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### Review of Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala

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Coleman, he claims that Presbyterian ethnocentrism inspired sincere men and women at the same time that it crippled them. Banker constantly reminds us that southwestern missionaries were not unique in either virtue or vices, that they themselves were affected by the region which they sought to convert, and that missionaries could never escape distant forces at work in the society which had sent them forth. Teachers labored for the spirit, but the building of railroads, the discovery of gold and silver, depressions, low salaries, hunger, and disease compromised their efforts. Even at the height of Presbyterian success in 1890, Banker details the seeds of failure, or in the church language of the time, "discouragements": poor health of missionaries, their ignorance of native languages, lack of indigenous leaders, poverty, and the intellectual undermining of Calvinist orthodoxy by modern thought.

*Presbyterian Missions* is based on extensive archival research. Expanding the secondary bibliography beyond 1985 would make this study seem less dated to scholars. One could argue that the federal Indian Peace Policy, 1869–1882, motivated Presbyterians more than Banker allows. Nevertheless, this is a solid and tough-minded mission history, valuable for church historians and students of the Southwest alike.

*Fairhaven College, Western Washington University*

ROBERT H. KELLER

*Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala.* By Michael F. Steltenkamp. (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. xxiii + 240 pp. \$19.95)

As a student, I recall reading *Black Elk Speaks* and *The Sacred Pipe* which provide glimpses, through the cultural lenses of one medicine man called Black Elk, into the religion and world view of the Oglala. Those works depicted Black Elk as a great holy man for his people whose vision was interrupted abruptly by the onslaught of American expansionism. In these works, Black Elk is portrayed as a staunch traditionalist who became trapped by his placement on the reservation. Over the years, academics and others have made Black Elk, his visionary message, and his life experiences a symbol of the victimization of Native Americans under the domination of the United States. With this interpretation Black Elk, the human being, was destroyed and replaced by a stereotypical, static image that satiated our image of the noble savage. Black Elk the symbol replaced Black Elk the man.

*Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala* by Michael Steltenkamp rediscovers Black Elk by destroying that noble savage icon. Black Elk was not a paralyzed victim of the reservation period or a spiritual relic of a bygone era. Instead he lived a dynamic, full life after settling into reservation life—a life that was complex, multi-dimensional, and filled with contradictions. Using extensive ethnographic interviews with Lucy Looks Twice, Black Elk's daughter, and others who knew him, the author describes the holy man's life from 1890 until his death. In 1904, Black Elk converted to Catholicism, eventually becoming a catechist and tireless missionary to his people. During those years, Black Elk was not the stoic warrior trapped in the pre-reservation past, but a vital member of his community providing spiritual solace to his family and community through Christianity. His conversion and teaching of Christianity, as Steltenkamp points out, was not a radical departure from his earlier participation in Lakota traditions. Black Elk's conversion was part of a larger cultural continuum in which the past and present were woven together by his spiritual journey. His role as a medicine man turned Catholic catechist represented not only the connection to earlier traditions, but also to present circumstances. In this respect, Black Elk for the Oglala served as "a beacon for others struggling to make their way down the sometimes gloomy corridor of twentieth-century life" (p. 136).

Michael Steltenkamp's work is a refreshing, new portrait of Black Elk. It is a biography, devoid of romantic stereotypes, that fleshes out the life of the famous holy man. What is more important, in focusing on the post-reservation life of Black Elk, the book allows the reader to capture glimpses of the cultural mechanisms many Oglala employed to confront life's challenges. In short, *Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala* is an insightful piece of scholarship that cuts through Black Elk, the noble savage, to reveal Black Elk, the human being. In doing so, Steltenkamp captures the essence of Black Elk's message: that one can undergo radical life changes and lead a productive, happy life.

*University of Montana*

GREGORY R. CAMPBELL

*Children of Grace: The Nez Perce War of 1877.* By Bruce Hampton. (New York, John Macrae Books, 1994. 407 pp. \$27.50)

Bruce Hampton was drawn to the Nez Perce flight of 1877 by discovering an expended .45-70 caliber cartridge at a battle site.