**[The Economics of Christmas](https://andreasmoser.wordpress.com/2010/12/23/economics-of-christmas/)**

Posted on [23 December 2010](https://andreasmoser.wordpress.com/2010/12/23/economics-of-christmas/)by [Andreas Moser](https://andreasmoser.wordpress.com/author/andreasmoser/)

Some are looking forward to the Christmas season as the nicest time of the year, others are dreading it, I mostly choose to [ignore it](https://andreasmoser.wordpress.com/2010/12/13/why-i-hate-christmas/" \o "Why I hate Christmas. (Or used to.)" \t "_blank). As an aspiring [student of Economics](https://andreasmoser.wordpress.com/2010/11/27/bsc-development-and-economics-at-lse/" \o "BSc Development and Economics at LSE" \t "_blank), I also choose to subject this festive period to the following economic analysis:

**Christmas Presents**

On first sight, presents sound like a wonderful thing. You receive a surprise or something that you had always wanted, and you receive it for free. An economic benefit, surely. But it’s not that simple, because most people make presents at least in the expectation of receiving something in return (not necessarily presents though). If you never return anything, you will realise that people will stop giving to you as well. Trust me, I have noticed it myself.



What a waste!

You might still think that this underlying *quid pro quo* may put a dent in the philosophical value of Christmas presents, but it surely is normal economic behaviour. But Christmas presents are in fact quite different from other economic transactions:

1. In a usual economic transaction, the value of a product is about the same to the seller as it is to the buyer. Otherwise, they wouldn’t agree on a price.
2. With Christmas presents, **the value to the giving person is what he or she spends on the present**: 40 $ for a tie. 29 $ for a book. 30 $ for a ticket to the theatre.
3. **For the receiving person however, the value** is independent of that investment. It **is solely determined by how useful he or she will find the present**. He might only wear the tie once or twice a year. He might not read the book, for lack of interest or time, or he might have wanted to read it anyway, but wouldn’t have spent money on it and would have gotten it from the library instead. And she might be bored all the way through the theatre performance and even have to pay a bus fare or fuel to get there. In all these examples, the economic benefit to the receiving person is much less than the investment made by the giving person.
4. Thus, **economic value is destroyed**.
5. Of course, there is also the possibility of the reverse scenario: A present requiring a small economic investment might bring lots of benefit. A painting that you can finish in a day might decorate somebody’s office for a lifetime (and save him the money he would have to spend to buy a painting). A book that you bought at a flea market for 3 $ might keep someone entertained and happy for a week.
6. Countless disappointed faces under Christmas trees and the scores of people in shops after Christmas wishing to return gifts suggest that in too many instances, we are closer to the scenario described in nr. 3 than the one in nr. 5.

This blog is never about nagging, but always about constructive solutions. So we will analyse **how to increase the economic value of your Christmas present**transactions:

1. The best approach would be **not to give any presents at all**. In a free economy, people will buy what they need and want, and suppliers will produce and sell what people want. This radical approach might seem a bit heartless though.
2. **Give money** (or in the absence thereof some other freely exchangeable goods, like cigarettes in 1948 Berlin, or bullets for AK-47s in present-day Mogadishu). The receiving person will know how to get the most personal benefit out of your present and we can be certain that he will spend it to maximise his economic gain.

[](https://andreasmoser.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/schachnovelle.jpg)

Books and cigars are perfect presents – for me.

1. **Give something that everyone needs** and would have to buy for himself otherwise. Examples are bread and milk, or frozen pizzas for bachelors. This will free up the receiving person’s budget for other investments.
2. Make **wish-lists**. Let people know what you want and ask what they want. This way, everyone will be happy and we have even demonstrated that a market functions best if all information is freely available.

In line with my last suggestion, I have posted my own [wishlist](https://andreasmoser.wordpress.com/books-my-wishlist/" \o "Books: My wishlist" \t "_blank), which will even remain valid beyond Christmas.

**Christmas Travel**

I have to admit I never got the point of Christmas travel to reunite with other members of your family or clan. Surely, if you have parents to visit on Christmas, you also have them in May and August. My feelings and respect towards my parents might go up and down a bit with certain events and developments, but they are not dependent on a recurring event in a calendar.

