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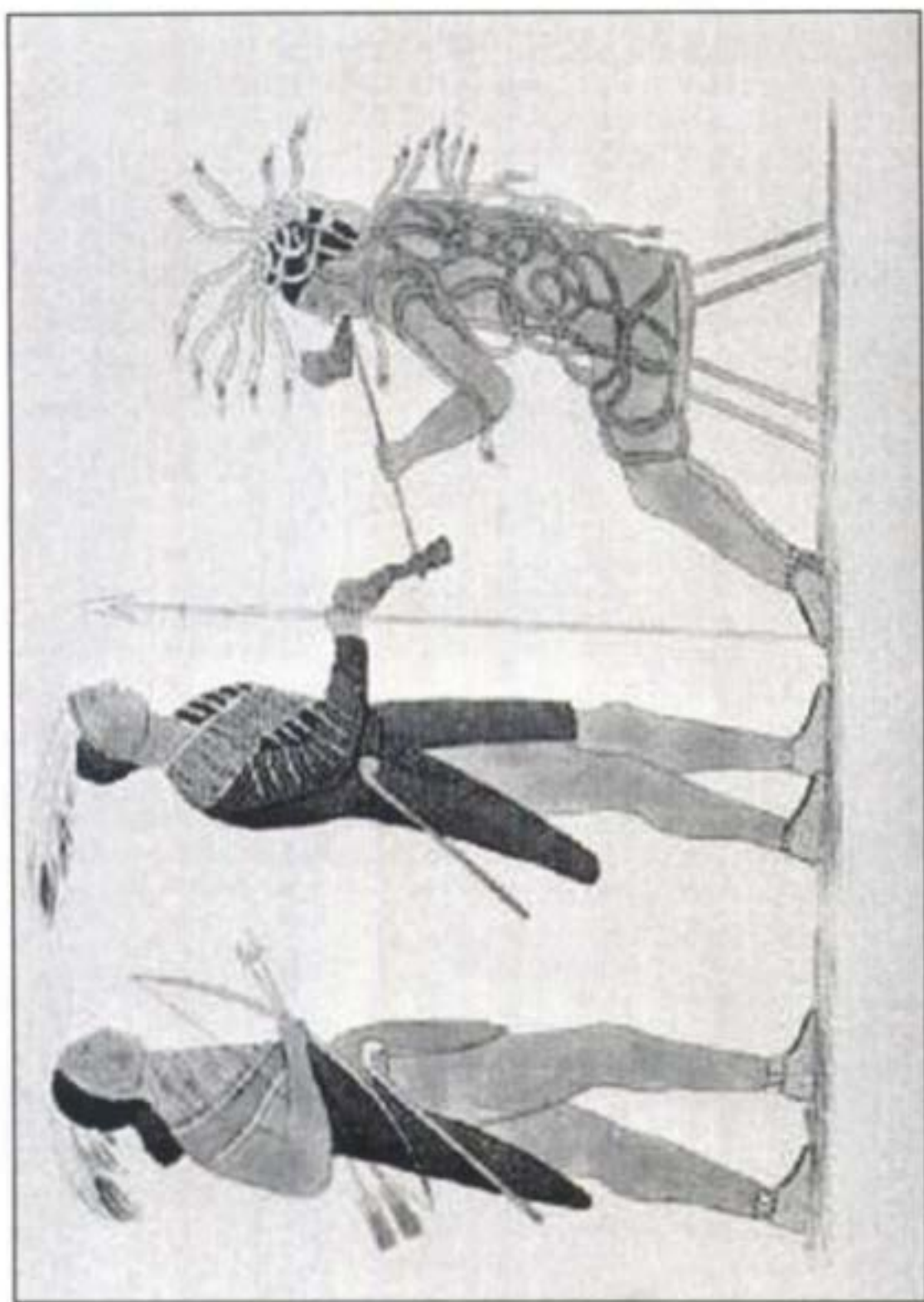


# REASON & REVELATION

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New Directions in Bahá'í Thought

Edited by Seena Fazel & John Danesh



**A NATIVE AMERICAN DEPICTION OF**

(l to r) Deaganawida, Hiawatha, and Thadodaho at the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy.

# Bahá'í Universalism and Native Prophets

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*Academic and popular attention has revived interest in native spirituality. This essay explores the possibility of accepting prophets from indigenous cultures into Bahá'í doctrine, reflecting a development that has already taken place in popular Bahá'í belief in North America. A hitherto under-studied Persian text of 'Abdu'l-Bahá establishes this principle in such a way that its explicit enunciation is now possible. The prophetic credentials of Iroquois culture hero and statesman Deganawida are critically examined as a test case. The legend of Deganawida has a kernel of historicity overlaid by hagiography, with admitted Christian influence. Nonetheless, if the Bahá'í principle of "progressive revelation" can assimilate the Amerindian spiritual legacy as distinct from and developmentally asynchronous with Irano-Semitic and Sino-Indic religious histories, then it might be possible to accord Deganawida a theoretical status within Bahá'í prophetology, and affirm Bahá'u'lláh's unifying role in world history, as oral cultures take their place alongside the more familiar "literate" traditions.*

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Thereupon Tekanawita [Deganawida<sup>1</sup>] stood up in the center of the gathering place, and then he said: "First I will answer what it means to say, '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 again [?], secondly I say: " 'Now it is arriving, the Power,' and this means that the different nations, all of the nations, will become just a single one, and the Great Law will come into being, so that all now 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 in turn, the other, my third saying: " 'Now it is arriving, the Peace,' and 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, then there will be peace. Then there will be truthfulness, and they will uphold hope and charity, so that it is peace that will unite all of 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. When they are functioning, the Good Message and also the Power and the Peace, these will be the principal things everybody will live by; these will be the great values among the people." (Deganawida, Iroquois prophet, circa 1450 C.E.)<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations declared 1993 the International Year of Indigenous People. This reflects a widespread renewed interest, popular and academic, in native spirituality. In Canada, such concern with "First Nations"<sup>3</sup> has had an ecumenical impact as well. A strong native presence in the membership of the Canadian Bahá'í community is reflected in the fact that native Canadians represent the most significant influx of new converts to the Bahá'í Faith in Canada, particularly in the Peigan Reserve in southern Alberta. In 1993, the Bahá'í national convention held in Regina focused "on the unique culture, heritage and destiny of Canada's Native peoples."<sup>4</sup> The "destiny" referred to here is the Bahá'í-inspired vision of Amerindian awakening and its anticipated impact on the historic path to world peace. In 1993, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, whose chairperson was a native Canadian woman, made a formal submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.<sup>5</sup>

In its advocacy on native issues,<sup>6</sup> previous representations had been made by that national assembly in 1960<sup>7</sup> and in 1968,<sup>8</sup> the outcome of a history of productive relations with native Canadians. Canadian Bahá'í interaction with native peoples is characterized not only by respect and advocacy, but also by ecumenism. Integration of



sacred ceremonies (sweet grass and peace pipe ceremonies, blanket dances, and powwows) into Bahá'í conferences, especially in western Canada, has enriched Canadian Bahá'í experience in a pluralistic (rather than a syncretistic) way.

Reflected in its representations to the Canadian Parliament and in proclamation pamphlets, the relation of the Bahá'í Faith to native Canadians has been a dual one: one of advocacy and one of teaching. Bahá'ís would like to see native Canadians embrace their religion but, at the same time, preserve native cultural identities. The purpose of the present study is to examine the implications of such rapprochement for Bahá'í doctrine.

### **The “Official” and “Popular” Paradox**

A classic paradox in the academic study of religion arises from the formal comparison of “official” and “folk” (or “popular”) forms of religion. Ideally, the two should mirror one another. In reality, they often do not. This paper will explore one such paradox: indigenization of sectors of Canadian Bahá'í community life, supported at the policy level but not fully integrated at the doctrinal level.

