuels, such as coal and oil.

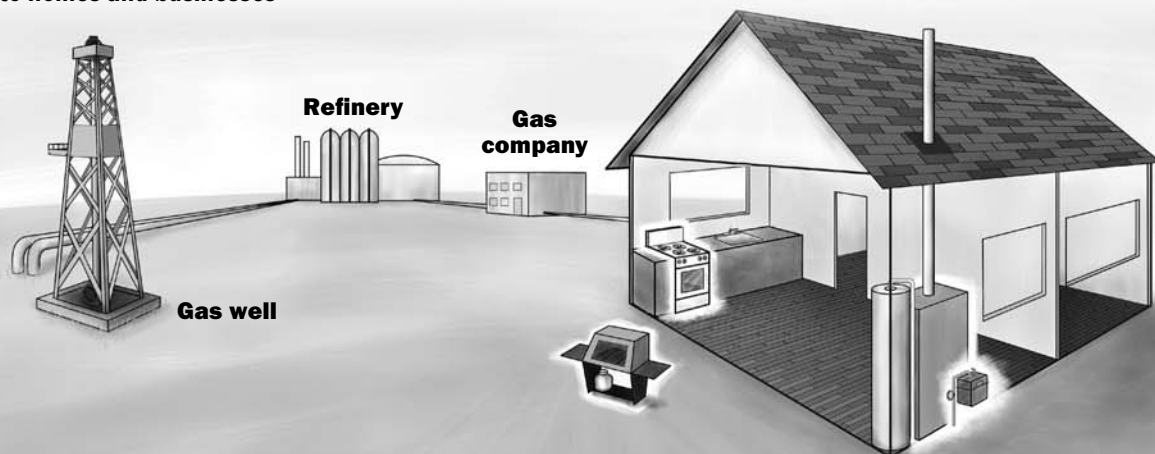
To facilitate transport, some natural gas is chilled to very low temperatures and converted into liquefied natural gas. Butane and propane often end up as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), which is well-known to those who like to cook on gas barbecues with bottled gas. LPG is also commonly used as fuel for buses, tractors, trucks, and other vehicles. On the chemical front, butane and propane have found their way into plastics, solvents, synthetic fibers, and other organic products.

### **A Finite Energy Supply**

As with all fossil fuels, natural gas is a finite resource. According to estimates, about 45 percent of the world's recoverable gas remains to be found. If that figure is correct, at the present rate of usage, the supply may last about 60 years. But in many lands, energy consumption is increasing, so present predictions may be highly inaccurate.

To be sure, the almost frenetic rate of industrialization in some lands could lead one to think that earth's resources are infinite. Granted, there is also nuclear power as well as renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power. But will these meet the growing energy needs? And will they prove to be environmentally clean and safe? Time will tell.

.....  
***After being extracted, natural gas is piped to a refinery, where it is processed for distribution to homes and businesses***





## A BOOK YOU CAN TRUST



### Part 1

# Egypt in Bible History

*The Bible was written over a period of some 1,600 years. Its history and prophecy are linked to seven world powers: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Anglo-America. Each of these will be considered in a series of seven articles. The objective? To show that the Bible is trustworthy and inspired of God and that its message is one of hope for an end to the suffering caused by human misrule.*

**E**GYPT, famous for its pyramids and the Nile River, was the first world power of Bible history. Under its shadow the nation of Israel was formed. Moses, who penned the first five books of the Bible, was born and educated in Egypt. Do secular history and archaeology corroborate what Moses wrote about that ancient land? Consider some examples.

### Trustworthy History

**Titles and terms.** Accurate history is often revealed in the details—customs, etiquette, names and titles of officials, and so on. How do the books of Genesis and Exodus, the first two books of the Bible, measure up in this respect? Regarding the Genesis narrative about Joseph, a son of the patriarch Jacob, as well as the Bible book of Exodus, J. Garrow Duncan says in his book *New Light on Hebrew Origins*: “[The Bible writer] was thoroughly well acquainted with the Egyptian language, customs, beliefs, court life, and etiquette and officialdom.” He adds: “[The writer] employs the correct title in use and exactly as it was

used at the period referred to. . . . In fact, nothing more convincingly proves the intimate knowledge of things Egyptian in the Old Testament, and the reliability of the writers, than the use of the word Pharaoh at different periods.” Duncan also states: “When [the writer] brings his characters into the presence of Pharaoh, he makes them observe the correct court etiquette and use the correct language.”

**Brickmaking.** During their period of slavery in Egypt, the Israelites made bricks out of clay mixed with straw, which served as a binding material. (Exodus 1:14; 5:6-18)\* Some years ago, the book *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* stated: “In few places has [brickmaking] been practised more than in Egypt, where sun-dried bricks still are, as they always have been, the characteristic building material of the country.” The book also mentions “the Egyptian practice of using straw in

\* If you do not have a Bible but have access to the Internet, you can check the scriptures electronically at [www.watchtower.org](http://www.watchtower.org). There you will see the box “Read the Bible Online.”