From empirical evidence, we know the following facts about Christmas travel:

1. Far **more people than usual travel**.
2. As is normal (and foreseeable), this makes travel **more expensive** at this time of year.
3. People start their journeys relatively late (22 or 23 December at the earliest) and all want to arrive at their destinations on the evening of 24 December.
4. Christmas is in winter (at least on the northern hemisphere). Roads are blocked, sea lanes are frozen, airports are closed. This reduces the travel capacity at a time of hiked-up demand, which can only lead to chaos.

[](https://andreasmoser.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/nonsuch-park-snowball.jpg)

Engaging in economically neutral Christmas activities. At Nonsuch Park, Surrey in December 2010.

1. Because of the **winter conditions**, travellers do not have access to all the substitute options that they would have in other seasons, like going by bike or driving themselves.

We can easily detect a vicious circle of ever-decreasing supply and ever-increasing demand. The only sensible option therefore is to travel at other dates. It will be cheaper, more enjoyable and you have a higher chance of actually reaching your intended destination.

**Christmas Shopping**

As you are already getting a sense of my rather negative economic assessment of Christmas, I can see you are itching to say: “But I thought Christmas was GOOD for the economy because of all the **extra spending and increased retails sales**.”

Fair enough, some businesses do indeed make a large junk of their turnover in the two months leading up to Christmas. And Christmas is undoubtedly good for some businesses, for example those that farm and sell [Christmas trees](https://andreasmoser.wordpress.com/2010/12/14/christmas-video-treevenge/" \o "Christmas Video: Treevenge" \t "_blank), candles, *Glühwein* (mulled wine), even book stores.

More turnover for these businesses, more profit, more jobs, what can be bad about this from an economic perspective? Well, this part of Christmas does not deserve a negative ruling. But it also doesn’t deserve a positive remark. Because it is only neutral. **Christmas shopping has no positive effect on the economy**.

Why is that? Simply because any Dollar, Pound or Euro that you spend in December, you won’t spend in January or you will have saved in November. Christmas shopping does not increase spending in an economy, it just shifts your spending away from other months and away from other products and services. If this effect is positive or negative therefore depends on which spending you cut to have a party on 24 December. If you decided to forego university to save on tuition fees, it will be a terrible (dis)investment. If you decide to cut back on drug use to buy presents for your family, it will be rather positive.

**Conclusion**

* Your Christmas spending has a neutral effect.
* If you spend your money on presents, do so wisely.
* Don’t travel at Christmas!

If you do need to get together with your family over Christmas, I hope this blog will give you something a bit different to talk about at the dinner table. Enjoy the holidays!

# Increase in Holiday Shopping Indicates Increased Confidence, Experts Say

Dec. 18, 2011

By ALICIA TEJADA, TJ WINICK, and TRISH REGAN via [**WORLD NEWS**](http://abcnews.go.com/wn)



Super Saturday Shoppers Seek Deals

[**NEXT VIDEO**Celebrity Gift Ideas For Under $100](http://abcnews.go.com/Business/holiday-shopping-boost-economy/story?id=15184370)

**AUTO START: ON**| [**OFF**](http://abcnews.go.com/Business/holiday-shopping-boost-economy/story?id=15184370)

With only six days left before Christmas, holiday shoppers are flooding the malls and local stores.

Nearly half of shoppers have not finished their Christmas shopping yet, and the traditional biggest shopping days -- Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and Green Monday -- are all behind us. The outlook seems to be that it's shaping to be a robust season for the economy.

Experts say this year consumers have the upper hand, as stores opened for extended hours and online vendors offered major discounts, some even with free shipping.

Some stores called Saturday, Dec. 17 "Super Saturday," even though that name is usually reserved for the last Saturday before Christmas. The deals came early this year because Christmas Eve is actually the last Saturday before Christmas. Retailers offered the better deals earlier to get more shoppers into their stores than they would if they had waited until Dec. 24.

Frenzied shoppers hit the stores Saturday to take advantage of the kind of deals that retailers usually only offer at the last minute. Major chains including Macy's, Sears, and J.C. Penny cast out the bait, offering shoppers major discounts with up to 60 percent off some merchandise for a limited time.

"The holiday season this year favors the consumer," Ellen Davis of the National Retail Federation told ABC News. "Retailers have been very promotional, they know that the average shopper is still looking for a deal, spending on a budget, is very focused on small, discretionary items, basics and necessities."

