



<https://wallpapercave.com/w/wp3439482>

# The Education of Little Tree

A Path for the Discussion of Native Spirituality

Doug Olena, January 9, 2022

We know some history, some culture, but it's likely we are under many illusions about Native and First Peoples' life and spirituality.

This season we will explore indigenous life and spirituality with an eye to becoming empathetic toward our Indian neighbors.

*—A note about this series*

# My Suggested Guidance

- \* Humility
- \* Listen to Native voices
- \* Develop Fruit of the Spirit first
- \* Modify perspectives
- \* Jesus is not the problem, the Western Church might be...

“The problem with the Christian conception of human behavior is that it apparently depends on the cultural context in which it exists to determine what standard of behavior the will shall follow.”

*—Vine Deloria, Jr. in God is Red, p. 190*

“Christianity is a religion almost wholly determined  
by the culture in which it finds itself.”

*—Vine Deloria, Jr. in God is Red, p. 192*

# in another's moccasins

- \* How should we approach any discussion with a people who have been harmed by association with our culture?

# in another's moccasins

- \* We need to unpack our culture's motives for colonization and oppression.
- \* What are the presuppositions that hinder/help our movement away from a Western "Manifest Destiny" with respect to indigenous cultures?

“Christianity itself may find the strength to survive if it honestly faces the necessity to surrender its narrow interpretation of history and embark on a determined search for the true meaning of human life on this planet.”

*—Vine Deloria, Jr., in God is Red, p. 269*

This is a call for volunteers!

*–Doug and Marty*

# Outline, Spring 2022

- \* Plan for the Spring
- \* Notes about *Little Tree*
- \* Why *Little Tree*?
- \* *God is Red* by Vine Deloria, Jr.
- \* Christianity in conflict with Christ



<https://bit.ly/3qb0fMc>

# Plan...

- \* Marty and Lois have recently taken a course on Indigenous Canada from the University of Alberta.  
<https://bit.ly/3EYQqVL>
- \* I leave it to them to comment on the course.
- \* Lois suggested a general topic on Native American Spirituality for the Spring.

# Plan...

- \* This season of Life Together will attempt to address some of the defects in our understanding and provide a route toward social and personal empathy to move Christianity forward past its historicized barriers to conversation.

# Plan...

- \* Why read *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*?
- \* Vine Deloria, Jr. wrote this book in 1972 to call the obvious collaboration between Christianity and the Western social milieu to account and to assert indigenous voices into the conversation about religion in the modern world. It was updated in 1992, and 2003.