Rise in the indigenization of Canadian Bahá'í conferences reflects a current trend among missions today in integrating elements of native spirituality with dominant forms of the Canadian religious culture. From a Bahá'í perspective, the major warrant for a religion's spiritual authenticity is the attestation of a bona fide “Manifestation of God” in any given tradition. Acknowledgment of messengers of God among native Canadians would appear to be a specifically Bahá'í innovation, despite the parallel indigenization of Christian worship. Towards this end, the concept of messengers of God to native Canadians has been introduced in the form of localized proclamation pamphlets, officially approved by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada but never officially adopted as a public teaching for the non-native population. By accepting native traditions as richly spiritual and valid, and through an “indigenization” of Bahá'u'lláh at the missionary level, Bahá'ís have in effect created a body of opinion that may lie outside of the formal teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. No Manifestation of

God from among native peoples has been explicitly recognized in Bahá'í doctrine. Official Bahá'í doctrine, which is at its heart universalist, has yet to establish a formal position with respect to indigenous prophets. This raises the question of the place of native spirituality in Bahá'í prophetology.

### **Cross-cultural Messianism and Bahá'í Universalism**

She [White Buffalo Calf Woman] has returned. Not in the same form that she came in the first time but really in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. (Counsellor Jacqueline Left Hand Bull Delahunt, 1995)<sup>9</sup>

Bahá'í teachers have often appealed to native prophecies to establish the claims of Bahá'u'lláh. This process creates an eschatological bridge between native worldview and Bahá'í universalism, in a linkage between native wisdom teacher and Bahá'í prophet, between vision and fulfilment. As prophecies tend to be teleological, it is natural that Bahá'í recourse to prophecy is primarily one of missionary ingenuity. Neither believer nor teacher, as a rule, ever question prophecy. To do so is religiously imprudent, as the force of the proof text resides in its authority.

Not unlike popular Mormon identification of Jesus Christ with the ancient Toltec culture hero Quetzalcoátl, the figure of Bahá'u'lláh is becoming progressively indigenized in the Americas. Taking the figure of Quetzalcoátl as a prime example of this Bahá'í teaching technique,<sup>10</sup> Bahá'ís have appealed to prophecies surrounding the return of the Toltec civilizer, and to the "mantic history" of the "Books" of the Yucatec Mayan "Chilam Balam" priests as well.<sup>11</sup> The mystique of such a tradition possibly resides in the fact that it is literate<sup>12</sup> (the Mayans had an extraordinary interest in prophecy) and "historical" (calendrical, chronological, cyclical).

In 1975, in the ancient capital of the Peruvian Inca empire, the golden city of Cuzco, Bahá'ís attending an all-Quechua Bahá'í conference (Quechua is the surviving language of the ancient Inca empire, now the second official language of Peru) were photographed beside a sign, which read: "Bahá'u'lláh is the return of Viracocha."<sup>13</sup> Eschatologically, Bahá'u'lláh has become the Inca culture hero Viracocha

*redivivus*.<sup>14</sup> The existence of prophecies envisioning the return of Quetzalcoátl and Viracocha predisposed Bahá'í pioneers and converts to identify Bahá'u'lláh with both of these culture heroes, Toltec and Inca.<sup>15</sup> The phenomenon of Quechua converts identifying Viracocha with Bahá'u'lláh might in part be explained by a belief among present-day Incas that the head of the Inca deity Ri actually exists and is reconstituting itself in the Andean underworld, its head growing a body toward its feet. When the body of Ri is restored, the Inca will return.<sup>16</sup>

The number of localized indigenous messianic connections with the eschatological persona of Bahá'u'lláh will continue to grow, but the process has yet to witness official recognition of native spirituality as a feature of Bahá'í doctrine.

### **Native Teaching and Bahá'í Folk Beliefs**

A full-color picture of native Bahá'ís performing at a major Bahá'í event in Montreal is featured prominently on page eight of a publication of the Bahá'í International Community.<sup>17</sup> On page ten of this magazine, it is stated: "Bahá'ís the world over come from all religious backgrounds: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Zoroastrian, *animist*, and non-religious." (Emphasis added) The use of the term "animist" here is politically incorrect.<sup>18</sup> For the same reason, I have avoided using other terms, such as "primitive" and "primal," in this essay.<sup>19</sup>

Further on, page 37 of the same publication states: "People from all of the major religious backgrounds have found that the promises and expectations of their own beliefs are fulfilled in the Bahá'í Faith. *Bahá'ís from Native American, African and other indigenous backgrounds, similarly, find in the Bahá'í teachings fulfilment of prophetic visions.*" (Emphasis added). Here, reference to prophetic visions would logically require the instrumentality of prophets (major or minor) or, if not, then seers or sages. Prophecies and visions are acknowledged far more easily than are prophets and seers, even though the former require the instrumentality of the latter. Thus, on page 34, under the header "Divine Messengers," the Bahá'í International Community states: "Bahá'ís believe that throughout history



the Creator has revealed Himself to humanity through a series of Divine messengers. These messengers include: Abraham, Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh."

Absent from this list are native prophets and seers, because they are not attested in Bahá'í scriptures, except in principle. The problem of attestation notwithstanding, we get a much different picture when it comes to native teaching work. There are some significant reasons for this.

Throughout Bahá'í history, Bahá'í missionaries ("pioneers") have done more than anyone else to universalize the Bahá'í Faith, both demographically and doctrinally. In 1916-17, 'Abdu'l-Bahá lent considerable impetus to this missionary diversification in his *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, which were addressed to four countries: the United States, Canada, Newfoundland, and Greenland.<sup>20</sup> In fulfilling 'Abdu'l-Bahá's vision of systematic missionary work to be prosecuted throughout the Americas, Bahá'í pioneers dedicated their lives to promoting the Bahá'í gospel of unity. Evidence of such dedication is not lacking: what appears to be a local Mohawk tribute to Bahá'í pioneers, James and Melba Loft, was published in *Tekawennake*.<sup>21</sup>

In the Bahá'í mission field, it was necessary to relate Bahá'í teachings and truth-claims to indigenous traditions. Native-oriented Bahá'í teaching pamphlets were published for that purpose. It is important to note that these pamphlets typically expressed genuine Bahá'í solidarity with elements of native spirituality, which included recognition of some of the great spiritual teachers revered in native traditions. Such pamphlets—some in typescript, others handwritten—were thus on the cutting edge of Bahá'í universalism. In the pamphlet review process, Bahá'í policy has supported the teaching initiatives of Bahá'í pioneers, but official Bahá'í doctrine has not formally assimilated some of the sweeping universalisms published by Bahá'í pioneers or by other authors of teaching materials.

Despite generic concessions to the existence of native messengers of God in principle, in practice there is an explicit Bahá'í stricture against adding actual names of Manifestations of God who are not attested to in the Abrahamic tradition, most notably in the Qur'an. While the Qur'an would appear to have very little to do with indigenous traditions in the New World, and has no binding authority on



Bahá'í doctrine or praxis generally, the Qur'an is seen as a universal scripture, thereby acting as a prophetological constraint on any such authority claims. This has not altogether deterred Bahá'ís from expressing personal interest in the authenticity of culture heroes as possible messengers of God. There are, for example, chapters on the Iroquois prophet Deganawida in two Bahá'í-authored books: *Warriors of the Rainbow* and *Voices of Earth and Sky*.<sup>22</sup>

### The Problem of "Adding Names"

Universalism may have its limits.<sup>23</sup> Bahá'í salvation history accounts for the appearance of the great world religions as each having been founded by a "Manifestation of God." A Bahá'í list of the founders of the major religions may be marked by incompleteness. In response to a believer who raised this issue, Shoghi Effendi explained: "Regarding your question: the only reason there is not more mention of the Asiatic Prophets is because their names seem to be lost in the mists of ancient history. Buddha and Zoroaster are mentioned in our scriptures—both non-Jewish or non-Semitic Prophets. We are taught that there have always been Manifestations of God, but we do not have any record of their names."<sup>24</sup> This answer satisfies the problem of inclusivity in cases where all historical traces have vanished. But what of living oral traditions, if and when such narrative events preserve and prolong the memory of a culture hero who is likely to have been a real historical figure in pre-Columbian times? A legend might, after all, have a historical kernel, a basis in history.

