

# Many Messengers of God

A Native American Perspective

## Deganawidah - The Peacemaker

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for

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## Preface

After enrolling in the 2011 Wilmette Institute course on the Kitáb-i-Íqán and Gems of Divine Mysteries I quickly realized how little I knew of Christianity and Islam. It seemed every other page held something I didn't understand. Then I began to wonder why both are mentioned so frequently. The answer to that was so apparent that I almost didn't see it. Bahá'u'lláh was addressing questions from people with these backgrounds. This does not demean other religions or spiritual traditions in the least. In fact, the Kitáb-i-Íqán is in answer to questions from the Bab's uncle, an Islamic scholar.

After realizing this, I wondered what the view of the Bahá'í Faith was on other religions and other Messengers, especially those from North America. I found reference to this in an article written by Christopher Buck (one of our course instructors) and Donald Addison (Choctaw elder and professor of Native Studies) the article is titled "Messengers of God in North America Revisited: An Exegesis of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Amir Khán", Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies, Volume 1 (2207): 180-270).

The article explains the Bahá'í Faith's view of these Messengers and in addition states the benefit of the Bahá'í Writings in it's ability to heal previous conflict.

"The Bahá'í attitude to earlier religions, therefore, is not that they are false or heathen, but that, at root, they are all true and that these fundamental truths still persist within them... Through the Bahá'í teachings, the inner conflict which many still feel between their ancient religions and Christianity is resolved and, at the same time, they are enabled to understand their spiritual unity with the peoples of other continents, such as Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims with whom they will undoubtedly come into contact with increasing frequency". (*The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 22 March 1988, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly (unpublished). Cited by Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 March 1997 to an individual Bahá'í. Posted by Brent Poirier on the Tarjuman list, 9 June 2007.*)

As my questioning progressed, it occurred to me that North and South America, Africa and the Island nations such as Australia and New Zealand have not had their Messengers of God "recognized" by the world communities of scholars, philosophers, theologians, etc. In the Bahá'í Writings Bahá'u'lláh states:

"Unto the cities of all nations He hath sent His Messengers." (*Gleanings p.145*)

Considering this, how could it be that some countries did not have "recognized" Messengers? As I pondered this, I began to realize that each of these countries have oral traditions. I wondered if these countries were treated as disrespectfully as my own Native North American culture where oral traditions continue to be called myths, legends, lore and fables none of which indicate truth, fact or authenticity. There is a similar disrespect when Euro-Americans call our traditional clothing "costumes". These forms of attire are not worn for pretend or fantasy nor for a Halloween party. These types of disrespect made me want to write even more than before. I feel it is up to us as Indigenous people to speak openly and to educate. So, with that in mind, I started to search for anything written by Indigenous authors particularly Bahá'í authors from any of these countries using the Bahá'í Writings as proofs of Prophethood. To date, I found Donald Addison, a Choctaw Bahá'í (as cited above) whose example I can follow, although not as an academic, but as a Native "grass roots" individual.

The next question was, how would I begin to write about something so vast and to a mixed audience of both Native and Euro-Americans? I could almost predict the criticism from both sides. It was tempting to let fear keep me from writing. It would be so much safer to keep these thoughts to myself. But after

wrestling with this for awhile, I decided the end goal was far more important than what my own personality might suffer. I then remembered a quote from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

“As to those things published in journals against thee: Thou shouldst not be grieved nor sorry therefor, because thousands of journals have written traducing Abdu'l-Bahá, have given false and base accusations and awful calumnies. Notwithstanding these he was neither troubled nor grieved thereby; nay, rather these caused me to exert myself more than usual in the path of God and to drink the cup of sacrifice and to boil in the fire of His love. Man must seek to gain the acceptance of God and not that of the different classes of men. If one is praised and chosen by God, the accusation of all creatures will cause no loss to him; and if the man is not accepted in the threshold of God, the praise and admiration of all men will be of no use to him.” (*Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá V.1, p.157*)

Now that I was ready to move forward I needed to figure out how to write about my oral culture. I decided to think about this as “walking the middle path” between oral and written culture. This seemed like a good idea, yet I was very uncomfortable and found I made no progress. So, I decided to consult with another Native American Bahá'í, Joye Braun (Lakota), who carries a degree in journalism and is well published. Her first question was of utmost importance and contained the hesitancy I was feeling. She asked why should we have to “prove” our Messengers of God? We know who they are and shouldn't feel trapped in the Euro-centric idea that the written word is the only authority. Then, her next comment really brought to light my dilemma, “... we as Natives rely on these western versions of authenticity to authenticate what we say, do or write about. We allow ourselves to fall into the trap of influence by foreign nations... now is all influence bad? No of course not! But we as Natives must shift our conscience to regain cultural authority in self determination...”

With all my heart, I fully agreed with this statement, yet I still felt compelled to attempt this paper using the written word to prove authenticity hopefully without disrespect or belittlement of my oral history and culture. As I sat quietly, I realized my reasoning for this compelling feeling is my belief in the importance of bringing recognition, respect and better understanding of Native American and other Indigenous histories, cultures and traditions. We all have so much to offer to the world in terms of Bahá'u'lláh's Message. So important is the reality of world unity through diversity, that I was willing to risk most anything to make a step made, no matter how hesitant, toward this end.

