

Rabbi Club of Omaha



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A RABBI APPRECIATES XMAS

Dec. 21, 1960

There are many times when, difficult as it may be, a detached and objective view of ourselves is helpful.

For the sake of our health we submit ourselves to the scrutiny and probings of our physicians.

And sometimes they tell us things we do not want to hear.

For the sake of sound planning, we consult legal advisors who with keen eye examine our conformity to the laws and the mores of society.

They, too, often tell us what we would rather not hear.

The truest friend is, on occasion, the one who tells us the truth where others hide behind pleasantries.

And the Truth often hurts.

None of these encounters are pleasant, but they are enriching and they make us healthier, sounder, happier people.

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Still, knowing this, how seldom we seek the Physician of the Soul to learn the Truth of Faith and to face squarely the lessons of here and of eternity.

How reluctant we are to see ourselves as God sees us! And yet see us He does. In the Prayer-book of the Synagogue there is this prayerful admission: "Thou, O God, searches the innermost recesses and probest the deepest impulses of the heart. Naught is concealed from Thee nor hidden from Thine eyes.

I think all of us catch a glimpse of that view in this season of the year at this time of Xmas.

— Tho Xmas as a religious festival has no formal association with Jewish life or practice; still, its mood and lesson enfolds Jew and non-Jew perforce.

— The profundity and depth of spiritual meaning for the Christian who stands in wonder before the retold but ever-fresh story of the birth of his Savior oerleaps the limiting walls of the Church with

a corrective but True view of our times, our society and, indeed, the manners and morals of us all.

For me appreciation of Xmas finds its source not in the superficial or the decorative or even, in the mystical.

Nor do I find the greatest power of Xmas in the affirmation of universal peace or good will or harmony to which all men ^{aspire} ~~agree~~.

Christmas tells us something we would rather not hear and ^{something} infinitely more vital; it points directly and forthrightly to an abiding conflict among us... the conflict between the material and the spiritual, between the real and the ideal, to the conflict between what we are and what we so easily could become.

Christmas is the taste of what might be in friendship and compassion, in understanding and tolerance, in giving and sharing.

Christmas is not alone the miracle of what once was, but of what can yet be, could it here and now begin.

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At Christmas wonderful things happen in human relations that reflect the divine image -- like this program ~~XXXXXX~~ with my colleague, a dedicated and consecrated minister addressing himself so eloquently to the spiritual content of a Jewish festival, and with me, A Rabbi, speaking to the theme of Christianity's holy season.

Christmas has a precious difference: we are understanding rather than critical, we are compassionate rather than competitive, we love more deeply, care more realistically.

At this season men reach out across the barriers of status and authority and race and creed to grasp a hand and say "I wish you well!"

Employer and worker, master and servant, rich and poor, wise and simple ^{discover} ~~find~~ in their hearts a common concern and a grand and glorious shared humanity, which bridges their differences and unites their hearts.

If you would look for a miracle in Xmas, this is it. If you would see how wondrous might be our lives on earth, this is the pattern.

If you would be reminded of the healing balm of ^a spiritual receptivity to God's will that binds up the wounds of strife and contention; here in this seasonal Xmas mood it is unmistakeably to be found.

Christmas is the tomorrow that might yet be.

In Christmas-time we live in a new world where the fantastic and startling Truth assails us that so much of what are are -- so much of what we suffer need no longer be and so much of what we dream ^{could} ~~has~~ now and here ^{begin} ~~begun~~.

Let it then be not too late to hope and pray that what Xmas celebrates in the birth of a child in purity, innocence and redemptive promise may yet grow and mature in our own humanity as it did in his.

May ours be a continuing life of goodness and Truth that shall bring the spirit of Christmas to all tomorrows by closing, once and for all, the distance between our Faith and our Deed.

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