

WHAT IS THE BEST THEOLOGY?

by Jayson X

Last modified on July 15, 2011

PART ONE: THE DEFINITIONS OF “BEST” AND “THEOLOGY”

I have taught secondary school English for many years, and every year I try to get all my students to understand that a noun is a person, place, thing, or idea. George Washington, New York City, a desk, and Einstein's Theory of Relativity are all nouns. Now, I want to take this time to explore what the word “best” means, as in what is the best person, place, thing, or idea and why? The best of any group is the one that is most useful for a particular task. The reason is that we always have tasks to accomplish and some people, places, things, and ideas work better than others to accomplish those tasks.

For example, if I want to win a battle, it is better to have my army led by General George Washington than by the latest *Playboy* centerfold model; but if I want to have an extremely pleasant sexual encounter, it is better (at least for most men, and I happen to be a man) to mate with the model than the general. No disrespect at all intended toward Washington, whom I happen to esteem highly.

If I want to play baseball, a large field works better than my dining room. If I want to write a letter, a desk works better than a roller coaster. If I want to explain why time seems to slow down when objects approach the speed of light, Einstein's Theory of Relativity works better than Newtonian physics. Et cetera.

That having been said, let's turn our attention to theology. A theology can be defined as a system of beliefs about God, and God can be defined as the being who supposedly created the universe on purpose. Using these definitions, I want to answer the question, What is the best theology? In other words, what theology is the most useful?

“Useful for what?” you might ask. To answer this question, I will start by asking another question: What are theologies usually used for? When answering this question, let's ignore any evil uses of theologies, such as manipulating people, and focus on only good uses. This focus will help us determine the best theology rather than getting sidetracked discussing irrelevant details.

Theologies are usually used for trying to understand, describe, and believe the truth about God; and to promote virtue and happiness. So, if we determine what theology most promotes truth, virtue, and happiness, we determine the best theology.

Just about every human would agree that truth, virtue, and happiness are preferable to their opposites or their lack. Truth is preferable to falsehood or a lack of truth, virtue is preferable to vice or a lack of virtue, and happiness is preferable to misery or a lack of happiness. I happen to agree with the vast majority of humanity on this issue. Believing in the truth helps us deal with reality wisely, it feels more pleasant to be happy than not, and virtue promotes the happiness of the majority of people. So in this case, common sense is correct.

PART TWO: REASON-BASED THEOLOGIES ARE BETTER THAN FAITH-BASED THEOLOGIES

Simply speaking, there are two main types of theologies to choose from: faith-based and reason-based. Faith is one's ability to believe something although it is not proven to be true; and 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 leprechauns requires faith, and believing in the moons around Jupiter requires reason.

Is it better to base one's beliefs on faith or reason? The answer is the latter for at least three reasons.

One, although one's reason is imperfect, it still is the best means to believe what is true and disbelieve what is false. Faith allows one to believe in leprechauns and anything else for that matter, but reason allows one only to believe that which is likely to be true.

Two, reason helps us deal with reality wisely while faith often causes us to deal with reality foolishly. Consider people's reactions to the disease polio, for example. At least since 1789, people have been suffering from this horrible “debility of the lower extremities” (“The History of Polio”). 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.

Three, reason helps us be more virtuous than faith. The 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.

What did reason tell Medieval Christians about witches? It told them that there is really no such thing as a witch. Most people accused of witchcraft are innocent, and the rest are lunatics or charlatans.

But what did faith tell Medieval Christians about witches? It told them that most people who were accused of witchcraft were probably witches and deserved to die. According to their supposedly holy book, the Bible, "A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death" (Leviticus 20:27). Many thousands of innocent people were tortured and murdered as a result.

What did reason tell people about the theory that the Earth revolves around the sun? It told them that they should investigate the theory and prove it correct or incorrect. In either case, no one had to be threatened or harmed.

But what did faith tell Galileo's captors and their supporters? The sun goes around the Earth because the Bible says so. Psalm 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. If Galileo had not recanted his heretical (but true) theory that the Earth orbited the sun, he would have been tortured and murdered by these followers of the supposed Prince of Peace.

What did reason tell people about the Spanish Inquisition? It told them that the Inquisition was wrong. No one deserves to be tortured or murdered just because they believe something. It doesn't matter if they

believe in Judaism, Islam, a supposedly heretical type of Christianity, or whatever.

But what did faith tell most Spaniards about the Spanish Inquisition? It told them that everyone in the whole world should be a Roman Catholic Christian (in both belief and practice) and they should start that process right there in Spain.

What does reason tell us about the ongoing Arab-Israel conflict? It tells us that the conflict has much to do with religious stupidity. Simply speaking, despite the supposed secularism of most Zionists, the Israelis believe they are the Chosen People, so they took back some land from the Arabs. The Arabs, most of whom are Muslim, believe that this supposed Holy Land should belong to them because their religion is much better than Judaism.

But what does faith say? That depends on what religion, i.e. system of beliefs based on faith, you believe. If you are a Jew or a Christian, your religion might tell you that many Arabs should be killed and their land taken. Likewise, if you are a Muslim, your religion might tell you that many Israelis should be killed and their land taken.

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.

Being Middle Eastern Gentiles, the Arabs are like the Canaanites; so the Jews have a Biblical justification to murder the Arabs in Canaan and steal their land—not that all (or even most) modern Jews choose to interpret the Bible that way, but too many do.

As for Christians, these Bible verses are also part of their supposedly holy book, and many Christians interpret them literally and consider them still applicable. This assertion is proven by the blind support that many American Fundamentalist Christians have for Israel, compared to the needs and wants of the Palestinians.

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?” (Arlandson).

