

Daily Meditation 12/24/2022

From Advent to Christmas Eve & Birth of the Rebel Jesus

Good morning.

Today is Christmas Eve. And I invoke in the meditation this morning a number of thoughts that, taken collectively, I think, are very much in opposition to sentimentalizing Christmas and sentimentalizing the baby Jesus.

One of these contributions is made by the American singer Jackson Browne in his poem, his song, called "The Rebel Jesus." I just discovered this this morning, actually. And I'm making this video on the 22nd. And I was really taken by it. I had not heard it before. I like the music. But I think I love the words. And so I want to share with you the entire poem, or song. I'm not going to sing it for you. (laughs) That would not make for a pleasant Christmas Eve.

But I'm just going to give you a heads up. The very last lines are like this, "from a heathen and a pagan, on the side of the rebel Jesus."

So he is not a Christian speaking. That's not how he identifies himself, at least at this time in his life when he wrote this, which I think was around 2012 or so.

The Rebel Jesus

*All the streets are filled with laughter and light
And the music of the season
And the merchants' windows are all bright
With the faces of the children
And the families hurrying to their homes
As the sky darkens and freezes
Will be gathering around their hearths and tables
Giving thanks for God's graces
And the birth of the rebel Jesus*

*And they call Him by the "Prince Of Peace"
And they call Him by "The Saviour"
And they pray to Him upon the seas
And in every bold endeavour
And they fill His churches with their pride and gold
As their faith in Him increases
But they've turned the nature that I worship in
From a temple to a robber's den
In the words of the rebel Jesus.*

...of course, referring to Jesus turning the moneylenders' tables over in the temple.

So obviously, he's criticizing institutional religion here, that pride and gold in the churches. But that ain't necessarily what Jesus was about.

*We guard our world with locks and guns
And we guard our fine possessions
And once a year when Christmas comes
We give to our relations
And perhaps we give a little to the poor
If the generosity should seize us
But if anyone of us should interfere
In the business of why there are poor
They get the same as the rebel Jesus*

So we're into charity, or giving, giving a little bit out to the poor, one day a year or more. But what about the structures that bring about injustice and poverty and sustain the poverty? And the business of why they are poor? What happens then?

The people who rebelled get the same treatment that Jesus got. He rebelled, and it did not end well for him.

Last stanza:

*But pardon me if I have seemed
To take the tone of judgement
For I've no wish to come between
This day and your enjoyment
In a life of hardship and of earthly toil
There's a need for anything that frees us
So I bid you pleasure and I bid you cheer
From a heathen and a pagan
On the side of the rebel Jesus*

So he's kind of employing some compassion here himself, as he did a lot to judge other people. He himself does not identify as a Christian, but he does identify with the rebel side of Jesus. And he does want to wish everyone good cheer at this time of the year.

So I think this poem was very unsentimental, and sentimentality has been defined by a sociologist whose name escapes me right now -- *The Feminization of American Culture* -- who says sentimentalism is "rancid political consciousness."

...rancid political consciousness. And Carl Jung said that the convex and concave of sentimentalism is violence: the other side of sentimentalism is violence. Sentimental is the cover-up for violence.

So that that's what is being said, by the author of *The Feminization of American Culture*, that our sentimentalism is rancid political consciousness. It's not about justice. It's about feelings that smother justice

So let us have an unsentimental Christmas! I wish you an unsentimental Christmas on this Christmas Eve.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.

Blessings upon the rebel Jesus, the rebel in all of us.