

## *Is Santa Claus An Idol?*

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### *An Idol in the Making*

Santa Claus knows when you have been bad or good. Santa Claus rewards the good children with presents. The bad kids get coal. Santa Claus sees you when you do wrong and when you do good. Santa Claus is able to appear simultaneously in millions of homes all on one night using what must be tantamount to supernatural powers.<sup>1</sup>

Even his common imagery in dolls and drawings matches exactly the depiction of Jesus in Revelation 1:13-15. Santa has a belt around his waste with head and hairs like wool, white as snow. He looks very similar to the image of God that Michelangelo used in the Sistine Chapel where Adam's finger is outstretched to that of God.

Santa Claus is clearly an idol except in name. He is a human-looking figure with godlike powers depicted in imagery identical to that associated with the image given God. All images and casts of Santa's form are thus clearly idols. ***You don't have to call something an idol for it to be an idol.***

The fact Santa Claus can be given a human history as originally a bishop with a good heart toward children does not exonerate the situation.

Any Christian who teaches their child of Santa is teaching their child to honor an idol. Most Protestants believe the Catholic veneration of saints is wrong, but when it comes to St. Nicholas — the one ascribed supernatural abilities and powers — the most dangerous to venerate of all — most Protestants actually *teach* their children of the special place that St. Nicholas has for them in their hearts. They can look forward to rewards from St. Nicholas if they have been good. This makes the child naturally ask St. Nicholas in their prayers to remember them and bring them what they want. Thus, most Protes-

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1. A catalog of Santa's attributes make even his parallel to Christ clear:
    1. Flying and gifts: Santa goes into the air and gives gifts. Jesus ascends on high and gives gifts (Ephesians 4:7-8).
    2. Coming soon: Santa shall descend from the sky. Jesus "shall descend" from the sky (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
    3. Rewarding works: Santa gives his gifts according to whether you are good or bad. Jesus gives his gifts according to whether you are good or bad (Revelation 20:12-13).
    4. All Seeing: Santa sees you when you are sleeping, and knows when you're awake. Jesus sees you when you are sleeping, and knows when you're awake (Proverbs 5:21).
    5. Clothing: Santa wears red clothes. Jesus wore red clothes (Revelation 19:13).
    6. Hair: Santa has hair white as snow. Jesus had hair "white as snow" (Revelation 1:14, Daniel 7:9).
    7. Entering: Santa can come in though the doors are shut. Jesus can come in though the doors are shut (John 20:19).
    8. Omniscient (all knowing): Santa knows if you've been bad or good. Jesus knows if you've been bad or good (Proverbs 15:3).
    9. Omnipresence (everywhere at one time): Santa can be in one billion homes in a 24 hour period; that is eleven hundred & fifty-seven homes per second, virtually omnipresent. Jesus is omnipresent (Matthew 18:20).
    10. Omnipotent (all powerful): Santa is powerful enough to carry presents for a billion children. That is Omnipotence. Jesus is Omnipotent (Matthew 28:18).

tant Christians actually endorse directly or indirectly worship and veneration of a saintly idol figure to whom their child naturally turns in prayer for gifts.

Interestingly, the adult believes none of these things about Santa. It is not an idol to the adult. *It is solely an idol to the child.* Yet, by the adult foisting this story on the child as truth, the adult has duped the child into idol worship.

Is your child innocent of sin that you cause? Jesus said, “But whoso shall cause to stumble (*scandalizo* in Greek, *entrap*) one of these little ones (children) which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Mat.18:6). If the adoration by the attributes you explain to your child makes them think of Santa Claus as a godlike being, you have caused your child to sin. (1 Sam.15:23.)

The millstone is a bit too heavy to bear if you ask me.

Please also notice the consequences on our entire society of Christians not only accepting this but continuing to defend it: where is the focus at Christmas today? Is it on Christ? Or Santa Claus?

