

Introduction

The histories of American indigenous peoples and the immigrants are at odds. Many contemporary Euro-American historians, anthropologists, religious leaders, educators, and jurists, use terminology and tenaciously cling to unsubstantiated concepts and theories that denigrate and contradict histories, religions, and world views of the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

A major Euro-American fiction still held by many is that God and the Messengers of God were somehow absent in the entire hemisphere prior to, and at the time of the arrival of the Spanish conquest of the Americas. This ethnocentric fiction has had, and still has, tragic implications for American Indian nations that wish to worship God as the Messengers taught them, and which is their fundamental human right.

In the United States, American Indians have had religious freedom for only 10 years, from 1978 to 1988. In 1978, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was enacted by the U.S. Congress. Then in 1988, The U.S. Supreme Court gave a majority opinion in the Lyng Decision that American Indian religions are not protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Popular ethnocentric terminology that will be excluded from this paper when referring to the religious liturgies of the indigenous peoples of this hemisphere include: heathen; heretic; demonic; primitive; culture hero; cult; myth; legend; shaman;

idolatry; mumbo jumbo; animism; and lower case first letters and plurals as in "spirits" and "gods" when referring to a people's Creator or Messenger of the Creator.

The use of such terminology rationalizes the European conquest, demeans the self-concept of vulnerable Indian youth and fosters racism.

Since the term Native American has been defined in two U.S. federal statutes to mean Native Hawaiians, Native Pacific Islanders, and American Indians (which legally includes Alaskan Natives), the names American Indian and Indian will be used throughout this paper when referring to the indigenous people of the two continents of this hemisphere.

Indigenous peoples of this hemisphere have always believed they originated here. Today many white historians and other scientists are beginning to reject the Bering Strait migration theory. Reliable estimates are that human habitation existed in this hemisphere 70,000 to 100,000 B.C. and that the pre-Columbian population of the hemisphere was 100,000,000 to 145,000,000. These figures are pushed back every few years as new scientific evidence is found.

The premise of this paper is that God did not neglect the millions of indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere, that over the centuries a "myriad of Messengers" of God were sent to various Indian nations to bring them divine theologies of which many have survived and are practiced today.

For centuries, the indigenous peoples of the Americas have been intensely religious and spiritual. The ancient religious tradition incorporates the secular. Spirituality is integrated in the cosmic, human, and divine world view.

The evidence is abundant that the bounties of God given through the Messengers took root in the hearts and minds of the recipients of these messages and gave rise to the incomparable achievements of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. These contributions to humankind include: three fifths of the food that is consumed today; a vast cornucopia of medicines; the concept of democracy (including women suffrage) that was the basis of the U.S. Constitution; and a communion with the natural world and the living beings on the earth that Indians integrate visually, aurally, intellectually, imaginatively, emotionally and spiritually.

Numerous indigenous religions, the names for God and the Messengers of God are irretrievably lost. There has been a blotting out of knowledge as millions of human beings died as a result of pestilence and genocide. It is estimated that 85% of the hemisphere's population died of plagues, the sword and musket soon after 1492. Yet we know some of the names that now extinct peoples had for God, although many of the names and teachings of God's Messengers are gone.

The following is a compilation of still vital religions, names and fragmentary descriptions of God's Messengers and their

teachings.

Sintupi Win - Tail Feather Woman

Sintupi Win was a Santee Dakota. As a Messenger of the Great Spirit She gave the Drum religion to Indian nations of the Great Lakes area in 1877.

The 1860's and 1870's were a time of terrible turmoil for the Dakota. Following three broken treaties, starvation, the Minnesota Uprising led by the patriot Little Crow, and the mass hangings of 38 Dakota ordered by President Abraham Lincoln, the Dakota people were in despair. 3,300 infantry and 4,000 cavalry pursued them. 1,300 Dakota men, women and children were penned up in the Fort Snelling stockade. Three hundred died of starvation and disease in the winter of 1863. In the spring, 771 prisoners, mostly women and children were jammed in a small river steamer for a 450 mile journey down the Mississippi to St. Louis and then for a 350 mile journey up the Missouri River to St. Joseph. 547 men followed by boat and freight cars. All 1,300 were herded on one boat for a one month journey to Crow Creek. Three hundred died.