**Holiday Shopping Impact on Economy?**

Increased holiday shopping hours, including on Thanksgiving, extended free shipping offers and more shipping days contributed to the rise in sales.

The National Retail Federation revised its holiday sales forecast upwards from 2.8 percent (which it had forecast in October) to 3.8 percent, for a record $469.1 billion.

Now while this is still below the 5.2 percent for 2010, it's above average for the past decade, and holiday shopping isn't even over.

One survey conducted by the National Retail Federation found consumers had completed less than half of their holiday shopping as of the second week in December, boosting retailers hopes.

Experts say that despite the tough job market and the weak stock and house prices, Christmas is shaping up to be surprisingly strong for retailers.

"Households are spending with some gusto," said Mark Zandi, Chief Economist for Moody's Analytics.

Zandi told ABC that increased confidence is helping both low and high income households finally start spending after long holding off, them decreasing the amount they're saving and putting that money back out in the economy.

"A solid Christmas buying season will set a very positive tone for the economy going into 2012," Zandi said.

Trish Regan, business analyst and journalist, reports that more shoppers are also using credit cards at a rate of 7.4 percent more than last year. Debit card purchases are up 3.4 percent over last year as well.

This is partly due to the increase in online shopping, since you can't pay cash online, but another reason is that people may not want to spend a lot of cash just yet, but they don't want to pass up on a good deal, Regan said.

Consumers may feel optimistic enough to buy on credit and worry about paying their debts after the new year, she said.

When it comes to the deals, though, experts warn, this may be as good as it gets.

"We are not expecting on the 23rd and 24th of December for there to be a lot of huge mark-downs," Davis said. "This is really when the prices are going to be very good, so if you're a shopper, this is the time to go out and buy."

## Statistics and facts on the Christmas Season in the U.S.

Christmas is celebrated in the United States on the 25th of December. Christmas is a civil holiday and is celebrated by an increasing number of non-Christians, and is an integral part of the holiday season. Christmas is typically the largest economic stimulus for many nations around the world as sales increase dramatically in almost all retail areas. The [United States' retail industry](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243448/holiday-retail-industry-sales-in-the-united-states/)generated over three trillion U.S. dollars during the holidays in 2013. These holiday sales reflected about [19.2 percent of the retail industries total sales](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243452/holiday-sales-as-a-percentage-of-industry-sales-in-the-us/) that year. As a result, just over [768 thousand employees were hired throughout the United States](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243461/increase-in-holiday-employment-in-the-united-states/) to compensate for the holiday rush. [The Christmas shopping season](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243495/period-when-us-consumers-began-shopping-for-the-holiday-season/) can start as early as September and some consumers begin even earlier.

The Christmas tree is considered to be the main symbol of this pagan tradition, and is an integral part of the holiday shopping season. About [33 million real Christmas trees](http://www.statista.com/statistics/209249/purchase-figures-for-real-and-fake-christmas-trees-in-the-us/) were purchased in the United States and cost, on average, about[35.30 U.S. dollars](http://www.statista.com/statistics/209238/mean-average-dollars-spent-on-rea-and-fake-christmas-trees-in-the-us/) in 2012.  
  
The economic impact of Christmas is a factor that has grown steadily throughout the United States and the world and will continue to be a significant event and key sales period for retailers and businesses.   
Photo: istockphoto.com / hanibaram