As I continued forward, I first wanted to understand why Bahá'u'lláh wrote so much about the proof of Prophets. The most obvious answer was that He came from an Islamic background and culture and His first adherents were of the same background. Naturally, they would pose questions, especially about the “Seal of the Prophets”. The “Seal of the Prophets” is taken to mean that Muhammad was the last of the Prophets. Thus, I can see this was a question posed to Bahá'u'lláh many times.

Second, I wondered if the topic of proofs was clarified for those of us not from an Islamic background. I found the following statements from Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era which gave me a new understanding.

“The sun is its own proof, to all that have the power of perception. When it rises we need no ancient predictions to assure us of its shining. So with the Manifestation of God when He appears. Were all the former prophecies swept into oblivion, He would still be His own abundant and sufficient proof to all whose spiritual sense are open.” (*Esslemont, J.E., Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, United States Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980 edition, p.6*)

“Bahá'u'lláh asked no one to accept His statements and His tokens blindly. On the contrary, He put in the very forefront of His teachings emphatic warnings against blind acceptance of authority, and urged all to open their eyes and ears, and use their own judgement, independently and fearlessly, in order to ascertain

the truth. He enjoined the fullest investigation and never concealed Himself, offering, as the supreme proofs of His Prophethood, His words and works and their effects in transforming the lives and characters of men. The tests He proposed are the same as those laid down by His great predecessors.” (*Esslemont, J.E., Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, United States Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980 edition, p.7*)

The next and final question was why I needed to cite references. I'm not a scholar or an Academic, couldn't I just write my understanding and leave it at that? Then I remembered when I taught my children and other young people about our Native traditions and ceremonies I usually referenced which Elder, Grandma or Grandpa, Aunt or Uncle etc. told me the story. This wasn't because what I personally said had no value, it was so the young people could follow up and continue in their learning process with the family that held that particular story. I realized that “citing” references was what I had done all my life.

All of the above seemed to ease my hesitations and fears and now I find myself finishing this preface. In the finishing, there are a few separate issues I'd like to address. Someone mentioned I should say a little about myself. I am a Native American Bahá'í - Shawnee, Delaware, Cherokee, Seneca, and for clarification, I also lived on the Cheyenne River Lakota reservation in Eagle Butte, South Dakota for many, many years. I speak their language and follow their traditions and culture, consequently many people assume I am from there. Although, I am not, I have to say they are the people of my heart and will always remain so.

I was also asked what was the most motivating factor for writing this paper. Without a doubt, to encourage other Native American and Indigenous Bahá'ís to write about their Messengers of God. As you can tell from my preface this was a daunting task. I hope what I've written about my trials and tribulations will be of help to others, whom I fervently wish will improve on this initial “grass roots” endeavor.

There was another motivation for this work, and that is to share in an authentic and honest manner my thoughts as a Native American Bahá'í about the Peacemaker. Even though I am not Haudenosaunee, I'm still hoping that a Native perspective will result in a greater understanding of who we are in general and that the Peacemaker will prove to be just as authentic as those from an Abrahamic or Eastern tradition.

I also want to bring attention to the scholarly work of Dr. Christopher Buck who in numerous articles and papers has pioneered the idea of recognizing Native Messengers of God within a Bahá'í context. In addition, I want to express my personal gratitude for his encouragement during this work and most especially for his patience and respect in understanding a culture completely different from his own.

And also a special thanks to Dr. Rob Stockman of the Wilmette Institute who has supported Native Americans in so many ways, including making it possible for me to take so many classes over many years.

Sincerely,  
Paula Bidwell

## Introduction

Within the Kitáb-i-Íqán and Gems of Divine Mysteries, Bahá'u'lláh describes qualities, traits and events of Messengers of God from the East which serve as proofs of Prophethood. The purpose of this paper is to use these proofs along with other proofs from the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith to suggest the possibility that Deganwidah (The Peacemaker) of the Six Nations is one of many Messengers of God worldwide.

“And since in their inmost Beings they are the same Luminaries and the self-same Mysteries, thou shouldst view their outward conditions in the same light, that thou mayest recognize them all as one Being, nay, find them united in their words, speech, and utterance.” (*Gems of Divine Mysteries p. 33*)

Native Americans have been so misunderstood for so many years, that I feel I could write a paper just on that. But first I need to acknowledge that some of these misunderstandings have come from our own people and others have not. I believe there is a shared responsibility for education. Someone has to want to hear and the other has to want to speak. Having said all of that, within the scope of this paper there are definitely a few misconceptions that need to be addressed.

### *Who is the real Hyawatha?*

A very important misunderstanding is The Hiawatha of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem. The Hiawatha of this poem is completely fictitious and far removed from the real Hyawatha, a very holy man who traveled with the Peacemaker. The only similarity between the two is the name. It is said that Mr. Longfellow chose a name he had heard not knowing which Native language it belonged to or what it meant.

