



JIM C'S QUIZ OF THE WEEK

MONDAY – 12/11/2006

HOW DID "SANTA CLAUS" ORIGINATE? PART 2

During the 16th century Protestant Reformation, both reformers and counter-reformers took a dim view of saints, and they actively tried to stamp out St. Nicholas-related customs. The Puritans in America made it illegal to mention St. Nicolas' name, and the people were not allowed to exchange gifts, light a candle, or sing Christmas carols.

By the 19th century, St. Nicholas (the gift-giver) was superseded in much of Europe by Christkindlein (the Christ child), who delivered gifts in secret to the children. The Christkindlein accompanied Nicholas-like figures with other names (such as "Père Noël" in France), or he travelled and delivered gifts with a dwarf-like helper called "Pelznickel" (a.k.a. "Belsnickle") or Nicholas with furs.

The gifts found by children the next morning were credited to Christkindlein, who had come while everyone was asleep.

Soon, however, the visible Belsnickle began to overshadow the non-visible Christkindlein. Eventually, Christkindlein became Kriss Kringle, and all three (including St. Nicholas) were combined into the image that we all now know as Santa Claus.

Moment of Zen: Christmas, it has always been about gift-giving