

FIRST VOICES

“ . . . in the land of their first inheritance . . . ”

“I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust . . .”

-prophetic words from the past-



VISION OF A PROPHET

The mark of any great prophet is a powerful vision. The giant evergreen tree that Deganawidah saw in his vision had a tremendous impact on him. He knew that in his quest for bringing peace and harmony among his people that the evergreen tree was important. For that purpose he had the Great Tree of Peace, also known as the Great White Pine, planted in the land of the Onondagas. The white pine was chosen because of its cluster of five needles that symbolized each of the Haudenosaunee Nations. From that spot the roots of this tree could grow out among the Nations and to the four corners of the earth.

Like any powerful symbol, this physical reminder was not for Deganawidah but for the people he taught. He knew without any doubt that when this vision was given him by the Great Spirit it was only a matter of time until what he had seen would be fulfilled. He believed the vision that the Great Spirit had given him was true. In similar fashion, several hundred years later a series of visions was given to a man by the

name of Handsome Lake. These visions became the teachings of the “Gaiwii”, the foundation of the Code of Handsome Lake. It is recorded that the vision given to Handsome Lake while he was dead was an opportunity for many to find their way back to the Great Spirit.

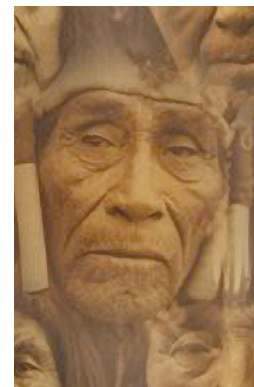
While he was dead to the world the Great Spirit sent three men to talk to Handsome Lake and give him a message for his people. Following these teachings was an opportunity for people to find peace with the Creator. Around the same time period, out on the plains of North America, a young man by the name Plenty Coups was also given a powerful vision. He related it to the wise men of the tribe. They interpreted it to mean that one day the buffalo would not roam the land but would be replaced by the spotted animals that the white men were bringing west with them. In the vision, Plenty Coups was also instructed to develop his spiritual as well as physical abilities.

Like the examples above we can look even further back into Ancient American History to a prophet who had a vision of a great “Healer” to come. Six

centuries before the first Christmas, a religious leader of a nation of Ancient Americans had a vision concerning the life of the Son of the Great Spirit. This prophet by the name of Nephi had a desire to understand the prophecies of his fathers. He prayed with great faith believing that the Great Spirit can reveal His Divine Will and give understanding to men. His vision began with a messenger from the Great Spirit appearing to him and talking to him face to face almost exactly like what Handsome Lake experienced. *And he (the messenger) spoke unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked, and I beheld the Lamb of God going forth among the children of men. And I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits; and the angel (messenger) spoke and showed all these things unto me. And they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God; and the devils and unclean spirits were cast out (1 Nephi 11:31).*

Just like many prophets before him and many that have followed, Nephi was not the same person at the

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Continued on page 2

Vision of a Prophet continued
conclusion of this vision (you can read the complete vision in the Book of Mormon, 1Nephi Chapters 11 through 15). The chance for any person to see a glimpse of the future workings of the Great Spirit is a powerful experience.

Years later when Jesus, the Messiah, appeared to the Ancients in the land of the Americas, His teachings and healings fulfilled the prophecies. We should keep in mind that Nephi did not get to see these things happen in his lifetime yet he believed that they would someday. He knew that the Great Spirit does not lie. A question we could ask ourselves: Do we have the same desires as the men mentioned above, that is to understand the ways of the Great Spirit? Even more importantly, do we implement those teachings and beliefs in our everyday life? A heard a very wise man several years ago teaching young men that they should seek for powerful visions from the Great Spirit. It is important for us no matter what our age to not only seek out powerful visions but to follow the teachings of the Great Spirit and his son Jesus Christ bringing peace into our lives.

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Do you find the name *First Voices* interesting? We hope that you might find it interesting since it involves the past, present and future of the First Nations of the Americas. We have been fascinated with the name

ourselves when it came to us in the planning stages of this journal. After considering the title we were drawn to several quotations from the ancient records translated in 1829 by the power of the Great Spirit. It was printed and presented to the world as the Book of Mormon.

This record contains the history of those people the Europeans discovered here in the Americas. As you read below the title it says, "in the land of their first inheritance..." (Mosiah 10:13). Putting aside for the moment any discussion of where the natives of this land came from or how they got to the Americas we are told in these ancient records that the Great Spirit promised this land to them over 2500 years ago. North, Central and South America are the lands promised to the First Nations people in these records as well as Biblical records. "The blessings of thy father have revailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:" (Genesis 49:26 *Jacob speaking prophetically to his son Joseph*). The reality in our mind is that this land was covenanted to the First Nation peoples and one day it will be theirs again as the Great Spirit has promised. Secondly, we are prompted to consider the voice of those people who have gone on before us. "I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust..." (2Nephi 33:13) It seems strange that we would literally hear a voice speaking from the dust but it is a powerful event when we do have that experience. What is it exactly? Do

we not hear our ancestors speak in the wind? Do we not hear their voices in the ancient teachings?