In 1876 the white soldiers were attacking Sintupi Win's people who were unarmed. Sintupi was about 10 to 14 years old. She hid in a lily pond and immersed, breathed through a reed. It

is said that She stayed in the pond for ten days without food and nearly froze to death.

She had a vision. The Great Spirit (Tunkasida Wakan Tanka or Kitche Manitou) took Her into the sky and showed Her the suffering people who were spread out across the land, frightened, isolated and everywhere under attack.

The Great Spirit instructed her how to return peace and harmony to the people. He taught Her how to construct a drum and decorate it. The Great Spirit taught Her 88 healing songs. Twenty of these songs are sung in sequence on special days. She learned the songs in the Dakota and Ojibwe languages.

The Great Spirit told Sintupi Win to first teach the Chippewa nations how to make the Drum and sing the songs. Then Sintupi Win should travel toward the east, circle around to other nations and eventually bring the Drum back to the Dakota. The Creator told her, "When this circle is complete, something great will happen."

Other aspects of the prophesy included a promise of peace and unity among the Indian nations. Those who practice the Drum religion would become as members of a family and would understand and practice their mutual obligations and responsibilities. When the Drum moves on, the host people would have to keep one small piece of the Drum and then make another. The individual who passes the Drum to another nation is required to live with the people in order to teach.

Tailfeather Woman, after constructing the first Drum, taught her own people the songs and prophesy. She then took the Drum to

the Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa in 1877 who now have 10 Drums. The Lac Court Oreille Chippewa received the Drum in 1878. Other nations that received and still sing with the Drum are the Fond du Lac Chippewa, the Leech Lake Chippewa, the Red Lake Chippewa, the Bad River Chippewa, the St. Croix Chippewa, the Lac du Flambeau, the Menominee, and the Potawatominee of Wisconsin who carried the Drum to Kansas where there are 10 active Drums. The Kickapoo, the Meskwawki of Iowa and the Winnebago of Nebraska sing the sacred and beautiful songs. The Drum religion is vital among these nations.

It is said that the Drum religion is stronger in the Great Lakes area than is the Medewewin society.

The Drum is moving to complete the circle.

Personal Communication
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August 30, 1993

Mút-sí-l-ü-ív, Sweet Medicine of the Cheyenne

The Cheyenne word for God is Heammawiho. Several centuries ago the prophet and savior Mut-si-l-u-iv, meaning Sweet Root Standing, also known as Sweet Medicine, came to the Cheyenne people. It is said He was born of a virgin, and came at a time when people were living without law. He began to do miracles at an early age. Sweet Medicine left the people for four years and journeyed to Noahvose, the Sacred Mountain, or Bear Butte, adjacent to the Black Hills. Aged and holy women and men instructed Him for four years in many things he should take back to the people. He received the Four Sacred Arrows still held by the Cheyenne nation and was taught the Renewal Ceremony. Sweet Medicine returned to the people and taught them good government, and new laws for social harmony.

He taught the people to be good and kind to one another, to pray at dawn, at noon, at sunset and before sleep, to protect orphans, old and infirm people, to honor women, to be forgiving, and to be honest and trustworthy.

It is said that Sweet Medicine lived for so many years that several generations passed while He was still alive. At the time of His death near Bear Butte, He told of the coming of horses, the coming of white strangers who would kill off most of the animals and birds and who would begin to take away their blood (Cheyenne children). He said this would make them lose their sacred ways so

they would become a lost people. He kept repeating, "Don't let them take our blood!"