### *What is Wampum?*

Wampum plays a very important part in the Message of the Peacemaker. The average person might have heard that wampum was used for money. But to the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations), wampum is very sacred and was never used as money. It was the European colonists who used the shell beads as a medium of exchange. Wampum was discovered by Hyawatha, during a most terrible period of sadness and mourning. This is described in detail during the recitation of the the Great League of Peace. To this day, wampum belts, circles and strands continue to be a major part of Haudenosaunee life and are very sacred.

### *Are Native people monotheistic or polytheistic?*

And the last common misconception concerns the erroneous idea that Native spiritual beliefs and practices are polytheistic. This is a label that was placed on us by early Christian Missionaries who did not understand our languages. Charlotte Khan, a Diné Bahá'í, states this very clearly, “We believe everything has a spirit, there are spirits in everything, but we don't think they are gods. There is only one Creator and that Creator has many names.” (*Perspectives of a Diné Bahá'í—The Intersection of Diné culture with the Bahá'í Faith, Transcription from a taped interview with Charlotte Kahn recorded on November 26, 1999 CE, in Luckachukai, Navajo Nation Arizona*)

### *Who is the Peacemaker?*

The true name of the Peacemaker is Deganawidah. This name has many variant spellings which is typical of attempts to translate a language that has no written words. The name “Deganawidah” is considered sacred and not for use in everyday language and discourse. Consequently, throughout this paper I'll use the name “Peacemaker”.

Little is known of the Peacemaker's early life. Although, most agree that He was born to a virgin, who lived in a remote location with her mother. The mother and daughter had moved to this remote location in order to escape the ravages of blood feuds. Blood feuds had made life extremely dangerous for everyone. It was common to live in fear day and night. This is the dark time that the Peacemaker was born into.

“How often have the Prophets of God... chosen to appear, and deliver their Message in countries and amidst peoples and races, at a time when they were either fast declining, or had already touched the lowest depths of moral and spiritual degradation.” (*Shoghi Effendi, Advent of Divine Justice, p.16*)

One story told of the Peacemaker's childhood is He refused to play at war games with the other children and instead tried to explain to them that war was not good nor was fighting among each other. Some say the other children shunned Him because of this.

When the Peacemaker grew into adulthood, He built a canoe made of white stone. No one had ever built such a canoe and many believed that it would sink as soon as it touched water. It did not sink. Consequently, this is considered one of the signs that the Peacemaker was not an ordinary man. Thus, He left home and traveled east to deliver His Message of Peace to neighboring tribes. The delivery and content of this Message is very detailed and contains many proofs of Prophethood that are described in the Bahá'í Writings. I'll list and describe these later in this paper.

Another important factor in the Peacemaker's life is the date of His Message, which according to oral history was around the year 1,000 in the month of August when a solar eclipse occurred over the land of the Seneca. For many years there was controversy as European writers decided on a much later date. Although, recently thanks to the work of Dr. Barbara Mann, Ph.D, an American Studies Instructor at the University of Toledo, and Jerry Fields, an astronomer-mathematician at the same institution, a date was arrived at that combined both scientific data and oral history, the date is August 31, 1142. Very close to what the Haudenosaunee have been saying all along.

*What is the Peacemaker's Message?*

“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.” (*Christopher Buck, Native Messengers of God in Canada, The Bahá'í Studies Review 1996 p.113 -114*)

The Message the Peacemaker brought is often translated as the “Good Message” which encompasses what is translated as the Power and the Peace. Other names for His message are: The Iroquois Confederacy, the Great League of Peace and the Great Law.

“Now it is arriving, the Good Message. This indeed, is what it means: When it stops, the slaughter of your own people who live here on earth, then everywhere peace will come about, by day and also by night, and it will come about that as one travels around, everyone will be related. Now it is arriving, the Power, and this means that the different nations, all the nations, will become just a single one, and the Great Law will come into being, so that now all will be related to each other, and there will come to be just a single family, and in the future, in days to come, this family will continue on. Now it is arriving, the Peace,’ this means that everyone will become related, men and also women, and also the young people and the children, and when all are relatives, every nation, there will be peace as they roam about by day and also by night. Now, also, it will become possible for them to assemble in meetings. Then there will be truthfulness, and they will uphold hope and charity, so that it is peace that will unite all the people, indeed, it will be as though they have but one mind, and they are a single person with only one body and one head and one life, which means that there will be unity... all of mankind will repent of their sins, even

evil people, and in the future they will be kind to one another, one and all. When they are functioning, the Good Message and also the Power and the Peace, moreover, these will be the principal things that everybody will live by; these will be the great values among the people." (*Woodbury and Gibson, Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson p. 5 - 6*)

The Peacemaker's Message continues to guide the Haudenosaunee through all aspects of life. A full rendition of this Message takes several days to recite and reveals the ways in which the Peacemaker's teachings are invaluable to all people, no matter what tribe, nation or country we originate from. Also, as a Native American Bahá'í, I believe the Peacemaker's Message is a path for the Message of Bahá'u'lláh and that Bahá'u'lláh is most probably the return of the Peacemaker.

## **Part I**

### **Proofs of the Prophets**

In the Kitáb-i-Íqán and Gems of Divine Mysteries, Bahá'u'lláh describes a number of Prophets and in doing so provides us with ways to discern Prophethood. Other writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi give further proofs. In the following pages I will present these proofs as they pertain to the Peacemaker.

