

12/24/57
A Jewish View of ~~X~~mas

Privilege to observe from sidelines

Eve of greatest Xtina festival.

Mark of greatness & blessing of America & maturity, wisdom and liberalism of NCC & Mr. Swanson & son to invite me, a rabbi, to comment on Xmas a festival which I do not observe.

↓
Yet May be for that very reason, just because the observance of Xmas has not been intertwined with personal experience that I may be able to see in it & hopefully to share with you a brief insight into its spirutall meaning and potential ~~a~~ for human goodness.

Perhaps the objective outside view has some merit and the mind that comes without preconceived notions may very well come closer to truth than those who follow blindly after habit.

Often observed that among my own people, those who have converted in mature years to Judaism -and therefor come to it afresh- often come with a zeal and fervor that makes the rel life of ~~some~~ born Jews appear pallid and lifeless by comparison.

And so, dear friends, I confess to you that while I am not a Xtian and while I can not call Jesus my Savior -- I do get excited about Xmas.

Quickly let me say, my excitement ~~does not~~ ^{our Xmas is not} come from our own festival of ~~Chanuka~~ ^{Chanuka} often ~~celebrated~~ (as this year) with the Xmas season nor from ~~xxxx~~ the atmosphere of hurry and excitement, decorations and

the reflection of my joy of

frantic preparations for Xmas observance
all around. ~~Not from Xmas spirit or spirit~~
about us. is the asking that moves me
Quickly let me say I am not opposed to
gift giving or receiving. We Jews
have 8 days. etc

Good tradtion: The wise men brot gifts
to the cradle of Jesus--- Bible says
nthing about returning giftsnext day--
but seriously: Gospels says specifically
that they came to worship & then they
gave gifts. *just*

Were I a Xtian minister rather than a
rabbi, were I then one of the celebrants
of Xmas rather than a Jewish teacher
permit me, dear mechandizers and sales
people to say that there is nothing I would
resent more strongly than the use of
commercialism ~~ix~~ as an end in itself
forgetting the wonder and majesty, the
mystery and deep spirituality of Xams
as the birth of the Christian savior.

My desire is your return to the joy of peace.

[I know that today will be a weariying one
for you. I don't know if you met last
years figures or not. But tonight when
the doors of your store are closed behind
you, I for one would be pleased to know
that you have entered a wholly new, a
completely different Xmas than that
of the hectic weeks and months you have
just passed thru.]

[Will not your homes be the more tranquil,
the nearness of amily & friends the more
precious, the quiet ~~and~~ spirituality of
your church the more welcome as you
leave the outer Xmas spirit behind you
and enfold the inner Xmas spirituality
within you.]

From my point of view, and I trust you will agree, there can be nothing more shocking than the wholesale transformation of the most deeply ~~pen~~ penetrating article of faith-- the birth of the Savior-- into a materialistic orgy of ~~xxx~~ sensual and physical delight.

This bothers me only because you and I Xtian and Jew are in our singularly unique ways searching for the same thing: How to know God, how to persuade people to do His will and to bring thereby an era of universal justice and peace to our troubled and sorely frightened world.

The Jew has his particular answer. We believe that man comes to know God by reaching constantly up to Him-- by the sanctification of every act of life, thru commandments and ordinances that regulate our relationship with the Almighty and with our fellowmen. What God has revealed to us is a way to search for him.

But Xtian tradition responds from the opposite point of departure. And in the birth of Jesus, God became man. (Walked and talked this earth with him, instructed him, gave him an immutable model and then died for him. (In the infant baby Jesus was God-- redeemer and savior. What to me is the wonder and mystery of Xmas, and the unique spiritual approach of Xtianity.

World never born
The identity of God and Man is not accepted by the Jewish mind, but in it I see the very opposite extreme from anything material or temporal. (It is pure spirit. In the reenactment of the Xmas story thru legend and Scripture, observance and

touch the divine. That to me, is the present which is really worth opening on Xmas day..... And once it is held in your hearts ... it is not returnable.

Ladies & Gentlemen, we are dealing here with the very core of religion.. your religion. And we have been talking about one sacred day and its message.

Again refer to ~~you~~ ^{the set of terms -}

Day after X-mas - one of ^{the} letdown - ^{of + conc.} exchanges, returns, complaints. Measure of ^{your} success = how many you don't get. Is it possible that same thing applies to the spiritual gifts ~~you~~ ^{received} on X-mas? (How much of an exchange is there of the goodwill & fellowfeeling of X-mas, for customary competition & callousness?) What is it that makes men ~~"act in a selfish way"~~ ^{act in a selfish way} their most human (& ergo most divine impulses) evaded by the birth of the baby Jesus, for less than human hatreds & prejudices. ^{as her} That same baby Jesus in the days & years following X-mas grows to manhood who ^{as her} says in the tradition of his Jewish teachers: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

With X-mas - associated: real acts of charity, food & toys to underprivileged, well organized dinner to aid needy families, home & institutional hospitality for the lonely & bereft - Gifts for those who serve us. (On X-mas men try at least to level distinctions. master-servant, employer, employee, rich & poor, wine & simple: try to say merry X-mas to each

other in sympathized human terms. ^{different} All this on X-mas - And then? Then come the

returns & exchanges: ~~only with some are you fairer~~

The words of Jesus who as infant ^{on Xmas} inspires goodness, kindness, justice & mercy, as ^{deep things} the divine prophet speaks to deaf ears & we go right on temporizing with social injustice, indulging our prejudices, ignoring our under-privileged brothers & building ever more fearful & contemptible methods of human extermination.

Such is the spiritual exchange following X-mas.

Let me then wish you not only a Merry X-mas but an understanding & containing one -

With you Jewish neighbor who finds earth best sanctified by aspirations heavenward, let X-mas impell the X-tion to recall his contribution to our common spiritual treasury

by accepting as real & lasting the greatness of the ^{Heaven} that to earth in the birth of his savior. And as the infant wails of the

^{precious} ^{child} newborn Jesus as infant in a manger warm your hearts with love & understanding, let

the nature & vital words of the ^{some} infant
grown to manhood be equally compelling as
he urges a life of compromise toward our brethren.
Truly, I say unto you, as you did it to one
of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. Matt 25:40.

This is a fearful, terrifying, dangerous world in
which we live. Also: a world of greater
promise, potential for sadness, happiness &
health than any other generation of man.

The direction - toward annihilation - or
toward life - good life lies in the
power of our spirit to direct the use
of our material power.

Let us grasp & hold fast to that spirit
may you ^{be strengthened by} ~~be~~ hearken ~~to~~ those who speak with
the ^{inspiring} ~~spirit~~ of God in the hearts:

Whether it be Moses saying "Be strong & of
good courage & be not afraid - for ~~the~~
the Lord shall be with thee

the ^{real} ~~the~~ X-mas spirit in the same tone

"But straightway Jesus spoke to them:
Be of good cheer; it is I - be not afraid.