Kuksu - California Tribes

Kuksu came from the south to the Wintun people. This Messenger of God then took His divine teachings to the Maidu, the Miwok, Pomo and Wappo, including most of the peoples of the Sacramento Valley, the surrounding mountains and the North Central Coast. It is believed that the one named Kuksu taught the people how to live an exemplary life. The ideal person was sober, industrious, loyal in marriage, pure hearted, kind and obedient to the elders and chiefs who conducted the ceremonies.

Good Furred Robe of the Mandan

Good Furred Robe had two brothers and a sister. Their names were Cornhusk Earrings, Uses His Head for Rattle and a sister Waving Corn Stalk. Soon After the Corn People emerged from under the ground, Good Furred Robe began to lay out the villages and fields. He distributed corn, beans, squash and sunflower seeds to each family, He taught the people songs and agricultural practices. Good Furred Robe organized two societies, one for the women, the Goose Society, and one for the men, the Brave Warrior Society or Black Mouths. He taught them ceremonies and behaviors that were sacred and that would ensure harmony.

Esdzaanadleehe (Changing Woman or White Shell Woman) of
the Navajo

After the creation of the Earth People a baby was seen floating on a lake which was at the top of Blanca Peak. The new baby was Changing Woman. She grew up in four days and created the Kinaalda ceremony in order that women would be able to have children and the human race would be able to multiply.

The first ceremony took place at Cho'ool ii. When Changing Woman became kinaalda, Salt Woman, who was the first White Shell Woman, gave Her her own name. She dressed Her in white shell clothes.

After giving birth to twin boys She went to Her home in the west. Then She created the Navajo people. She made four clans: Bitter Water; Tall House; Short Distance to Water Clan; and, Mud Clan. She took two boys of the Short Distance to Water Clan to Her home in the west and taught them everything about the past, present and future. They were given the power to make Blessing Way Songs. The Blessing Way Ceremony concerns everything good for the people to live by.

Pahana of the Hopi

The sun was created by Old Spiderwoman. She and Pahana, the Elder Brother accompanied the people up from the Third World.

Maasaw, Caretaker of the Earth told people after He allowed them emergence into the Fourth World "You can use the earth but you cannot keep it. For it is my responsibility to care for it." Maasaw created the appropriate paths of life.

Maasaw gave a stone tablet to Old Spiderwoman that was inscribed with the "road plan of life". Breaking it in two, Maasaw gave one half of the tablet to the Hopi and the other half to Pahana.

The Pahana took off at a good clip to the East. Then before Maasaw disappeared he told them that the Pahana would return one day to unite with his Hopi brethren and all other righteous people.

It was understood that when the two were finally reconciled, each would correct the other's laws and faults; they would live side by side and share in common all the riches of the land and join their faiths in one religion that would establish the truth of life in a spirit of universal brotherhood.

There was a test according to Nequatewa, for weeding out impostors: when Pahana came He should be asked about His books which would contain His secrets. It was said that the book of

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truth would not be on top but at the very bottom. If He asked the Hopi for the privilege of teaching them His language and taught them how to write they must be sure to ask that they would like to be taught in the book of truth because if He was the true Pahana he would quickly consent to teach them of this book. For their belief is that if he is not the one they are looking for He will refuse to teach them of His religion. Now if they learned His religion they would compare it with their religion and ceremonies and if these were alike they would know that the Pahana had been with them at the start.

Over the years and beginning in July of 1540 scores of Catholic, Mormon, Moravean, Baptist, Mennonite, and Presbyterian men and women attempted to impose their belief systems on the Hopi. Force, violence and mockery of the Hopi beliefs were pervasive. All failed the Pahana test.

Pte San Win - White Buffalo Calf Woman of the
Lakota/Dakota

In approximately the year 663 A.D. the White Buffalo Calf Woman brought the gift of the Calf Pipe to the Lakota people. She was Wakan (holy) and was sent by the Creator Tunkasila Wakan Tanka in a noble form to reveal the mysteries of the nature of God. When Pte San Win came to the camp circle She came singing a song and carrying a Pipe bundle. She took the food and served it, first to the little children (wakan yeja - the sacred beings), then to the women and then to the men. She was a beautiful woman dressed in the softest deer skin which was ornamented with fringes and beautiful colors. She said She wished to serve them always; that they had first seen He as smoke and that they should always see Her as smoke.

