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Before the 1840s, Christmas was about the birth of Jesus, get-togethers with family and friends, and celebrating the holiday with favorite foods.

According to the Pew Research Center, 33 percent of those who were surveyed dread the commercialism/materialism of the holiday and 73 percent of people agree that the true meaning of Christmas is being phased out in favor of new gadgets, new clothes, and new stuff. www.pewforum.org.

What happened? Do we blame commercialized Christmas on the “Coca-Cola” Santa Claus that styled and profiled in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1920?

Dangling the carrot of instant gratification on television commercials, our children beg and plead for the latest, shiniest, and most expensive toys.

Many adults teach small children that a magical being in a red suit that lives at the North Pole brings presents on Christmas Eve—lots of presents—too many presents. Fostering greed and materialism in our youngest to our oldest citizens, the holiday is more about receiving than giving. Does happiness equal gifts? Ask an American teenager. Is Santa teaching our children to define contentment as possessions?

Do we blame major retailers for product propaganda? Purchase our merchandise. Put money in our pockets! Make our holiday merrier than yours. Christmas mania madness is about money—more money for retailers and manufacturers. Spend. Spend. Spend.

Jewelry advertisements up the pressure for romancers to find the perfect gift. Love is connected to the diamond carat. Don't sweat your debt. Your sweetheart needs that ring bling.

Buy more lights, tinsel and wrapping paper. Acquire more decorations. Add to your collection of Santa figurines. More. More. More.

And buy teeny tiny collectible toys as stocking stuffers. Manufacturers know that collectibles rake in the cash. Buy shoddy objects that break and are thrown away before the New Year holiday.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday every year. Sales galore! Marketing mania reigns supreme. Deck the halls with your credit card's high interest rate. Fa la la la la la la la. Line our pockets with your hard-earned cash. When you overspend and can't pay your rent or utility bills, we don't give a rat's patootie. Glam and glitter draws you in so we can dig into your saving's account. It's a ho-ho holiday hoax. And a debt disaster. Merry scary Christmas.

Profit is not a dirty word, but hoodwinking the public is dirty. And using Santa Claus as bait to catch more profit is dirty. What about the American economy? Doesn't consumerism feed the need? Yes, but follow the money trail. Who gains and gets the most? When did "budget" become a dirty word? Consumers, hop away from the holiday hype.

What about buying American-made? Instead of items from communist countries that violate human rights. Watch out for counterfeit and knockoff products. And step away from cheap plastic crap that litters our landfills. Buyers beware of totalitarian countries that poison products for profit.

Remember the epic Cabbage Patch Kids craze of 1983. The evening news showed customers surging into stores to grab the desired dolls and engaging in hitting, shoving, trampling. The Cabbage Patch Kid, the iconic symbol of toy obsession, depicted supply and demand. “My kid must have a doll! I’ll pay any amount.” God bless us two and not you.

Holiday stampedes for the flavor-of-the-year electronics became vogue. Camp-out in long lines; rush the entrance, dash for deals. Be the first to buy the hottest gadgets! Competitive consumerism is rampant.

The top Christmas toys list is announced every year. Promotional codes, coupons and sales suck buyers into the sea of competition for the popular toys. The stores shelves are emptied long before Christmas day. Major toy store owners smile all the way to the depository. Manufacturers laugh all the way to their stockpiles of gold coins.

Frenzied parents engage in bidding wars on eBay for prized products. “I am a failure if I can’t buy what my child wants!”

Consume. Consume. Consume. Then discard items when they go out of style. Drop off boxes of stuff to thrift stores so you can reduce the consumerism guilt which allows us to buy more stuff the following Christmas. Buy. Buy. Buy. I must have it. I cannot live without it. I cannot be the only one without it. Whatever your “it” is.

This is my Conspiracy Theory of the secret society of Santa retailers, merchants and manufacturers. Have you noticed how much earlier malls and stores decorate and promote sales? Play Christmas music? Bombard you with bargains?

Are you feeling green over spending too much green? Then halt impulse-buying. And cease rushing madly to the malls on Christmas Eve. Stop the reckless spending—lock up your wallet. Make moderation your mantra.

Put the Santa Claus spending craze back into the box. Close the lid. Step away.

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