So, simply speaking, we have determined that reason is good and faith is bad. Therefore, we can also dismiss all the faith-based theologies as bad compared to the reason-based theologies.¹ What are some popular faith-based theologies? Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, at least in their most common forms. Among other things, Judaism asserts that the Jews are God's Chosen People who deserve to own and live on the land of Canaan forever; Christianity asserts that Jesus of Nazareth is the Only-begotten Son of God who atoned for humanity's sins through his sacrificial death on a cross; Islam asserts that, through the angel Gabriel, God gave the Koran to the Prophet Muhammad; and Hinduism teaches that there are many gods who are all just part of God.

There is no reasonable basis to believe these assertions. They are extraordinary claims without any extraordinary proof. Therefore, they, along with their associated theologies, should be dismissed as false.

PART THREE: DEISM IS THE BEST REASON-BASED THEOLOGY

That leaves us to examine the reason-based theologies. As far as I know, there are only three completely reason-based theologies: Deism, Agnosticism, and Atheism. There is much discussion about what these theologies mean; and I am sure that many Deists, Agnostics, and Atheists would disapprove of even calling their particular belief system a theology. However, they are theologies because they are systems of belief about God.

Yes, I also know that many Deists, Agnostics, and Atheists don't like to admit that their particular way of thinking is a belief system, but it is. A belief is something that one accepts as true. Deists, Agnostics, and Atheists

1 Some people might object here and ask, “Wasn't there once a Cult of the Supreme Being in revolutionary France that was a reason-based theology, and didn't it have something to do with the Reign of Terror?” To learn my response to this criticism, read A1 near the end of this essay.

all accept as true the assertion that they should base their opinions on reason. They also accept as true the consequences of their reasoning. In other words, they believe the belief that they should base their beliefs on reason and also believe that the consequences of their reasoning are true. That is at least a two-step belief process—belief in the method and belief in the conclusions. So Deism, Agnosticism, and Atheism are all belief systems.

For the sake of simplicity, I will propose and use the definitions which make sense to me, because I want to make sense here, not split hairs.

I define Deism as the philosophy that one should base all of one's beliefs on reason and reason leads one to conclude that God exists, or at least probably exists. I define Agnosticism as the philosophy that one should base all of one's beliefs on reason and reason leads one to conclude that one cannot conclude if God exists or not. And I define Atheism as the philosophy that one should base all of one's beliefs on reason and reason leads one to conclude that God does not exist, or at least probably does not exist.

Here, someone might argue that Agnosticism is not a belief system, and it does not come to a conclusion because it stops short of a conclusion. Once again, I say that Agnosticism is a belief system, because Agnostics believe that they should base their beliefs on reason, and they believe their conclusions, one of which is that they cannot conclude if God exists or not. This conclusion is paradoxical rather than contradictory. The paradox is that Agnostics conclude that they cannot conclude. Yet, that is how I am about a number of issues, such as whether there will be a large-scale nuclear war within the next 100 years or whether humanity will converse with intelligent extraterrestrials within the next 1,000 years. For now, I conclude that I cannot conclude if there will be or not, and I believe my conclusions.²

Please note that all these theologies are based on reason, I have defined them all fairly and in commonly understood ways, and I respect all three much more than I respect any faith-based theology. I called these theologies philosophies in my definitions because, although they focus primarily on the existence or non-existence of God, their assertions have ramifications far beyond that one issue. For example, if one bases all of

² Some people might object here and ask, “What should I do if I still disagree with this essay's definition of Deism, Agnosticism, and/or Atheism?” To learn my response to this criticism, read A2 near the end of this essay.

one's beliefs on reason, one can only believe that which is reasonable; one cannot believe that which is unreasonable. Also, if God exists, as the Deists believe, many things are possible that would be impossible if God does not exist. I will expand on this fact later in this essay.

The question now is, Which one of these three is the best theology? To make a long story short, I say that Deism is the best theology, because it is more useful for promoting truth, virtue, and happiness than the others.

PART FOUR: DEISM PROMOTES TRUTH MORE THAN AGNOSTICISM AND ATHEISM

Deism promotes truth more than Agnosticism and Atheism because God probably exists. There are at least two or three intellectually compelling reasons to believe in the existence of God.

One, 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.

Some physicists assert the Multiverse Theory to explain why our universe seems so fine-tuned for life without resorting to belief in God. They argue that there are probably many universes, maybe more than a trillion of them, and our universe is one of them.³ At least one of those

³ There are at least two acceptable definitions for the word *universe*: 1) Everything that exists that was created by God. That includes all the galaxies, stars, planets, and space that we perceive. 2) A realm of existence. In this essay, when I refer to the universe as one thing, I am

universes should be perfect for life because each (or at least many) of the universes is at least a little different. So, suppose that there are a trillion universes in the Multiverse, and just one, our universe, is able to create and sustain life. "Big deal!" such Atheistic physicists would say. "That still leaves 999,999,999,999 without life."

The main reason that I reject the Multiverse Theory is that there is basically no evidence for it. No other universe has been scientifically proven to exist. Therefore, until such evidence is convincingly presented to me, I will continue to believe that this universe is the only universe that exists.

Two, 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 created, I believe that that something is God.⁴

Many Deists find that these two reasons, the Argument from Design and the First Cause Argument, are enough for them to believe in God, and they would strongly disagree with my third reason, which is soon to follow. Their disagreement is just fine with me. I will give you the answer that makes the most sense to me, not the answer that makes the most sense to a certain type of person who is not me.

Three, human existence has a strange quality to it—a quality that makes it seem purposefully created. We experience great joys and sorrows,

using the first definition; and when I refer to more than one universe, I am using the second definition.