Hide

**Facts on Christmas Season in the U.S.**

[inShare](javascript:void(0);)2

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Overview of the U.S. Christmas Season** | **Values** | **Statistic** |
| [Retail industry sales in the U.S.](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243448/holiday-retail-industry-sales-in-the-united-states/) | $3.19tn | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243448/holiday-retail-industry-sales-in-the-united-states/) |
| [Holiday employment in the U.S.](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243461/increase-in-holiday-employment-in-the-united-states/) | 800k | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243461/increase-in-holiday-employment-in-the-united-states/) |
| [Holiday retail sales in the U.S.](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243439/holiday-retail-sales-in-the-united-states/) | $619.9bn | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243439/holiday-retail-sales-in-the-united-states/) |
| [Christmas holiday retail growth](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243423/growth-of-christmas-holiday-retail-sales-in-the-us-1999-2011/) | 4.1% | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243423/growth-of-christmas-holiday-retail-sales-in-the-us-1999-2011/) |
| [U.S. retail e-commerce holiday season sales](http://www.statista.com/statistics/241945/us-retail-e-commerce-holiday-season-revenue/) | $61.8bn | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/241945/us-retail-e-commerce-holiday-season-revenue/) |
| [Percentage of retailers beginning holiday promotions on October 1st](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243613/when-online-retailers-began-their-holiday-promotions-in-the-us/) | 15.4% | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243613/when-online-retailers-began-their-holiday-promotions-in-the-us/) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Christmas shopping in the U.S.** | **Values** | **Statistic** |
| [Average Christmas expenditure on gifts](http://www.statista.com/statistics/246963/christmas-spending-in-the-us-during-november/) | $781bn | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/246963/christmas-spending-in-the-us-during-november/) |
| [Average amount spent on Christmas cards](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243489/average-amount-holiday-shoppers-spent-on-merchandise-in-the-us/) | $29.14 | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243489/average-amount-holiday-shoppers-spent-on-merchandise-in-the-us/) |
| [Amount of Cyber Monday shoppers in the U.S.](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243507/amount-of-cyber-monday-shoppers-in-the-united-states/) | 122.9m | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/243507/amount-of-cyber-monday-shoppers-in-the-united-states/) |
| [Average number of holiday gifts expected by U.S. consumers](http://www.statista.com/statistics/246558/number-of-holiday-gifts-expected-to-be-purchased-by-us-consumers/) | 12.9 | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/246558/number-of-holiday-gifts-expected-to-be-purchased-by-us-consumers/) |
| [Percentage of U.S. consumers buying gifts online](http://www.statista.com/statistics/246671/venues-where-us-consumers-expect-to-buy-holiday-gifts/) | 45% | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/246671/venues-where-us-consumers-expect-to-buy-holiday-gifts/) |
| [Christmas tree retail value in the U.S.](http://www.statista.com/statistics/278007/us-christmas-tree-retail-value/) | $1.16bn | [Details →](http://www.statista.com/statistics/278007/us-christmas-tree-retail-value/) |

Embed Top Facts

# The Economic Impact of Christmas Shopping

[ustom User Avatar](http://www.teenink.com/users/J%7B.%7DTaylor)

By [J.Taylor](http://www.teenink.com/users/J%7B.%7DTaylor), Omaha, NE

[More by this author](http://www.teenink.com/search.php?smodel=all&sall_uid=67924)

[Email me when J.Taylor contributes work](javascript:void(0))



Image Credit: Chris H., Honoka'a, HI

Perhaps it’s the quintessential blend of gift giving and Christmas spirit that drives us to go shopping. Perhaps it’s the low prices or the heavily advertised new technologies and deals, or perhaps it’s the reassuring feeling of selflessness that we get when giving a gift to a family member. There are many things that lead Americans to dig into their bank accounts and go on massive spending sprees around the time of Christmas. The exchanging of gifts is one of the core aspects of the modern Christmas celebration, making the Christmas season the most profitable time of year for retailers and businesses throughout the United States.  
  
In the United States, Christmas shopping starts as early as October. Prices go down, and the number of shoppers nearly doubles during the two months leading up to December 25th. However, the best day economically to Christmas shop is without a doubt Black Friday, the day after thanksgiving. On Black Friday, prices of most retail items are cut in half and amazingly cheap deals are given. If you don’t mind camping outside of BestBuy at 2 A.M. to beat a massive crowd of eccentric shoppers looking to get their hands on a ‘50% off iPad’, then Black Friday is an excellent day for you.  
  
However, Black Friday is an even greater day for retail stores across the country. CEO’s strategically plan for Black Friday with advertising ploys and hot deals as it is their biggest pay-day of the year. Retail stores try to take advantage of shoppers who are eager to buy gifts and attempt to channel their wants with slashed prices and heavy advertising. Each year the Nation Retail Federation (NRF) conducts its Christmas Holiday Consumer Intentions survey in an effort to predict what the financial outcome will be for the upcoming Christmas season. Some of the results show annual increases in the number of shoppers. In 2011, the average amount of money that consumers plan to spend for gifts is just over $515. The average amount they plan to spend on both decorations and food is at about $142. Ninety-one percent of Americans plan to celebrate winter holidays and 76% plan to do holiday related-shopping.   
Clearly, the holiday season seems to boost shopping in the U.S, thus serving as a stimulant to the economy. Not only does Christmas shopping warm the hearts of family and friends who are gift recipients, but it also invigorates a U.S. economy that is dire need of a financial catalyst.