**Sun-dried bricks made with straw are still used in Egypt today**



**Part of an Egyptian's shaving kit—a razor and a mirror**

making bricks,” thus corroborating that additional detail recorded in the Bible.

**Shaving.** Hebrew men of ancient times grew beards. Yet, the Bible tells us that Joseph shaved prior to appearing before Pharaoh. (Genesis 41:14) Why did he shave? To conform with Egyptian custom and etiquette, which considered facial hair to be a sign of uncleanness. “[The Egyptians] prided themselves on being clean-shaven,” says the book *Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt*. In fact, cosmetic sets consisting of razors, tweezers, and mirrors, along with their containers, have been found in tombs. Clearly, Moses was a meticulous chronicler. The same can be said of other Bible writers who documented events relating to ancient Egypt.

**Business enterprises.** Jeremiah, who wrote the two books of Kings, gave specific details regarding King Solomon’s trade in horses and chariots with the Egyptians and the Hittites. A chariot cost “six hundred silver pieces, and a horse . . . a hundred and fifty,” or one quarter the cost of a chariot, the Bible states.—1 Kings 10:29.

According to the book *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, the Greek historian Herodotus and archaeological findings both confirm that a lively trade in horses and chariots was carried on during the reign of Solomon. In fact, “a standard exchange rate of four . . . horses for one Egyptian chariot was established,” the book states, corroborating the figures given in the Bible.

**Warfare.** Jeremiah and Ezra also mention the invasion of Judah by Pharaoh Shishak, specifically stating that it occurred “in the fifth year of [Judean] King Rehoboam,” or 993 B.C.E. (1 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chronicles 12:1-12) For a long time, the only record of that invasion was the one found in the Bible. Then there came to light a relief on the wall of an Egyptian temple at Karnak (ancient Thebes).

The relief depicts Shishak standing before the god Amon, Shishak’s arm raised in the act of smiting captives. Also recorded are the names of conquered Israelite towns, many of which have been identified with Biblical sites. Additionally, the document mentions “The



**The names of conquered Israelite towns are recorded on this relief at Karnak**

Shaving kit: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY; Karnak relief: Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.; Memphis statue: Courtesy Daniel Mayer/Creative Commons



Field of Abram”—the earliest reference to the Biblical patriarch Abraham in Egyptian records.—Genesis 25:7-10.

Clearly, the Bible writers did not pen fiction. Recognizing their accountability to God, they wrote truth, even when doing so was unflattering—as in the case of Shishak’s victories in Judah. Such candor contrasts sharply with the varnished, exaggerated chronicles of the ancient Egyptian scribes, who refused to record anything that might be uncomplimentary to their rulers or people.

### **Trustworthy Prophecy**

Only Jehovah God, the Author of the Bible, can unfailingly predict the future. Note, for example, what he inspired Jeremiah to foretell concerning two Egyptian cities—Memphis and Thebes. Memphis, or Noph, was once a prominent commercial, political, and religious center. Yet, God said: “Noph itself will become a mere object of astonishment and will actually be set afire, so as to be without an inhabitant.” (Jeremiah 46:19) And so it turned out. The book *In the Steps of Moses the Lawgiver* says that “the titanic ruins of Memphis” were pillaged by Arab conquerors, who used them as a quarry. It adds that today

“within the circuit of the ancient city not a stone protrudes above the black soil.”

Thebes, earlier called No-amon or just No, suffered a similar fate, along with its impotent gods. Concerning this onetime capital of Egypt and principal center of the worship of the god Amon, Jehovah said: “Here I am turning my attention upon Amon . . . and upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt and upon her gods . . . And I will give them into . . . the hand of Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon.” (Jeremiah 46:25, 26) As prophesied, the Babylonian monarch conquered Egypt and its prominent city of No-amon. Then, after Persian ruler Cambyses II dealt another blow to the city in 525 B.C.E., it steadily declined, finally being completely ruined by the Romans. Yes, accurate prophecy puts the Bible in a class of its own, giving us confidence in what it says about our future.

### **A Hope You Can Trust**

The very first prophecy recorded in the Bible was penned by Moses during the time of the Egyptian world power.\* Found at Genesis 3:15, the prophecy states that God would

\* The prophecy recorded at Genesis 3:15 was stated by God in the garden of Eden and was later recorded by Moses.

***This colossal fallen statue found near Memphis once stood about 40 feet (12 m) tall***





produce a “seed,” or offspring, who would crush Satan and his “seed”—those who adopt Satan’s wicked ways. (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8) The primary “seed” of God proved to be the Messiah, Jesus Christ.—Luke 2:9-14.