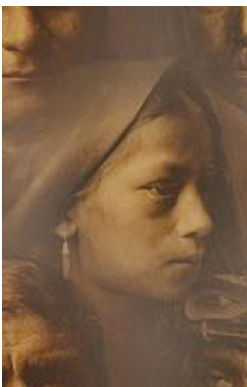
Have you ever considered the fact that unknown to us there was a written history of the ancestors of the natives of the Americas? Why would that be so unlikely? Let us consider for a moment another example, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Much of what has been on the parchments discovered in the 1940's has verified biblical writings of the ancient prophets in Israel. Through the ages of time the Great Spirit has not changed nor the fact that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel. Please read on with an open mind and feel free to contact us for more information.

QUOTABLE

A note of passing interest in this respect concerns Chief Joseph. After his surrender in 1877, he gave a pendant to General Miles, and this object eventually found its way to West Point. A few years ago it was examined and turned out to be a Mesopotamian tablet recording the sale of livestock, a disturbing anomaly and an undeniable fact that should have been grasped at once by Christian fundamentalists and Mormons. How this tablet got into Joseph's family and became an heirloom is a matter of some speculation, telling us that our view of Western Hemisphere prehistory is not as complete as we might think. *Vine Deloria "Red Earth, White Lies" page 48.*



"The blessings of thy father have revailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:"



“EARTH IS OUR MOTHER”

In 1854 Seattle, also known as Seattle, Chief of the Duwamish and Suquamish Tribes located in the Puget Sound area of Washington State was giving a reply to President Franklin Pierce pertaining to the sale of a piece of land in exchange for a reservation. Following is a couple of quotes from his reply to the President.

Every part of earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which comes from the trees carries the memories of the red man. The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are a part of the earth and it is a part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, they are our brothers. The rock crests, the juices in the meadows, the body of the pony, and the manall belong to the same family.

Above Seattle starts out stating how sacred the creation of the land is to his people. Yet not only the earth, all of the creation of the earth, everything related to the earth. The earth and all living animals is part of his family. *You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children*

what we have taught our children that the earth is our mother. He further stresses the importance of teaching the children of the white man to respect the land they walk on and of its sacredness, as he has taught his children that the earth is their mother.

Big Thunder (Bedagi) of the Algonquin Tribe once said, “The Great Spirit is in all things, is in the air we breathe. The Great Spirit is our father, but the earth is our mother. She nourishes us; that which we put into the ground, she returns to us.”

In the Book of Mormon I read of another great king who lived several hundreds of years ago whose name was Benjamin. He had sent out a proclamation to his people to gather on the morrow round about the temple. As they had pitched their tents all round the Temple with their doors facing the temple. He noticed that there were so many people so he ordered a tower to be built that he may speak to his people from a tower. He realized that still there would be too many that would not be able to hear him. So he requested his words be written down so all would hear what he had to say unto them.

This king exhorted many wonderful words of remembrance as to who they were, their place on this earth and who they should render thanks to, and that even though he was their king he was no better or greater than they are. “Ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold it

belongs to Him who created you.” He further states; “I, when you call your king, am no better than you are; I am about to yield up this mortal frame to its mother earth” (Mosiah 2:25 & 26). What I am connecting here is the dust of this earth, is being related to the mother from whence we were created by the Great Spirit. When your walk on earth's path is over you will return to your mortal frame to be dust or ashes again from whence it was created.

Wendy Rose of the Hopi/Mikok Tribe said, “My fathers told me that Hopi Earth does contain my roots and I am, indeed, from that land because my roots are there. I will find them.”

We see in the words of these quotes a connection from hundreds of years ago to the present day. We listen to the same teachings from King Benjamin, Chief Seattle, Big Thunder and Wendy Rose. These very same teachings have been taught from generation, to generation, from king, to kingdom, from chief to tribe and president, from father to children.

I again ask you to remember these teachings as you have read, and ponder on these words in your heart. Ask the Great Spirit as you pray if what you read here is true. Ask him to reveal to you the truth that has been spoken. Ask him to help you find your roots that you may receive nourishment and grow on the creator's creation. Ask Him that you will never forget these teachings brought forth this day.

...remember these teachings as you have read, and ponder on these words in your heart.

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land...





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