

1. IS "MERRY CHRISTMAS!" ANTISEMITIC?
2. IS JESUS STILL "THE REASON FOR THE SEASON"?
3. "HAPPY HANUKKAH!" IS NOT ANTICHRISTIAN--BUT IS "HAPPY HOLIDAYS!"?

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS

309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636

Phone 508.775.8008

Noncommercial reproduction permitted

Besides being the longest-titled Thinksheet ever, it hasn't been able to make up its mind as to what it's about. But its perplexity well represents my vague discomforts about public symbolic expressions--by individuals, religious organizations, merchants, & government at all levels: how in the world are we to speak of, & to one another about, the sere end of the year?

PEANUTS

by Charles M. Schulz



A. My personal practice? I "Merry Christmas!" all I don't know to be Jews & "Happy Hanukkah!" those I know to be Jews. Fear shuts the mouth, & both Jews & Christians at this time of year celebrate, each religion in its own way, deliverance from fear: (1) 165BC/BCE, no foreign army is occupying or threatening Jerusalem; (2) 7-5BC/BCE, the Christmas angels say to the shepherds, "Stop being afraid!" It seems to me a **chicken** parading as a dove for a Christian not to say "Merry Christmas!" for fear the addressed may not be a Christian & therefore one may be exposed as (1) antisemitic if the addressed is Jewish or as (2) a cultural imperialist if one is secularist. Down with chickens.

B. Remember, in the 1950s & '60s, the Religion in American Life (RIAL) annual advertising "Keep Christ in Christmas" campaigns? I supported this endeavor both because Jesus is the historic reason for this season in our culture & as a counter to excessive Christmasism (commercialization). **Secularists** have an interest in keeping "Christ" (ie, religion) out of Christmas (and like to read "Xmas" not as shorthand for Χρίστος ["Christ's-mass"] but as a surd to be filled in with your own content, whatever); **Jews** are less and less interested in forgetting Jesus & more and more interest in claiming him, but they have an interest in the diminishment of "Christ" as a way of referring to Jesus. That leaves us Christians to be "Christ" promoters (while being sensitive both to the antisemitic potential of the term & to the quite proper Jewish complaint that as applied to Jesus [at least so far in the course of history], the Jewish "Meshiach" [Greek, "Christ-ós"] is not exhausted of meaning, is not left without remainder, is not--in the linguistic sense--"satisfied").

C. Lucy's "A Christmas play with **no religion** in it" is no joke. I saw on the telly a public-school "Christmas" play complete with manger--but no baby Jesus! A symbol, I thought, of the religion-in-public-education quandary.

D. So what about "Happy Holidays!"? It hits me as flat as "Have a good one!" I can understand clerks' fear of offending somebody, but they can't win: they offend me with their **banalities**. I look enough like a rabbi to be often taken for one, so sometimes I get a "Happy Hanukkah!"--which I much prefer to the "Happy Holidays!" copout. I have far more respect, & love, for Judaism & Jews than for secularism & secularists.