Christ’s reign will encompass the entire earth, from which he will remove all wickedness and oppressive human governments. No longer will ‘man dominate man to his injury.’ (Ecclesiastes 8:9) Moreover, like Joshua of old, who led Israel into the Promised Land, Jesus will safely lead “a great crowd” of God-fearing humans into a far greater “Promised Land”—a cleansed earth that will be transformed into a global paradise.—Revelation 7: 9, 10, 14, 17; Luke 23:43.

That precious hope calls to mind yet another prophecy recorded during the time of

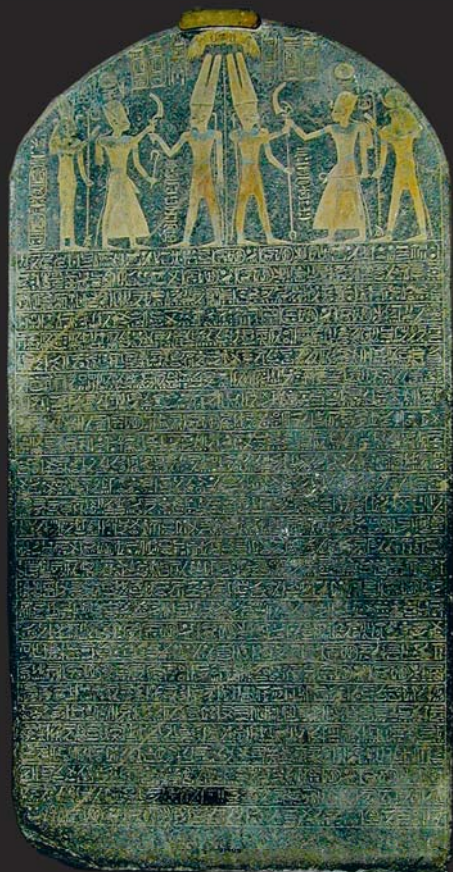
ancient Egypt. Found at Job 33:24, 25, the prophecy states that God will deliver humans even from “the pit,” or the grave, by means of a resurrection. Yes, in addition to those spared through the coming destruction of the wicked, many millions now dead will be raised to life with the prospect of everlasting life in Paradise on earth. (Acts 24:15) “The tent of God is with *mankind*,” says Revelation 21:3, 4. “He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”

Trustworthy history and prophecy—that theme will continue in the next article in this series, which will focus on ancient Assyria, the world power that followed Egypt.

## THE MERNEPTAH STELA

In 1896 in an Egyptian funerary temple, archaeologists found what has been called the Merneptah Stela. This black granite pillar boasts of the achievements of Egyptian King Merneptah, believed to have reigned in the late 13th century B.C.E. Inscribed on the stela is a hymn, which reads, in part: “Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more.” This is the only known reference to Israel in ancient Egyptian texts and the earliest reference outside the Bible.

The stela was made during the Biblical period of the Judges, an era documented in the Bible book of that name. However, unlike the self-applauding chronicles of the pharaohs, the book of Judges sets out both the exploits and the failures of Israel. Concerning the failures, Judges 2:11, 12 states: “The sons of Israel fell to doing what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah and serving the Baals [Canaanite gods]. Thus they abandoned Jehovah . . . , who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.” Such candor characterizes the entire Bible.





## Wisdom for the Tongue

**I**F ONLY I could take back what I said!’ Have you ever said that to yourself? Yes, we all struggle to control our tongue. We can tame virtually any animal, the Bible says, “but the tongue, not one of mankind can get it tamed.” (James 3:7, 8) So should we just resign ourselves to defeat? No! Consider some Bible principles that can help us to gain more control over this small but powerful body member.

● *“In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly.”* (Proverbs 10:19) The more we talk, the greater the risk that we will say something foolish or even harmful. Indeed, the unbridled tongue can be like a fire, rapidly spreading hurtful gossip and slander. (James 3:5, 6) However, when we ‘keep our lips in check,’ or think before we speak, we take into consideration the effect our words may have. In this way, we become known for discretion, and we gain the respect and confidence of others.

● *“Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath.”* (James 1:19) Others appreciate it when we listen closely to what they say, for in this way we show that we are

not just interested but also respectful. But what if someone says something hurtful or provocative? Then we must try to be “slow about wrath” by not reacting in kind. Who knows? The person may have been upset for some reason and may even apologize for his unkind remark. Do you find it hard to be “slow about wrath”? Then pray to God for self-control. He will not ignore such sincere requests.—Luke 11:13.

● *“A mild tongue . . . can break a bone.”* (Proverbs 25:15) Contrary to popular perceptions, mildness has strength. A mild answer, for example, can overcome opposition that seems as hard and inflexible as bone, perhaps because of anger or prejudice. To be sure, it can be a challenge to display mildness, especially in a heated situation. So think about the benefits of doing what the Bible says and the possible consequences of not doing so.

Bible principles truly are “wisdom from above.” (James 3:17) When we apply that wisdom to our tongue, our words become dignifying, endearing, and upbuilding—like “apples of gold in silver carvings,” just right for the occasion.—Proverbs 25:11.



