

WHO NEEDS SUN MOON WHEN  
WE HAVE BLACK ELK?

Yesterday [26May78], the rabbi carrying the Torah scroll in the worship processional and in the march to the UN [International Religious Convocation for Human Survival, conjoint with the UN Special Session on Disarmament] was Mike Robinson, NYTS DMin, who says about the doctoral seminar of mine that the freshest opening of the whole year was "Way of Being Religious #3: Living Harmoniously Through Conformity to the Cosmic Law," Sinism [the mentality of China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, SE Asia] being the chief living representative--but for Americans, the most poignant form of Sinism is that of the Indamers or Amerinds, who now politically call themselves "the Native Americans" [sometimes even "Red Power"]. This think-sheet is a soliloquy on this type or dimension or way of being religious, in the light of the past eight days.

1. Religiously, the most influential Native American was BLACK ELK (1862-1950), Lakota (Dakota: Oglala) shaman and, for the last half c. of his life, Christian catechist. The two books--B.E. SPEAKS (Jn. Neihardt, U. of Nebr. Press) and THE SACRED PIPE (Joseph Epes Brown, Penguin Books)--reveal a pure spirit unsurpassed by any religious figure in history with, in my opinion, the exception of Jesus. Hear the beginning of the former: "My friend, I am going to tell you the story of my life, as you wish; and if it were only the story of my life I think I would not tell it; for what is one man that he should make much of his winters, even when they bend him like a heavy snow?....It is the story of all life that is holy and is good to tell, and of us two-leggeds sharing in it with the four-leggeds and the wings of the air and all green things." And of the latter: "In the great vision which cam to me in my youth, when I had known only nine winters, there was something which has seemed to me to be of greater and greater importance as the moons have passed by...."

2. I have sorrow that I did not know of and seek out this great shaman, though it would have been possible: it is even possible that my father-in-law employed him and his people, for Grandpa Ganjwish did indeed hire Lakotas from the state to the north, for the purpose J.E. Brown adduces, xiiif: "I went to find B.E. in the fall of 1947....we met in an old canvas-wall tent on a Nebraska farm where his family and members of their band were employed in harvesting potatoes." So near a miss! But Neihardt and Brown saved me!

3. For the world-religions worship, led by religious leaders from around the world--many coming specifically for this event--our son Mark and I had chosen quotations from the world's great scriptures: he, all except the Bible; I, the Bible, but I'd prefaced the biblical quotations with one from Black Elk; then discovered that, on Mark's list, the first quote was, too, from B.E.! In the service, B.E.'s successor, who is also the historian of the Lakotas, Chief Noble Red Man, age 74, nephew of B.E., read only one thing from Native American scriptures, viz. the quotation Mark had chosen. (In conversation with me later, he said yes when I asked him whether he, like his uncle, syncretizes the Native American and the Christian faiths.)

4. Now I'll interface the above with my experience of Sun Moon, at whose seminary eight days ago I gave a lecture titled "Unificationism Is Not Christian." Both Elkism and Moonism are Sinic syncretism, but only the former can be called Christian. E.g., Jesus--not somebody else, whom Moon calls "the Lord of the Second Advent"--is "coming" (Parousia) in Elkism. Now, so, too, is the White Buffalo Cow [become] Woman [who first came to bring the peace-harmony revelation in concrete form, the Sacred Pipe]. As Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, I'd be pleased to have him return not on clouds but on the White Buffalo Cow: androgynous Parousia! But I would not be pleased to have only a Lady of the Second Advent, the White Buffalo Cow Woman returned *without* Jesus, who is "the same" forever (Heb.13.8) and is to return "the same" (Ac.1.11, not necessarily the same way), having warned me against substitutes (Mt.24.23-26).

5. In the Chief's prayer in the Sioux language, I recognized a few words before he translated into English. Moon says God wants to be "Grandfather": so the Chief spoke to God!