While historicity is a necessary warrant of authenticity, it is not a sufficient warrant for determining prophetic credentials. Shoghi Effendi stated why: "Regarding your questions: we cannot possibly add names of people we (or anyone else) think might be Lesser Prophets to those found in the Qur'an, the Bible and our own Scriptures. For only these can we consider authentic Books."<sup>25</sup>

Note that this pronouncement, in principle, does not exclude other religious traditions from recognition. Take the case of Buddhism, for instance. Nowhere in Bahá'u'lláh's writings is Buddhism ever mentioned. In explaining Bahá'u'lláh's silence, Shoghi Effendi reasoned:

“As there were no followers of the Báb or Bahá’u’lláh derived from the religions of the Far East in Their days, this may be the reason that They did not address any Tablets directly to these people.”<sup>26</sup> Nor is there any mention in Bahá’u’lláh’s writings of the Buddha by name, for the very same reason. Yet Bahá’u’lláh’s designated successor and interpreter, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, assimilated both Krishna<sup>27</sup> and Buddha into Bahá’u’lláh’s prophetic scheme, which is referred to as “progressive revelation.” While ‘Abdu’l-Bahá certainly had the authority to add to the number of Manifestations of God attested to in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, individual Bahá’is have neither the authority nor the license to do so. In this respect, the Bahá’í canon of named Manifestations of God is, for all intents and purposes, closed.

How is it possible, therefore, for senior Bahá’í officials to add to this list anyway?<sup>28</sup> In the epigraph at the beginning of this paper, former Universal House of Justice member David Ruhe was quoted as saying: “*To the warring tribes 700-800 years ago there came an astonishing Prophet of Peace—Deganawidah.*”<sup>29</sup> This statement was made as the opening remark of the Hasan M. Balyuzi Memorial Lecture, presented at the 18th Annual Conference of the Association for Bahá’í Studies at Harvard University, 1994.

A similar statement was cited above made by Counsellor Jacqueline Left Hand Bull—herself a Lakota Indian—in 1995, when, in a widely televised interview, she declared her personal belief that: “*She [White Buffalo Calf Woman] has returned. Not in the same form that she came in the first time but really in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.*”<sup>30</sup>

In both these cases, the spirit of Bahá’í universalism has moved beyond the boundaries of formal doctrine. How should we understand this? Since more is known about Deganawida than about White Buffalo Calf Woman, it should prove useful at this juncture to examine the Deganawida legacy, to try to see why it presents itself to not a few Bahá’is as evidence of an authentic native messenger of God—a conviction that illustrates the paradox of official and popular Bahá’í beliefs.

### **“The Peacemaker” as a Test Case**

In 1993, in my first contact with Native Canadians at an interfaith event held in Mississauga, Ontario, the name of Deganawida was spoken of, with reverence, in the same breath and spirit as the name of Jesus Christ. This spirit of profound reverence made a deep impression on me, and I resolved to find out more about this native Canadian culture hero. In the course of my subsequent reading, I came across this generous assessment of the legacy of Deganawida and the Iroquois, spoken by Richard Pilant in his address to the Institute of Iroquoian Studies in 1960:

The Six Nations in Canada constitute the most complete survival we have today of one of the highest cultures of one of the races of mankind—the Indian. Unlike the Mayas and the Incas to the South, the Long House People developed a democratic system of self-government. They alone among the Indian nations made a major political contribution in their form of Government which can be maintained to have furnished a prototype for the United States and the United Nations. Socially the Six Nations met the sociologist's test of higher cultures by having given a preferred status to women.<sup>31</sup>

This assessment, though somewhat out of place in an academic setting, shows the kind of recognition Deganawida can enjoy even in learned societies. This may be due in part to the importance of the Iroquois Great League of Peace (as a cultural and ritual institution) and the subsequent Iroquois Confederacy<sup>32</sup> (as a political and diplomatic entity), and its presumed influence on the framing of the American system of government.<sup>33</sup> (The problem of Iroquois influence will be discussed later in this paper.) The task of disentangling fact from fancy in the Deganawida cycle, though, is even more problematic. But systematic attempts have been made. It should be pointed out that the Deganawida cycle is sacred to the Iroquois nations, and that “the Peacemaker” himself is revered to this day as a messenger from the Creator.



## The Deganawida Cycle

Deganawida is a name said to mean, “*Two water currents flowing together.*”<sup>34</sup> If tradition warrants, some time between 1400 A.D.<sup>35</sup> and 1600 A.D. (possibly in the year 1451 A.D. when the Iroquois witnessed an eclipse of the sun), Deganawida,<sup>36</sup> the “Heavenly Messenger,”<sup>37</sup> is said to have established the Great League of Peace among the warring Five Nations of the Iroquois (from east to west: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca). The League’s origins and purposes are explained in the central Iroquois myth, the Deganawida epic.<sup>38</sup> The nature of this warfare was a cultural pattern known as the “mourning war,” essentially a system of blood feuds.

Huron by birth and Mohawk by adoption, Deganawida was a prophet, statesman, and law giver who co-founded with Hiawatha the Iroquois “League of People of the Longhouse,” also known as the “Great League of Peace.” This League, in actual practice, was vested in a council of fifty peace chiefs, or *sachems* (a term used to distinguish these from other chiefs). Each successor to a League chief was chosen by a “clan mother” presiding over the lineage in which the title was held. The governing council required unanimous consent to render each of its decisions.<sup>39</sup> The symbol of the League was the White Tree of Peace, over which hovered an ever-vigilant eagle.

The historicity of the League of Five Nations is not in dispute, nor is the existence and role of Deganawida himself in the formation of the original Iroquois confederacy. The traditional legend, which survives in several versions, has variations that pose no serious challenge to the unity of the narrative. Mythic elements, of course, give the legend its charm and symbolic depth, which in and of themselves are no less valuable. Christian influence, however, cannot be ruled out. For this reason, the version known as the Code of Dekanahwideh together with the Tradition of the Origin of the Five Nations’ League, “Prepared by the committee of chiefs appointed by the Six Nations’ Council of Grand River, Canada, and adopted by Council of Chiefs, July 3, 1900,” is prefaced with this concession:

With reference to the origin or birth, character and doings of Dekanahwideh [sic] as herein chronicled, it will be observed that they present an analogy or similarity to Hebrew biblical story and teachings.



This is portrayed strongly in the narration of the birth of Dekanawideh and also in extraordinary powers which he is attributed to have possessed. There is little doubt that some of this influence was brought about as a result of the labours and teachings of the Jesuit fathers among them.<sup>40</sup>

The "extraordinary powers" which Deganawida is said to have possessed need not be of Christian provenance, however, as this is a common feature of aboriginal narratives and of folklore generally.

In the epitome of the Deganawida legend given below, no attempt is made to note variants:<sup>41</sup>

In ancient times, Tarenyawagon ("The Holder of the Heavens") saved the Five Nations from onslaught of the Stone Giants. He conquered monsters and put the world in order. He gave laws for men to follow, taught the art of war, and provided for good fishing. Over time, the five tribes had a disagreement, and went their separate ways. Among the ancestors a child was born to a Huron virgin near the Bay of Quinte near Kingston, Ontario. This child was an incarnation of Tarenyawagon, entrusted with a great mission of peace. His first task was to cure the Iroquois of cannibalism.

Deganawida set out on his mission in a canoe carved from white stone. He crossed Lake Ontario. On the far shore he found hunters whose village had been razed. They told of warmongering, the slaughter of innocents, and of cannibalism. Deganawida then visited Djigonsasa, the Mother of Nations, who fed warriors traveling through. He told her to cease supporting the war parties, and then imparted to the Mother of Nations his gospel of Righteousness, Peace, and Power, symbolized by the Longhouse and the Great Law:

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. This message has three parts: Righteousness and Health and Power—*Gaiihwiyo*, *Skenno*, *Gashedenza*. And each part has two branches.

Righteousness means justice practiced between men and between nations; it means also a desire to see justice prevail.

Health means soundness of mind and body; it also means peace, for that is what comes when minds are sane and bodies cared for.

Power means authority, the authority of law and custom, backed by such force as is necessary to make justice prevail; it also means religion, for justice enforced is the will of the Holder of the Heavens and has His sanction.