## Is It Appropriate to Pray to “Saints”?

Marie and Theresa considered themselves to be “good Catholics.” Both believed in “saints.” Marie believed that she could pray to them for help. Theresa regularly prayed to the patron “saint” of her home village. She also prayed to the “saint” after whom she was named.

**L**IKE Marie and Theresa, millions of people around the world pray to their “saints” to invoke a blessing. According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, “the saints intercede for men,” and “it is ‘good and useful’ to invoke them to obtain . . . benefits from God.”

How, though, does God view the matter? Is it acceptable to him that we pray to “saints” to intercede in our behalf? Consider what the Bible says.

### Should We Invoke “Saints”?

In the Bible, the Greek word rendered “saint” in some versions means “holy one.” However, there is no mention in the Bible of any faithful worshipper of God praying to a “saint.” Why is that? The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that it was only “by the 3rd century [that] the efficacy of intercession of the saints was clearly recognized.” That was some 200 years after Christ died. The teaching, therefore, did not originate with Jesus and the inspired Bible writers who documented his ministry. The reason?

The Bible consistently teaches that we should pray only to God, doing so in the name of Jesus Christ. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” Jesus said. “No one can come to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6, *Catholic Jerusalem Bible*) Those unambiguous words harmonize with Jesus’ teaching recorded at Matthew 6:9-13. While explaining the subject of prayer, Jesus said to his followers: “You must pray, then, this way: *Our Father in the heavens*, let your name be sanctified. . . .” (Matthew 6:9) Clearly, our





heavenly Father is the only one to whom we should address our prayers. This truth rests on a fundamental Bible principle.

### **Prayer—An Act of Worship**

“Prayer,” says *The World Book Encyclopedia*, “refers to reverent words and thoughts directed toward God, gods, goddesses, or other *objects of worship*. . . . Prayer is an important *form of worship* in nearly all the religions in the world.” (Italics ours.) Ask yourself, “Is it proper to bend our knees in worshipful prayer to anyone other than our Creator and Life-Giver?” (Psalm 36:9) “The true worshipers,” said Jesus, “will worship *the Father* with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him.” (John 4:23) The Bible also states that our Creator requires our “exclusive devotion.”—Deuteronomy 4:24; 6:15.

Consider the example of the Christian apostle John. After receiving the spectacular visions recorded in the Bible book of Revelation, the awestruck apostle “fell down to worship before the feet of the angel” who had shown him these things. How did the angel respond? “Be careful!” he said. “Do not do that! All I am is a fellow slave of you and of your brothers . . . Worship God.” (Revelation 22:8, 9) Yes, once again the Bible emphasizes that we should worship only Jehovah God.

In harmony with the foregoing, God alone is called the “Hearer of prayer.” (Psalm 65:2) Moreover, as the Almighty, he alone has the authority, knowledge, and power to answer any legitimate request sought through prayer. (Job 33:4) Even Jesus Christ, by his own admission, has limitations. (Matthew 20:23; 24:36) That said, however, Jesus Christ has been given great authority, including the responsibility of serving as mankind’s Intercessor.

### **A Sympathetic Intercessor**

Of Jesus the Bible says: “He is able also to save completely those who are approaching God through him, because he is always

alive to plead for them.” (Hebrews 7:25) In other words, Jesus can serve as the sympathetic Intercessor in behalf of those who ‘approach *God* through him.’ This does not mean that we should pray to Jesus and that he will forward our prayer on, as it were. Rather, it means that we pray to God in the name of Jesus, thus acknowledging his authority. Why is Jesus the perfect Intercessor?

For one thing, Jesus experienced life as a human, which enabled him to appreciate more fully the sufferings of others. (John 11:32-35) For another, he demonstrated his love for people by healing the sick, raising the dead, and providing spiritual sustenance to all who came to him. (Matthew 15:29, 30; Luke 9:11-17) He even forgave sins. (Luke 5:24) This gives us confidence, for if we sin, “we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one.”—1 John 2:1.

Jesus’ love and compassion are qualities we should try to imitate. True, we are not authorized to serve as intercessors. But we can pray for others. In fact, love should impel us to do so. “Pray for one another,” wrote James. “A righteous man’s supplication, when it is at work, has much force.”—James 5:16.

Marie and Theresa learned those precious truths by examining the Bible for themselves. Jehovah’s Witnesses invite you to do the same. As Jesus said, “those worshiping [God] must worship with spirit and truth.”—John 4:24.

### **HAVE YOU WONDERED?**

- To whom alone did Jesus say we should pray?—Matthew 6:9.
- In what capacity does Jesus serve?—Hebrews 7:25.
- Should we pray to God for the welfare of others?—James 5:16.



