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### December 20, 2009: Does a Hallowed Secularist Send Chanukah Gifts?

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Title: Does a Hallowed Secularist Send Chanukah Gifts?

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12/20/2009—This blog is primarily dedicated to the actual way-of-life changes that occur when a person ceases to be a member of the organized religions. The Christmas season presents an obvious issue because Christmas is completely intrusive and beautifully attractive. The whole culture gives presents. And who would not want to be part of the Hallmark family moments that are portrayed? This same kind of question confronts minority religious believers, of course, and I don't know how they handle it. Judaism, for example, ingeniously answered this problem years ago, at least in America, by elevating a minor holiday, Chanukah, to Christmas-like significance. Chanukah is not a holiday that anyone would know about if it were not for Christmas. Jews would not celebrate it anymore than they celebrate Purim now. Many cultures celebrate the winter solstice. The timing of Christmas itself is probably the result of just such cultural borrowing. And many involve lights. That is partly why Christmas is so attractive. There are two obvious choices for the hallowed secularist. One is to ignore the holidays. But that would mean weakening connections with the immense believing world. The second is to join in from a distance, for example giving gifts to believers in accordance with their beliefs. And singing their hymns. This second path is complicated by intergenerational family ties. For a long time to come, the family of the hallowed secularist will remain at least formally religious. This will even include grown children and grandchildren. The hallowed secularist always wants the influence of religion to remain strong. It is good to be religious when you are young. You can think about the implications of belief later. So the temptation will be to join in with the religious celebrations. But at a certain point, one is then no longer forging the necessary secular path to the future.