#### **Prophets Bring a Book**

“God hath raised up Prophets and revealed Books as numerous as the creatures of the world, and will continue to do so to everlasting.” (*Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 125*)

"The Prophets 'regarded as One and the same person' include the Lesser Prophets as well, and not merely Those Who bring a 'Book'. (*From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 8, 1949 - Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 498* )

#### *Wampum as a Book*

Wampum are traditional sacred beads made from the whelk shell and quahog clam shell. Wampum objects such as belts, circles and strands are used for recording significant events, no event would be considered authentic if it was not accompanied with a wampum object. The League of Peace is documented in several large wampum belts which are still in existence and are read every few years. This reading takes about eight hours daily and continues for three or four days.

#### *How can woven strands of beads be considered a book?*

For most of us the word "book" creates an image of paper pages bound together with a cover. It might be hard to imagine that a series of shell beads strung in various patterns could be considered a book. Although, if we look at the history of the modern book, we find that objects with specific patterns and shapes were previously used as forms of communication. “In the earliest recorded Western history Herodotus tells a story in which a Scythian ruler sent several objects to the Persian King Darius. The objects had symbols of a bird, mouse, frog and seven arrows. These objects and symbols were “read” as a surrender.” (*History - Is it a Book, Barbara Davison, 1997 and revised by Emily-Jane Dawson, 1999*)

As writing evolved so did the book, evolving from clay tablets, to scrolls of papyrus, parchment and vellum, to bound paper pages. Then as the printing press became widely used modern books were distributed in vast numbers. Because of this, we currently expect a book to be made of paper pages with two covers. With the digitalization of printed books I've often wondered how long it will take before our contemporary concept of book will become obsolete.

#### *Is reading wampum accurate?*

The first written transcripts of the Great League of Peace appear in the late 1800s. The written transcripts were taken by various transcribers, from different tribal people at different times, yet the written transcripts vary only slightly which gives us an undeniable proof that oral history is accurate when “read” with wampum belts, circles or strands.



## **Prophets appear when society is at the lowest moral and spiritual state**

“...when the Day-star of Truth hath set, and the mirrors that reflect His lights have departed, mankind will become afflicted with “oppression” and hardship, knowing not wither to turn for guidance.” (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 32)

“How often have the Prophets of God, not excepting Bahá'u'lláh Himself, chosen to appear, and deliver their Message in countries and amidst peoples and races, at a time when they were either fast declining, or had already touched the lowest depths of moral and spiritual degradation.” (*Shoghi Effendi, Advent of Divine Justice*, p.16)

The time of the Peacemaker’s appearance was considered a devastatingly dark time in Haudenosaunee history. This time was described very well by Arthur Parker, an accomplished Native American scholar and historian:

“A man's life was valued as nothing. For any slight offense a man or woman was killed by his enemy and in this manner feuds started between families and clans. At night, none dared leave their doorways, lest an enemy’s war club strike them down. Such was the condition when there was no Great Law.” (*Parker, Arthur C., The Constitution of the Five Nations, University of the State of New York, New York State Museum p. 17*)

## **They Found a New Civilization**

“The Prophets of God have founded the laws of divine civilization. They have been the root and fundamental source of all knowledge. They have established the principles of human brotherhood, of fraternity, which is of various kinds—such as the fraternity of family, of race, of nation and of ethical motives... The spiritual brotherhood which is enkindled and established through the breaths of the Holy Spirit unites nations and removes the cause of warfare and strife. It transforms mankind into one great family and establishes the foundations of the oneness of humanity.” (*‘Abdu’l-Bahá., Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 142)

The message the Peacemaker brought involved social, spiritual and moral changes by creating an alliance of native nations called the Haudenosaunee (“People of the Longhouse”) who have been united for over a thousand years by the cultural and moral values brought by the Peacemaker.

“... having become one family, the Five Nations, they now have united...” (*Woodbury and Gibson, Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson p.57*)

## **There is an Immediate Transformation of Society**

"It is evident that nothing short of this mystic transformation could cause such spirit and behaviour, so utterly unlike their previous habits and manners, to be made manifest in the world of being. For their agitation was turned into peace, their doubt into certitude, their timidity into courage. Such is the potency of the Divine Elixir, which, swift as the twinkling of an eye, transmutes the souls of men!" (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 156)

“Now it is arriving, the Good Message, also the Power, and also the Peace. Now indeed you have ended your killing of humans." That, moreover, is how it will happen; kindred people will stop massacring and scalping one another. As to that, it will stop now; from now on it will come about that everyone will be

related, members of all of the different nations. “ (Woodbury and Gibson, *Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson* p.13)

### **There is a Continuance of Transformation**

The Message of the Peacemaker continues to this day to guide the Haudenosaunee people.

“If you ask me what is the most important thing I have learned about being a Haudenosaunee, it’s the idea that we are connected to a community, but a community that transcends time.” (Rick Hill Sr. *Tuscarora Chair, Haudenosaunee Stabding Committee on NAGPRA*)

The message of the Peacemaker was carried beyond the Haudenosaunee people to the Euro-Americans. There is documented evidence that the Constitution of The United States was based on the Great Law of Peace.