⁴ Some people might object here and ask, "Where did God come from?" To learn my response to this criticism, read A3 near the end of this essay.

and sometimes coincidences can be so meaningful that they seem planned by something supernatural like God. Shakespeare seemed to have noticed this strange quality of human life too, as illustrated in Act II, Scene vii, Lines 139-166 of *As You Like It*:

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.
At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.
And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.
Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.
And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part.
The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound.
Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

If all the world is a stage and we are merely players, then someone (God) created the stage and players for some reason.⁵ The universe in general and one's life in particular probably follow some kind of plot, which was also created by God. I am not saying that we do not have freewill or that everything is predetermined. I believe that we do have freewill to a large extent and most things happen by pure chance. However, I believe that God has established the general way that the universe, including humanity, will work and occasionally tinkers around with it to get the desired result.

Human history is so much like a play. People do much good and accomplish great things. People also do much evil and accomplish many horrible things. There are amazing heroes, incredible villains, and lots of people in between.

There is also a fascinating balance between progress, regress, and repetition. Humanity has progressed from the Stone Age to the Space Age. It has also progressed from savagery to decent civilizations in many nations. However, it seems that for every two steps humanity takes forward, it takes one step back. For example, Western Civilization has largely escaped the superstition of the Dark Ages, but religious fundamentalism, bigotry, and ignorance are on the rise in the United States of America. (Yet one more reason to promote Deism!)

And, of course, the old saying has much truth: "The more things change, the more they stay the same." People are basically the same now as they were when humanity first migrated from Africa. We still create and destroy, love and hate, progress and regress, promote life and destroy it, et cetera. Life is one heck of a play, and God is one heck of a playwright!

Here, someone might claim that Agnosticism is more likely to be true than Deism because Agnosticism does not assert the existence or non-existence of God. It just asserts that one cannot conclude if God exists or not. My argument against this is that one can conclude that God exists or at least probably exists, and this conclusion is like many other reasonable conclusions.

⁵ Some people might object here and ask, “Why is it more likely that there is only one God rather than two or more Gods?” To learn my response to this criticism, read A3 near the end of this essay.

The truth is that we know very little with absolute certainty. Knowing with absolute certainty means that we cannot be sane and doubt what we know. At most, I can only think of three things that I know with absolute certainty: 1) I exist; 2) I perceive, feel, and think; and 3) mathematics remains constant. These facts alone belong to The Absolutely Certain Level of Knowledge.

Everything else can be doubted. I am real, but the whole universe beyond myself might be my hallucination. For example, I can doubt that the keyboard I am typing on exists. Perhaps some scientist is prodding my brain in a laboratory somewhere and making me think that I am typing on a real keyboard. Any doubt, whether probable or not, is enough to disqualify something from the category of what is absolutely knowable. I do not absolutely know the keyboard exists or that I am typing on it.

Obviously, you absolutely know something I do not. You absolutely know that you exist. However, you cannot absolutely know that I exist. Perhaps you have made yourself believe that someone else wrote this essay, but the truth is that you wrote it in your imagination. Maybe you are the only existent being—God Itself—and you want to believe others exist so that you will not be bored and lonely.

Having defined the first level of knowledge, The Absolutely Certain Level, it is time to define the second level of knowledge, The Deductive Level. Into this category belong all things we accept as true because we perceive them and/or they logically explain known facts. Either way, we use deduction to accept things as true which might not be true. I deduce that this keyboard is real because I can see it, touch it, hear its keys click when I press them, and this belief is not an extraordinary claim.

We have to believe in things in The Deductive Level in order to enjoy life and cope well with its challenges. We can't just be small “a” agnostic (not knowing) about everything. As far as I know, we have to have theories and hypotheses about every assertion we know of to deal with them wisely, or at least relatively wisely. These theories and hypotheses do not have to be well-developed and articulated, but they do have to be there, somewhere in our brain.

The third level of “knowledge” is The Faith Level. The Faith Level of “Knowledge” does not have knowledge at all. It only has unproven and unlikely beliefs that are accepted as knowledge (known truths) by the believer, even though these beliefs are probably false. However, one can still believe an assertion in The Faith Level of “Knowledge” and still be

sane. The assertions of this level can be accepted as true by sane people who were indoctrinated to believe them and/or want to believe them. Unfortunately, many (if not most) humans are often skilled at finding false reasons to support their cherished beliefs.

The fourth and final level of “knowledge” is The Insane Level. The assertions in this level are so obviously wrong that one cannot be sane and believe them.

On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the most, how much credulity does it take to believe certain assertions? (Here, I define credulity as one's willingness to believe and one's lack of skepticism. This definition is somewhat different than most people's definition, but credulity is the closest word that I know to the idea I am discussing.) The following is my estimation. The number to the left is the assertion level, and the number to the right is the credulity level. The lower the assertion level, the less credulity it takes to believe.

1. Oneself exists: 0
2. My keyboard exists: 1
3. The stranger walking outside my window exists: 2
4. The Great Wall of China exists: 3
5. God exists: 4
6. God does not exist: 5
7. The Loch Ness Monster exists: 6
8. The Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming are all true: 7.
9. The Flying Spaghetti Monster exists: 8.
10. We all live in a yellow submarine: 9.
11. Oneself does not exist: 10.

So, where should I draw the line between reasonable and unreasonable beliefs? I draw it between Assertion Level 6 and 7. Although not as reasonable as Deism, Atheism is a reasonable belief for at least one reason: God has never, to the best of my knowledge, come out of hiding and spoken to all mortal humans in an obvious and direct way. However, believing that the Loch Ness Monster exists is an unreasonable belief because it is an extraordinary claim without extraordinary proof.

