

LESSON SIXTEEN: DEISM AND DEATH

Directions: Except for the questions at the end, the following article (http://www.deism.com/deism_vs.htm) comes from the World Union of Deists Website (www.deism.com). Read the article with your child, and then ask your child the questions at the end.

Revealed religions all teach different opinions on death. Even the different denominations of the same umbrella religion preach different dogmas. A good example is Christianity. Some of the Christian denominations say an essential qualification to get into heaven (of course they all agree dying is a key requirement) is that you have to be baptized "by submersion," while others say just a "sprinkling" is fine. Which is it? Sprinkling or submersion??

The fear of death is a big motivator for many people to support a particular religion. We all know, without the possibility of doubt, that a day will come for absolutely all of us when we will die. This realization brings fear to many people. It also brings money to religious charlatans who aren't ashamed to prey on this fear. In fact, it can be truthfully said that the revealed religions of the world all use the fear of death to put cash in their own pockets.

Contrary to this self-serving attitude of the revealed religions, Deism teaches that no one knows for certain what happens after death, if anything at all. It teaches that, based on the creation we are all a part of, we shouldn't worry about it. That instead, we should be concerned for the present and future of planet Earth and humanity. That we should work hard to improve life and also enjoy it here and now. Why should we worry about death when we have so much to do in life? And do we think so little of Nature's God that we don't trust Him with our future? Ethan Allen, a Deist from America's Revolutionary War era, wrote, "Ungrateful and foolish it must be for rational beings in the possession of existence, and surrounded with a kind and almighty Providence, to distrust the author thereof concerning their futurity, because they cannot comprehend the mode or manner of their succeeding and progressive existence."

Another Deist that had interesting thoughts on death was Benjamin Franklin. One quote of Franklin's was, "Take courage mortal, death cannot banish you from the universe."

Ben Franklin's epitaph on himself provides a look at his belief that our life on earth is not the beginning and end of a personality. He, like Ethan Allen above, seems to have believed that the state of our spirits or souls is of an evolutionary nature. Franklin's epitaph reads, "The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here, food for worms. But the work shall not be lost; for it will, as he believed, appear once more in a new and more elegant edition, revised and corrected by the Author."

In Thomas Paine's *The Age Of Reason*, we read . . . the following:

But all other arguments apart, the consciousness of existence is the only conceivable idea we have of another life, and the continuance of that consciousness is immortality. The consciousness of existence, of the knowing that we exist, is not necessarily confined to the same form, nor to the same matter, even in this life.

We have not in all cases the same form, nor in any case the same matter that composed our bodies twenty or thirty years ago; and yet we are conscious of being the same persons. . .

That the consciousness of existence is not dependent on the same form or the same matter is demonstrated to our senses in the works of the creation, as far as our senses are capable of receiving that demonstration. A very numerous part of the animal creation preaches to us, far better than Paul, the belief of a life hereafter. Their little life resembles an Earth and a heaven - a present and a future state, and comprises, if it may be so expressed, immortality in miniature.

The most beautiful parts of the creation to our eye are the winged insects, and they are not so originally. They acquire that form and that inimitable brilliancy by progressive changes. The slow and creeping caterpillar-worm of today passes in a few days to a torpid figure and a state resembling death; and in the next change comes forth in all the miniature magnificence of life, a splendid butterfly.

In an essay Mr. Paine wrote the following short and to the point passage:

I consider myself in the hands of my Creator, and that he will dispose of me after this life consistently with His justice and goodness. I leave all these matters to Him, as my Creator and friend, and I hold it to be presumption in man to make an article of faith as to what the Creator will do with us hereafter.

Question Number One: Do you believe that there is life after death? Why or why not?

Question Number Two: If you said yes to Question Number One, how do you believe that life after death will happen? (For example, you can say by reincarnation, resurrection, or replication. Reincarnation means a spirit or soul is put into a completely different body, possibly the body of a different species; resurrection means a creature is made to live again because someone (probably God) reassembles all the parts that composed the original body; and replication means that someone (probably God) makes a replica of the dead creature. As long as the memory and personality of the replica are basically the same as the dead creature's, the replica of the creature is that creature.) Why do you believe this?