

Jesus Christ, Yes! Santa Claus, No!

The end of an age of selfishness, if not of egocentricity may be at hand. Already a group of Negroes is protesting the taking over of what used to be a sacred holiday by large commercial establishments. But it is not only this sacred holiday, but all sacred holidays that have been smothered by an unwarranted commercialism.

The true religion of the times is that of the ancient god, Mercury, i.e. the god of the markets and market-places. There is nothing especially unwholesome in such a religion. It still persists in various forms in the “underdeveloped” parts of the world. The unwholesomeness comes when grand principles, even what have been called divine revelations are smothered in encouraging gift purchases to satisfy the desire natures.

All founders of all faiths stressed the control of the desire nature—not its entire obliteration, but its control. But the pseudo-science of economics has emphasized more than anything else the fulfillment of desires. And pragmatically this might not be so objectionable if it brought us security or joy or peace. It has not. An Alan Watts might write, *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, but who really wants that?

Orthodoxy in religion assumes that if one only self-proclaims devotion one is automatically exempt from practicing the moral code established by the founder of his own faith. Several are the faiths but the moral teachings of the various prophets and saints are remarkably similar. Orthodoxies also resemble each other:

- a. Our founder alone and nobody else presented such a code.
- b. Our devotion to our founder exempts **us** from fulfilling his commandments.
- c. Our ancestral behavior patterns establish a norm which we must not break.

In the Orient we do not find Christmas trees and Santa Claus and a number of practices and superstitions for which there is no biblical premise. So-called “fundamentalism,” while declaring for a verbal interpretation of the scriptures at a most narrow outlook, has nonetheless permitted a number of pagan institutions to creep into our society. Not only that it also limits the outlook to folklore traditions, the origins of which are most obscure, to say the least.

And where has it brought us? To war, to riots, to factionalisms, to dissatisfaction!

We are now fighting a war in a foreign land to introduce Santa Claus in place of the native cults. We do not so verbalize it, but everything demonstrates it is true. And a lot of us do not want that! True, there have been great efforts in the past to force our religion, whatever it be, on unbelievers. But now we are fighting to compel peoples with long lines of culture behind them, to the Hobsonian choice of Santa Claus or “Marx-Leninism” (which often has the same relation to Marx and Lenin as practicing religion has to the teachings of Jesus Christ).

Today we see the rise of “world” outlooks. Everything must have a “world” outlook. You can scan the phone book and magazine advertisements and find this “world” organization and that one, all ignoring the existence of each other. And if we examine closely, we find that one such group is anxious only to give, to help, to extend hand and heart. Another one is working for democracy and equality. But another has come out blatantly and uncompromisingly for Santa Claus! And their

practice is to seek money and membership in a corporation whose board has been carefully selected. And they assume that if they can only universalize Santa Claus, with themselves in the driver's seat, that we shall have "one world!"

Have we ever tried to put the Sermon on the Mount, or even the Beatitudes into practice? Because there is Truth behind them, many people, more and more are having demonstrations and there is some evidence that these demonstrations, against war, and sometimes against poverty and injustice, are really demonstrations **for** the Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount.

"Only in America" we have forms of Buddhism that are not only far removed from the teachings of Gautama Siddhartha but even deride them. You can see older people going to such meetings—of quite different natures, but all agreeing in ignoring or deriding the actual teachings of Lord Buddha. Instead of controlling the desire nature as he taught, full vent is given to it. And "only in America" this may be called "Buddhism."

It is the same ethos which has substituted "tricks-and-treat" blackmail for All Saints Day. And once this trend has started and encouraged, there is no end. Our temples today are department stores, not churches, or shrines. If we were consistent we should be having our services in such edifices.

Envy, the desire nature and even the passions are encouraged in the name of the Prince of Peace! The institutions of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are largely the results of either pagan infiltrations or commercial growth. Love, brotherhood, generosity, where are they?

One suggests that everybody learn to sing and practice Adam's "O Holy Night."