The Loch Ness Monster is supposed to be something like a large species of dinosaur trapped for millions of years in a lake in Scotland. There

have been supposed sightings and photographs of it, but there has not been a Loch Ness Monster captured alive or even found dead for that matter. A live Loch Ness Monster or a relatively fresh Loch Ness Monster corpse would be extraordinary proof that the creature does exist, yet such proof will almost certainly never be found. For decades if not for centuries, many people have spent much time trying to find such proof and failed. Searching for the Loch Ness Monster in Scotland is like searching for a leprechaun in Ireland. It won't be found because it does not exist.

With all this in mind, Assertion Level 1 belongs to The Absolutely Certain Level of Knowledge; Assertion Levels 2 through 6 belong to The Deductive Level of Knowledge; Assertion Levels 7 and 8 belong to The Faith Level of “Knowledge”; and Assertion Levels 9 through 11 belong to The Insane Level of “Knowledge.”

A. The Absolutely Certain Level of Knowledge

Assertion Level 1: Oneself exists.

B. The Deductive Level of Knowledge

Assertion Level 2: My keyboard exists.

Assertion Level 3: The stranger walking outside my window exists.

Assertion Level 4: The Great Wall of China exists.

Assertion Level 5: God exists.

Assertion Level 6: God does not exist.

C. The Faith Level of “Knowledge”

Assertion Level 7: The Loch Ness Monster exists.

Assertion Level 8: The Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming are all true.

D. The Insane Level of “Knowledge”

Assertion Level 9: The Flying Spaghetti Monster exists.

Assertion Level 10: We all live in a yellow submarine.

Assertion Level 11: Oneself does not exist.

PART FIVE: DEISM PROMOTES VIRTUE MORE THAN AGNOSTICISM AND ATHEISM

Virtue means doing what is good, and good means treating living creatures the way that they should be treated. Deism promotes virtue more than Agnosticism and Atheism for at least one reason: If God exists, God might reward relatively good humans after death and punish relatively evil humans after death. In other words, if God exists, true justice is likely to exist. True justice is when all creatures get exactly what they deserve. Since true justice obviously does not happen before death, it must happen after death for it to exist; and only God has the power to make true justice a reality.

Because they believe in God, Deists can honestly believe in true justice and use that belief to motivate them to be more virtuous than they would be otherwise. Yes, it is good to do good for goodness sake, but many people do whatever they want to do as long as they believe that they will not be punished for doing it. However, God almost certainly sees and knows everything, and God is almost certainly more good and just than even the best human being who ever lived, 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. Moving fast, being strong, being intelligent, knowing facts, being wise, and being virtuous are all worth doing. In other words, they are all good things. Yes, there are some relatively fast, strong, intelligent, knowledgeable, wise, and virtuous humans. God, however, is almost certainly faster, stronger, more intelligent, more knowledgeable, wiser, and more virtuous by far than any human.

That is why I confidently believe that God will give true justice to every creature who dies. God has the power and the justification to do so, 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.

I believe that this life is like taking a test. Testing requires time; and after a test is turned in, it gets graded. Then, simply speaking, the students who deserve a good grade receive a good grade and the students who deserve a bad grade receive a bad grade.

This life requires time; and after it ends with death, God has proven facts to justly reward or punish us. Then, those of us who deserve to be rewarded will be rewarded, and those of us who deserve to be punished will be punished.

I know that many people, even many Deists, disbelieve and/or dislike the idea of reward and punishment after death, or, in some cases, even conscious existence after death. However, I am convinced that if God is completely virtuous, God must make these things a reality.

Imagine that you are a very gifted video-game designer and that you made a video game in which computer creatures in a computer world actually learn, think, feel pleasure, and unjustly suffer—creatures much like us humans in this universe. It would be un-virtuous of you to let those creatures unjustly suffer without compensating them with much pleasure; and if you were un-virtuous in any way, you would obviously not be completely virtuous.

God is like the imaginary video-game designer, and this universe is like the computer world. Simply speaking, all of us suffer unjustly before death, and many of us suffer unjustly more than we experience pleasure. So God has an obligation to compensate us with much pleasure. If God does not adequately compensate us in this life—and in the case of many of us, God doesn't—God must make us consciously exist after death in order to do so. Thus, if there is conscious existence after death, God might be completely virtuous; and if there is not conscious existence after death, God is not completely virtuous.

Furthermore, God gave us the ability to freely choose to do good and evil deeds. Since God gave us this ability and God has the knowledge and power to justly reward and punish us, God must also justly reward and punish us to be completely virtuous. Otherwise, God is unjust; and one cannot be completely virtuous if one is unjust.

Suppose that Hitler and Gandhi's commonly believed reputations are well deserved. Hitler was very evil, and Gandhi was very good. It would be unjust (a form of not being virtuous) to reward both with the same amount of pleasure forever, as soon as they died. Hitler deserves to be punished, and Gandhi deserves to be rewarded. Then, maybe after Hitler becomes as virtuous as Gandhi, Hitler might deserve to be rewarded like Gandhi. But, as far as I know, that would take much time, love, punishment, and repentance for Hitler.

Let's try another example. Suppose that there is a very evil man named Terrence who kidnapped a sweet three-year-old boy named Phillip in order to torture him until he dies. Twenty years pass, and every day Terrence gleefully tortures Phillip, making Phillip's life a living hell. No one but Phillip, God, and Terrence hear Phillip's constant cries of agony and see his once healthy body increasingly mutilated, scarred, rotted, and emaciated.

Both Terrence and Phillip die at the same moment, twenty years after the kidnapping. Thus, Terrence has purposefully done much evil, experiencing much perverse joy in the process; and Phillip has basically only known misery for his entire life. Is it right for Terrence not to be punished? No! Justice demands that he be punished. Is it right for Phillip to live such a horrible life only to cease consciously existing? No! Justice demands that he be compensated after death. Does God have the power and justification to punish Terrence and reward Phillip? Yes! If God is completely virtuous, God will do so.

