

AMEN?

Many people have been highly critical of Congressman Cleaver because he closed a prayer that was to open the 117th Congress of the United States with the words “Amen and Awoman.” While that faux pas borders on being ludicrous and silly, it has diverted attention from a more serious problem that is revealed in the other closing words of his prayer. But first, some historical background information that seems to be related to what has been and is currently happening in our nation. This history is not that of the United States but from ancient Israel around 600 BC.

Even when some of the Jews had been carried away to Babylon, those who remained in Jerusalem (prior to the assault that resulted in the destruction of the temple and the city) still engaged in idol worship and even put a statue of the Babylonian god Tammuz in the Temple and engaged in shocking obscenities used in this idolatrous worship. This was totally insulting to God and represented total rejection of Jehovah in a blatant trespass of the first commandment “You shall have no other gods before me.”

It seems to me that the prayer offered at the Opening of the 117th Congress of the United States has parallels to what was happening in Jerusalem twenty-six hundred years ago (before the city and the temple were destroyed).

I transcribed the prayer of Congressman Cleaver (since the only transcript I found on the internet left out some very significant parts of the prayer). The prayer calls for success and peace for our nation and generally sounds like prayers we might hear in our churches. However, at the very end of the prayer the Congressman revealed that his prayer was not offered to Jehovah (the One true God) but to a Hindu god named Brahma. This was done as an official act of Congress and (in my opinion) is the equivalent of setting up and worshiping an idol in a place that many have told us (in recent days) was a sacred place. There was no official censure of the Congressman for this desecration.

Representative Cleaver’s Prayer at the Opening of the 117th Congress of the United States follows:
Let us pray.

Eternal god, we bow before your throne of grace as we leave behind the politically and socially clamorous year of 2020.

We gather now in this consequential chamber to inaugurate another chapter in our roller-coaster representative government.

Control our tribal tendencies and quicken our spirits, that we may feel thy priestly presence even in moments of heightened disagreement.

The members of this august body acknowledge your sacred supremacy and, therefore, confess that without your favor and forbearance, we enter this new year relying dangerously on our own fallible nature.

God, at a moment when many believe that the bright light of democracy is beginning to dim, empower us with an extra dose of commitment to its principles.

May we of the 117th Congress refill the lamp of liberty so brimful that generations of unborn will witness its undying flames and may we model community healing, control our tribal tendencies and quicken our spirit that we may feel thy priestly presence even in moment of heightened disagreement.

May we so feel your presence that our service here may not be soiled by any utterances or acts unworthy of this high office. Insert in our spirit a light so bright that we can see ourselves and our politics as we really are, soiled by selfishness, perverted by prejudice and inveigled by ideology.

Now may the god who created the world and everything in it bless us and keep us. May the lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us. May the lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us peace: peace in our family, peace across this land and dare I ask, O lord, peace even in this chamber, now and evermore.

We ask it in the name of the monotheistic god, Brahma and the god known by many names by many different faiths. Amen and Awoman.

Some Interesting Observations and Comparisons

The objective of the mantra for Brahma is for success and peace. We certainly see these elements in the Congressional prayer of Representative Cleaver.

Lord Brahma is regarded as the creative aspect of Lord Vishnu (compare this to “the Son of God” being the agent of creation in Judeo-Christian belief). He is even regarded as the Lord of Speech (the Logos?) and the creator of the four Vedas (which might be thought of as parallels to the four books of the gospel which Christians believe to be inspired (created) by God the Holy Spirit). Vedas are Hindu hymns that describe their doctrines (Rig), their religious rituals (Sama), instructions for the rituals (Yajur) and spells against enemies, sorcerers, and diseases (Atharva).

Each of his four faces continuously chants the Vedas – Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharva Veda. I’m not sure if this means that a particular face is associated with a specific Veda. If it is, then we see another similarity of the four faces of the four living creatures mentioned in Revelation and Ezekiel in that each face is thought by some to be related to the emphasis of a specific gospel. For example, the Lion face is associated with Matthew’s gospel, the Ox face with Mark’s gospel, the Human face with Luke’s gospel and the Eagle face with John’s gospel.

Another similarity is that just as the four faces of Brahma continuously chant, the four living creature of Revelation also continuously chant and they say Holy, Holy, Holy. Also, Brahma is sitting on a lotus blossom in the pose commonly referred to as the “lotus position” in yoga exercises. This is the position that devotees are to take as they reverence Brahma to invoke his blessing by repeating his mantra over and over. Another curiosity is that Brahma is associated with the Hiranyagarbha (the cosmic egg). Similar eggs (some brightly colored) are found in other religions such as Babylonian beliefs that their main goddess was born each spring from such an egg and that renews the cycle of nature. Some suspect that this is also related to the origin of what we call Easter eggs.

The depictions of Brahma have four arms. In the hand of the upper arm, he holds a rosary which is a string of 108 prayer beads that are used in Hinduism, Buddhism and yogic tradition. Contrast this to only 20 prayer beads in the Catholic rosary.