# The Macadamia Nut

## Australia's Native Delicacy

**B**OTANIST Walter Hill watched his young assistant in horror. The boy had just eaten nuts from a newly discovered species of tree growing in the subtropical rain forests of southeast Queensland, Australia. Hill had heard that the nuts were poisonous. But the lad neither became ill nor dropped dead. Instead, he found the nuts to be delicious. So Hill tried one himself and agreed. Soon thereafter he began distributing macadamia seedlings to friends and botanists around the world.\*

Today, some 150 years later, macadamia nuts are popular worldwide—and for good reason. The journal *Chronica Horticulturae* explains: “The macadamia is considered one of the world’s finest gourmet nuts because of its unique, delicate flavour, its fine crunchy texture, and rich creamy colour.” Little wonder that macadamia nuts are Australia’s most successful indigenous food crop!

### A Tough Nut to Crack

Evergreen macadamia trees flourish along Australia’s subtropical east coast. Two of the nine species produce edible nuts, which consist of a fibrous outer husk; a tan, spherical shell, and a marble-size, cream-colored kernel.

The tough shell, however, is hard to crack.†

\* Years earlier, explorers Cunningham (1828) and Leichhardt (1843) collected macadamia nuts, but their specimens were placed in storage and not described. In 1857, a colleague of Hill’s, Melbourne botanist Ferdinand von Mueller, named the genus *Macadamia* after his good friend Dr. John Macadam.

† Crushed macadamia-nut shell is so hard that it makes an excellent industrial abrasive.

The Aborigines used rocks. Pioneer orchardist John Waldron used a hammer and anvil. In fact, with these simple tools, he cracked open about eight million nuts over a period of 50 years. Could machines do the job? Early designs were unacceptable because they tended to damage the kernel. In time, however, more effective machines were built.

Another problem involved reproduction. When planted, nuts from good trees often produced poor quality offspring. And efforts at grafting failed. Faced with these difficulties, commercial cultivation stalled—that is, until the Hawaiians tackled the problem. They made the needed breakthroughs. As a result, they were soon supplying 90 percent of the world’s macadamia nuts. Not surprisingly, they came to be called Hawaiian nuts.

Then, in the 1960’s, Australian growers “took on the macadamia as a serious commercial crop,” applying the lessons learned in Hawaii. As a result, the local industry blossomed to the point that Australia now produces about 50 percent of the world’s macadamia nuts. They are also grown in Africa, Asia, and Central America.

### A Visit to an Australian Farm

*Awake!* visited Andrew, who has a macadamia farm near the town of Lismore, New South Wales. “We plant different macadamia varieties every few rows to encourage cross-pollination,” explained Andrew. *Awake!* learned that about 80 percent of the many millions of trees planted in Australia are



**Australia's growers plant thousands of new trees every year**

All photos pages 22 and 23: Australian Macadamia Society

proved varieties selected by Hawaiian breeders. However, Australian breeders are now using genetic material from wild macadamias to produce improved local varieties.

Looking at the trees, we see hundreds of nuts dangling like little balls in the thick foliage. The nuts mature over six months and then fall to the ground. We notice that some of the fallen nuts have holes. "Rats can chew through a shell in eight seconds," said Andrew. "Wild pigs also love macadamia nuts." Further along the row, Andrew pauses to kick a half-buried nut free from the dirt. "That's three cents saved," he says with a grin. Many farmers harvest the nuts by using a specially designed machine with a drum and short plastic fingers that collect fallen nuts. The nuts are then husked and sorted at the farm, after which they are delivered to a factory to be shelled, graded, and shipped to buyers.

### **Tasty and Healthful!**

As we finish our tour, we munch on a handful of kernels—their rich, creamy flavor leaving us smacking our lips. But are macadamia nuts healthful? The oil content of the nut (largely monounsaturated oil, or good oil)

"regularly exceeds 72%, which is the highest for any oil-yielding nut," says a government fact sheet on macadamia-nut culture. According to recent studies, modest consumption can actually reduce harmful low-density cholesterol and triglycerides and lower high blood pressure.

People enjoy macadamia nuts in chocolate candy, gourmet cookies, or premium ice cream. Others prefer them roasted, salted, or simply straight from the shell. Whatever their preference, most people come back for more.

## **SHELLS FUEL A POWER PLANT**

Rock-hard macadamia-nut shells have a calorific, or fuel, value close to that of brown coal. Thus, an Australian energy provider is using waste shells to generate electricity for both the nut processing plant and the electricity grid. The plant is Australia's first waste-to-energy project, and its output may increase considerably as more growers provide fuel.



WAS IT DESIGNED?

## The Eye of the Peacock Mantis Shrimp



● The peacock mantis shrimp, found on Australia's Great Barrier Reef, is equipped with the most complex eyesight in the animal kingdom. "It really is exceptional," says Dr. Nicholas Roberts, "outperforming anything we humans have so far been able to create."

