

**Is There a Santa Claus?**

The following purports to be a letter written to the editor of the New York Sun:

"Dear Editor:—I am eight 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, 115 West 95th Street."

The editor replies as follows:

"Virginia, your little friends are all wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age, and do not believe except they see, and think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love, generosity and devotion exists, and you know they abound and give to your life its 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. We would have no child-like faith then, no poetry and romance to make tolerant this existence. We should have no enjoyment except in sense and sight. Eternal light with which childhood fills 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 all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see him coming down, what would it 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 which no one can see. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside the curtain and view the supernatural 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 thousand times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

The above was copied with evident approval by the Kansas City Star, and the Freethought Ideal rebukes these dishonest editors as follows:

"No wonder the Christian people grovel in superstition and ignorance as long as one of the leading newspapers of the world prints such outrageous lies for children to read, and then to be endorsed by another leading paper of the world. Both the editor of the New York Sun and of the Kansas city Star are contemptible frauds to print such stuff for truth. They also know they are poisoning the minds

of the innocent with religious ignorance, superstition, prejudice, dogma and myth that has already cost billions of dollars and the precious lives of millions of people, besides untold sorrows, miseries and crimes—all in the name of Christianity.

"Here a little girl of eight asked for the truth, and was given a contemptible lie in its stead. Oh, truth! billions of lies are told in thy name for the benefit of Christianity.

"Who but a fool nowadays believes in ghosts, fairies, and the like? Yet these lying editors try to make children believe in them.

"Yes, we agree in one thing, that this infernal deception will continue ages, especially if such fools or deceivers remain in the newspaper field. No sane editor would attempt to mislead his readers unless he sees a vast compensation in it for doing so, and in such case he would be dishonest.

"Gentlemen, let truth be your motto and such ignorance will find its way into oblivion, where it should have been ages ago."

**Opening the Pearly Gates.**

The priests, rabbis, preachers, bishops and scribes around New York city are in a state of upheaval over Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott's scheme to let Agnostics, Mohammedans and Buddhists into paradise. A few Sundays ago, in response to a question, Dr. Abbott plainly stated that he saw no reason why honest men of these classifications could not go to heaven. As Dr. Abbott is a successor of Henry Ward Beecher in the big Plymouth church, his words bear weight among the brethren. The newspapers have taken the matter up and have been interviewing leading preachers on the subject. Of course the average preacher gets up on his hind feet and loudly demands that all honest men be sent to hell, unless they consent to believe his theological tommyrot; but it is a healthy sign of the times that a large number of the most prominent of Gotham clergymen agree with Dr. Abbott's proposition. It is, indeed, an encouraging symptom of intellectual emancipation that the leading preachers in New York dare to stand up and tell the world that honest unbelievers can go to heaven. One by one the old creeds and myths are being shattered by the idol-smashers of the times, and now we hear the death-rattle in the throat of that barbarous old dogma of "salvation by faith."

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