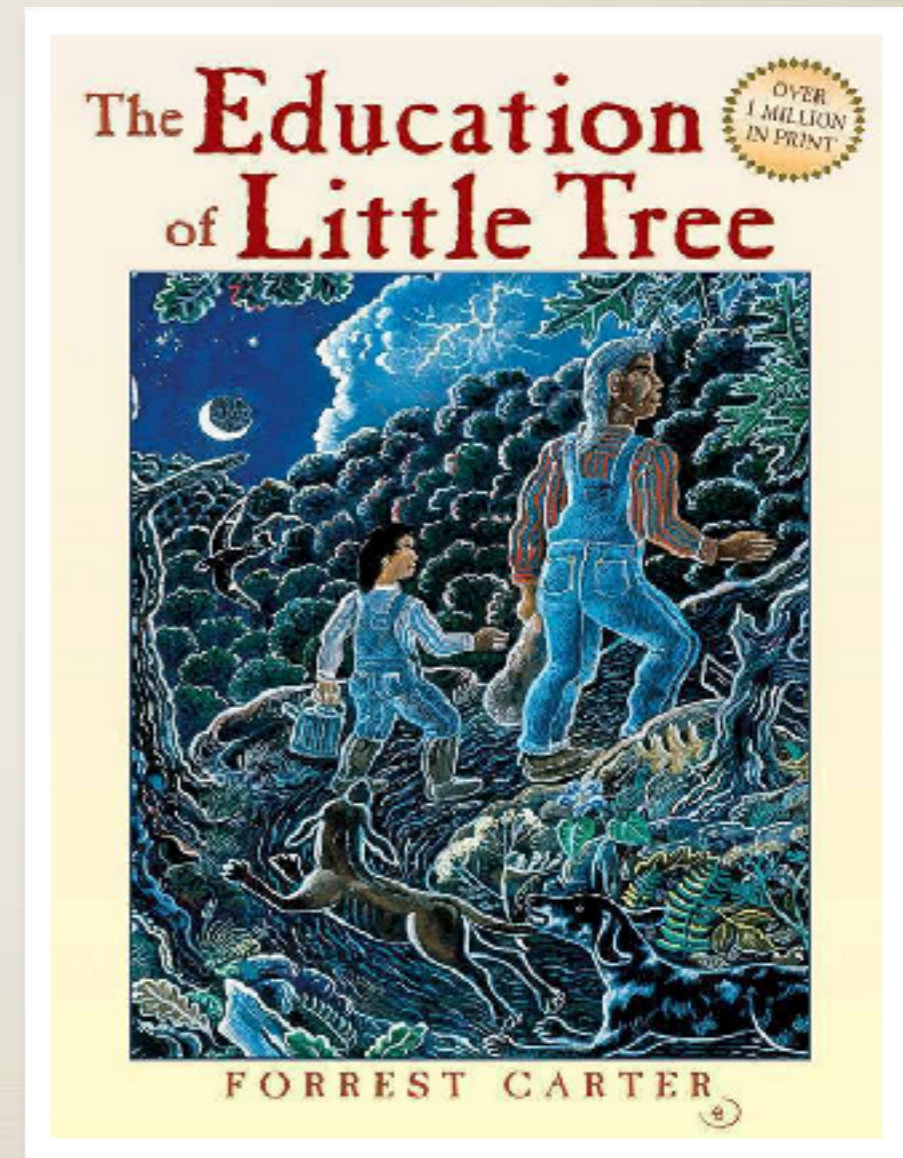


[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/native-american-education\\_n\\_5593253](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/native-american-education_n_5593253)

# Notes about *The Education of Little Tree*

# Notes...

- \* *Little Tree* has accumulated a devoted readership for a variety of reasons.
- \* Though Vine Deloria dismisses the book and those like it as misleading fabrications, others have suggested that it stays true to tone and content of Native American life in the early 20th-Century USA.



# Notes...

- \* The author Asa Earl “Forrest” Carter\*, who also wrote the Josey Wales stories, was at one time a KKK insider and a political segregationist. Deloria rejects his work on that account. But later on, Carter made an effort to rewrite the story of his life.
- \* His path was complicated and has been written about in some depth.

\*This wikipedia page is quite helpful.

# Why *Little Tree*?

- \* The simple answer: The winsome coming-of-age fictional tale of a young indigenous person may give us a pathway for conversation.
- \* A more complete answer: The book provides a pastiche of early 20th century indigenous life and its quandaries.
- \* The narrative suggests a topical treatment of indigenous ways of life, making graceful conversation easy.

# Why *Little Tree*?

- \* The book is a personal favorite of Eden and me. We read it every few years or so. It gets us in touch with a variety of issues, and addresses some sympathies that are close to modern life, sympathies that are at least implicit in Christ's approach to the world, though maybe not the modern Evangelical church.

