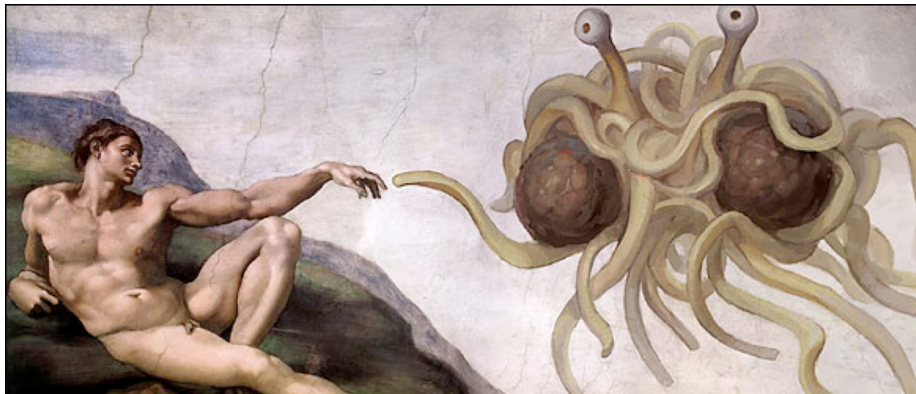


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But Is There Intelligent Spaghetti Out There?



Venganza.org

Artists, too, shall tell his tale: The Flying Spaghetti Monster, the intelligent god of Pastafarianism, with Adam, the first man.

By [SARAH BOXER](#)

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Is the super-intelligent, super-popular god known as the Flying Spaghetti Monster any match for the prophets of intelligent design?

This month, the Kansas State Board of Education gave preliminary approval to allow teaching alternatives to evolution like intelligent design (the theory that a smart being designed the universe). And President Bush and Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee both gave the thumbs up to teaching intelligent design.

Long before that, Bobby Henderson, a 25-year-old with a physics degree from Oregon State University, had a divine vision. An intelligent god, a Flying Spaghetti Monster, he said, "revealed himself to me in a dream."

He posted a sketch on his Web site, [venganza.org](#), showing an airborne tangle of spaghetti and meatballs with two eyes looming over a mountain, trees and a stick man labeled "midgit." Prayers to the Flying Spaghetti Monster, his site says, end with "ramen," not "amen."

Then, Mr. Henderson, who says on his site that he is desperately trying to avoid taking a job programming slot machines in Las Vegas, posted an open letter to the Kansas board.

In perfect deadpan he wrote that although he agreed that science students should "hear multiple viewpoints" of how the universe came to be, he was worried that they would be hearing only one theory of intelligent design. After all, he noted, there are many such theories, including his own fervent belief that "the universe was created by a Flying Spaghetti Monster." He demanded equal time in the classroom and threatened a lawsuit.

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Photo: An early computer, the "mechanical mind" developed at MIT, 1927.

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Soon he was flooded with e-mail messages. Ninety-five percent of those who wrote to him, he said on his Web site, were "in favor of teaching Flying Spaghetti Monsterism in schools." Five percent suggested that he would be going to hell. Lawyers contacted him inquiring how serious he was about a lawsuit against the Kansas board. His answer: "Very."

This month, the news media, both mainstream and digital, jumped in. The New Scientist magazine wrote an article. So did Die Welt. Two online encyclopedias, Uncyclopedia and Wikipedia, wrote entries on the Flying Spaghetti Monster. The Web site Boingboing.net mounted a challenge: "We are willing to pay any individual \$250,000 if they can produce empirical evidence which proves that Jesus is not the son of the Flying Spaghetti Monster."

Now, Mr. Henderson says on his Web site, "over 10 million people have been touched by His Noodly Appendage." But what does that mean? When push comes to shove, will the religion that has come to be known as Pastafarianism do what it was intended to do - prove that it is ridiculous to teach intelligent design as science?

Mr. Henderson, who said in an e-mail message that his divine vision was induced by "a lack of sleep and a mounting disgust over the whole I.D. issue," has wit on his side. His god not only resembles human brains (proof, a fan writes, that "we were created in His image") but also looks like the kind of bacteria that proponents of intelligent design hold up as too complex to be the work of evolution alone.

Two dozen academics have endorsed the pasta god. Three members of the Kansas board who already opposed teaching intelligent design wrote kind letters to Mr. Henderson. Dozens of people have posted their sightings of the deity (along with some hilarious pictures). One woman even wrote in to say that she had "conceived the spirit of our Divine Lord," the Flying Spaghetti Monster, while eating alone at the Olive Garden.

"I heard singing, and tomato sauce rained from the sky, and I saw angel hair pasta flying about with little farfalle wings and playing harps," she wrote. "It was beautiful." The Spaghetti Monster, she went on, impregnated her and told her, "You shall name Him ... Prego ... and He shall bring in a new era of love."

Parody is a lot of fun. And parody begets more parody, especially on the Internet. It's contagious. But has anyone ever converted to a parody religion?

The history books show that parody isn't always the smartest strategy when it comes to persuasion. Remember Galileo? Some recent scholars say that it may not have been his science so much as his satire, "Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems," that got everyone steamed up. Under threat of death, Galileo ended up recanting his view that the earth revolves around the sun, and had to wait 350 years for vindication.

And yet the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster flourishes. It even has schisms. A rival faction, based on SPAM (Spaghetti & Pulsar Activating Meatballs), has formed. And there's bickering, Mr. Henderson said in an e-mail message, about whether the god is made of spaghetti or linguini. Those people, he noted, "give me a headache."

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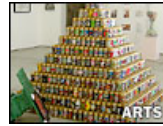
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