**Consider:** The peacock mantis shrimp can perceive polarized light and process it in ways that humans cannot do. Polarized light waves may travel along a straight line or rotate in a corkscrew motion. Unlike other creatures, this mantis shrimp not only sees polarized light in both its straight-line and corkscrew forms but is also able to *convert* the light from the one form to the other. This gives the shrimp enhanced vision.

DVD players work in a similar way. To process information, the DVD player must convert polarized light aimed at a disc into a corkscrew motion and then change it back into a straight-line format. But the peacock mantis shrimp goes a step further. While a standard DVD player only converts red light—or in higher-resolution players, blue light—the shrimp's eye can convert light in all colors of the visible spectrum.

Researchers believe that using the peacock mantis shrimp's eye as a model, engineers could develop a DVD player that plays discs with far more information than today's DVDs. "What's particularly exciting is how beautifully simple it is," says Roberts. "It works much, much better than any attempts that we've made to construct a device."

**What do you think?** Is the remarkable eye of the peacock mantis shrimp a product of chance? Or was it designed?

Courtesy Stephen Childs



# *“You Have Kept a Positive Spirit”*

● Camila suffers from anemia, neurological problems, and growth dysfunction. Consequently, at eight years of age, she was only 30 inches (75 cm) tall. Camila’s parents, who are Jehovah’s Witnesses, decided to take her to a medical conference that was being held at a local theater in their hometown in Argentina. They sat in the second row, and 500 people were in attendance.

During a lecture, the speaker, who was a doctor, pointed to Camila as an example of someone who appeared to have good health. Unaware of the girl’s age and medical condition, he asked: “How old is the baby?”

“Eight years old,” said Camila’s mother, Marisa.

“Did you say eight months old?” the doctor replied.

“No, eight years old,” affirmed Marisa.

Intrigued, the doctor invited mother and daughter up onto the stage to answer some questions. After Marisa described the studies that physicians had done on Camila and the treatments they had tried, the doctor said: “There are mothers who cry because their children have a common flu. But after seven years of treatments and after having done all that is possible for Camila, you have kept a positive spirit. How have you done that?”

In response to this kind invitation, Marisa told the audience about her Bible-based hope



***Eight-year-old Camila with her mother, Marisa***

of a righteous new world in which all forms of sickness and suffering, as well as even death itself, will cease to be. (Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 21:3, 4) Finally, Marisa described the worldwide brotherhood that Jehovah’s Witnesses enjoy and explained how their love for one another helps the Witnesses cope with trials and other difficulties that arise in life.—John 13:35.

When the program concluded, a woman approached Marisa and asked her to tell her more about the points she had discussed. Eager to learn, the woman accepted a free home Bible study, which Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide offer to people who sincerely want to understand the Bible and God’s wonderful purpose for mankind.

## YOUNG PEOPLE ASK

# Should I quit school?



At what grade do you think you should leave school? .....

At what grade do your parents want you to leave? .....

**D**O THE two answers above match? Even if they do and you're still in school, you may have days when you wish you could quit. Can you relate to the following comments?

● *"Sometimes I'd get so stressed out that I didn't want to get out of bed. I'd think, 'Why do I need to go to school and learn things that I'm never going to use?'"—Rachel.*

● *"Many times I've been tired of school and just wanted to drop out and get a job. I've felt*

*that school was doing me no good and that I would rather be getting paid for my time."*  
—John.

● *"I had up to four hours of homework a night! I became so bogged down with assignments, projects, and tests—all back-to-back—that I felt I couldn't handle it and wanted out."*  
—Cindy.

● *"We've had a bomb threat, three suicide attempts, one actual suicide, and gang violence. Sometimes it just got to be too much, and I wanted to leave!"—Rose.*

Have you faced similar challenges? If so, what situation has made you want to quit school?

Maybe you are now seriously planning on quitting. How, though, can you tell if you're leaving because it's time to do so or because you are just sick of school and want out? To answer that, it would help first to define what it means to quit school.

### Leaving or Quitting?

How would you describe the difference between leaving school and quitting school?

Did you know that in some countries it's normal for a youth to graduate after between five and eight years of instruction? In other lands, students are expected to stay in school for ten to twelve years. So, there is no set age or grade that applies to everyone equally around the world.

In addition, some countries or states may allow a student to take some or all of his or her classes from home, without going to a regular school. Students who are homeschooled

—with their parents’ permission and cooperation, of course—are not quitting.

However, if you’re thinking of *ending* your school career before you graduate—either regular school or school at home—you need to consider the following questions:

**What does the law require?** As mentioned, laws governing the amount of schooling a student must have differ from place to place. What is the minimum schooling that the law in your area requires? Have you reached that stage yet? If you ignore the Bible’s counsel to “be in subjection to the superior authorities” and you leave before that grade, you are quitting.—Romans 13:1.

**Have I achieved my educational goals?** What are the goals that you want your education to help you achieve? Not sure? You need to know! Otherwise, you’re like a passenger on a train who has no idea where he wants to go. So sit with your parents, and fill in the work sheet “My Educational Goals,” found on page 28. Doing so will assist you to stay focused and will help you and your parents to plan how long you should stay in school.—Proverbs 21:5.