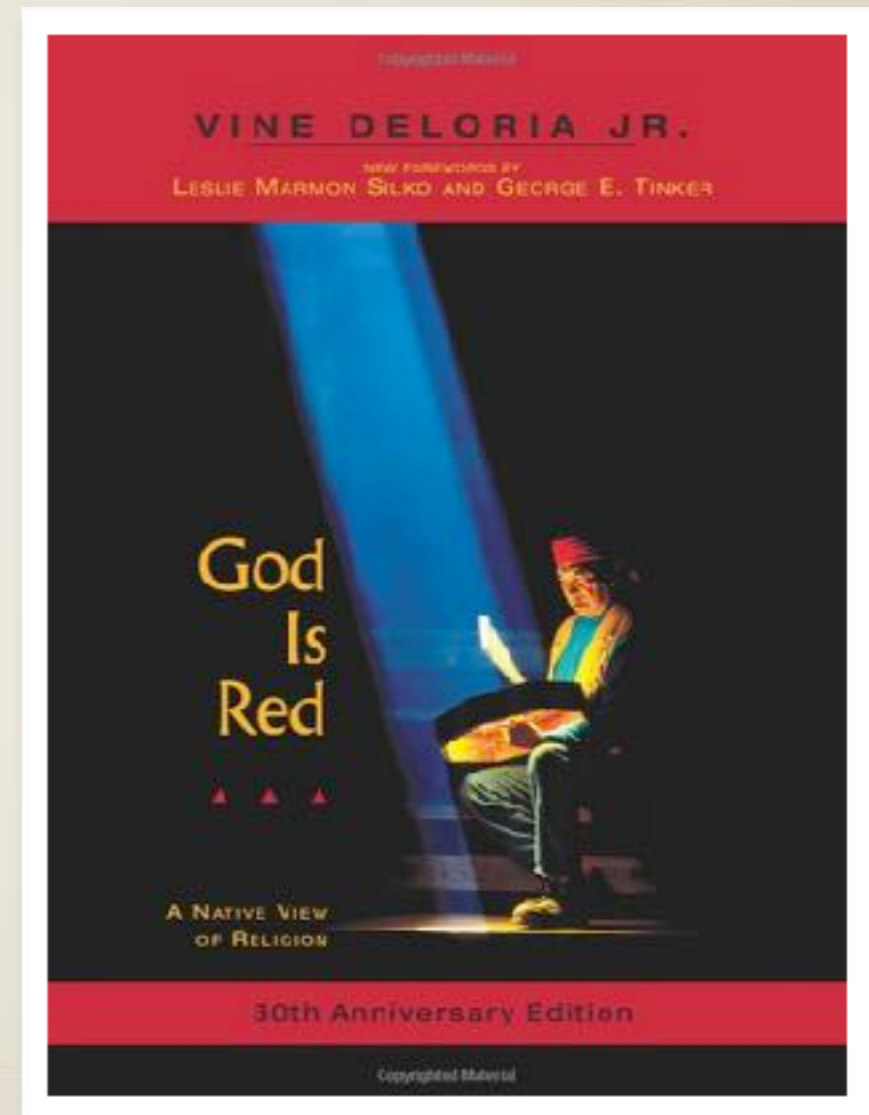


Cherokee Indians in Washington in 1866 to negotiate the treaty with the United States. Apic / Getty Images  
<https://time.com/4935802/cherokee-slavery-court-decision/>

Notes about *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*

# Notes...

- \* *God is Red*, a classic at its first publication in 1972, Deloria provides insight into Indian spirituality in contrast to Western Christian hegemony.
- \* Though flawed in a variety of ways, the book still provides ample resource on Native spirituality, its roots, and modern expressions.



# Notes...

- \* Vine Deloria, Jr., a child of both Western and Native American worlds, holds a theology degree from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and a J.D. from University of Colorado Law School.
- \* Author of more than 20 books, Deloria participated in a variety of notable public Native American concerns, and wrote at a time in the '60s through the new millennium spurring Native Americans to address continuing concerns about their status in the USA.

\*This wikipedia page is quite helpful.

# Notes...

- \* *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* follows his contention that native origin stories, in conflict with empirical data, are both prior and superior to Western narratives of creation, including the biblical one.
- \* Privileging these stories over known facts of the matter, he errs in the way that young-earth creationists do, including the promotion of already debunked cosmological proposals like Immanuel Velikovsky's *Worlds in Collision*.

# Notes...

- \* Deloria's fabrications in these matters does not detract from his account of conflict between Native American/ First People and Western misuse of Christianity as justification for hegemony over against pagan Indian religious life.
- \* Though his depiction of Indian spirituality is merely a sketch of this broad topic, it nonetheless points to the natural lines of divergence between it and Western spirituality.

# Notes...

- \* Deloria's criticism of Western spirituality focuses on the use of Christianity as a tool of expansion, and as justification for the acquisition/theft of Native American Indian rights to its own property.
- \* This issue can't be analyzed simply, and no retort about a mischaracterization in Deloria's critique changes the facts about Western hegemony.

