

LESSON EIGHT: RADIO INTERVIEW NOTES

Directions: Jayson X is a leader of an organization called the World Union of Deists (WUD), which was established to teach people about Deism and to encourage them to become Deists. Jayson prepared the following notes so that he would do a good job representing Deism and the WUD when he talks about these things during radio interviews. With your child, read and discuss these notes.

- I. Faith and reason defined
 - A. Faith is one's ability to believe something although it is not proven to be true. Believing in leprechauns requires faith.
 - B. Reason is one's ability to perceive reality as honestly and completely as one can, and then make logical conclusions based on what one perceives. Believing in the moons around Jupiter requires reason.
- II. Reason generally works better than faith for understanding and dealing with reality.
 - A. The story of the Cure for Polio

At least since 1789, people have been suffering from this horrible debility of the lower extremities. One common faith-way to deal with this awful disease is to try to pray it away. Simply speaking, prayer is an inexpensive and easy way for people to feel like they are solving a problem without actually solving it. Polio is not stopped by prayer. Polio was basically stopped by reason, though. By perceiving reality as honestly and completely as he could, and then making logical conclusions based on what he perceived, Jonas Salk was able to discover the first safe and effective polio vaccine.

Put simply, faith spreads polio and reason stops it. Faith spreads polio by discouraging scientific efforts to stop polio. If prayer works, why bother to do hard scientific research? If God controls every aspect of our lives—including who gets a disease and who doesn't, and who lives and who dies—why bother trying to contain the spread of polio? Faith convinces many people, far too many people, to simply pray and trust God rather than seriously use their reason to understand and solve important problems.

- B. The Bible (an example of faith-based literature) teaches that the sun orbits the Earth.

Psalms 93:1 boldly proclaims, "Yea, the world is established; it shall never be moved," and Joshua 10:12-13 adds, "Then spoke Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the men of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, 'Sun, stand thou still at Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Ai'-jalon.' And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. . . . The sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day." Thus, the Earth supposedly stands still while the sun and moon circle it.

III. Reason generally works better than faith for promoting virtue.

- A. Medieval witch-hunts, the trial of Galileo, the Spanish Inquisition, and the current Arab-Israeli conflict are all examples of evil caused largely by faith—or, if you prefer, a lack of reason.
- B. Genesis 17:8 states that God gave Canaan to the descendants of Abraham forever, and much of the rest of the Bible teaches that the Jews are the descendants of Abraham. Deuteronomy 7:1-2 and 20:16-17 state that God commanded the Jews to murder—although some say that it can't be murder because God commanded it—all the inhabitants of Canaan. The Book of Joshua describes in detail how the Jews, aided by God, followed the divine command and settled the Promised Land.
- C. According to “What Does the Religion of Peace Teach About Violence[?]”, the Koran “contains at least 109 verses that call Muslims to war with nonbelievers.” Then the site lists 39 of those verses and 16 hadiths. The first three of these Koran verses are 2:191-193, 2:244, and 2:216. Furthermore, according to “The Ultimate Goal of Islam,” Koran verses 9:33, 48:28, and 61:9 are often interpreted by pious Muslims as God's command and prediction that Muslims should and will conquer the Earth. These verses state “the superiority and triumph of Islam over all religions.” They “are found in the historical context of warfare and violence, so how can they fail to inspire violent fanatics?”

IV. Arguments for the existence of God

A. The Argument from Design

The universe seems created. The universe is complex, magnificent, and balanced. If it were an accident rather than a work of God, it would almost certainly be homogeneous, bland, and chaotic. For example, a haze of gray gas is likely to exist without being created but not all the complex, magnificent, and balanced galaxies, stars, planets, and creatures of the universe. Therefore, God almost certainly exists.

This assertion is especially obvious when we realize that our universe seems fine-tuned for life. For example, it has all the things to create and sustain life as we know it, including energy, water, and elements like carbon. It also has the proper amount of gravity. The gravitational constant is a physical constant involved in the calculation of the gravitational attraction between objects with mass. If the gravitational constant was stronger, the universe would have collapsed on itself by now. If it was weaker, the stars would have died out by now because they need much mass to burn.

B. The First Cause Argument

Everything came from something except the first cause, because there cannot be an infinite regression. Consider me for instance. What caused me to exist? Here is the probable chain of events as I understand it: I am a human who came from other humans, and the first

humans came from apes, and the first apes came from some other kind of mammal, and the first mammal came from a reptile, and the first reptile came from an amphibian, and the first amphibian came from a fish, and the first fish came from some other kind of multi-celled aquatic creature, and the first multi-celled aquatic creature came from a single-celled aquatic creature, and the first single-celled aquatic creature came from the Earth, and the Earth came from a nebula, and the nebula came from the Milky Way Galaxy, and the Milky Way Galaxy came from the Big Bang, and the Big Bang came from . . . something. Was that something God or an accident? Because the universe seems purposefully created, I believe that that something is God.

V. The goodness of God

- A. God is probably completely good, because God created everything that is good and God is not likely to be outdone by any of God's creations in doing anything worth doing.

VI. There will probably be conscious existence and true justice after death.

God has the power and the justification to make conscious existence and true justice after death, the most virtuous people I know would do so, and God will not be out-virtued by any of God's creations. I say that God has the power because God created the universe in the first place, and I say that God has the justification because death is the opportunity to give a creature a new start. At death, the life that a creature lived in this universe ends—a life that has probably served its purpose. If there is life after death, death is the beginning of a new life with a new purpose. It is also an opportune time to give the dead creature exactly what he, she, or it earned in this life.

VII. Deism promotes happiness more than Agnosticism and Atheism.

Deism promotes happiness more than Agnosticism and Atheism for at least two related reasons: one, Deism promotes virtue more; and two, Deism promotes the belief in the possibility of conscious existence after death while encouraging us to strive to make this life as good as we can make it before we die.

VIII. Famous Deists

- A. Plato, Cicero, Leonardo da Vinci, Voltaire, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Ethan Allan, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Charles Darwin (at least for awhile), Mark Twain, and Albert Einstein.

IX. A leading Atheist became a leading Deist.

- A. The former proponent of Atheism, Antony Flew, was drawn to Deism based on the incredible complexity of DNA. Mr. Flew wrote in his book *There Is A God*, “[A] gene is nothing but a set of coded instructions with a precise recipe for manufacturing proteins. Most important, these genetic instructions are not the kind of information you find in thermodynamics and statistical mechanics; rather, they constitute semantic information. In other words, they have a specific

meaning. These instructions can be effective only in a molecular environment capable of interpreting the meaning in the genetic code. The origin question rises to the top at this point. The problem of how meaningful or semantic information can emerge spontaneously from a collection of mindless molecules subject to blind and purposeless forces presents a deep conceptual challenge” (Flew 128-129).