The conclusion to this section of the essay is almost unnecessary to say, but I will say it anyway. Because neither Agnosticism nor Atheism teach that God exists, neither Agnosticism nor Atheism can motivate people to be virtuous the way that Deism can.

PART SIX: 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; 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. Here, "this life" means the universe and our experience in it.

As I recently explained, Deism promotes virtue because if God exists, true justice is likely. But why would virtue promote happiness? As I said before, virtue means doing what is good. Good means treating living creatures the way that they should be treated. In most cases, creatures should be treated in the way that gives them the greatest amount of happiness. Happiness is the goal because, as far as I know, all creatures want to be happy or to be as close to happy as they are capable of.⁶ In fact, it can easily be argued that happiness (or being as close to happy as one is capable of) is the only thing that all creatures want.⁷

Refraining from theft and murder are virtuous deeds because theft and murder unjustly hurt others. Conversely, feeding a starving child and saving a drowning swimmer are virtuous deeds because they justly help others. People are hurt when they are made unhappy for some reason, be it mental or physical pain; and people are helped when they are made happy for some reason, be it mental or physical pleasure. So there is a causal relationship between virtue and happiness. In general, virtue increases happiness, and vice (the opposite of virtue) decreases happiness. Because Deism increases virtue, Deism increases happiness too.

Believing in conscious existence after death makes most people happier for at least two reasons. One, we want to keep living because we like living, at least to an extent; and two, we hope to have a much better life than we experience in this universe. Conscious existence after death is obviously a way to keep living, and it offers one the chance to have a much better life.

But there is a dangerous aspect to believing in conscious existence after death. Too often, those who believe in it do not work as hard as they should to make this life as good as it should be. Instead of improving their

⁶ Some people might object here and ask, “What about animals that humans kill for food, like cows and chickens? They don’t want to be killed and eaten.” To learn my response to this criticism, read A4 near the end of this essay.

⁷ Some people might object here and ask, “What about humans who willingly sacrifice themselves for others, such as parents who willingly sacrifice themselves for their children or soldiers who willingly sacrifice themselves for their nation? Aren’t they giving up their happiness for the happiness of others?” To learn my response to this criticism, read A5 near the end of this essay.

societies, working conditions, moral character, and relationships, they are likely to say to themselves, “This life sucks. The next life should be much better. So instead of trying to fix things, I will just put up with my problems and wait for death.”

Deism avoids this dangerous aspect by being honest and not asserting that there actually is conscious existence after death. Maybe there is, and maybe there isn't. However, most Deists agree that, whether there is or isn't, all people should work hard to make this life as good as it can be.

If there is conscious existence after death, relatively virtuous humans are likely to be rewarded because they worked hard to help themselves and others. In other words, they are true heroes, and true heroes deserve to be rewarded. Furthermore, if there is conscious existence after death, relatively evil humans are likely to be punished because they chose to selfishly hurt others more often than not. In other words, they are true villains, and true villains deserve to be punished.

But what if there is no conscious existence after death? What if we die, and that is basically the end of our thoughts, memories, and feelings—our unique personality forever gone? Being virtuous is still the best way to be because, simply speaking, we will have made this life as good as we could make it. Doing so benefited us when we lived and those we left behind when we died.

PART SEVEN: THE CONCLUSION OF THE MAIN PART OF THIS ESSAY

We just spent much time and effort determining what the best theology is, but why did we bother? In other words, why does it matter what the best theology is?

There are currently billions of people on this planet, and it seems that no two of them believe in exactly the same things about every issue. Thus, all of them live by their own personal philosophies or unique interpretations of their religion. One of the foundations of all well-developed personal philosophies and religions is the answer to this question: Does God exist? So the answer to this question is very important to us humans.

What we believe influences what we think, and what we think influences how happy we are and what we do. Thus, one's theology has a large impact on one's happiness and deeds. The better the theology, the happier the person and the kinder the deeds.

All of us have to believe something about God, so we all have to choose a theology. To paraphrase an excellent song by the rock band Rush, "If we choose not to decide, we still have made a choice." The question is, Which theology will we choose to believe? If we choose Deism, we can have the best of every theology while avoiding the worst. Like those who believe in many faith-based theologies, we can believe that God exists and is completely good, and that there will be conscious existence and true justice after death.⁸ And like Agnostics and Atheists, we can still be completely honest and reasonable. We don't have to sacrifice our honesty or reason to believe in the aforementioned hopeful doctrines.

There have been many virtuous and wise people throughout human history who have chosen Deism, whether they used the word Deism to describe their theology or not—people such as 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. Think about how much better the world is because of their contributions. Now imagine how much better the world would be if the majority of humanity voluntarily chose to become Deists. It can, and it should, happen!

If you are not a Deist already, please consider becoming one. All you have to do is base all your beliefs on reason and conclude that God exists or at least probably exists. And if you want to learn more about Deism, visit www.deism.com or email me at jayson@deism.com. May reason prevail!

⁸ Some people might object here and ask, "What if God is too powerless or ignorant to give us conscious existence and true justice after death?" To learn my response to this criticism, read A6 near the end of this essay.

PART EIGHT: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q1: Wasn't there once a Cult of the Supreme Being in revolutionary France that was a reason-based theology, and didn't it have something to do with the Reign of Terror?

