



# **Santa Claus Pagan Origins of Everyday Christmas Traditions and Beliefs**

*O. M. Spencer*

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Kindle version of vintage monograph originally published in 1873. Contains lots of great info and illustrations seldom seen today. A great look at the story behind all of our Christmas traditions. Did you know? The Christmas Tree came from Germany, our Santa Claus from Holland ... or when you threaten your kids with coal if they were bad, did you know that many old world nations had a bugabear traveling with St Nicholas to pass out rods, or beatings to the bad children?

Absolutely amazing account of Christmas's pagan origins.

Read excerpt -

The custom thus established in the Occident spread rapidly; particularly through the efforts of St. Chrysostom, who makes mention of it in one of his sermons as early as 386. Fifty years later it was introduced into Egypt. Here, however, it came into collision with the feast of Epiphany, which was already celebrated, as the feast of the birth and baptism of Christ, on the 6th of January, the birthday of Osiris, the Egyptian sun-god.

In Germany the Christmas holidays appear to have been substituted for the old pagan festival of the "Twelve Nights," which extended from the 25th of December to the 6th of January. The Twelve Nights were religiously observed by numerous feasts, and were regarded by the ancient Germans as among the holiest and most solemn of their festivals. Regarding, in common with other pagan nations, the active forces of nature as living personifications, they symbolized the conflict of natural forces by the battle of the gods and giants. Thus in the old German mythology Winter is represented as the ice-giant, heartless, inexorable, the enemy of all life, and the relentless foe of gods and men. By the aid of his powerful steed Swadilfari, the all-stiffening north wind, he constructs a formidable castle of ice, which threatens to inaugurate the reign of Night and Winter, of Darkness and eternal Death. Then follows the conflict of giants and gods, of Winter with Spring, of North Wind with South Wind, until Thor, the god of the thunder-storm, demolishes with his thunder-stone the castle of the ice-giant, when Freija, the beautiful goddess of spring, resumes her former sway, and life and light and prosperity return.

But the restless giants ever invent new stratagems to regain their lost supremacy. Thum, the prince of the giants, robs the sleeping Thor of his dreaded sledge-hammer, and hides it eight leagues under the earth. This insures the reign of Winter for the eight months of the year when the thunderstorm slumbers, until Thor, accompanied by Loki, the spring wind, again demolishes with his recaptured hammer the castle of the ice-king, when the Winter Storm is again compelled reluctantly to retire. This eternal conflict of the opposing forces of summer and winter frequently occurs under various forms in the German mythology, and constituted one of the most striking features of the old German poesy, as the beautiful legend of Idunna and her apples and the giant Thiassi, in the poem of "Edda."

In the midst of this struggle of the conflicting forces of nature the Germans and other Northern peoples celebrated the festival of the Twelve Nights. This festival, as already stated, commenced on the 25th of December. Though in the depth of midwinter, when the ice-king was in the full flush of victory, it was

nevertheless the turning-point in the conflict of natural forces. The sun-god having reached the goal of the winter solstice, now wheeled his fiery steeds, and became the sure precursor of the coming victory of light and life over darkness and death.

But while a pagan festival might be transformed into a Christian holiday, there was no place in a system of theism, unless in its poesy, for the pantheon of pagan gods. These were therefore either relegated to oblivion, or, metamorphosed into demons, witches, and ghosts, are now supposed to have special power to work mischief, particularly during the Christmas.

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