# On the other hand...

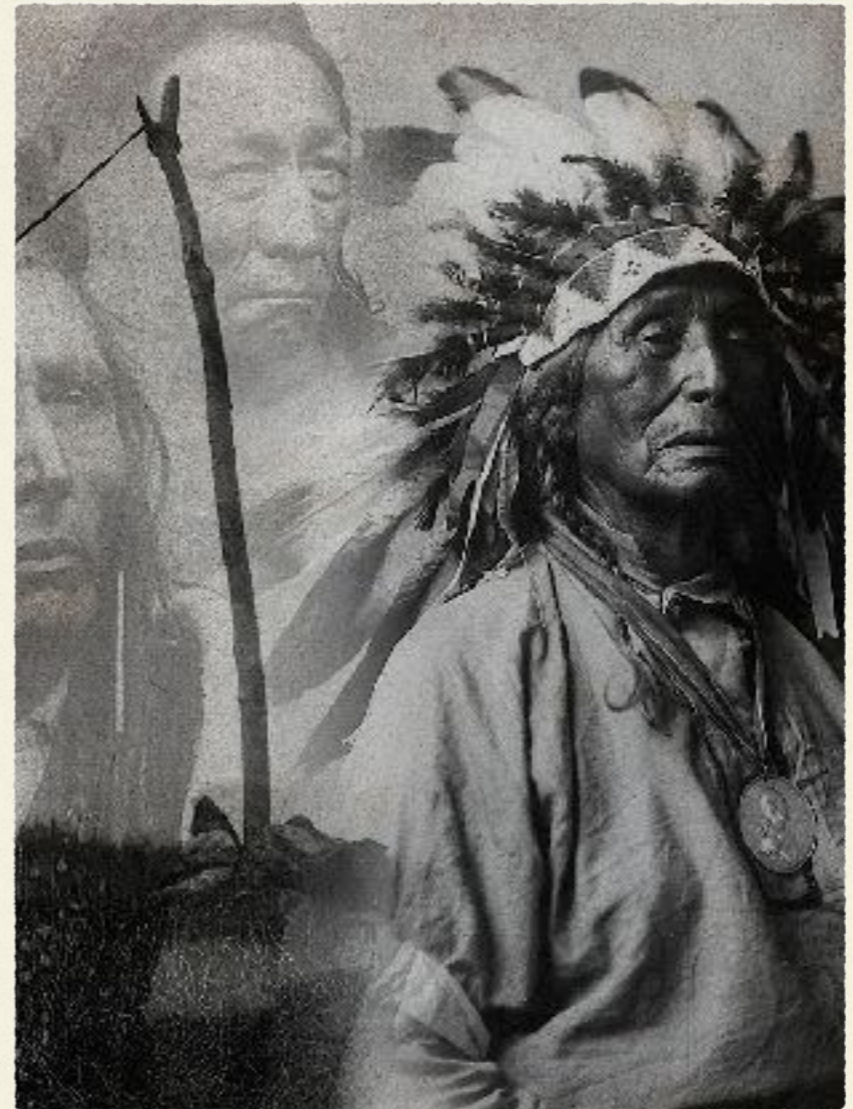
- \* Deloria makes clear that Native American spirituality is not doctrinaire. It is not a matter of getting the theology right, but of reverence for the earth as our father and the living tribal communities.
- \* The land holds both the living tribe with its meanings and all its dead. So American hegemony over the land in betrayal after betrayal of treaties and agreements with the USA is particularly odious. Capitalist theft of property plays a large part in his grievances.
- \* He criticizes Western science also because of the theft of burial remains of Indian ancestors, ensconcing their skeletons in museums (a travesty since adjudicated).

# On the other hand...

- \* Native spirituality is rooted to historically significant locations, and places that evoke a sense of spiritual awakening in every people.
- \* Christian spirituality is, on Deloria's account, so often tied to its enclosing culture, in this case capitalist expansion, that it is not the generator of a godly culture.
- \* Christianity is so tied to its privileged historical account, that it condemns native spirituality without a fair evaluation. "Pagans do not deserve a hearing."

# What I'm asking from the Class

- \* Engage the topic.
- \* Read the literature.
- \* Take a chapter or two of *Little Tree* and use it as a source of conversation for the class.
- \* Volunteer to lead a weekly discussion in the next few months.



<https://bit.ly/3qbofMc>



<https://www.craigtennantart.com/>

# The Education of Little Tree

Some remarks about the chapter: *Little Tree*

Doug Olena, January 16, 2022

The bus driver told Granpa how much it was and while Granpa counted out the money real careful—for the light wasn't good to count by—the bus driver turned around to the crowd in the bus and lifted his right hand and said, “How!” and laughed, and all the people laughed.

Carter, Forrest. *The Education of Little Tree* (p. 8). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

how<sup>2</sup> /hou/

I. *exclamation*

a greeting attributed to North American Indians (used in humorous imitation).

– **origin** early 19th cent.: perhaps from Sioux *háó* or Omaha *hou*.

Then we walked to the back of the bus, and I noticed a sick lady. She was unnatural black all around her eyes and her mouth was red all over from blood; but as we passed, she put a hand over her mouth and took it off and hollered real loud, “Wa ... hooo!” But I figured the pain must have passed right quick, because she laughed, and everybody else laughed. The man sitting beside her was laughing too and he slapped his leg.

Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 8). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# The use of language...