Your teachers and others will no doubt give you advice on how much schooling you should have. Ultimately, though, your parents have the authority to make the final decision. (Proverbs 1:8; Colossians 3:20) If you leave before you reach the educational goals that you and your parents decide upon, you are quitting.

**What are my motives for dropping out?** Beware of fooling yourself. (Jeremiah 17:9) It’s a human tendency to give noble reasons for selfish actions.—James 1:22.

Write here the honorable reasons you might have for ending your school career prematurely.

.....  
Write here some selfish reasons for quitting.  
.....

## WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY



**Esme**

“School is where I learned to love books. It’s a beautiful thing to be able to understand someone’s thoughts and feelings through reading.”

“I tend to have trouble managing priorities. But without school, I’d be worse! School helps me keep a routine, stick to a schedule, and get the important things done.”



**Christopher**

What honorable reasons did you write down? A couple of possibilities might be to help support your family financially or to engage in volunteer work. Selfish reasons might be to avoid tests or to escape homework. The challenge is to discern which is your primary motivation—is it honorable or selfish?

Look again at the points you wrote down, and honestly rate from 1 to 5 the reasons you want to quit school (1 indicating less important, 5 most important). If you drop out just to escape problems, you are likely in for a shock.

### What’s Wrong With Quitting?

Quitting school is like jumping off a train before you reach your destination. The train may be uncomfortable and the passengers



unfriendly. But if you leap from the train, you will not reach your destination and will likely cause yourself serious injury. Similarly, if you quit school, you may not reach your educational goals, and you will probably cause

yourself both immediate and long-term problems, such as the following:

**Immediate problems** You will likely find it more difficult to get a job, and if you do get one, it will probably be lower paying than one you might have obtained if you had completed your schooling. To support a basic standard of living, you may then have to work longer hours in surroundings that will likely be even less pleasant than your current school environment.

**Long-term challenges** Research shows that those who drop out of school are more likely to have poorer health, have children at a young age, end up in prison, and have to rely on social welfare programs.

Of course, completing school is no guarantee that you'll avoid those problems. But why unnecessarily handicap yourself by dropping out?

### Benefits of Not Quitting

True, if you've just failed a test or had a difficult day at school, you might want to give up—any future problems may seem insignificant compared with your present grind. But before you take the “easy” option, consider what the students quoted earlier say about how they benefited because they did not drop out of school.

● *“I’ve learned endurance, to be mentally tough. I’ve also learned that if you want to have a good time doing something, you have to make it happen. Along the way, I’ve improved my art skills, which I will use when I graduate from school.”—Rachel.*

## MY EDUCATIONAL GOALS

A primary function of education is to prepare you to find a job that will help you support yourself and provide for any family you may eventually have. (2 Thessalonians 3:10, 12) Have you decided what kind of job you want and how your time at school can help you prepare for it? To assist you in determining if your education is leading you in the right direction, answer the following questions:

What are my strengths? (For instance, do you interact well with people? Do you enjoy working with your hands, creating or fixing things? Do you do well at analyzing and solving problems?)

.....  
What jobs could I do that would allow me to use my strengths?

.....  
What employment opportunities are available where I live?

.....  
What classes am I now taking that will prepare me for the job market?

.....  
What educational options do I currently have that would help me reach my goals more efficiently?

.....  
Remember, your goal is to graduate with an education you can use. So don't go to the other extreme and be a perennial student—one who stays “on the train” indefinitely just to hide from the responsibilities of adulthood.

### TO THINK ABOUT

- How can having short-term educational goals help you to make the most of your time at school?
- Why is it important for you to have some idea of the type of employment you would like to have after you leave school?



**Quitting school is like jumping off a train before you reach your destination**

● *“I now know that if I work hard, I can reach my goals. I’m taking a very practical technical training course in high school that will help qualify me for my preferred job as a press mechanic.”—John.*

● *“School has improved my problem-solving*

*ability, whether in the classroom or elsewhere. Figuring out ways to deal with academic, social, and physical challenges has really helped me to mature.”—Cindy.*

● *“School has helped prepare me for the challenges of the work environment. Also, I faced many situations that forced me to examine the reasons for my faith, so being at school has strengthened my religious convictions.”—Rose.*

Wise King Solomon wrote: “Better is the end afterward of a matter than its beginning. Better is one who is patient than one who is haughty in spirit.” (Ecclesiastes 7:8) So rather than quit, patiently work through the problems you face at school. If you do, you will find that the end afterward will be much better for you.

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More articles from the “Young People Ask” series can be found at the Web site [www.watchtower.org/ype](http://www.watchtower.org/ype)

## A NOTE TO PARENTS

“My teachers are boring!” “I get too much homework!” “I struggle just to get passing grades—why even try?” Because of such frustrations, some youths are tempted to quit school before they have acquired the skills they will need to make a living. If your son or daughter wants to quit school, what can you do?