The Peacemaker’s Message also influenced the women’s rights movement.

“...women of the Six Nations inspired suffragists with the vision of a society in which women had the same rights and responsibilities as men.” (Sally Roesch Wagner, *Sisters in Spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminists* (Native Voices, 2001)

A Haudenosaunee delegation presented a continuation of the The Peacemaker’s Message at the United Nations World Peace Summit (August 28-31 2000)

In 1991 Onondaga Clan Mother, Frieda Jean Jacques states:

“... at a time when our people were in the midst of wars and pervasive violence the Peacemaker came and brought us a message of love and peace. One of the gifts he brought to us at that time was the concept of the Good Mind (Ganigonhi:oh)... When the Europeans first came to this continent they were surprised to see that the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) did not have a police force or many laws to make the people behave themselves. I feel that the use of Ganigonhi:oh was so pervasive that it was unnecessary to have a police force and many laws... I refer to the Good Mind as a discipline, rather than just a description of a persons state of mind. First of all Ganigonhi:oh recognizes that we are connected to the good, that we have access to a loving source of good thoughts. Each and every one of us has many, many thoughts each day. With discipline we can become aware of each thought, see its substance, realize its intent, and then determine if you should follow and build on that thought”. (Jacques, *Freida Jean, Discipline of the Good Mind, Northeast Indian quarterly 1991:31*)

### **There are Star and Sky Signs**

“... a star will appear in the heaven, heralding unto its people the advent of that most great light. In like manner, in the invisible heaven a star shall be made manifest who, unto the peoples of the earth, shall act as a harbinger of the break of that true and exalted Morn. These twofold signs, in the visible and the invisible heaven, have announced the Revelation of each of the Prophets of God, as is commonly believed”. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán pages 61-62, paragraph 66*)

When the Peacemaker’s Message was first accepted, a star sign in the visible heaven occurred in the land of the Seneca with a black sun (solar eclipse). This eclipse occurred as the Peacemaker gave His message. This sign was crucial to the Peacemaker’s success in founding the Confederacy and gaining the trust of warring tribes. This star sign was proof for the Seneca to join the League. Messengers carried the story of this occurrence which helped pave the way as the Peacemaker traveled east with His message.

*The Peacemaker talks of a sky sign pertaining to future events:*

"Next I decree that if it should happen in future generations that someone might cause the League's affairs to diminish - perhaps by the chiefs making mistakes at the Confederacy Council causing dispute as time passes - then it will descend, the meteor, the one whose body is entirely white. This is the one, the White Meteor, will pick up what they are fighting over, their Power and the Peace and the peoples sustenance, which is, indeed, the Great Law." (Woodbury and Gibson, *Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga* by John Arthur Gibson p. 70)

*Bahá'u'lláh talks of a sky sign pertaining to future events:*

"Immediately after the oppression of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn..." (*Gems of Divine Mysteries*, p.9)

### **They Tell of a Future Messenger**

"...the fact that all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation." (*Kitáb-i-Íqán* page 13, paragraph 13)

"The next direction that he will face will be eastward and at that time he 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.... Deganawida said as this light approaches that he would be that light, and he would return to his Indian people, and when he returns, the Indian people would be a greater nation than they ever were before." (Buck, Christopher, *Native Messengers of God in Canada: A Test Case for Baha'i Universalism* published in *Baha'i Studies Review* 1996 p118 )

### **There is a Prophecy of the Future**

"...when the Day-star of Truth hath set, and the mirrors that reflect His light have departed, mankind will become afflicted with "oppression" and hardship, knowing not whither to turn for guidance". (*Kitab-I-Iqan* p. 32)

"...they will disperse, some going toward the east, some going toward the west, some going toward the south and some going toward the north; thus the families will scatter and the several Nations will live all over the island and nowhere can one find space to live and multiply, for they won't make space for them and give them shelter, the individual families. If it happens they do shelter them, it won't be long before those living there will begin to abuse them, eventually forcing them to leave their settlement, and the reason why they will do this is that they have never accepted the League's Great Law and the Peace; this is what they will see, our grandchildren, should it happen that they don't watch out, the chiefs of the League." (Woodbury and Gibson, *Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga* by John Arthur Gibson p.71)

When the Peacemaker was leaving the people, he told them "...they would face a time of great suffering. They would distrust their leaders and the principles of peace of the League, and a great white serpent was to come upon the Iroquois, and that for a time it would intermingle with the Indian people and would be accepted by the Indians, who would treat the serpent as a friend. This serpent would in time become so

powerful that it would attempt to destroy the Indian, and the serpent is described as choking the life's blood out of the Indian people." (*Apologies to the Iroquois 163-164*) (Buck, Christopher, *Native Messengers of God in Canada*, *Baha'i Studies Review* p. 118)

## **Part II**

### **Beyond the Proofs of the Prophets**

Beyond the proofs of Prophethood there are striking similarities between Bahá'u'lláh's Message and the principles of the Baha'i Faith and The Peacemaker's Message and the laws of the Great League of Peace.