- \* The use of language related to a group of people is indicative of the measure of respect we grant to them, whether we think of them as worthy of respect or not, human or not, pagan or not.
- \* The misuse and misappropriation of Native American language is especially odious in this context.
- \* Spirit Animal, Tribe, Squaw, Chiefs and Indians (sports), Eskimo, “Indian” and derivations: Indian giver, Indian summer, etc.

# The use of language...

- \* Through the eyes of an impressionable child, Little Tree understands the bald disrespect as something other than what was intended.
- \* He is an innocent and doesn't see the malice.

# Contrasts

- \* Contrast the rude speech of the whites on the bus with Carter's description of the natural world.
- \* "Seemed like we'd come straight up against a mountain, but as we walked, the mountains seemed to open up and fold in around us on all sides.
- \* "The sounds of our walking began to echo, and stirrings came from around us, and whispers and sighs began to feather through the trees like everything had come alive. And it was warm."\* (soundscape 1)

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 8). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# The Song...

- \* “Awi usdi the little deer  
And Min-e-lee the quail-hen  
Even Kagu the crow takes up the song  
‘Brave is the heart of Little Tree  
And kindness is his strength  
And Little Tree will never be alone.’”\*
- \* The use of animals as part of NA speech is indicative of seeing a broader spectrum of life as part of the living community, not an “us over them,” but an equality before nature.

\* Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (pp. 9-10). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.



<http://www.monomakhos.com/the-chokeee-tradition-of-raising-boys-to-men/>

# The Education of Little Tree

Some remarks about chapter: *The Way*

Doug Olena, January 16, 2022

# The Way...

- \* The concept of the Way predates Christ.
- \* Following Christ has been offered to us as the Way.
- \* How that plays out in the individual is idiosyncratic.
- \* The presupposition is that, like Aristotle's ethic, learning to follow the Way takes practice. (C. S. Lewis)
- \* "What would Jesus do?" recalls the Way Jesus lived. How did he make decisions about what to do?

# The Way...

- \* The Way implies a path, a journey. Most obviously this is the journey of life. It might also apply to individual decisions.
- \* The ancient Greeks thought of traversing the Way as a journey that needed guidance like a steersman on a river boat, guiding the ship around dangers, and toward the goal.
- \* One tool required to do this is a test for the truth, a touchstone.

# The Way...

- \* The Way is both a path to take and the navigation required to stay on that path, with the tools necessary to make the right decisions about directions in a particular case, especially since the path of life is not predefined for us.
- \* The end of the path is not known from the beginning.

# The Way... OT

- \* And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. Isaiah 35:8 NIV
- \* Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way\*; walk in it." Isaiah 30:21 NIV
- \* This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'" Jeremiah 6:16 NIV

\*This phrase has recently been popularized by the Disney series *The Mandalorian*.

# The Way... NT

- \* This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”  
Matthew 3:3 NIV
- \* Paul giving his defense to Felix said, “However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.”

# The Way...

- \* The Way is not available to the unclean or wicked fools.
- \* The Spirit of God guides by helping us select the Way.
- \* Ask for the ancient paths, ask for the good Way.
- \* The Way involves making crooked paths straight.
- \* Christianity was known as the Way.

# The Way... LT

- \* Granma patiently creating the moccasins. Skill requires staying on the path to completion.
- \* “A man rises of his own will in the morning,’ he had spoken down to me and he did not smile. But Granpa had made many noises in his rising, bumping the wall of my room and talking uncommonly loud to Granma, and so I had heard, and I was first out, waiting with the hounds in the darkness.”
- \* Granpa teaching, then providing grace to follow.

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 11). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# The Way... LT

- \* “So. Ye’re here.” Granpa sounded surprised. “Yes, sir,” I said, and kept the proud out of my voice.
- \* What is the instinct, or guidance that warns us about pride?
- \* What is the reality that keeps LT humble?

# The Way... LT

- \* “I could feel something more, as Granma said I would. **Mon-o-lah, the earth mother, came to me through my moccasins.** I could feel her push and swell here, and sway and give there ... and the roots that veined her body and the life of the water-blood, deep inside her. She was warm and springy and bounced me on her breast, as Granma said she would.”\*
- \* What would you call this awareness?
- \* Why is “Mother Nature” treated as an alien concept in Western Christianity?