Pte San Win gave the people a most sacred red stone Calf Pipe and seven sacred ceremonies.

She told the people what the Pipe means. She said, "When you smoke this Pipe and pray with it, all living things and the whole universe are drawn to you in a sacred way so you must have respect for this and pray for everything that is, and so pray to Wakan Tanka.

The White Buffalo Calf Woman told the people about the meaning of the seven sacred ceremonies and how the practice of them would keep a beautiful light alive within the heart.

She left toward the East.

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Nemterequeteba of the Chibchas of Columbia

Nemterequeteba, a sacred Being came to the Chibcha about fourteen hundred years before the time of the Spanish conquest. His other names were Sugomonxe, Sugunsua (the Person who can disappear), Bochica (Person of the sun), and Chimzapaqua.

It is said He came out of the east and traveled over the country as an old man with long hair and a long beard, teaching the people chastity, clean-mindedness, kindness, and helpfulness of conduct, urging them to give up all drunkenness and other self-indulgence, while learning the arts of spinning, weaving and painting textiles.

He organized a new religion with priests who were taught to live lives of purity. Then He disappeared. For a time after Nemterequeteba left the Chibchas became united and created a vital civilization.

Ipeorkun Kunkilel of the Cuna of Eastern Panama

Ipeorkun Kunkilel came to the Cuna to teach them about hospitality, kindness and helpfulness to one another, and especially to the aged, the widows and the orphans as part of the way to serve God. He taught the people to follow a high moral law, how to heal the sick, to develop the powers of a wise seer and to know about a beautiful afterlife. He lived on earth about fifty years.

The Ulikron of the Guaymi Indians of Panama

In the oral history of the Guaymi, the Ulikron, Ngobo Ulikron (orphan of the virgin) traveled from the far and cold north long, long ago and talked to the people of many nations. The Ulikron told the men to be good, to do good, and to love good. His eyes were soft and seeing; His eyes saw through men; and the men looked

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on and wept and stopped their wars; they stopped their hate; their bows and arrows shot the deer, but never man again, and long they walked the Ulikron Way and talked of Him till one great chief began to war again and build big houses of stone. Yes, the Ulikron went down to the end of the earth. He went to the far south and talked. He saw the land of gold and the land of great waters and the great stone houses and men dressed in gold and soft clothes who built long roads - men of great wisdom born of the stars.

The Ulikron pointed to the stars. He talked of the Gad above those stars, and He told men to be good and that He would come again for all good men and men began to be good. "All Indians wait for the Ulikron!"

Chinigchinix of Southern California

Chinigchinix (Chinigchinich, Changichnish) came to the Alahum (Luiseño), Kamia (Diegueño), Iviatim (Cahuilla) and the Tongva (Gabrieleño) not long before the coming of the Spaniards. It is said He was born on Santa Catalina Island, which had been occupied by the Tongva for some centuries.

Chinigchinix brought a religion of high moral standards. At puberty initiation ceremonies sandpaintings were used to show each youth his relationship to the Creator. The sanpainting usually featured a large circle with smaller circles of the sun and moon inside and with forms of animals, reptiles and birds to indicate the forms of life with which the youth would become involved. At these ceremonies the youth would be instructed about religious and moral principles, about living in harmony with the Great Spirit and His creations for the benefit of their families and humankind.

Chinigchinix taught the people that a paradise lay beyond the rainbow over the western sea.

Dekanawidah (the Peacemaker) of the Iroquois League

The divine Lawgiver alighted from a white stone canoe and expounded his Great Law. He said, "I plant the Tree of the Great Peace. Roots have spread out from the Tree to the north, the east, the south and to the west. The name of these roots is the Great White Roots and their nature is Peace and Strength."

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