

Many Messengers of God



Deganawidah - The peacemaker

Using proofs of Prophethood from the Bahá'í
Writings this is the first in a series of papers on the
Many Messengers of God from indigenous cultures.

*Abstract from the Tablet to Amir Khan of
Tihvan revealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha*

“In ancient times the people of America (ahl-i Amrīk) were, through their northern regions, close to Asia, that is, separated from Asia by a strait. For this reason, it hath been said that crossing had occurred. There are other signs which indicate communication.”

“Undoubtedly in those regions the Call of God must have been raised in ancient times, but it hath been forgotten now.”



One of the purposes of this paper is a teaching tool toward the goal of the Five Year Plan.

In a letter to a National Spiritual Assembly Rúhíyyih Khánúm states: “We Bahá’ís do nothing but miss buses...Are we going to miss the Indian bus for the whole period of the Bahá’í Dispensation?”



The second purpose is to create an awareness and recognition of our Native Messengers.

If the Bahá'í Faith were to find a way to acknowledge Native Messengers of God it would be a much needed step toward healing. The history of religious persecution of Native Americans has created a wound far deeper than most imagine.



Rúhíyyih Khánum said in another letter: “The arrow is far deeper in the hearts than we dream and we Bahá'ís should draw this arrow, in the name of Bahá'u'lláh...”





And finally to encourage my people, and all Indigenous people, to write about their Messengers using our sacred Bahá'í Writings as a guide.



*“Unto the cities of all nations
He hath sent His Messengers.”*



Deganawidah - the Peacemaker



Deganawidah - the Peacemaker was a Messenger of God sent to the Nations of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora who are located on the Northeastern Sea Board of the United States and Canada.

These Tribes are also known as the Six Nations or the Haudenosaunee



When we referring to Deganawidah most Native people use the title of Peacemaker. Speaking his name is considered an invocation or prayer.

We know very little about the Peacemaker's early life. We are not even sure which Tribe he was born into. Although, most agree that He was born to a virgin.

In 1142 A.D. the Peacemaker first gave His Message about the unity of Nations.



He said: “I carry the Mind of the Master of Life, and my message will bring an end to the wars between east and west. The word that I bring is that all peoples shall love one another and live together in peace.”

The Peacemaker and Proofs of
Prophethood



They bring a Message...

The Peacemaker documented His Message in a series of wampum belts. These wampum belts are made of shell beads and woven into intricate patterns. They “read” exactly like a book. It can take as long as four eight hour days to read these belts.



The first written versions of the Peacemaker's Message appeared in the late 1800s. These transcripts were recorded from different Tribal elders, by different people, at different times. Yet the transcripts are almost identical giving us proof that oral history can be incredibly accurate.



Prophets appear when society is at its lowest moral and spiritual state...



At the time of the Peacemaker's appearance, our people were at war with each other, tribe against tribe, clan against clan and family against family. We brutalized each other and killing had become common.

They Found a New Civilization...

The Message the Peacemaker brought created a new civilization by bringing together the Nations through social, spiritual and moral changes.



*There is an immediate transformation of
Society...*

From Wampum belt transcriptions we are told the
Peacemaker said:

“... kindred people will stop massacring... it will stop now;
from now on it will come about that everyone will be
related, members of all of the different nations.”

*There is a Continuance of the
Transformation...*

Almost a thousand years later the Message of the Peacemaker continues to guide the Haudenosaunee and has also influenced people around the world.

The Peacemaker's Great Law of Peace is documented as being the basis for the Constitution of The United States.



When the suffragettes of New York who lived in close proximity to the Six Nations people witnessed the equality our women experienced, they were inspired and encouraged.



The Haudenosaunee continue to send delegations to the United Nations. They present the Peacemaker's Message which is still relevant today.



There are star and sky signs...



A solar eclipse happened on August 31, 1142, as the Peacemaker gave His Message to the Seneca Nation. This solar eclipse is historically documented.

They tell of a future Messenger...



This is a quotation from a Wampum belt transcription:

“...they will be momentarily blinded by a light that is many times brighter than the sun. The light will be coming from the east to the west over the water....”

The Peacemaker said He would be that light and when He returns, the people would become a greater nation than ever before.

There is a prophecy of the future...

When the Peacemaker was leaving the people, he said we would face a time of great suffering, that we would distrust our leaders and forget the principles of the Great Law of Peace.

Beyond the Proofs of the Prophets



The Tree as a Sacred Symbol...



Abdu'l-Bahá said:

“From the seed of reality religion has grown into a tree...this means the nations and peoples...will be brought into unity...”



The Peacemaker's Message is symbolized by the “Great Tree of Peace”.

The Presence of a Prominent Woman...



Tahirih was one of the original eighteen “Letters of the Living”.

Tsikonsase was the first woman to accept the Peacemaker’s Message. She is known as the “Mother of all Nations”.



The equality of women and men...



From the Message of the Peacemaker it is said that all men stand as towering trees of the same height, women are also of the same height to one another and to the men.

Similarities between

The Universal House of Justice

and

The Haudenosaunee Grand Council

The Haudenosaunee Grand Council is a comprised of the Chiefs from all the Nations. It is said to be the world's oldest democracy.