### **Santa: The Most Serious Problem with Christmas**

The issue of Santa is perhaps the most serious surrounding Christmas. Arguably, the old pagan association with Christmas and the Feast of Saturnalia is gone. Perhaps the pagan association with dressing up of trees is gone. However, there is no disputing that Santa Claus has all the aspects of a pagan idol but he is not called an idol. Frankly, I doubt any idol-worshiper ever called their gods idols. I bet you they called them God, or Saturn, or Zeus, or some other name that became one of endearment. They may even have been understood as *myths* and *legends*, and things only to tell children to instill the moral virtue of some specific god. Yet, God Yahweh calls all these figures *idols* and their images *idols*.

This is why the Santa Clause myth and his imagery is pure idol worship.

Is it any defense that we can use Santa for good? Some who defend the Christmas celebration season argue as follow:

I would like to suggest that believers can capitalize on the Christmas season as a family tradition and as a learning experience much like the Old Testament Pass-over was to be used by Israel. It all depends on the spirit and attitude in which it is done.<sup>2</sup>

While that argument may help defend Christmas as a celebration if it was simply a *service* at Church, it does not justify all the trappings that now go with it, such as Santa, and his rewards of gifts, etc. Santa becomes the overarching hero of the season that everyone looks up to and anticipates his coming to reward and bless us all.

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### *A Bad Witness To Jews*

What if you are Jewish and you are considering becoming a Christian? Wouldn't you judge or evaluate your decision by the practices you see done by Christians? Would not this include the most notorious practice of all — Santa Claus lessons at Christmas?

Well every Jew is trained in a couple of points. "You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3. This is the very first of the Ten Commandments. It tells us that God doesn't like competition. But what does God mean by "no other gods?" He says: "You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them." Exodus 20:4-5.

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2. "Should Christians Celebrate Christmas?" at [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=2561](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2561) (accessed 5/31/08).

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## Conclusion

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The fascination of images/statues which represent beings with godlike abilities obviously draw attention away from God. Because any Jewish person knows this, doesn't this mean if we invited a Jew to celebrate Christmas with us, and they accepted, that we are giving not merely a bad witness, but a repulsive one?

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## *Conclusion*

In my estimation, it is now too late to rescue Christmas from its paganism. The true meaning of Christmas, if it ever had that (which is doubtful due to its pagan origins) has totally been overcome by pagan values. Its meaning is lost even by those who go to church. It requires superhuman effort to steer one's family to the correct course. All the trappings of Christmas by society pull in the opposite direction. It would probably be best to tell your family we are stopping the entire practice so we do not get sucked into the world's definition of what is happening at this time. Then Santa Claus will have as much meaning to your family as it does to a Jewish family.

If you wish to celebrate Jesus' birth, perhaps it would be best to adopt the likely true date of his birth — September 11th.<sup>3</sup> That would transform the horrible memory of that modern tragic date into a great celebration of the bread of life entering our world. This time, let's not make the mistake of our ancestors. Let's not introduce any pagan elements. Let's read the Bible, pray and sing with a focus on the story of Jesus' life.

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3. Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1991 in *The Star that Astonished the World* (1991) provided excellent evidence this is the likely day of Jesus' birth.

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*Connection to Satan?*

By the way, what other word does Santa spell if you change the letters around? He comes as the angel of light. But he is right there in front of you, and he could deceive “even the elect” as Jesus says. Is this mere coincidence? Not really.

When N.Y. Theology Professor Clement Clarke Moore’s Christmas character from his 1822/1848 poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas* (later renamed *T’Was the Night Before Christmas*) began to evolve, he was at first simply an elf called St. Nicholas. He was ninety years away from becoming Santa Claus. Moore deliberately was incorporating the concept of *Old Nick* the elf from prior lore. What was this lore? What elf was known as *Old Nick*? Before we tell you, let’s see two other influences on the character we know of as Santa Claus.

In Laurence Gardner’s *Realm of the Ring Lords: The Myth and Magic of the Grail Quest* (Fair Winds, 2003) at 181-82, he explains the origin of Santa Claus as he sets forth the old lore behind Tolkien’s imagery in the *Lord of the Rings* that relied upon this elfen imagery. Gardner has utterly no concerns about this from a Christian perspective. He approaches this totally as a scholar, and demonstrates no disturbance about what he is relating.