It will take the form of the Longhouse, in which there are many fires, one for each family, yet all live as one household under one Chief Mother. Hereabouts are Five Nations, each with its own Council Fire, yet they shall live together as one household in peace. They shall be the Kanonsiónni, the Longhouse. They shall have one mind and live under one law. Thinking shall replace killing, and there shall be one Commonwealth.<sup>42</sup>

She was the first to embrace Deganawida's message and, in so doing, gave clan mothers priority over men.

Deganawida came to one cannibal's lodge. Deganawida climbed to the roof and lay chest-down by the smokehole. After the cannibal's grisly stew was brewed, as the cannibal was about to eat from a bowl made of bark, he suddenly beheld in it the face of Deganawida. The cannibal thought he saw himself looking up from the depths of the pot. Then Deganawida met the cannibal as he threw away the body. They ate venison together, then buried the corpse. To the cannibal Deganawida explained his message, adding that the Ruler had ordained that antlers be worn as a sign of authority. The cannibal accepted. Thereupon Deganawida named the cannibal, Hiawatha.

Deganawida went next to the Mohawks to preach his message. To the "Flint Nation" Deganawida proclaimed: "The Great Creator from whom we are all descended sent me to establish the Great Peace among you. No longer shall you kill one another and nations shall cease warring upon each other. Such things are entirely evil and he, your Maker, forbids it."<sup>43</sup>

Though persuaded by his message, the Mohawks demanded proof of Deganawida's power to establish such a peace. The prophet obliged, answering: "I am able to demonstrate my power for I am the messenger of the Creator and he truly has given me my choice in the manner of my death."<sup>44</sup> Trial by ordeal was in order, one of his own choosing. He scaled a tree and, after it was felled over a precipice, he emerged unscathed. He then wed the chief's favorite daughter and became a chief himself. The chief accepted Deganawida's message.

Hiawatha tried to convert the cannibal despot Atotarho, his half-

brother. Atotarho was a wizard, chief of the Onondagas, with snakes for hair, twisted in body and mind. The wizard frustrated all of Hiawatha's attempts to establish peace. Then, according to one version, Osinoh the Witch transformed herself into an owl and killed each one of Hiawatha's daughters. Hiawatha was distraught, with no one who could comfort him in his grief. Mourning, Hiawatha forsook the Onondagas.

As he wandered, Hiawatha came upon a lake or cluster of lakes, filled with ducks. He startled them, and as they took flight, they took all the lake water with them. Gathering the shells from the lake bottom and stringing them into beads, Hiawatha invented wampum and spoke of its use for consoling those who mourn.<sup>45</sup>

In a cornfield outside a Mohawk village, Hiawatha found a hut where he made a fire and proceeded to make wampum. To messengers from the village, Hiawatha taught protocol in the ritualized use of wampum. The village chief promised Hiawatha a seat of honor at council where they could consult over food, but the promises were broken. Hiawatha again went wandering.

Hiawatha then chanced upon Deganawida, who went about consoling Hiawatha with eight of the thirteen strings of wampum fashioned by Hiawatha. Wampum proved an effective medicine for those who mourn, as Hiawatha's grief was dispelled. Deganawida sent scouts in the form of crows, bear, or deer to find Atotarho's column of smoke. In the meantime, Deganawida and Hiawatha successively won the allegiance of the Oneidas, Cayugas, and Senecas. With the two having the power of unity, Deganawida led the Nations to Atotarho, in order to transform him, singing the Peace Hymn along the way.

As the procession reached Onandaga, Deganawida exorcized Atotarho of his evil spirits. The two Iroquois prophets got Atotarho to agree to be the firekeeper, the principal chief with veto power, and Onandoga as the capital of the Five Nation's territory. After enlisting the Onondaga chief's support, Deganawida planted the Great Tree of Peace in what is now Syracuse, New York. Tradition relates that Deganawida uttered these words as he established the confederacy:

I am Dekanawidah, and with the Five Nations' Confederate Lords I plant the Tree of the Great Peace.

I name the tree the Tree of the Great Long Leaves. Under the shade

of this Tree of the Great Peace we spread the soft white feathery down of the globe thistle as seats for you, Adodarhoh, and your cousin Lords.

Roots have spread out from the Tree of the Great Peace, one to the north, one to the east, one to the south and one to the west. The name of these roots is The Great White Roots and their nature is Peace and Strength.

We place at the top of the Tree of the Long Leaves an Eagle who is able to see afar. If he sees in the distance any evil approaching or any danger threatening he will at once warn the people of the Confederacy.<sup>46</sup>

The Iroquois prophet cast weapons of war beneath the Four White Roots of the Tree and so founded the Five Nations Confederacy. This comprised some fifty League chiefs, each invested with a crown of antlers, the wing of a seagull to brush dust away from the council fire pit, and a pole to rid the area of all creeping creatures. Symbolizing the League was the Longhouse with its five fire pits under one roof, wampum belts depicting the Five Nations, Onondaga being a great tree or heart at its center. A meal of beaver tail, with no sharp utensils in the common dish; five arrows bundled together to make them strong; the council fire and pillar of smoke that reached the sky; five stalks of corn emerging from one stalk fed by four roots: all of these symbolized the power of the League.

The League then established its foreign policy, with laws regulating admission into the League. Delegations were sent out to the Ojibways, Cherokees, and other tribes to offer them the Great Peace. The League reserved the right to wage just war against any opposing nation that refused to accept the "Great Peace." The final symbol of the League was the Condolence ceremony, a re-enactment of the rite as performed by Deganawida for Hiawatha, and by both for the exorcism of Atotarho. The Condolence ceremony, with its thirteen wampum strings of Requickening, would serve to swerve the mourner from vengeful grief resulting in never-ending blood feuds. Having fulfilled his mission, Deganawida departed, promising to come again in a time of crisis. Deganawida's very name was considered sacred, and for this reason, he is often simply referred to as "the Peacemaker."<sup>47</sup>

Typical of myths narrating the exploits of other culture heroes, Deganawida "travels magically, overcomes a whole series of trials, and battles monsters. The myth of origin, like the legend, tells that the hero's task is to structure the world and society. It is in this sense that myths are the reflection of society."<sup>48</sup>



The historicity of Deganawida, though never in doubt, presents all the problems of the so-called quest for the historical Jesus. Overlooked by Vecsey in his critical treatment of the Deganawida cycle—but in complete accord with his findings—is Seldon's dissertation on Deganawida. After examining differing published versions, along with versions collected by the author himself (documented in English during visits to several Iroquois reserves and reservations including Tyendinaga, Six Nations, and St. Regis), Seldon found that the legend of Deganawida was transformed over time into myth. Furthermore, the roles of Deganawida and Hiawatha altered through time as a function of various social and psychological pressures on the Iroquois.<sup>49</sup> Of the extant versions of the Deganawida cycle, Gibson's narrative is, according to Vecsey, "perhaps definitive."<sup>50</sup>

### **Mad Bear's Prophecy of Deganawida's Return**

Since there is at least one tradition of Deganawida's return, it is probably only a matter of time before Bahá'í pioneers to Iroquois peoples proclaim Bahá'u'lláh to be the return of Deganawida. Let us then examine one tradition foretelling the return of Deganawida.

Mad Bear (Wallace Anderson), was an Iroquois nationalist, a Tuscarora by birth. In August, 1959, author Edmund Wilson had an interview with Mad Bear . . . [who] proceeded to relate a prophecy ascribed to Deganawida, which was presumably a source of encouragement whenever his collective hopes for his people flagged. He had heard this prophecy from the head clan mother of the Senecas, who resided on the Tuscarora reserve, and "from a number of other sources," which Mad Bear did not disclose.<sup>51</sup>

Vecsey confirms that the prophecy of Deganawida's return is sufficiently attested in Iroquoian tradition to be considered an essential, though not prominent, feature in the Deganawida cycle.<sup>52</sup> The Six Nations' version has the prophet condition his return on times of crisis: "If at any time through the negligence and carelessness of the lords, they fail to carry out the principles of the Good Tidings of Peace and Power and the rules and regulations of the confederacy and the people are reduced to poverty and great suffering, I will return."<sup>53</sup> In 1990, a trade book, *Native American Prophecies*, popularised Deganawida's prophecy as transmitted by Mad Bear.<sup>54</sup>

So ends the Deganawida cycle, but not its enduring legacy. I now take up the Iroquois influence hypothesis, as this informs popular appreciation of Deganawida.

