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Christmas—Little More Than Pagan

THE TREND toward denigration of the Christmas season by diluting its religious significance may have reached a new low.

This year a stranger could easily get the idea from the way it is celebrated that Christmas is based primarily upon material rather than spiritual themes.

Commercialization is only one of several aspects that detracts from the central purpose, which is to celebrate the advent of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God.

Formerly those engaged in Christmas for profit at least recognized this in their promotions. Increasingly, the trend has been to eliminate references to the Christ child in seasonal advertising and merchandise, and also in Christmas television shows.

The practice of gift-giving apparently developed out of spontaneous generosity. Gifts were brought by the Wise Men who visited the baby Jesus. His followers later exchanged gifts to express love, fulfill needs and to add joy to the celebra-

tion.

Out of this grew various legends of magic built around St. Nicholas, Santa Claus and Mr. Christmas. Children are told that Santa brings gifts at Christmas and the Bunny lays eggs at Easter.

Such tales may confuse religious ideas. One small boy asked another if he believed in the devil. "Naw," the other replied. "It's just like Santa Claus. It's your father."

For many people, drinking parties symbolize the spirit of Christmas. Hardly anything could be less appropriate to the true meaning. At a time when mankind's spiritual joy should be at a peak, it doesn't seem proper that one should muddle his mind with intoxicating beverages, drugs or even overeating.

Nevertheless, feasting and happy family reunions have long been integral parts of both religious and non-religious celebrations, and no doubt will continue. Mostly, they are very good.

An example of the dilution of Christmas appears in greeting

cards. Shoppers find little more sentiment on them than "Season's Greetings" or "Happy Holidays" to express their joy for the meaning of Christ's birth.

The custom of mailing cards is declining because of the cost of postage, but Christians have a better reason to stop. Why send such banal messages as appear on the ornate cards offered?

Christmas trees are said to have been introduced by Martin Luther, who related evergreens to eternal life. It seems that decorated trees may be more adored than the Christ-child.

Christmas trees, the exchange of gifts, the sending of greetings, family festivities and even some of the legends may be acceptable adornments for a happy season.

Nevertheless, if tinsel and colored lights, neckties and diamond bracelets are all that Christmas means, it has lost its significance. Without celebrating the birth of Christ, Christmas may be little more than a pagan holiday!