Gardner explains that Old Nick was here in the United States in elf form since 1822/1848 in Moore’s poem and Nast’s artwork in the 1860s while Father Christmas was in England beginning in 1888, with holly in his hair. Yet, by the period 1931 to 1964, Haddon Sundblom began to portray in monthly magazines, at the pay of Coca Cola, a figure that merged St. Nicholas and Father Christmas into a single character called Santa Claus. In agreement is Phyllis Siefker who points out: “Santa Claus is an Americanization, all right, but not of a Catholic Saint [Nicholas]. . . Despite a century of repetition, this story is simply untrue....”<sup>4</sup>

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4. Siefker, *Santa Claus, Last of the Wild Men: The Origins and Evolution of Saint Nicholas* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997) at 5,7.

Gardner explains this merger, and then tells us the competing influences which a Christian should recognize as utterly pagan:

In fact two other traditions had become merged with that of the American yuletide elf [St. Nicholas] — the first being England's own druidic Holly King, Father Christmas. More importantly, though, was the re-menting of the original Pelznichol culture — by then widely recognized as Kris Kingle — for it was actually Pelznichol, the wild hobgoblin (a counterpart of Hodekin and Robin Goodfellow, or Puck) who carried the alternative name which became Santa Claus. *Id.*, at 181.

But who was the *Old Nick* aspect of this merged figure? Why was that his name in More's poem? Gardner explains its origins, saying the character had nothing in common with the bishop of that name, but instead a very different figure which should disturb Christians:

To understand how this transpired, we need to go back in history again to Europe where Pelznichol was so called because he was a *nick* (a sprite). Consequently, ***one of his familiar names was Old Nick***. So, from the moment that Clement Clark More's Christmas character appeared, 'dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,' the beginning of ***a merger was apparent between his St. Nicholas*** and the other Furry Nicholas.

*Old Nick*, meanwhile, had been the very figure most associated with Pope Gregory's ***description of the devil [in the 12th Century]***, taking over totally from the earlier fallen angel depiction in medieval times, so that ***the devil was (and still is) referred to as Old Nick***.<sup>5</sup> Where did this devil live? Apparently, he lived in the far North according to the churchmen who quoted the Old Testament book of Jeremiah (1:14):

‘Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.’ So the legendary *Old Nick* (Pelznichol) supposedly came from the North Pole, just as Santa does today — having no geographical relevance to the historical St. Nicholas. *Id.*, at 182.

If you thought it could not get worse, continue reading. Gardner then explains an old historical study that demonstrates that in German legends our good St. Nicholas developed in plays a split personality. When he was *Claus*, he was the devil in German legends. The author of this historical work was none other than Jacob Grimm of Grimm’s fair tales. Gardner explains:

It is from the writings of Jacob Grimm (of the Brothers Grimm fairy tale fame) that the puzzle is finally pieced together. In his comprehensive research work entitled *Teutonic Mythology* Grimm explains that, in the course of Christmas plays of the Middle Ages, it was common for a saintly bishop (generally St. Nicholas) to develop a split personality within the plot. While the traditionally benevolent saint would remain in character, his alter ego would degenerate into an additionally scripted figure of opposition akin to Pelznichol—a **wild satanic creature called Claus**. *Id.*, at 183.<sup>6</sup>

Gardner greets the irony and the intention behind calling the final character *Santa Claus*.

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5. The quote of Grimm appears also in Siefker, *Santa Claus, Last of the Wild Men: The Origins and Evolution of Saint Nicholas* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997) at 69, but she has “Clobes” not “Claus.” Yet, “Clobes” is how a German font would appear to us — *aus* with an umlaut could appear to a translator as *obe*, but the underlying German word is *Claus*. Gardner apparently recognizes this font misreading. Corroborating that Old Nick stands for *the devil* is *The Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* by J. Gordon Melton (Thomson Gale, 2003) which explains at 650 about the term “Old Nick” that it is “A well-known British name of the Devil. It seems probable that this name is derived from the Dutch Nikken, the devil....”



And so it was that, when the Holly King, St. Nicholas, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, and Pelz nichol merged into the one all-embracing character, it was the *Old Nick* alter ego from the Christmas plays who finally reigned supreme. It was he who determined the Yuletide elf's name for all time for he was the '**Satan Claus,**' or as he has become better known (*by way of strategic anagrammatical switch* from the original satanic definition to a more acceptable saintly style), **Santa Claus.** *Id.*, at 183.