### **The Iroquois-Influence Hypothesis**

Until recently, Hollywood has tended to focus on American Indian war societies. But, according to native peoples, an ancient peacemaking tradition has existed among the First Nations since the dawn of North American aboriginal history. A recent study argues that one of the most compelling bodies of evidence for the existence of a peace movement among indigenous societies during the American Revolution is preserved in the Morgan Papers, a collection of largely unpublished documents relating to the first American Indian peace treaty in 1776.<sup>55</sup> Historical arguments have also been advanced which hypothesize Iroquois influence on Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of American democracy.<sup>56</sup> In 1751, Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to James Parker, his New York City printing partner, made the comparison explicit:

It would be a very strange Thing, if six Nations of ignorant Savages should be capable of forming a Scheme for such a Union, and be able to execute it in such a Manner, as that it has subsisted Ages, and appears indissoluble; and yet a like Union should be impracticable for ten or a Dozen Colonies, to whom it is more necessary, and must be more advantageous; and who cannot be supposed to want an equal Understanding of their Interest.<sup>57</sup>

Iroquoist Elisabeth Tooker has taken to task such a view of history, calling it a “myth.”<sup>58</sup> Despite the negative verdict of recent scholarship, the power and prestige of the Iroquois Confederacy was sufficient to impress Benjamin Franklin as a model for comparison. Lack of evidence to substantiate direct influence on American government need not diminish recognition of the Iroquois model, which owes its existence, at least traditionally, to Deganawida.

Scholarship can be relied upon to provide correctives. But, as in the case of Tooker’s critique, debunking myth is not always the same as demythologizing myth. Debunking totally discredits the myth,

whereas demythologizing salvages from the myth its historical kernel and, if that is lacking, whatever truth might still be gleaned from the intent of the myth. Resolving this controversy exceeds the scope of this paper. No amount of scepticism, however, is likely to dissuade native views on such matters.<sup>59</sup>

The notion of what I shall term *semitocentrism* is crucial here. As formulated and as currently understood, Bahá'í prophetology—in its essential features—differs little from standard Islamic prophetology. It is universal in respect of literate, but not oral, cultures. In other words, religions that lack either an Abrahamic or Indo-Aryan ethnic endowment are unlikely to achieve parity with those religions that are already accepted within the Bahá'í tradition.

### **The Islamic Legacy: Sabianism As a Procrustean Category**

Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl tried to adumbrate forms of indigenous religions (especially African) under the rubric “Sabian”—although Abu'l-Fadl's writings appear to be devoid of reference to New World traditions. Problems of category become apparent in his definition of the Sabians as a reference to “all non-Judaic and non-Indic religions of antiquity.”<sup>60</sup> This may be true insofar as the learned apologist was concerned, but his own explanation fails to include, at least in specific terms, the religious traditions of the indigenous, pre-Columbian New World.

The term “Sabian,” as I have previously shown, reflects an essentially Islamic view of the history of religions, which entailed an obvious lack of consensus, and indeed confusion, in the use of the term which Bahá'í terminology stood to inherit.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl's usage of the term was broader than that which Shoghi Effendi was to adopt a few decades later:

As to the religion of the Sabæans, very little is known about the origins of this religion, though we Bahá'ís are certain of one thing, that the founder of it has been a divinely-sent Messenger of God. The country where Sabæanism became widespread and flourished was Chaldea, and Abraham is considered as having been a follower of that Faith.<sup>62</sup>

The Bahá'í Faith has therefore inherited from Islam an unresolved problem in the use of the term "Sabian." For Bahá'u'lláh, it referred to the religion of John the Baptist.<sup>63</sup> Shoghi Effendi used the term in line with its more common Islamic meaning, however.

### **Nine is Not Enough**

Bahá'ís have traditionally spoken of nine existing world religions: (1) Sabianism; (2) Hinduism; (3) Zoroastrianism; (4) Buddhism; (5) Judaism; (6) Christianity; (7) Islam; (8) the Bábí religion; and (9) the Bahá'í Faith.<sup>64</sup> Shoghi Effendi was quick to recognize the intellectual objections that could be raised to such a fixed and closed canon. Therefore, he counselled Bahá'ís not to lay too much stress on this list.<sup>65</sup> On the evidence of current publications, this foresighted doctrinal flexibility was destined to avoid the pitfalls of a nine-religion exclusivism.<sup>66</sup> The question remains as to how Bahá'í doctrine will adapt to the sociological fact of religious traditions not specified, yet anticipated in principle and accommodated in practice as the result of conversions from increasingly diverse populations.

Bahá'í universalism is circumscribed by the limited possibility of the attestation of prophets by name. In principle, Bahá'í doctrine acknowledges that messengers of God were sent to all peoples at one time or other, and that the names of more than a few of them are lost. Analytically, the Bahá'í list of nine explicitly recognized prophets represents only two families of religions: the Irano-Semitic (Sabianism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Babism, and the Bahá'í religion) and Sino-Indic traditions (Hindu tradition, Buddhism, and, to a lesser degree in Bahá'í texts, Confucianism). Native spirituality belongs to neither.

### **Authority and Attestation: The Constraints of Science on Religion**

Authoritative Bahá'í pronouncements do place constraints on what Bahá'ís can integrate into their undisputed, canonical list of divine messengers. However, doctrine is theoretically open to refinement provided other Bahá'í principles are considered.



As a general rule, Shoghi Effendi left questions of history open to historians. In a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer, the Guardian stated: "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." (25 November 1950) On the basis of these statements, the Research Department in a memorandum to the Universal House of Justice concluded: "Because the Writings of the Faith contain no exact information regarding dates of Dispensations prior to that of Muhammad, Bahá'ís can accept the conclusions of scholars, bearing in mind that there is often disagreement among the scholars themselves on such matters."<sup>67</sup>

### **Synchronic and Diachronic Models of Progressive Revelation**

If Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl has acknowledged the existence of two separate and unrelated streams of religious tradition—two relative solitudes, religions of the New World represent neither stream. To suggest that native Amerindian religions are somehow lost tribes of Sabians is, of course, absurd—and reductionist in the extreme. The Research Department of the Universal House of Justice broached this problem when in 1988, it drew attention to the following statement from one of the well-known tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "*In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association and interchange of thought were well-nigh impossible. Consequently, intercourse, understanding and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable . . .*"<sup>68</sup> This idea trades on the observation that societies on separate continents functioned as distinct social worlds with independent religious traditions.

This, in turn, invites formal consideration of non-Irano/Semitic and non-Sino/Indic religious traditions along with their respective founders in those traditions which ascribe their origins to such founders. On the basis of other texts in addition to the one just cited, the Research Department, on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, concluded: "In light of everything above, it would appear possible that

Manifestations of God have lived simultaneously in different areas of the globe . . . ”<sup>69</sup> This statement is important in that it theoretically allows for formal recognition, at least in principle, of religious traditions outside the Irano-Semitic family.

A more enlightened doctrinal modification might be possible on the basis of a history of civilizations, in which human societies might be seen as undergoing asymmetrical developments. In their respective courses of social evolution, spiritual traditions may be seen as endemic, distinct, and independent of each other, except perhaps for certain universal features (phenomenological, not essentialist). Being virtually cut off from the East prior to Columbus (subsequent to any prehistoric migrations), religious history in the Americas evolved independently of Jesus and Muhammad, such that revelations from God to the Americas were not mediated through Asia. Too narrow a Bahá’í conception of progressive revelation would require that, in theory and assuming a prior date for Zoroaster, a Zoroastrian would be obliged to believe in the Buddha as next in the succession of prophets. A corollary of such a view would imply that the New World was bereft of its own prophets during the dispensations of Christ and Muhammad.

### **‘Abdu’l-Bahá on Native Messengers of God**

In his compendium of Bahá’í teachings, *‘Amr va khalq* (“Command and creation”), Fádil Mázandarání refers to a tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed to a certain Amir Khan of Tehran. The gist of this piece is this: in times past, the Call of God (*nidáy-i iláhí*), referring to ancient messengers of God, had assuredly been raised among the people of North America (*ahl-i amrik*), though most of the teachings have been forgotten. As to translation, the Universal House of Justice has provided the following authorized translation of the central portion of the text:

In ancient times the people of America 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.