A1: “The Cult of the Supreme Being . . . was a form of deism established in France by Maximilien Robespierre during the French Revolution. It was intended to become the state religion of the new French Republic. . . . Robespierre believed that reason is only a means to an end, and the singular end is virtue. He sought to move beyond simple deism (often described as Voltairean by its adherents) to a new and, in his view, more rational devotion to the godhead. The primary principles of the Cult of the Supreme Being were a belief in the existence of a god and the immortality of the human soul. Though not inconsistent with Christian doctrine, these beliefs were put to the service of Robespierre's fuller meaning, which was a type of civic-minded, public virtue he attributed to the Greeks and Romans. This type of virtue could only be attained through active fidelity to liberty and democracy. Belief in a living god and a higher moral code, he said, were 'constant reminders of justice' and thus essential to a republican society” (“Cult of the Supreme Being”).⁹

The Reign of Terror was a very violent period in French history that lasted from September 5, 1793, to July 28, 1794. Between 16,000 to 40,000 French were killed. It ended in a coup in which several leaders of the Reign of Terror were executed, including Robespierre (“Reign of Terror”).

So, yes, there once was a Cult of the Supreme Being in revolutionary France that was a reason-based theology, which did have something to do with the Reign of Terror. However, as I understand it, the Cult of the Supreme Being, compared with the Cult of Reason which it replaced, did not instigate as much bloodshed. In fact, it enabled Theists in France to openly express their belief in God. Sadly, many French did die after the Cult of the Supreme Being became the official religion of the land. However, those deaths were more likely to be politically, rather than religiously, motivated.

⁹ I made some minor changes to this quotation so that it would be more logical and easier to understand.

That having been said, I deplore large-scale executions and the marriage of religion and government. When thousands of citizens are being executed, chances are that the government is being very unjust and unnecessarily violent. Such was the case of the French First Republic.

Also, all people should be allowed to worship whoever they want, including no one. They should not be compelled by their government to adopt a religious belief or practice. As the French First Republic proved yet again, when a government adopts a certain religion, it unjustly uses its power to promote that religion. That is why a government should be forever and completely religiously neutral.

The problem with the Cult of Reason was that it was a government religion that citizens were forced to adopt, rather than just one of all religions that citizens could freely choose. The problem was not that Deism is flawed or inherently violent. Deism is definitely not inherently violent, and, as far as I know, it is not flawed in any way. That was a time of great social upheaval in France, and after centuries of oppression, much of the nation wanted bloody revenge. So Deism is not to blame for any of the bloodshed, although some Deists, such as Robespierre, were.

In fact, one of the most famous Deists in history, Thomas Paine, was imprisoned by the French First Republic largely because he vocally opposed capital punishment in general and revenge killings in particular (“Thomas Paine”). While languishing in jail, Paine got so sick that he almost died and barely avoided being executed himself.

Q2: What should you do if you still disagree with this essay's definition of Deism, Agnosticism, and/or Atheism?

A2: In case you still disagree with this essay's definition of Deism, Agnosticism, and/or Atheism, please do the following: Throughout this essay, mentally replace the word Deism with Shmeism, Agnosticism with Shmegnosticism, and/or Atheism with Shmatheism. Shmeism means the same thing or almost the same thing as Deism, Shmegnosticism means the same thing or almost the same thing as Agnosticism, and Shmatheism means the same thing or almost the same thing as Atheism.

In short, I will invent new words for you, because I want to express ideas here without getting sidetracked by pointless debate over the meaning

of a word or words. Is it possible for a human to base all of his or her beliefs on reason, even her or his theological beliefs? Yes. It is difficult but yes. And is it possible for a human to do that and conclude that God exists, or at least probably exists? Yes, such a person is a Deist or a Shmeist, and his or her theology is Deism or Shmeism. Take your pick.

In case I haven't made myself clear yet, is it possible for a human to base all of her or his beliefs on reason and to conclude that he or she cannot conclude if God exists or not? Yes, such a person is an Agnostic or a Shmagnostic, and her or his theology is Agnosticism or Shmegnosticism. Take your pick. Lastly, is it possible for a human to base all of his or her beliefs on reason and to conclude that God does not exist, or at least probably does not exist? Yes, such a person is an Atheist or a Shmatheist, and her or his theology is Atheism or Shmatheism. Take your pick.

Q3: Why is it more likely that there is only one God rather than two or more Gods, and where did God come from?

A3: One reason that monotheism is probably correct is that everything came from something except the first cause. I hate to repeat myself, but once again consider a human—me—for example. What caused me to exist? Here is the probable chain of events as I understand them: 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 galaxy, and the galaxy came from the Big Bang. Eventually, there had to be one thing that always existed, and from that one thing came all other things. There had to be a first cause because it seems impossible for the process of cause and effect to have gone on forever in the past. This fact indicates that there is just one God. God is the first cause.

A second reason to believe that there is only one God is this: Simply speaking, we know that at least one God exists because the universe exists, and it should only take one God to create the universe. Since we have much

evidence that one God exists but do not have much, if any, evidence that two or more Gods exist, we should believe that just one God exists.

A third reason to believe that there is only one God has to do with the answer to the question, Where did God come from? Some Atheists correctly argue that it is not very likely that the first thing that existed was a being who was capable of creating the universe. I have a response to this objection, though. Probably many Deists would disagree with my hypothesis, but it is still consistent with Deism. I hypothesize that the first thing that existed was some inanimate stuff—perhaps matter, perhaps energy, perhaps both. I don't know for sure, so I will call it stuff. Then, through a process similar to evolution on this planet, this stuff developed life, then intelligence, then virtue, and then extreme intelligence and virtue. Once it reached this stage, it was capable of creating the universe. This stuff was and is God. So God always existed, but God has changed.