**The History of Christmas  
  
  
  
http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/images/audio-speaker.gif**  [Click here for audio version of this](http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/Real-Story-of-X-mas-and-New-Years-b/)

|  |
| --- |
| **I.**     **When was Jesus born?**  A.     Popular myth puts his birth on December 25th in the year 1 C.E.  B.     The New Testament gives no date or year for Jesus’ birth.  The earliest gospel – St. Mark’s, written about 65 CE – begins with the baptism of an adult Jesus.  This suggests that the earliest Christians lacked interest in or knowledge of Jesus’ birthdate.  C.     The year of Jesus birth was determined by Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian monk, “abbot of a Roman monastery.  His calculation went as follows:  a.       In the Roman, pre-Christian era, years were counted from *ab urbe condita* (“the founding of the City” [Rome]).  Thus 1 AUC signifies the year Rome was founded, 5 AUC signifies the 5th year of Rome’s reign, etc.  b.     Dionysius received a tradition that the Roman emperor Augustus reigned 43 years, and was followed by the emperor Tiberius.  c.       Luke 3:1,23 indicates that when Jesus turned 30 years old, it was the 15th year of Tiberius reign.  d.      If Jesus was 30 years old in Tiberius’ reign, then he lived 15 years under Augustus (placing Jesus birth in Augustus’ 28th year of reign).  e.       Augustus took power in 727 AUC.  Therefore, Dionysius put Jesus birth in 754 AUC.  f.        However, Luke 1:5 places Jesus’ birth in the days of Herod, and Herod died in 750 AUC – four years *before* the year in which Dionysius places Jesus birth.  D.     Joseph A. Fitzmyer – Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at the Catholic University of America, member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and former president of the Catholic Biblical Association – writing in the Catholic Church’s official commentary on the New Testament[[1]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn1" \o "), writes about the date of Jesus’ birth, “Though the year [of Jesus birth is not reckoned with certainty, the birth did not occur in AD 1.  The Christian era, supposed to have its starting point in the year of Jesus birth, is based on a miscalculation introduced ca. 533 by Dionysius Exiguus.”  E.      The *DePascha Computus*, an anonymous document believed to have been written in North Africa around 243 CE, placed Jesus birth on March 28.  Clement, a bishop of Alexandria (d. ca. 215 CE), thought Jesus was born on November 18.  Based on historical records, Fitzmyer guesses that Jesus birth occurred on September 11, 3 BCE.    **II.**     **How Did Christmas Come to Be Celebrated on December 25?**  A.    Roman pagans first introduced the holiday of Saturnalia, a week long period of lawlessness celebrated between December 17-25.  During this period, Roman courts were closed, and Roman law dictated that no one could be punished for damaging property or injuring people during the weeklong celebration.  The festival began when Roman authorities chose “an enemy of the Roman people” to represent the “Lord of Misrule.”  Each Roman community selected a victim whom they forced to indulge in food and other physical pleasures throughout the week.  At the festival’s conclusion, December 25th, Roman authorities believed they were destroying the forces of darkness by brutally murdering this innocent man or woman.  B.    The ancient Greek writer poet and historian Lucian (in his dialogue entitled *Saturnalia*) describes the festival’s observance in his time.  In addition to human sacrifice, he mentions these customs: widespread intoxication; going from house to house while singing naked; rape and other sexual license; and consuming human-shaped biscuits (still produced in some English and most German bakeries during the Christmas season).  C.    In the 4th century CE, Christianity imported the Saturnalia festival hoping to take the pagan masses in with it.  Christian leaders succeeded in converting to Christianity large numbers of pagans by promising them that they could continue to celebrate the Saturnalia as Christians.[[2]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn2" \o ")  D.    The problem was that there was nothing intrinsically Christian about Saturnalia. To remedy this, these Christian leaders named Saturnalia’s concluding day, December 25th, to be Jesus’ birthday.  E.      Christians had little success, however, refining the practices of Saturnalia.  As Stephen Nissenbaum, professor history at the University of Massachussetts, Amherst, writes, “In return for ensuring massive observance of the anniversary of the Savior’s birth by assigning it to this resonant date, the Church for its part tacitly agreed to allow the holiday to be celebrated more or less the way it had always been.”  The earliest Christmas holidays were celebrated by drinking, sexual indulgence, singing naked in the streets (a precursor of modern caroling), etc.  