As to places whose people were not informed of the appearance of Prophets, such people are excused. In the Qur'an it hath been revealed: "We will not chastise them if they had not been sent a Messenger." (Q. 17:15)

Undoubtedly in those regions the Call of God must have been raised in ancient times, but it hath been forgotten now<sup>70</sup> (*al-battih dar án afahát niz dar azmanih-yi qadímih*<sup>71</sup> *vaqti nidá-yi iláhi buland gashtih va-lákin hál farámúsh shudih ast*<sup>72</sup>).

In this particular context, the expression "Call of God" (*nidáy-i iláhi*) is a transparent reference to prophets of God. The expression, the "Call of God," is a stock allusion to revelation, as in Bahá'u'lláh's poetic description of the Báb's revelation: "The divine call (*nidáy-i iláhi*) of the Celestial Herald from beyond the Veil of Glory."<sup>73</sup> Adduced in the text translated above is a quranic verse which 'Abdu'l-Bahá cites indicating that God would not judge a people unto whom no messenger (*rasúl*; *Amr va Khalq* 2:46) had come. Knowledge of God, according to Bahá'í doctrine, is necessarily mediated by chosen Revealers. This coded validation of Native messengers of God might suggest a separate and distinct spiritual history in a world far removed from Abrahamic tradition.

However, at the present time, the language of this tablet is not specific enough to warrant an explicitly positive statement from the House of Justice, which writes:

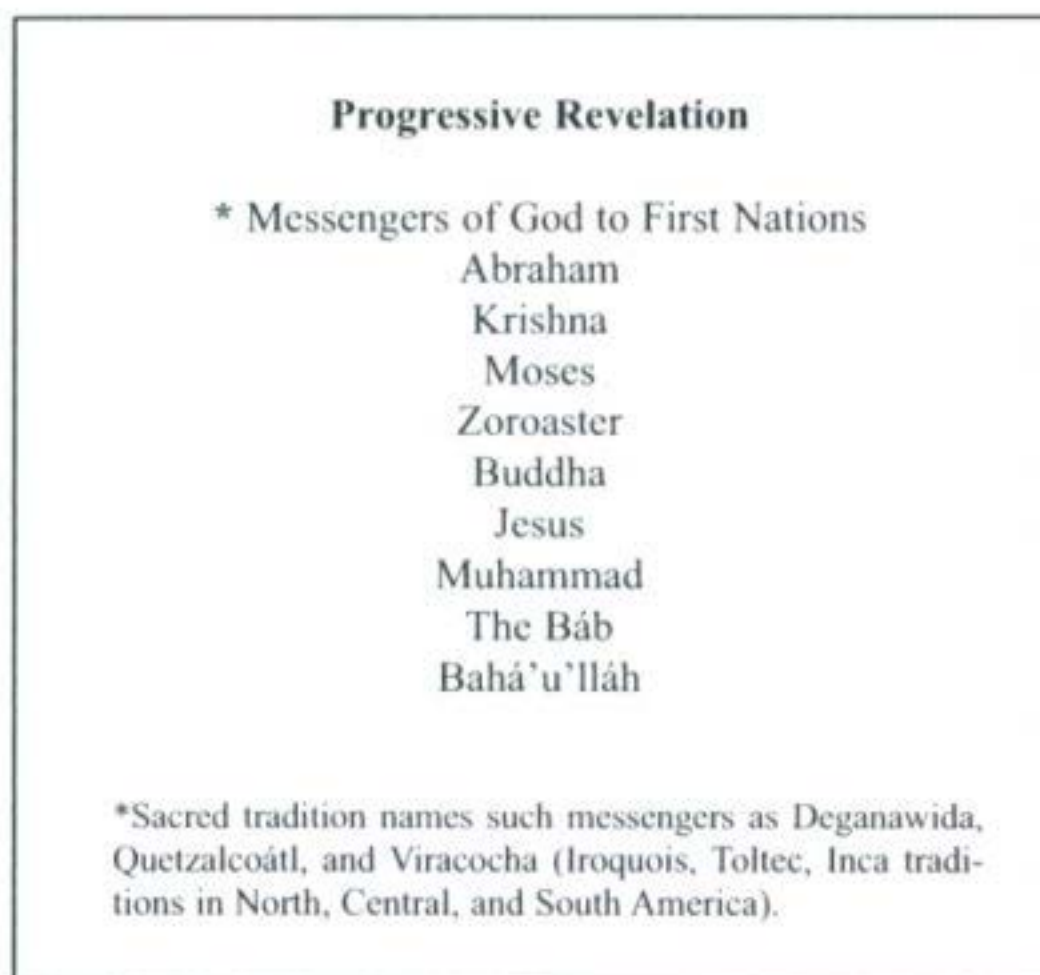
The Bahá'í Teachings do not explicitly confirm, nor do they rule out, the possibility that Messengers of God have appeared in the Americas. In the absence of a clear Text the Universal House of Justice has no basis for issuing the kind of statement you propose which would confirm, "in principle, that God sent Manifestations to the indigenous peoples of the Americas."<sup>74</sup>

## Universalizing Universalism

What is the status of this particular pronouncement, which admittedly exists in splendid isolation? Its implications are clear, and in relation to the paradigm bias of semiticentrism, the statement is profound. This Bahá'í validation of native messengers of God suggests a separate and distinct spiritual history in a world far removed from Abrahamic tradi-



tion. Thus, a Bahá'í pamphlet incorporating such a position might look something like the figure below:



From silence, we conclude that the question of the authenticity of native spirituality was not explicitly addressed during Shoghi Effendi's ministry as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. Though the Bahá'í stricture against adding names to the succession of prophets attested in Abrahamic scriptures would inevitably frustrate any Bahá'í attempt to enshrine a native culture hero who must be accepted by all Bahá'ís as a Manifestation of God, such a list might be open-ended with respect to principle. Native traditions pose their own difficulties in attestation, especially where accounts vary and when such traditions betray Christian influence and, more recently, Euroamerican influence at the hands of anthropologists and the press as well.<sup>75</sup> It could be argued that such historical uncertainties are no worse than problems surrounding the historicity of Krishna, for example.



At issue here is not the question of the *existence* of other messengers of God not attested to and listed in the Bahá'í writings, but the problem of designating them by name. In principle, a Bahá'í can certainly affirm that messengers of God have been sent to all peoples, according to Bahá'í belief, but that there is simply no authoritative way to attest the historicity of legendary culture heroes individually. 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*.

Deganawida presents a unique case for Bahá'ís because there is evidence for his historicity, as reflected in a scholarly consensus. This is not to say that the "historical Deganawida" is possible to recover. The fact that Deganawida may have appeared after Muhammad chronologically poses no difficulty, since native spirituality has had no historical connection with the Abrahamic stream of revelation. Diffusionist theories may explain the transmission of some vestiges of ancient native spirituality, but such diffusion does not predetermine subsequent developments. Though Islam is a universal religion and was always so potentially, its presence in the New World is late. Bahá'ís cannot expect Amerindians to have accepted Islam when they had no knowledge of it. Therefore, the existence of Native American prophets must be recognized in principle. Hence, although the Bahá'í Faith cannot claim Deganawida as its own, it can recognize the place of Iroquois spiritual genius within the world's sacred history.