#### **The Tree as a Sacred Symbol**

“From the seed of reality religion has grown into a tree which has put forth leaves and branches, blossoms and fruit. After a time this tree has fallen into a condition of decay. The leaves and blossoms have withered and perished; the tree has become stricken and fruitless. It is not reasonable that man should hold to the old tree, claiming that its life forces are undiminished, its fruit unequalled, its existence eternal. The seed of reality must be sown again in human hearts in order that a new tree may grow therefrom and new divine fruits refresh the world. By this means the nations and peoples now divergent in religion will be brought into unity, imitations will be forsaken, and a universal brotherhood in reality itself will be established. Warfare and strife will cease among mankind; all will be reconciled as servants of God. For all are sheltered beneath the tree of His providence and mercy.” (*Abdul-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 141-142*)

In Haudenosaunee tradition, the members of the League of Peace are sheltered by the Great Tree of Peace, whose roots can be followed from the any of the four directions by people with a good heart and good mind.

“To emphasize the union that had been created between the five nations, the Peacemaker chose a white pine tree, whose height pierced the sky and whose needles cluster in groups of five symbolizing the Five Nations. The Peacemaker explained that as the white pine tree retains its color throughout the seasons, so too would the Great Peace forever hold sway over the Five Nations.” (*Oneida Nation article, The Peacemaker's Gift, Nov. 3, 2008*)

#### **The Equality of Women and Men**

“The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment.” (*Promulgation of Universal Peace p. 375*)

“The Great Law. Much as all men stood as “towering trees” of the same height, ‘Women Chiefs’ would also be of the same height to one another and to the men. (*J.N.B. Hewitt, Women Chiefs, NAA, Hewitt Collection, No. 3577, 1926, 3.*)

#### **Presence of a Prominent Woman**

“Tahirih was an exceptional woman for her time and place, breaking the bonds which normally enslaved women in nineteenth century Persia. She attained a level of education unusual for women; she composed poems still widely regarded as masterpieces of literature; as one of the original nineteen followers of the Báb, she became a leader of the Bábi community and taught her Faith fearlessly.” (*Baha'i Topics - an information resource of the Baha'i International Community, Early Baha'i Heroines*)

“In his journey, the Peacemaker arrived at the waterfalls on the Easterly side of the river, where upon a long path, a woman lived alone. Tsikonsase (Jikonsaseh) was the woman's name. It is said that Tsikonsase was a descendent of the first woman on earth. Tsikonsase was said to have done a lot of work in relation to the warpath, as she fed warriors that travelled from the east and also those who travelled from the west. The Peacemaker spoke to Tsikonsase about her acts of aiding the war and told her to stop, because the Good Message, the Power and the Peace were coming to the nations. Tsikonsase accepted the good message and became the first woman to accept the Great Law of Peace. Later she became instrumental in promoting peace amongst the people. Tsikonase is also known as the Mother of all Nations” (*Indian Time, volume 14 no.28, July 1996, p.3*)

### **Bahá'í Universal House of Justice and Haudenosaunee Grand Council**

*The Universal House of Justice* - “The Universal House of Justice today guides the activities of the global Bahá'í community. This body was instituted by Bahá'u'lláh Himself as the supreme legislative organ of the Bahá'í administrative order.” (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 128*)

*The Grand Council* - “... the Haudenosaunee is a union of sovereign nations joined together for the common benefit of its citizens. Governed by a Grand Council of Chiefs who deliberate and make decisions for the people concerning issues both domestic and international.” (*Nya Wenha Ska Nonh, Onandaga Nation Website, [www.onondaganation.org/gov/sovereignty.html](http://www.onondaganation.org/gov/sovereignty.html)*)

*The Universal House of Justice* - “Baha'i elections have no candidacies, nominations, partisanship, campaigning, or electioneering.” (*National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States website, [www.bahai.us/welcome/organization/bahai-elections](http://www.bahai.us/welcome/organization/bahai-elections)*)

*The Grand Council* - Once a man is selected to be a Hoyane (Chief), he holds that position for life. Men do not "campaign" within the community for such positions.“ (*Nya Wenha Ska Nonh, Onandaga Nation Website, [www.onondaganation.org/gov/sovereignty.html](http://www.onondaganation.org/gov/sovereignty.html)*)

*Members of the Universal House of Justice* - “They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience. They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration,” (*The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, Bahai World Centre, Haifa, Israel, November 26, 1972*)

"It is incumbent to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, the names of only 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." (*Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, The Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL, 1953, p.88*)

*Members of the Grand Council* - “You shall be a good person, and, especially, you shall be kind to all of the people, not differentiating among them, the people who are wealthy, and the poor ones, and the good natured ones, and the evil ones who sin readily; all of them you shall treat kindly, and you shall not differentiate among them. And as to your own fireside, never consider only yourself, you must always remember them, the old people, and the younger people, and the children, and those still in the earth, yet unborn, and always you will take into account everyone's well being, that of the ongoing families, so that they may continue to survive, your grandchildren.” (*Woodbury and Gibson, Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson p. 100-101*)

“Hodiyahnehsonh are chosen because the men possess honorable qualities and are concerned with the well-being of the Confederacy. Their positions are unpaid and for life.” (*Haudenosaunee Guide for Educators, Smithsonian Institute, National Museum of the American Indian, Education office, 2009*)

#### *Universal House of Justice - Men of Justice*

“The Baha’i Universal House of Justice is comprised of nine men who have been elected from the Baha’i community. Bahá'u'lláh designated these nine men as "the Men of Justice". (*The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, Bahai World Centre, Haifa, Israel, November 26, 1972*)

#### *Grand Council - Caretakers of the Peace*

The Peacemaker brought a new system of government and administration. Included in this system are male leaders called Hoyaneh meaning “Caretakers of the Peace”.