F.      The Reverend Increase Mather of Boston observed in 1687 that “the early Christians who  first observed the Nativity on December 25 did not do so thinking that Christ was born in that Month, but because the Heathens’ Saturnalia was at that time kept in Rome, and they were willing to have those Pagan Holidays metamorphosed into Christian ones.”[[3]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn3" \o ")  Because of its known pagan origin, Christmas was banned by the Puritans and its observance was illegal in Massachusetts between 1659 and 1681.[[4]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn4" \o ")  However, Christmas was and still is celebrated by most Christians.  G.    Some of the most depraved customs of the Saturnalia carnival were intentionally revived by the Catholic Church in 1466 when Pope Paul II, for the amusement of his Roman citizens, forced Jews to race naked through the streets of the city.  An eyewitness account reports, “Before they were to run, the Jews were richly fed, so as to make the race more difficult for them and at the same time more amusing for spectators.  They ran… amid Rome’s taunting shrieks and peals of laughter, while the Holy Father stood upon a richly ornamented balcony and laughed heartily.”[[5]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn5" \o ")  H.     As part of the Saturnalia carnival throughout the 18th and 19th centuries CE, rabbis of the ghetto inRome were forced to wear clownish outfits and march through the city streets to the jeers of the crowd, pelted by a variety of missiles. When the Jewish community of Rome sent a petition in1836 to Pope Gregory XVI begging him to stop the annual Saturnalia abuse of the Jewish community, he responded, “It is not opportune to make any innovation.”[[6]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn6" \o ")  On December 25, 1881, Christian leaders whipped the Polish masses into Antisemitic frenzies that led to riots across the country.  In Warsaw 12 Jews were brutally murdered, huge numbers maimed, and many Jewish women were raped.  Two million rubles worth of property was destroyed.    **III.**     **The Origins of Christmas Customs**  A.     **The Origin of Christmas Tree** Just as early Christians recruited Roman pagans by associating Christmas with the Saturnalia, so too worshippers of the Asheira cult and its offshoots were recruited by the Church sanctioning “Christmas Trees”.[[7]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn7" \o ")  Pagans had long worshipped trees in the forest, or brought them into their homes and decorated them, and this observance was adopted and painted with a Christian veneer by the Church.  B.     **The Origin of Mistletoe** Norse mythology recounts how the god Balder was killed using a mistletoe arrow by his rival god Hoder while fighting for the female Nanna.  Druid rituals use mistletoe to poison their human sacrificial victim.[[8]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn8" \o ")  The Christian custom of “kissing under the mistletoe” is a later synthesis of the sexual license of Saturnalia with the Druidic sacrificial cult.[[9]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn9" \o ")  C.     **The Origin of Christmas Presents** In pre-Christian Rome, the emperors compelled their most despised citizens to bring offerings and gifts during the Saturnalia (in December) and Kalends (in January).  Later, this ritual expanded to include gift-giving among the general populace.  The Catholic Church gave this custom a Christian flavor by re-rooting it in the supposed gift-giving of Saint Nicholas (see below).[[10]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn10" \o ")  D.     **The Origin of Santa Claus**  a.       Nicholas was born in Parara, Turkey in 270 CE and later became Bishop of Myra.  He died in 345 CE on December 6th.  He was only named a saint in the 19th century.  b.      Nicholas was among the most senior bishops who convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE and created the New Testament.  The text they produced portrayed Jews as “the children of the devil”[[11]](http://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/Christmas_TheRealStory.htm" \l "_ftn11" \o ") who sentenced Jesus to death.  c.       In 1087, a group of sailors who idolized Nicholas moved his bones from Turkey to a sanctuary in Bari, Italy.  There Nicholas supplanted a female boon-giving deity called The Grandmother, or Pasqua Epiphania, who used to fill the children's stockings with her gifts.  The Grandmother was ousted from her shrine at Bari, which became the center of the Nicholas cult.  Members of this group gave each other gifts during a pageant they conducted annually on the anniversary of Nicholas’ death, December 6.  d.      The Nicholas cult spread north until it was adopted by German and Celtic pagans.  