

Was Santa Intelligently Designed?



AdultThought.ucsd.edu
announces the

Yes Virginia, No Gods
Editorial Contest
with **\$1000** in prizes

The Santa story is believed by children, created and supported by an organized, benevolent fraud; it contributes much to children's joy, and promotes an elementary morality. The Jesus story is believed by adults, supported by organized religions; it instills both thoughtful compassion and righteous intolerance.

However, there is no historical or scientific evidence compelling either story; there are many irreconcilable facts; and there is ample evidence of fraud. As with movies and politics, both Santa and Jesus require a "Willing Suspension of Disbelief" to be effective. Suspend your critical reasoning, and you get an IOU for joyous gifts to come later.

The social fraud underlying religion is concisely laid out in the most famous US editorial of all time, "Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus" (reprinted below). This editorial confuses the question, blatantly lies, promotes child-like faith, and belittles human capabilities and reason—all tactics of Intelligent Design.

Our challenge: What should you tell your eight-year-old sister when she asks, "What is real?" Write a one-page editorial response to Virginia which promotes thoughtful compassion and responsibility, without mythology.

Entries will be judged by a panel of humanists, looking for honesty and positive impact on the mind of a curious eight-year-old child. "Think, Virginia" might be a good starting point.

\$300 First Prize
\$200 ×2 Second Prizes
\$100 ×3 Third Prizes

Deadline: 5 Jan 2007 Contest Rules and Details: AdultThought.ucsd.edu

Yes, Virginia -- *The New York Sun* -- September 21, 1897

Dear Editor: I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in The Sun, it's so.' Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia O'Hanlon

Virginia, your little friends are *wrong*. They have been affected by the scepticism of a sceptical age. They do not *believe* except they *see*. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there *is* a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no child-like faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in *Santa Claus*! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

[Francis Church]

Science and Judeo-Christian Scripture

“The Church says the Earth is flat. But I know that it is round. For I have seen the shadow on the Moon. And I have more faith in a shadow than in the Church.” -- Ferdinand Magellan

“...For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.” Eccl 1:18

SCRIPTURE:

Universe, Earth, and Man created in their present form 6000 years ago

[Oct. 22, 4004 BC per Bishop Ussher]

A global flood killed all human and animal life 5000 years ago, except those in Noah's Ark.

Man is created in the image of God; but woman led Man into the sin of knowledge.

SCIENCE:

Visible Universe ~14 Billion yrs

Tree rings ~ 10,000 y

Ice Bores, C¹⁴ ~ 50,000 y

Plate tectonics ~100 Million y

DNA and Evolution is the core of modern Biology

The Bible is consistently wrong with regard to all substantive scientific issues. The early Christian Church opposed the development of science through imprisonment and death. During the Dark Ages, the Muslims supported science, and were the custodians of earlier Greek knowledge; the Crusades heralded the end of this flowering.

The European Enlightenment developed despite the oppression of Church orthodoxy, leading to our modern world. Two key ideas were Geological Time, inconceivable 2000 years ago; and belief based on empirical tests (science), independent of faith or superstition.

The Christian Wedges

Modern Christians choose to defend the faith through

- 1) a fervent base of Fundamentalists, who take Scripture to be the literal word of God and thereby reject all modern science and moral reasoning; and
- 2) “Wedge Issues” such as Sexuality and Evolution, where nationally funded obfuscation can make progress against modernity.

This is exemplified by, "Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture [which] seeks nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies."

<<http://www.antiEvolution.org/features/web.html>>

“If we view the predominant materialistic science as a giant tree, our strategy is intended to function as a ‘**wedge**’ that, while relatively small, can split the trunk when applied at its weakest points.

“Governing Goals: -- To defeat **scientific** materialism and its destructive moral, cultural and political legacies. -- To replace materialistic explanations with the **theistic** understanding that nature and human beings are created by God. -- To see design theory permeate our religious, cultural, moral and **political** life.”

It may seem strange that the Wedge attacks modern science, which is arguably the healthiest part of modern culture. However, scientists are generally too busy to fight back, and the American public is woefully uninformed:

Half the public thinks that humans lived with dinosaurs; only 1/3 can identify DNA as a key to heredity; half believe in Creationism. In contrast, Creationism is believed by about 5% of the Japanese public, and by 0.14% of earth and life science academics. [www.APS.org/apsnews/105/100518.cfm]

The University community will be well served if Intelligent Design helps clarify the nature of the current U.S. Culture Wars. The Political Right seeks to eliminate the social programs of the New Deal, allied with the Christian Right's agenda to reverse the Enlightenment. Humanists seek to form a just society based on human desires, needs and aspirations, balancing individual freedom with responsibility.