#### *Government and Administrative Order*

“The Bahá’í Administrative Order involves the integration of spiritual and material life of the individual and the community. It is a form of social organization or a form of governance whose main concern is the integrated spiritual and material well being of the people. Its primary goal is to provide for a just system such that individual capacities and potentialities can best flourish. It creates a balance between the individual and the collective rights and responsibilities. It leads to greater freedoms than mere individual expression. Beyond avoiding oppression it provides for growth in spiritual, mental and material dimensions. It creates well defined channels for the expressions of both constructive ideas and concerns. It provides the policy environment and the executive channels for a wholesome growth of individuals and communities.” (*Aghdasi, Farzin, Characteristics of Bahá’í Administrative Order and Liberal Democratic Notions –A Comparative Study*)

“The central idea underlying Iroquois political philosophy is that peace is the will of the Creator, and the ultimate spiritual goal and natural order among humans. The principles of Iroquois government embodied in The Great Law of Peace were transmitted by a historical figure called the Peacemaker. His teachings emphasize the power of Reason to assure Righteousness, Justice and Health among humans. Peace came to the Iroquois, not through war and conquest, but through the exercise of Reason guided by the spiritual mind. The Iroquois is based not on force of arms or rule of law, but spiritual concepts of natural law applied to human society.” (*The Great Law of Peace - New World Roots of American Democracy by David Yarrow, Sept. 1987*)

#### **Importance of the Education of Children**

“That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the laws of God... The parents must exert every effort to rear their offspring to be religious, for should the children not attain this greatest of adornments, they will not obey their

parents, which in a certain sense means that they will not obey God. Indeed, such children will show no consideration to anyone, and will do exactly as they please.” (*A Compilation on Baha’i Education compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Baha’i World Centre, August 1976 p.3*)

“The very first thing we do is keep our young people interested – to show them who we are and involve them in our way of life. Teaching them from the very beginning what our traditions are, involving them in those traditions, having them help maintain those traditions. That makes them belong, and feel as if they belong. We hold elder gatherings to transmit traditional knowledge to young people, and we do it in a very disciplined way.” (*G. Peter Jemison, Faithkeeper Cattaraugus Reservation Seneca Nation*)

## **Unity**

“Therefore it is our duty to put forth our greatest efforts and summon all our energies in order that the bonds of unity and accord may be established among mankind. For thousands of years we have had bloodshed and strife. It is enough; it is sufficient. Now is the time to associate together in love and harmony. For thousands of years we have tried the sword and warfare; let mankind for a time at least live in peace.” (*Abdul-Baha Foundations of World Unity p. 50*)

"Moreover, we will begin to use a single mind. And this we will do by being like a single person, working together to change the habits of the man who lives nearby. This is how we will all cooperate in our work: we will unite, creating a single family to carry on into the future, and all will become related so that there will be respect among the various nations. So now, you chiefs, we will unite, we will use a single way of thinking..." (*Woodbury and Gibson, Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson, p. 36*)

## **The Independent Prophet and the Lesser Prophet**

“... the independent Prophets are founders; They establish a new religion and make new creatures of men; They change the general morals, promote new customs and rules, renew the cycle and the Law.” (*Abdul-Baha, Some Answered Questions pages 164-165*)

The Peacemaker’s Message was the beginning of a new spiritual way of life and a new social structure. It united the warring people of five (later six) tribes. This Message is still followed today.

“... the second sort of Prophets who are followers, these also promote the Law of God, make known the Religion of God, and proclaim His word. Of themselves they have no power and might, except what they receive from the independent Prophets.” (*Abdul-Baha, Some Answered Questions pages 164-165*)

Hiawatha was the most influential follower of the Peacemaker and served as His spokesperson. He was a skilled speaker and instrumental in persuading the people to accept the Great Peacemaker’s vision. He continued with Peacemakers message for many years after the Peacemaker left.