Function and Purpose:



The Universal House of Justice guides the activities of the global Bahá'í community.



The Grand Council makes decisions for the people concerning issues both domestic and international.

Elections:



Bahá'í elections have no candidacies, nominations, partisanship, campaigning, or electioneering.



The members of the Grand Council are selected by women leaders called Clan Mothers. The men do not "campaign" within the community for such positions

Qualities of the members:



"...those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience."



Members of the Grand Council are chosen because they possess honorable qualities and are concerned with the well-being of the people.

Designations:



The Universal House of Justice is comprised of nine men whom Bahá'u'lláh designated as “Men of Justice”



The Grand Council members are called Hoyaneh meaning “Caretakers of the Peace”

Similarities between
the Great Law of Peace
and
the Baha'i Administrative Order

The Great Law of Peace is comprised of the
fundamental laws and principles of the
Haudenosaunee



The Administrative Order's main concern is the spiritual and material well being of the people. Its primary goal is to provide a just system which creates balance between the individual and collective rights and responsibilities.



The Great Law of Peace contains the principle of reason to assure righteousness, justice and health it is not based on force of arms or rule of law, but on spiritual concepts applied to human society.

Justice



“The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.”



The Peacemaker's Great Law of Peace created a social order of unity by eliminating the causes of conflict through the establishment of universal justice.

Righteousness



“The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book...is to endue all men with righteousness and understanding...”



One of the principles of the Great Law of Peace is righteousness. This righteousness provides an atmosphere of liberty and justice.

Economics



“... there will be a readjustment in the economic conditions of mankind so that in the future there will not be the abnormally rich nor the abject poor.”



The Haudenosaunee had no concept of modern economics where one is rich and another is poor. The social order required that every individual live in service to the other using spiritual means as a guideline.

End notes



“The Universal House of Justice is deeply concerned about the welfare of Indian people of America and yearns to see them take their rightful place as a significant element in the spiritualization of humanity, the construction of a unified world, and the establishment of a global civilization.”

Universal House of Justice - cited in a letter to the Continental Board of Counsellors in the Americas, 20 June 2002

A few Important aspects...

In keeping with the purposes of this paper as a teaching tool, I'd like to mention a few aspects that are historically important. I've placed them in a time frame in relation to Abdu'l'Bahá's visit to the United States.



43 years before Abdul-Baha's visit...



General Philip Sheridan's 1869 remark to Comanche Chief Silver Knife - "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" - became a popular slogan across the United States until the mid 1950's.

30 years before Abdu'l Baha's visit...

By 1885 Christian Boarding Schools endorsed and funded by the U.S. government, became the standard of attempts to “civilize” and “christianize” Native children. Children as young as four years old were abducted from their homes and placed in these schools. The founder of the Carlisle Indian School originated the popular Boarding School motto “kill the Indian and save the man”.

Carlisle
Indian
School
students
1885



21 years before Abdu'l Baha's visit...

This is the mass burial of several hundred men, women and children killed by U.S.

Government troops while on their way to a religious ceremony. The Indians were unarmed.

Government Reports state of those executed 18 were babies.



Morgan LaBeau, a 3rd generation Lakota Bahá'í, is a direct descendent of one of the survivors.

17 years "after" Abdu'l Baha's visit...

Native Americans are granted the right to citizenship on June 2, 1924 . Prior to this we had no rights and were held as prisoners of war and wards of the government.

Nipo Strongheart, a Yakima Bahá'í, is said to have written the bill that brought this into effect.



66 years after Abdu'l Baha's visit...

In 1978, Native Americans were granted the legal right to practice our religion. Prior to this, we were imprisoned and killed for praying.



I'd like to summarize this presentation with the following:



A letter from Dr. David Ruhe, former House of Justice member, to Dr. Christopher Buck



The abstract and facsimile of the Tablet to Amir Khan

Letter from Dr. Ruhe

“If you can bring off the category idea at the least, and Deganawidah as indigenous Prophet at the most it will be a great coup and a great service. A Bahá'í Indian woman, with tearful eyes, said that the Bahá'ís gave her no respect as an Indian — a sorry thing. Your mission = to bring respect for spirituality of the original Americans and perhaps much more — pride in the Founders of their spiritual systems.”



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از سبزه الحمر
شکایت از عدم افغان
صنایع در صحنه
صنایع در صحنه

تقدیر صنایع سبب تقویت هواست
بیکار از دست
صنایع در صحنه

و جهد و کوشش کن
افغان را
دیگر بهتر از است

که صنایع متعدد
همه نقص ماند
ایم در این

در از منته قریب
از جهت
تفویک با صنایع

بیشتر فاصله است
لهذا از جهت
که نیک شود

مرد در شده است
و علما
یکگزین دولت بر آورده

اما بکار
صنایع نوبت رسد
آن نفوس معذورین

در قرآن
میفرماید
و انکم معذبین
حقیر بنوعی بود

بسته در تصنیف است
نیز در از منته قریب
فقرت را
بلند کشنه
لکن حال
فهم شده است

از خدا میطلبیم
که خدا شما را
تائید فرماید
صنایع در صحنه

از صنایع
تکمیل فرمائید
علیکم التعمه
و انکم معذبین
تبع