A likely objection here is that Atheism implies that plant and animal life evolved by itself from inanimate stuff. We know that plants and animals exist, but we do not know that God exists. So why should we believe that God just evolved from inanimate stuff when we can just believe that plants and animals evolved by themselves from inanimate stuff? I admit that it is very unlikely that the first thing that existed was an all-powerful being who could create the universe, but I also insist that it is equally unlikely that the universe, which includes all the creatures in the universe, created itself. The universe consists of more than a trillion amazing things. God is just one amazing thing—for lack of better words. It is much more likely that the one amazing thing developed naturally and then created the trillion amazing things, than the trillion amazing things developed naturally by themselves.

God probably evolved and created life on planet Earth to evolve like God did, not in the exact way but a similar way. We humans might never create a universe. However, we did evolve from lifeless stuff and, later, creatures with little or no intelligence and virtue. Compared to many of our ancestors, we humans are much more like God; and if our species keeps evolving as it has been, our distant descendants will be much more like God than us. A work of art always teaches us something about its artist, and God is the artist of the universe. The universe teaches us that God is dynamic and likes evolution.

If my hypothesis that God evolved from lifeless stuff is correct, then the development of one God was unlikely. It was just an extreme coincidence like a lightning bolt haphazardly hitting a target in the bull's-

eye. The development of two or more Gods within the same amount of time, thus, seems even more unlikely, like two or more separate lightning bolts hitting a target in the bull's-eye at the same time. This indicates that there is probably only one God.

At this point, you might be thinking, *Well, maybe one God developed from the lifeless stuff and then waited a trillion years or so for another God to develop from lifeless stuff. After that, the two Gods created the universe together.* It is possible, and I guess that one could be a Deist and a polytheist. However, what is a better analogy concerning the relationship between God (or the Gods) and the universe: a brain and a thought, or a sculptor and a clay vase?

If it is a brain and its thought, there probably is only one God because each brain that I know of works by itself to think its thought. If it is a sculptor and a clay vase, maybe there is more than one God because a clay vase can have more than one sculptor.

I favor the brain and thought analogy because, as far as I know, more things are created by brains than by hands. In other words, we humans, and perhaps all thinking creatures, create more ideas than creative objects. We create many ideas and then use just some of those ideas to make creative objects.

An object is something that can be perceived by at least one of the five senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. So a creative object is an object that a creature purposefully makes that expresses a creature's idea. An idea is that which comes into existence in a mind as a product of mental activity. Paintings, sculptures, and written poems are examples of creative objects. Every day, I think many ideas, yet I sometimes go whole days without producing an object that shows any creativity.

Q4: What about animals that humans kill for food, like cows and chickens? They don't want to be killed and eaten.

A4: In most cases, we should allow animals to live for at least three reasons: God bothered to create them, they are our siblings because God is ultimately the parent of all creatures, and they can feel pleasure and pain.

However, I am convinced that it is sometimes good for humans to kill some animals to feed themselves and/or others, defend themselves and/or

others, build worthwhile structures, and obtain helpful natural resources. We humans are designed by God through evolution to kill and eat animals, so God obviously doesn't mind us doing these things to stay alive. If God didn't want us to kill animals for food, God would have made us be like plants, which make their own food from non-living things, specifically sunshine, soil, and water.

As for defending ourselves and/or others, building worthwhile structures, and obtaining helpful natural resources, God has made this life a game of survival of the fittest. Sometimes we have a choice: kill an animal or let that animal hurt us or someone else we love. Sometimes we have a choice: kill an animal or don't build a worthwhile structure. Sometimes we have a choice: kill an animal or don't obtain helpful natural resources. If we are to survive and thrive, in many cases, we must choose to kill an animal to defend, build, and obtain.

Tragically, this is how God has decided to create the universe. In many cases, it is either our survival and happiness or theirs. However, this does not give us permission to murder or torture animals. When we choose to kill animals, we should kill them for a good reason, and we should kill them as quickly and painlessly as possible. As I said before, God bothered to create them, they are our siblings, and they can feel pleasure and pain.

Q5: What about humans who willingly sacrifice themselves for others, such as parents who willingly sacrifice themselves for their children or soldiers who willingly sacrifice themselves for their nation? Aren't they giving up their happiness for the happiness of others?

A5: I am not saying that happiness is the only thing that all creatures want. Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't. I don't know. What I am saying is that even such humans might willingly sacrifice themselves for their own happiness. They probably feel happy sacrificing themselves because they are doing what they believe is good, they are not doing what they believe is evil, and they are helping those and/or the cause that they love.

In case you are wondering about how these assertions relate to altruism, read the following from *Wikipedia*:

“Altruism . . . is the renunciation of the self, and an exclusive concern for the welfare of others. It is a traditional virtue in many cultures, and a core aspect of various religious traditions, though the concept of 'others' toward whom concern should be directed can vary among religions. Altruism is the opposite of selfishness.

“Altruism can be distinguished from feelings of loyalty and duty. Altruism is a motivation to provide a value to a party who must be anyone but the self, while duty focuses on a moral obligation towards a specific individual (for example, a god, a king), or collective (for example, a government). Some individuals may feel both altruism and duty, while others may not. Pure altruism is giving up a value (a reward or benefit) with no expectation of any compensation or benefits, either direct, or indirect (for instance from recognition of the giving). . . .

“In the science of ethology (the study of animal behavior), and more generally in the study of social evolution, altruism refers to behavior by an individual that increases the fitness of another individual while decreasing the fitness of the actor. Researchers on altruistic behaviors among animals have been ideologically opposed to the sociological social Darwinist concept of the ‘survival of the fittest’, under the name of ‘survival of the nicest’

“Theories of apparently altruistic behavior were accelerated by the need to produce theories compatible with evolutionary origins. Two related strands of research on altruism have emerged out of traditional evolutionary analyses, and from game theory respectively.