**Examine your own attitude toward education.** Did you view school as a waste of time—a ‘prison sentence’ that you had to endure until the day you could pursue more interesting goals? If so, your attitude toward learning may rub off on your children. The fact is, a well-rounded education will help them acquire “practical wisdom and thinking ability”—qualities they will need in order to be successful adults.—Proverbs 3:21.

**Provide the tools.** Some who could be getting better grades simply do not know *how* to study—or they do not have the appropriate environment for it. A good study area might include an uncluttered desk with sufficient light

and research tools. You can help your child to make advancement—whether secular or spiritual—by providing training and the right setting for pondering over new thoughts and ideas.—1 Timothy 4:15.

**Get involved.** View teachers and guidance counselors as your allies, not your enemies. Meet them. Know their names. Talk to them about your child’s goals and challenges. If your child is struggling with grades, try to determine the cause. For example, does your child feel that excelling at school will make him or her a target of bullying? Is there a problem with a teacher? What about the courses? Your child should be challenged by the curriculum, not overwhelmed by it. Another possibility: Could there be an underlying physical cause, such as poor eyesight or a learning disability?

The more involved you are in your child’s training, both secular and spiritual, the better chance your child has of success.—Proverbs 22:6.

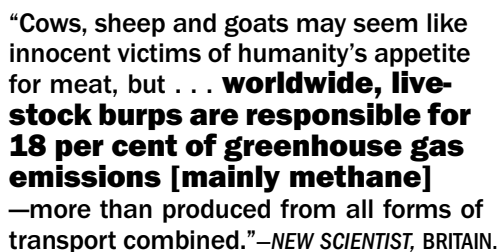
Scientists working in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, have discovered a superglue dating back thousands of years. “The glue . . . is just as good as the stuff found in hardware stores today,” says *The Star*, a Johannesburg newspaper. It is believed that ancient hunters used the glue to attach arrowheads or spear points to their shafts. Scientists’ attempts to replicate the ancient formula—with red ocher, animal fat, acacia gum, and sand—and to get the temperature control just right to dry the adhesive next to a fire, gave the scientists “new respect” for the people who used it.

“People who sleep fewer than seven hours a night are nearly three times as likely to get a cold than people who average eight or more hours of sleep,” says a report from Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. And those who stay awake “as little as 8 percent of the time they [are lying] in bed [are] five-and-a-half times more likely” to catch a cold than those who sleep more soundly. “Although sleep’s relationship with the immune system is well-documented, this is the first evidence that even relatively minor sleep disturbances can influence the body’s reaction to cold viruses,” said Sheldon Cohen, the study’s lead author. “It provides yet

**"As long as 40 percent of what we take out of the sea is treated as refuse, fish stocks cannot recover," says World Wildlife Fund fisheries expert Karoline Schacht.**  
—*BERLINER MORGENPOST, GERMANY.*

## Plenty of New Agricultural Land

“There is enough space in the world to produce the extra food needed to feed a growing population,” says *New Scientist* magazine. “And contrary to expectation, most of it can be grown in Africa.” The magazine cites an agricultural outlook report published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. According to the report, the amount of land currently devoted to agriculture worldwide could be more than doubled. “Over half of the additionally available land,” says the report, “is found in Africa and Latin America.”







## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE APOSTLE MATTHEW?

**3. Matthew was known by what other name?** CLUE: Read Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14.

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 .....

**4. What sacrifice did Matthew make to be a follower of Jesus?** CLUE: Read Luke 5:27, 28.

.....  
 .....

### FOR DISCUSSION:

What types of sacrifices might you need to make if you want to be a disciple of Jesus? What are some of the rewards you will receive? CLUE: Read Mark 10:28-30.

● Answers on page 12

## What Is Missing From This Picture?

Read Daniel 6:1-24. Now look at the picture. What features are missing? Write your answers on the lines below, and complete the picture by coloring it and drawing in the missing elements.

- 1 .....
- 2 .....

### FOR DISCUSSION:

Why was Daniel thrown into this place? Have you ever suffered for doing the right thing? Describe the incident. Why is it worth doing what is right, regardless of the consequences?

CLUE: Read 1 Peter 2:19-21.



## CHILDREN'S PICTURE SEARCH

Can you find these pictures in this issue? In your own words, describe what is happening in each picture.

## FROM THIS ISSUE

Answer these questions, and provide the missing Bible verse(s).

**PAGE 6** Who constructed all things?

Hebrews 3:\_\_\_\_\_

**PAGE 7** What will happen to the wicked?

Proverbs 2:\_\_\_\_\_

**PAGE 20** No one can come to the Father except through whom? John 14:\_\_\_\_\_

**PAGE 21** We should pray for whom? James 5:\_\_\_\_\_

# The Bible

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**The Bible**



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