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 11). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# The Way... LT

- \* Listening to the sounds of nature... p. 12 (read)  
(soundscape 2)

# The Way... LT

- \* Watching as Tal-con the hawk takes a slower quail.
- \* What's the lesson?
- \* “I didn't cry, but I know I looked sad, because Granpa said, “Don't feel sad, Little Tree. It is The Way. Tal-con caught the slow and so the slow will raise no children who are also slow. Tal-con eats a thousand ground rats who eat the eggs of the quail—both the quick and the slow eggs—and so Tal-con lives by The Way. He helps the quail.”\*

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 13). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# The Way... LT

- \* The Turkey Trap
  - \* Set the trap...
  - \* Return to the trap later...
  - \* They caught six turkeys. Granpa asked LT to choose three. LT chose the three smallest. Gets praise from Granpa for being like a hawk.
  - \* “I would have liked to live that time forever ... for I knew I had pleased Granpa. I had learned The Way.”\*

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 14). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# The Way... LT

\* “It is The Way,” he said softly. “Take only what ye need. When ye take the deer, do not take the best. Take the smaller and the slower and then the deer will grow stronger and always give you meat. Pa-koh, the panther, knows and so must ye.” And he laughed, “Only Ti-bi, the bee, stores more than he can use ... and so he is robbed by the bear, and the coon ... and the Cherokee.”\*

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 13). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# The Way... LT

- \* “It is so with people who store and fat themselves with more than their share. They will have it taken from them. And there will be wars over it ... and they will make long talks, trying to hold more than their share.
- \* “They will say a flag stands for their right to do this ... and men will die because of the words and the flag ... but they will not change the rules of The Way.”\*
- \* Luke 12:16-21 The Cherokee Way is coherent with Christ’s words and in perfect agreement here.

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 13). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# The Way... LT

\* Read poem on page 15.

# The Way...

- \* What are the implications of following the Way as defined in Judaism and Christianity and the Way as defined by Carter in *Little Tree*?



# The Education of Little Tree

Some remarks about chapter: *Shadows on a Cabin Wall*

Doug Olena, January 23, 2022

# Shadows on a Cabin Wall...

- \* Reading Shakespeare by oil lamp, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Byron, Shelley . . .
- \* Lady Macbeth, a puzzle: gender roles, hysteria . . .

# Shadows on a Cabin Wall...

- \* Making Whiskey: natural law, and the law of the land. What's the difference?
- \* The *establishment*, the *law*, *politicians*
- \* Granpa laid the death of his cousin “at the door of the politicians, who, he said, were responsible for just about all the killings in history if you could check up on it.”\*  
(not true, but maybe with respect to larger injustices)

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 18). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# Shadows on a Cabin Wall...

- \* “After listening to Granma’s readings, Granpa began to refer to George Washington in many of his comments ... holding him out as the big hope that there could be a good man in politics.”

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 18). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# Shadows on a Cabin Wall...

- \* Redacting history: “In reading the old history book in later years, I discovered that Granma had skipped the chapters about George Washington fighting the Indians, and I know that she had read only the good about George Washington to give Granpa someone to look to and admire.
- \* “He had no regard whatsoever for Andrew Jackson and, as I say, nobody else in politics that I can call to mind.”\*

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 18). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# Shadows on a Cabin Wall...

- \* “Granma slipped up and read about the Whiskey Tax.”
- \* Granpa, Washington, and the Whiskey Tax . . .
- \* Driving into town with the professor Granpa asked about the Whiskey Tax.
- \* Professor: “I teach English I don’t know *anything* about George Washington.”
- \* “But, Granpa said, you couldn’t discount him being a professor, for he had heard that more of them was crazy than not.”\*

\*Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree (p. 19, 20). University of New Mexico Press. Kindle Edition.

# Shadows on a Cabin Wall...

- \* “Granpa said he figured George Washington took a lick on the head some way or other in all his fighting, which accounted for an action like the whiskey tax.”
- \* About the Whiskey Tax . . .

# The 1791 Excise Whiskey Tax

- \* After a spirited debate, the House passed, by a 35 to 21 majority, the Excise Whiskey Tax—legislation that proved wildly unpopular with farmers and eventually precipitated the “Whisky Rebellion.”
- \* The measure levied a federal tax on domestic and imported alcohol, earmarked to offset a portion of the federal government’s recent assumption of state debts.

# The 1791 Excise Whiskey Tax

- \* Southern and western farmers, whose grain crop was a chief ingredient in whiskey, loudly protested the tax.
- \* In 1794, farmers in western Pennsylvania attacked federal officials seeking to collect tax on the grain they had distilled into whiskey.
- \* The administration of President George Washington dispatched a force of nearly 13,000 militia to put down a feared revolt. Resistance, however, dissipated when the troops arrived.

What are the Shadows?