## NOTES

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1. "To the warring tribes 700-800 years ago there came an astonishing Prophet of Peace—Deganawidah united five, later six, mutually hostile tribal groups in a federal union based on democracy, the first in the Western Hemisphere. He cemented this union with a "Great Law of Peace," a constitution which propounded one expansive human family. And thus, in God's Plan, with Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson as perceptive mediators, the Bill of Rights and the Constitution were vital steps (after the War of Independence,

- 1775-83) toward realising in America the Iroquois concept of the primacy of individual rights as superior to property and power. And of course the Iroquois foreshadowed, in their Longhouse of sky and earth, the planetary message of the Bahá'í Faith for today." (David S. Ruhe, "A New Evolution: Religious Bonding for World Unity," *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 4 [1994-1995] pp. 45-57).
2. John Arthur Gibson, *Concerning the League: The Iroquois League as Dictated in Onondaga*, newly elicited, edited and translated by Hanni Woodbury in Collaboration with Reg Henry and Harry Webster on the Basis of A.A. Goldenweiser's Manuscript. Memoir 9 (Winnipeg: Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics, 1992) pp. 36-41.
  3. On Canadian native peoples, see R. Snyder-Penner, "A Select Bibliography on Indigenous Peoples in Canada," *The Conrad Grebel Review*, Vol. 9 (Spring 1991) pp. 171-78. On native spirituality generally, see Armin W. Geertz, "Native North American Religions," in *A New Handbook of Living Religions*, ed. J. R. Hinnells (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) pp. 514-46.
  4. *Canadian Bahá'í News*, Vol. 5, no. 9 (1993) p. 13.
  5. The Universal House of Justice formally approved this initiative (*Bahá'í Canada*, Vol. 6, no. 3 [1993] p. 23).
  6. *The Right to An Identity* (Toronto: Canadian Bahá'í Committee, n.d.). The time frame within which publication of this pamphlet must have occurred (1967-1976) is ventured by W. Collins, *Bibliography of English Language Works on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths 1844-1985* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1990).
  7. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, "A Submission to the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs," in *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, No. 4. May 18, 1960* (Canada Senate and House of Commons, 24th Parliament, 3rd Session; Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, 1960). Also in French. Cited in Abler, *A Canadian Indian Bibliography 1960-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) pp. 148-49 (entry 720).
  8. Abstracted in Abler, *A Canadian Indian Bibliography*, pp. 51-52 (entry 262).
  9. Jacqueline Left Hand Bull, "Bahá'í," in *Parliament of Souls: In Search of Global Spirituality. Interviews with 28 Spiritual Leaders from Around the World*, ed. M. Tobias, J. Morrison, B. Gray (San Francisco: KQED Books, 1995) p. 22.
  10. From an academic perspective, the Quetzalcoátl prophecies are best treated by David Carrasco, *Quetzalcoátl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1982) pp. 148-204; idem, "Quetzalcoátl's Revenge: Primordium and Application in Aztec Religion," *History of Religions*, Vol. 19 (1980) pp. 296-320. For a translation of one of the native Quetzalcoátl traditions, see J. Bierhorst, *Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature: Quetzalcoátl/The Ritual of Condolence/ Cuceb/The Night Chant* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1974) pp. 17-105.

11. Latin literature purportedly transcribed from hieroglyphic texts. One of the "Sacred Books of the Jaguar Priests" has been translated by M. S. Edmonson, *The Ancient Future of the Itza: The Book of Chilam Balam of Tizimin* (Austin, Texas, 1982); cf. R. Roys (tr.), *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1967). Several Naturegraph publications, including pamphlets by the late Vinson Brown who established Naturegraph, have appealed to such traditions.
12. M. Jansen, "The Art of Writing in Ancient Mexico: An Ethno-iconological Perspective," in *Visible Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1986). In the sixteenth century, as Spaniards further explored Mesoamerica, they found eighteen different systems of writing. See also O. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992) p. 432, n. 34.
13. Photograph in *The Bahá'í World: An International Record*, Vol. 16 (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) p. 445. The sign in Spanish reads: "Bahá'u'lláh el retorno Viracocha." The caption states: "This sign says that Bahá'u'lláh is the return of Viracocha, a divine being of Indian tradition."
14. Phenomenologically, the figure of Bahá'u'lláh has been associated with various messianic traditions:
 

(1): <b>Bábí tradition:</b>	*	Him Whom God Shall Manifest; the Báb remanifest.
(2): <b>Shí'í Islam:</b>	*	Imám Husayn <i>redivivus</i> .
(3): <b>Zoroastrianism:</b>	*	Sháh Bahrám Varjávand.
(4): <b>Judaism:</b>	*	Ancient of Days; Glory of God; Everlasting Father.
(5): <b>Christianity:</b>	*	Christ returned; the Comforter/Spirit of Truth.
(6): <b>Sunní Islam:</b>	***	Return of Jesus Christ
(7): <b>Hinduism:</b>	**	Kalki Visnuyasas; the Tenth Avatar; return of Krishna.
(8): <b>Buddhism:</b>	**	Maitreya, the Fifth Buddha.
(9): <b>Indigenous:</b>	****	Viracocha's return (Quechua Inca tradition).

**Legend:**     Period during which messianic identification was made:  
 \*            During Bahá'u'lláh's ministry.  
 \*\*           During 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry.  
 \*\*\*          During the Guardian's ministry. Earlier attestation uncertain.  
 \*\*\*\*         Possibly as early as the Guardian's ministry.
15. See also Tony Shearer, *Lord of the Dawn: Quetzalcoátl, the Plumed Serpent of Mexico* (Healdsburg, CA: Naturegraph, 1971).
16. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, pp. 440-41, n. 11.
17. *The Bahá'ís: A Profile of the Bahá'í Faith and Its Worldwide Community* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1992) is a publication of the Bahá'í International Community (a non-governmental organization [NGO] with consultative status at the United Nations), Office of Public Information.
18. Native religious traditions, it is true, are suffused with ecological referents. For the modern native Canadian, what may have once qualified as animism



- has been considerably psychologised. Myth is now appreciated as heritage and is found to be replete with meaning, sending its own message to an ecologically endangered industrial society.
19. For a relevant discussion of the why such terms are so theologically freighted, see James L. Cox, "The Classification 'Primal Religions' as a Non-Empirical Christian Theological Construct," *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (1996) pp. 55-76.
  20. As pointed out to me by Stephen Bedingfield, personal communication, 28 December 1995. It should be noted that Newfoundland joined the Canadian federation in 1949.
  21. [No author cited], "30 Years of Pioneering on Tyendinaga Honored," *Tekawennake* [Brantford, Ontario] Vol. 5, no. 4 (1979). The present writer has not accessed this article.
  22. Willie Wiloya and Vinson Brown, *Warriors of the Rainbow: Strange and Prophetic Dreams of the Indian Peoples* (Healdsburg, CA: Naturegraph, 1962) pp. 42-48; Vinson Brown, *Voices of Earth and Sky* (Stackpole, 1979).
  23. On the development of Bahá'í universalism, see my article, "A Unique Eschatological Interface: Bahá'u'lláh and Cross-cultural Messianism," in *In Iran. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, Vol. 3, ed. by Peter Smith (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1986) pp. 157-79.
  24. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi dated 10 October 1950, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í reference file*, comp. H. Hornby, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988) p. 503.
  25. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi dated 13 March 1950, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 503.
  26. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi dated 5 March 1957, *The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963-1990* (Maryborough, Victoria: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991) Vol. 1, p. 23.
  27. 'Abdu'l-Bahá accepted both Buddha and Krishna as Manifestations of God. Evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's estimation of Krishna is found in Vol. 7 of Ishráq-Khávarí, ed., *Má'iday-i ásmání* (Tehran: Mu'assisa Mabu'át Amrí, 129 Badí' [1972]).
  28. In an obituary for the Iroquois Bahá'í pioneer James Loft, Deganawida is spoken of as a prophet in a purely referential way: "It is perhaps significant that Tyendinaga is the birthplace of Deganawida, the fifteenth century figure whom tradition regards as the founder of the Iroquois Confederacy. Regarded as a prophet by the Indian people, Deganawida, who was Huron by birth and Mohawk by adoption, united various tribes under one law and devoted his life to establishing peace, righteousness and civil law . . . His grave marker —within the shadow of the monument erected to the revered Deganawida— bears the simple legend, *Alfred "Jim" Loft—Bahá'í Pioneer* and is engraved with the Indian thunderbird symbol and a nine-pointed star" (Evelyn Loft Watts and Charles Jardine, "Alfred James Loft 13 July 1908-22 May 1973," in *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. 16, pp. 515-16).
  29. Ruhe, "A New Evolution," p. 45.