## **Justice**

“The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.” (*Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 66*)

“The Peacemaker and Hiawatha... set about to create a government whose purpose was not only to put an end to war and robbery, but to eliminate the causes of conflict through the establishment of universal justice... To the Haudenosaunee, justice is accomplished through the righteous action of a healthy society, one whose members have a refined capacity for reason.” (*McKeehan, Kimberly, Are We now One? Giving thanks the Haudenosaunee way, article published in The Montana Tributary November, 06, 2008*)



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## **Peace**

“The world is in greatest need of international peace. Until it is established, mankind will not attain composure and tranquility. It is necessary that the nations and governments organize an international tribunal to which all their disputes and differences shall be referred.” (*The Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 301*)

“... it is young as the day is when the sun is rising and lights up the earth; just as it causes warmth all over the earth for all the people, we will help the people of every nation. And just as all of the many things grow on earth and sustain the people, the newly arriving Great Law will come to shed light on the minds of the people...” (*Woodbury and Gibson, Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson p. 18*)

“Warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreement and dissension pass away and Universal Peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree.” (*The Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 145*)

“...several nations will become just a single one, and their power is that they shall join hands. This moreover, will be the basis upon which they will survive as a group, forming a single family, similar to being one person having one head and one life, surrounded by the Good Message. This is how peace will come about among all the nations, and power will arise for families to continue from here on in.” (*Woodbury and Gibson, Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson p. 15*)

## **Righteousness**

“The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book, nay, of every divinely-revealed verse, is to endue all men with righteousness and understanding, so that peace and tranquillity may be firmly established amongst them.” (*Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p.206*)

One of the three double principles of the Great League of Peace translated as righteousness or inner goodness. “... righteousness is in fact the result of practicing the good tidings and good mind. In any case, it refers to the power of reason and inner goodness. This righteousness provides an atmosphere liberty and justice that is free of corruption and evil intent.” (*Tracing the White Roots of Peace, a commentary by Teyowisonte (John Deer, 12/09/2002)*)

## **Economics**

“Through the manifestation of God's great equity the poor of the world will be rewarded and assisted fully and 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 rich will enjoy the privilege of this new economic condition as well as the poor, for owing to certain provision and restriction they will not be able to accumulate so much as to be burdened by its management, while the poor will be relieved from the stress of want and misery.” (*The Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 132*)

“... our economy, that way in which our people manage their resources, and the relationship of that management to the total organization of our society, are processes completely bound together. The distribution of goods, in our traditional society, was accomplished through institutions which are not readily identified as economic institutions by other societies....We feel that many people will be confused when we say that ours is a Way of Life, that our economy cannot be separated from the many aspects of our culture. Our economy is unlike that of Western peoples. We believe that all things in the world were created by what the English language forces us to call "Spiritual Beings," including one that we call the Great Creator...The Hau de no sau nee have no concept of private property. This concept would be a contradiction to a people who believe that the Earth belongs to the Creator. Property is an idea by which people can be excluded from having access to lands, or other means of producing a livelihood. That idea would destroy our culture, which requires that every individual live in service to the Spiritual Ways and the People....Ours was a wealthy society. No one suffered from want. All had the right to food, clothing, and shelter.” (*The Hau de no sau nee Address to the Western World, Geneva, Autumn 1977*)

## Appendix

“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.” (*Letter dated 29 March 1993, Universal House of Justice - cited in a letter to the Continental Board of Counsellors in the Americas, from the International Teaching Centre, 20 June 2002*)

“Your nineteenth point deals with the possibility of producing a teaching aid which would include references to Messengers of God sent to “native peoples”. It is normally left to the discretion of each National Assembly to decide what is included in the literature for teaching to be used in areas under its jurisdiction. Whatever step the National Spiritual Assemblies may take in this regard, if reference is made to individuals described as Messengers of God in the traditions of various tribes and peoples, care will have to be exercised that these are clearly distinguished from those whose prophethood is attested in the Bahá’í Writings.” (*The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 30 January 1990 to an individual believer*) Buck, *Christopher Native Messengers Baha’i Studies review p.131*

“Authoritative Bahá’í pronouncements do place constraints on what Bahá’ís can integrate into their belief system. However, doctrine is theoretically open to refinement provided other Bahá’í principles are brought into relevance.” (*Buck, Christopher, Native Messengers of God in Canada, Baha’i Studies Review, p.126*)

“In a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer on 14 April 1941, the Guardian, commenting on the problem of assigning specific dates to prophets of old, stated that “such matters, as no reference occurs to them in the Teachings, are left for students of history and religion to resolve and clarify.” Another statement may be cited as corroborative: “There are no dates in our teachings regarding the actual dates of the Prophets of the Adamic Cycle; so we cannot give any. Tentatively we can accept what historians may consider accurate” (*Buck, Christopher, Native Messengers of God in Canada, Baha’i Studies Review, p.126*)

“At issue here is not the question of the *existence* of other Messengers of God principle, a Bahá’í can certainly affirm that Messengers of God have indeed been sent to all peoples, according to Bahá’í belief, but that there is simply no conclusive way to attest legendary culture heroes individually. Under no circumstances does this prevent a real appreciation of such legends, and of the spiritual and cultural values enshrined in them. Thus, Bahá’í authorities may consider adding the *category* of (rather than *names* of) Messengers of God to First Nations, or Messengers of God to Indigenous Peoples. The problem now is no longer the *principle*, but rather the question of *names*.” (*Buck, Christopher Native Messengers of God Baha’is studies review p. 132*)

“Once native spirituality, in its noblest forms, is reconciled with and assimilated to the Bahá’í doctrine of Progressive Revelation, the Bahá’í worldview may achieve a more universal universalism.” (*Buck, Christopher Native Messengers of God in Canada: A test case for Bahá’í Universalism, Baha’is Studies Review p. 132*)