“Some of the proposed mechanisms are:

- Reciprocal altruism
- Selective investment theory—a theoretical proposal for the evolution of long-term, high-cost altruism
- Sexual selection, in particular, the handicap principle
- Reciprocity
 - Direct reciprocity (repeated encounters)
 - Indirect reciprocity (for example, reputation)
 - Strong reciprocity
 - Pseudo-reciprocity
- Kin selection

“. . . An interesting example of altruism is found in the cellular slime moulds, such as *Dictyostelium mucoroides*. These protists live as individual amoebae until starved, at which point they aggregate and form a multicellular fruiting body in which some cells sacrifice themselves to promote the survival of other cells in the fruiting body. Social behavior and altruism share many similarities to the interactions between the many parts (cells, genes) of an organism

“A study by Samuel Bowles at the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico, US, is seen by some as breathing new life into the model of group selection for altruism, known as ‘Survival of the nicest’. Bowles conducted a genetic analysis of contemporary foraging groups, including Australian aboriginals, native Siberian Inuit populations and indigenous tribal groups in Africa. It was found that hunter-gatherer bands of up to 30 individuals were considerably more closely related than was previously thought. Under these conditions, thought to be similar to those of the middle and upper Paleolithic, altruism towards other group-members would improve the overall fitness of the group. This is however simply a form of inclusive fitness—one vehicle helping other vehicles likely to contain the same genes.

“If an individual defends the group, risking death or simply reducing his reproductive fitness, genes that this individual shares with those he successfully defends (group members) would increase in frequency (thanks to his defense supporting their reproduction).” (“Altruism”).¹⁰

So, altruism might be a product of evolution, designed to pass on the genes of one’s tribe; and/or it might be a freewill virtuous choice for which the chooser deserves to be praised.¹¹ In the case of humans, I believe that most acts of altruism are a combination of evolutionary design and freewill virtuous choice.

¹⁰ I made some minor changes to this quotation so that it would be more logical and easier to understand.

¹¹ I am focusing here mainly on human altruism instead of examples of non-human altruism, because I know much more about and am much more interested in the former than the latter. I have studied human altruism as both an insider and an outsider. After all, I am a human living in a human society on a human-dominated planet.

Evolution is a proven fact that logically explains much about us altruistic creatures. Survival of the Fittest explains why most humans have at least adequate physical, emotional, and mental ability to survive and reproduce. And Survival of the Nicest explains, at least in part, why most humans are altruistic, at least from time to time. Thus, humans have evolved a natural ability, and in some cases a natural inclination, to be altruistic.

However, I also believe that God exists, is completely good, and allows all humans and animals to suffer and die. If all these beliefs are true, what is the purpose of this life for us humans? The most likely explanation is that God caused creatures like us to evolve in this life in order to teach and test us for the next life.

In this life, we have much opportunity to learn about both good and evil, and to frequently choose good over evil. We should only be rewarded or punished for our freewill decisions because only those are in our control. We should not be rewarded or punished for any other decisions, even the greatest act of biologically predetermined altruism or cruelty.

We humans have evolved the capacities to be altruistic, indifferent, and selfish. We also often have the ability to choose to use these capacities or not, and to even go against our natural inclinations. A man might have a strong inclination to avoid suffering and death, but might choose to rescue someone trapped in a burning building although the odds of the man burning alive are high. Likewise, a child drafted into an army in a brutal war might not want to torture and murder innocent people, but might choose to do so to avoid a horrible punishment.

Many things can be true at the same time, even paradoxical things. An act of altruism might be both a biological inclination and a freewill choice.

Q6: What if God is too powerless or ignorant to give us conscious existence and true justice after death?

A6: I am answering this question because an intelligent friend of mine said that God might be dead or might not even be aware that It created the universe. In the former case, God is too powerless to give us conscious existence after death; and in the latter case, God is too ignorant.

Both situations are possible, but then again, almost everything is possible. The question is, What hypothesis is most probable?

Is it more probable that the being who created the entire universe and gave us the ability to wonder about conscious existence and true justice has the power to give us conscious existence and true justice after death or not? It is more probable that God has the power because God has already demonstrated that God is unimaginably powerful. Even if God is dead, which would be impossible if the universe is like a purposefully created and sustained thought in the brain of God, God could have and should have created a mechanism to give us conscious existence and true justice after death.

Is it more probable that God ignorantly created the universe as Aristotle believed or that God purposefully created the universe? The latter is more probable because the universe is more like a masterpiece of art than an accident. Masterpieces of art require much planning and work to create, and planning and work are purposeful activities.

WORKS CITED

- “Altruism.” *Wikipedia*. 11 Jul. 2011. 14 Jul. 2011.
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altruism>>.
- Arlandson, James M. “The Ultimate Goal of Islam.” *Answering Islam*. 6 Jun. 2011. <http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/ultimate_goal.htm>.
- “Cult of the Supreme Being.” *Wikipedia*. 7 May 2011. 6 Jun. 2011.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cult_of_the_Supreme_Being>.
- “The History of Polio: A Hypertext Timeline.” 21 Jan. 2006. 2 Jun. 2011.
<<http://www.cloudnet.com/~edrbsass/poliotimeline.htm>>.
- The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952.
- “Reign of Terror.” *Wikipedia*. 23 May 2011. 6 Jun. 2011.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reign_of_Terror>.
- Shakespeare, William. “As You Like It.” *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. Boston: Houghton Mifflin company, 1974.
- “Thomas Paine.” *Wikipedia*. 3 Jun. 2011. 7 Jun. 2011.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine>.
- “What Does the Religion of Peace Teach About Violence[?]”
TheReligionofPeace.com: [A] Guide to Understanding Islam. © 2006-2011. 5 Jun. 2011. <<http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/Quran/023-violence.htm>>.