30. Delahunt, "Bahá'í," in *A Parliament of Souls*, p. 22.
31. Richard Pilant, "An Address to Iroquoian Studies," McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 6 April 1960; *apud* G. Reaman, *The Trail of the Iroquois Indians: How the Iroquois Nation saved Canada for the British Empire* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1967).
32. See J. Tuck, "Iroquois Confederacy," *Scientific American*, Vol. 224, no. 2 (1971) pp. 32-42.
33. A distinction drawn by D. Richter, "Ordeals of the Longhouse: The Five Nations in Early American History," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in North America, 1600-1800* (Syracuse University Press, 1987) pp. 11-27.
34. A. Parker, "The Traditional Narrative of the Origin of the Confederation of the Five Nations Commonly Known as the Iroquois," in *Parker on the Iroquois*, ed. by W. Fenton (Syracuse University Press, 1968) Vol. 3, no. 64, n. 2.
35. The year A.D. 1390 is given in J. Myers, *The Fitzhenry and Whiteside Book of Canadian Facts and Dates* (Richmond Hill, Ontario: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1991) p. 17. No documentation is adduced to support such a date. It has now entered the popular domain as a "fact."
36. A drawing of Deganawida appears in Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, p. 72.
37. Whether "Heavenly Messenger" is the actual meaning of, or is simply an epithet for, Deganawida is not specified in Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, p. 71.
38. Two critical treatments of the Deganawida cycle deserve mention here: D. Richter, "Ordeals of the Longhouse," pp. 11-27; C. Vecsey, "The Story and Structure of the Iroquois Confederacy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 54, no. 1 (1986) pp. 79-106; reprinted in *Imagine Ourselves Richly: Mythic Narratives of North American Indians* (New York: Crossroad, 1988) pp. 94-117.
39. Tooker, "The United States Constitution and the Iroquois League," pp. 113-14.
40. *The Code of Dekanahwideh together with The Tradition of the Origin of the Five Nations' League*, "Prepared by the committee of chiefs appointed by the Six Nations' Council of Grand River, Canada, and adopted by Council of Chiefs, July 3, 1900," in W. Fenton, ed., *Parker on the Iroquois* (Syracuse University Press, 1968) Vol. 3, no. 62.
41. For this the reader is referred to the work of Vecsey, *Imagine Ourselves Richly*, pp. 98-106, 115-17.
42. P. Wallace, *The White Roots of Peace* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1946) pp. 13-14. On the six principles that Deganawida explains to the Mother of Nations, see Vecsey, *Imagine Ourselves Richly*, pp. 113-15.
43. Fenton, *Parker on the Iroquois*, Vol. 3, no. 15.
44. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, no. 16.
45. See L. Ceci, "The Value of Wampum among the New York Iroquois: A Case Study in Artifact Analysis," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 38, no. 1 (1982) pp. 97-107.

46. Fenton, *Parker on the Iroquois*, Vol. 3, no. 3.
47. This epitome of the Deganawida cycle was for the most part based on Vecsey's much longer and carefully documented summary in, "The Story and Structure of the Iroquois Confederacy," pp. 82-90. Vecsey is to be consulted for the important variants in the retelling of the saga in its several versions and for his penetrating analysis of the legend as a whole.
48. Bonnefoy, *Mythologies*, Vol. 2, no. 1161.
49. Sherman Ward Seldon, *The Legend, Myth and Code of Deganaweda and their Significance to Iroquois Culture History* (Ph.D. Thesis, Folklore Program, Indiana University). Available from University Microfilms. Abstracted in Abler, *A Canadian Indian Bibliography*, pp. 656-57 (entry 2959).
50. Vecsey, "Story and Structure," p. 80, n. 3.
51. *Apologies to the Iroquois*, pp. 163-64.
52. Vecsey, "Story and Structure of the Iroquois Confederacy," p. 90.
53. Fenton, *Parker on the Iroquois*, Vol. 3, p. 105.
54. Peterson, "Deganawidah: Peacemaker of the Iroquois," in *Native American Prophecies*, pp. 62-89. Mad Bear's prophecy is reprinted on pp. 77-79.
55. G. Schaaf, "The American Indian Peace Movement: Past and Present," *Interculture*, Vol. 18, no. 4 [no. 89, English ed.] (1985) pp. 2-13; reprinted from *Akwesane Notes*, Vol. 17, no. 5 (1985). Schaaf highlights recent achievements by Amerindian leaders to promote peace.
56. B. Johansen, *Forgotten Founders: Benjamin Franklin, the Iroquois and the Rationale for the American Revolution* (Ipswich, MA: Gambit, 1982).
57. L. Labaree, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961) Vol. 4, pp. 118-19. Cited by Tooker, "The United States Constitution and the Iroquois League," p. 110.
58. Tooker, pp. 115, 121.
59. See "Iroquois Great Law of Peace and the United States Constitution: How the Founding Fathers ignored the Clan Mothers," *American Indian Law Review*, Vol. 16 (1991) pp. 497-531; cf. P. A. Levy, "Exemplars of Taking Liberties: The Iroquois Influence Thesis and the Problem of Evidence," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 53, no. 3 (July 1996) pp. 588-604; S. B. Payne, "The Iroquois League, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 53, no. 3 (1996) pp. 605-620; D. A. Grinde, A Sauce for the Goose: Demand and Definitions for Proof regarding the Iroquois and Democracy," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 53, no. 3 (1996) pp. 621-36.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 100, translator's note.
61. See my "The Identity of the Sabian: An Historical Quest," *The Muslim World*, Vol. 74 (1984) pp. 172-86.
62. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi dated 10 November 1939, *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 20.
63. Bahá'u'lláh identifies the Sabians so: "After the martyrdom of the son of Zachariah [John the Baptist], some of His followers did not turn unto the divine Manifestation of Jesus, the Son of Mary, and removed themselves

from the Faith of God, and until this day they have continued to exist in the world, being known to some as the Sabians. These people consider themselves to be the community of John" (*Qamus-i Iqan*, Vol. 2, p. 987, cited in *World Order*, Vol. 10 [1975] p. 3). In another passage, Bahá'u'lláh speaks of the followers of John the Baptist as those "who are even now still on the earth and are known as the Sabians" (*Asrar al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 233, cited in *World Order*, Vol. 10 [1975-76] p. 11).

64. In a letter to "Mrs. Russell," dated 28 July 1936, Shoghi Effendi wrote: "The number nine, which in itself is the number of perfection, is considered by the Bahá'ís as sacred, because it is symbolic of the perfection of the Bahá'í Revelation which constitutes the ninth in the line of existing religions, the latest and fullest Revelation which mankind has ever known. The eighth is the religion of the Báb and the remaining seven are: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islám, and the religion of the Sabians. These religions are not the only true religions that have appeared in the world but are the only ones still existing." *Bahá'í News*, No. 105 (1937) p. 2.
65. "The Guardian feels that with intellectuals and students of religion the question of exactly which are the 9 existing religions is controversial, and it would be better to avoid it" (letter dated 28 Oct. 1949 on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, originally published in *Bahá'í News*, No. 228 [1950] p. 4). See *Lights of Guidance*, p. 415.
66. In *The Bahá'ís*, the Bahá'í International Community publication referred to earlier, this particular significance attached to the number nine is completely omitted (p. 52).
67. Memorandum dated 24 May 1988, "Questions Relayed by the Spiritual Assembly of Mitcham," p. 2.
68. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Seven Candles of Unity," in Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974) p. 38.
69. Memorandum dated 24 May 1988, "Questions Relayed by the Spiritual Assembly of Mitcham," p. 3.
70. Research Department Memorandum, dated 16 May 1996.
71. I have slightly amended the text here due to a misplaced *hamza* above *qadima*. The *hamza* must surely have been intended for *azmanih*. The transliteration here reflects modern Tehran pronunciation, instead of *azmina*. See H. Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (Ithaca, New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976) p. 382.
72. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *apud* Fádil-i Mázandarání, *Amr va Khalq*, Vol. 2 (Germany: Bahá'í-Verlag, 1985) p. 46.
73. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Iqán: The Book of Certitude*, tr. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1931 [1970]) p. 239; Persian text, Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Iqán: Book of Certitude* (Bahá'í Verlag, 1980) p. 186, line 3.
74. From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice dated 16 May 1996.
75. See Jordan Paper, "Methodological Controversies in the Study of Native American Religions," *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses*, Vol. 22, no. 3 (1993) pp. 365-77.