These groups worshipped a pantheon led by Woden –their chief god and the father of Thor, Balder, and Tiw.  Woden had a long, white beard and rode a horse through the heavens one evening each Autumn.  When Nicholas merged with Woden, he shed his Mediterranean appearance, grew a beard, mounted a flying horse, rescheduled his flight for December, and donned heavy winter clothing.  e.       In a bid for pagan adherents in Northern Europe, the Catholic Church adopted the Nicholas cult and taught that he did (and they should) distribute gifts on December 25th instead of December 6th.  f.        In 1809, the novelist Washington Irving (most famous his *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and*Rip Van Winkle*) wrote a satire of Dutch culture entitled *Knickerbocker History*.  The satire refers several times to the white bearded, flying-horse riding Saint Nicholas using his Dutch name, Santa Claus.  g.       Dr. Clement Moore, a professor at Union Seminary, read *Knickerbocker History*, and in 1822 he published a poem based on the character Santa Claus: “Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.  The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in the hope that Saint Nicholas soon would be there…”  Moore innovated by portraying a Santa with eight reindeer who descended through chimneys.  h.       The Bavarian illustrator Thomas Nast almost completed the modern picture of Santa Claus.  From 1862 through 1886, based on Moore’s poem, Nast drew more than 2,200 cartoon images of Santa for *Harper’s Weekly*.  Before Nast, Saint Nicholas had been pictured as everything from a stern looking bishop to a gnome-like figure in a frock.  Nast also gave Santa a home at the North Pole, his workshop filled with elves, and his list of the good and bad children of the world.  All Santa was missing was his red outfit.  i.         In 1931, the Coca Cola Corporation contracted the Swedish commercial artist Haddon Sundblom to create a coke-drinking Santa.  Sundblom modeled his Santa on his friend Lou Prentice, chosen for his cheerful, chubby face.  The corporation insisted that Santa’s fur-trimmed suit be bright, Coca Cola red.  And Santa was born – a blend of Christian crusader, pagan god, and commercial idol.    **IV.     The Christmas Challenge**          Christmas has always been a holiday celebrated carelessly.  For millennia, pagans, Christians, and even Jews have been swept away in the season’s festivities, and very few people ever pause to consider the celebration’s intrinsic meaning, history, or origins.         Christmas celebrates the birth of the Christian god who came to rescue mankind from the “curse of the Torah.”  It is a 24-hour declaration that [Judaism](http://www.simpletoremember.com/) is no longer valid.          Christmas is a lie.  There is no Christian church with a tradition that Jesus was really born on December 25th.          December 25 is a day on which Jews have been shamed, tortured, and murdered.          Many of the most popular Christmas customs – including Christmas trees, mistletoe, Christmas presents, and Santa Claus – are modern incarnations of the most depraved pagan rituals ever practiced on earth.    Many who are excitedly preparing for their Christmas celebrations would prefer not knowing about the holiday’s real significance.  If they do know the history, they often object that their celebration has nothing to do with the holiday’s monstrous history and meaning.  “We are just having fun.”  Imagine that between 1933-45, the Nazi regime celebrated Adolf Hitler’s birthday – April 20 – as a holiday.  Imagine that they named the day, “Hitlerday,” and observed the day with feasting, drunkenness, gift-giving, and various pagan practices.  Imagine that on that day, Jews were historically subject to perverse tortures and abuse, and that this continued for centuries.  Now, imagine that your great-great-great-grandchildren were about to celebrate Hitlerday.  April 20tharrived. They had long forgotten about Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen.  They had never heard of gas chambers or death marches.  They had purchased champagne and caviar, and were about to begin the party, when someone reminded them of the day’s real history and their ancestors’ agony.  Imagine that they initially objected, “We aren’t celebrating the Holocaust; we’re just having a little Hitlerday party.”  If you could travel forward in time and meet them; if you could say a few words to them, what would you advise them to do on Hitlerday?  On December 25, 1941, Julius Streicher, one of the most vicious of Hitler’s assistants, celebrated Christmas by penning the following editorial in his rabidly Antisemitic newspaper, *Der Stuermer*:  If one really wants to put an end to the continued prospering of this curse from heaven that is the Jewish blood, there is only one way to do it: to eradicate this people, this Satan’s son, root and branch.  It was an appropriate thought for the day.  This Christmas, how will we celebrate? |