Gardner is not alone in his historic revelation of Santa Claus originating in mythology of Satan. In a chapter entitled "Satan Dons Furs," in Phyllis Siefker's *Santa Claus, Last of the Wild Men: The Origins and Evolution of Saint Nicholas* (McFarland, 1997), she explains Grimm's discoveries in *Teutonic Mythology* and the origin in myths about Satan. *Id.*, at 68-69. Siefker unlike Gardner is alarmed at the connections. She concludes:

The fact is that **Santa and Satan are alter egos**, brothers; they have the **same origin**. . . On the surface, the two figures are polar opposites, but underneath they share the same parent, and both retain many of the old symbols associated with their 'father' . . . From these two paths, he arrived at both the warmth of our fireplace and in the flames of hell. *Id.*, at 6.

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6. This split personality was also present in the stories of Nikolass or Klaus in the 1700s of Germany: "Black Pete, the 'grandfather' of our modern Santa Claus. Known in Holland as Zwarte Piet, this eighteenth-century German version, is—like his ancient shamanic ancestor—still horned, fur-clad, scary, and less than kind to children. Although portrayed as the slave helper of Saint Nicholas, the two are, in many villages, blended into one character. This figure often has the name *Nikolass* or *Klaus*, but has the swarthy appearance of the Dark Helper." (Renterghem, Tony van. *When Santa Was a Shaman* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1995) at 98.)

See also, Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* (London, 1888) Vol. IV at 1703 ("St. Claus throws rotten apples up")

Would there actually be an intention of hiding the devil in plain sight? To encourage us to worship *Santa* Claus because it is also an anagram for *Satan*? Blavatsky who founded the New Age movement in America the early 1870s openly endorsed worship of Satan in her journal *Lucifer*. Gail Riplinger writes in her exposure, *New Age Versions*, on the use of anagrams in the occult world:

Lucifer's True Identity as Satan is Revealed as the Anagram, a Transposition of Letters, To Obscure It. 'Blinds,' as esoterics call them, include scrambling the letters of a name to hide the true meaning of a word from the uninitiated. (Gail Riplinger, *New Age Versions*, at 52.)

Because everything points to an American origin in the early 1900s of *Santa Claus*, as an amalgam of various figures known in Europe as the devil, and the name *Santa* is an anagram for *Satan*, it is not as far-fetched as it may seem. Riplinger suggests it is a realistic concern:

Gods of the New Age include Sanatan and Sanatsiyata, . . . New Agers say each name is 'concealed anagrammatically' 'and are aliases,' and are 'an anagram used for Occult' purposes. ***Is Santa, the great usurper of Christ's attention at Christmas, an anagram?*** 'Ole Nick' is listed among the fallen angels or devils in the *Dictionary of Fallen Angels*. (Gail Riplinger, *New Age Versions*, at 52.)

Whether Santa is an anagram for Satan, there are enough other connections to a devil in its origin in the original mythology used in the United States that it supports expelling Santa from our homes. He has all the appearances of an idol, which should be enough to close the issue. Yet, if we needed any more confirmation, the spiritual lineage of Santa and the possibility of an anagram should squelch any further habit of using Santa as an entertainment tool with children.

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*Rappers Even Know It*

There is a song called *Holiday Madness* by Kam with lyrics that reveal intuition alone can establish what it takes scholars pages of discussion to prove. This song says:

You allow your child to worship a Satan.

Better known as Santa.

Claws in your pocket from L.A. to Atlanta.

Holiday madness.

A whole day dedicated to the devil.

...

I never read about him in the Bible.

The ... little pagan idol.

No wonder my mind is so twisted.

But thank God my church was not broke-wristed.

Even though I never went.

I know I can still repent.

....

October 31st is my favorite.

....

But who ... started that?

A whole day dedicated to the devil.

That's just one of several.

Most people don't think.

But America needs to see a shrink for her holiday madness.<sup>7</sup>

If a rapper can see it without a seminary education, then perhaps everyone will realize, with a little support, that it is time to stop smoking from Old Nick's pipe.

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7. <http://www.mtv.com/music/artist/kam/541519/lyrics.jhtml> (used under fair use).