
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Bureau of American Ethnology
Bulletin 149

Symposium on Local Diversity in Iroquois Culture

**No. 5. The Religion of Handsome Lake: Its Origin and
Development**

By MERLE H. DEARDORFF

THE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS

THE RELIGION OF HANDSOME LAKE: ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

By MERLE H. DEARDORFF

Ganioda'yo',¹ the Seneca, lived at Diono'sadégi' ("there a house was burned"),² June 15, 1799, when he woke from a 2-hour trance to speak the first of the "good words" which launched his career as a prophet, to his own people first, and then to the rest of the Iroquoian world. He is perhaps better known by his English name of Handsome Lake.

The ensuing 16 years of his ministry were spent in the three Seneca settlements: Burnt House, Coldspring on the Allegheny above, and Tonawanda near Akron, N. Y. In 1815 he went to Onondaga Castle; but he died soon after his arrival, and was buried there.

Gai'wii' ("good word; good message; gospel") is the Seneca name for the body of Handsome Lake's separate utterances of anecdote, parable, revelation, prophecy, apocalyptic, and law laid down with divine sanction during this period. As now recited, a history of its origin and some Handsome Lake biographical material are added. The Good Message is also the name of the religious beliefs and practices of those who follow this "New Religion," as its adherents call it in English.

¹ Ganioda'yo', "it is a very large lake," is the title of the Federal councilor among the Seneca whose opposite number in the other moiety is Tca'dage'onnye's, of the Snipe Clan. The Ganioda'yo' title belongs to the Turtle Clan. The fact that Handsome Lake was born a Wolf was no bar to his holding it, since borrowing by a clan with no suitable candidate for a vacant title is common (Fenton, 1950, p. 66).

² Seneca forms in this paper are modified from Parker (1913), *The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet*, the only generally available treatment of the man and his teaching, to conform with later usage.—W. N. F., ed.

The translation of the Good Message "code" therein is from a text assembled perhaps 50 years ago by Cattaraugus Seneca. Modern Good Message authorities among the Seneca criticise it as "all mixed up" and "only partly there." They do not approve altogether of the sources from which it was assembled, saying they were largely Christian Indians. The context of this paper will show that this comment is to be expected, since there are many "codes."

The Parker translation is owned by many Good Message followers. At Coldspring it serves as a trot for men preparing themselves to be "code" preachers.

Other published versions of the Good Message are referred to in the context. Many not so mentioned merely paraphrase Morgan.

The Bureau of American Ethnology has three unpublished and untranslated manuscript texts: BAE MSS. Nos. 449 and 2585 in Onondaga, and No. 3489 in Mohawk. Before the war, Dr. Frans M. Olbrechts of Ghent had a long Onondaga text; its whereabouts is now unknown.

The Reverend William M. Beauchamp said it was "fast dying out" in his day (Beauchamp, 1907, p. 412); and Parker describes the grief of the Onondaga preacher, Frank Logan, over its passing (Parker, 1913, p. 6). The New Religion has had its ups and downs, but it has not passed. The 10 Canadian and New York longhouses count at least half the reservation Iroquoians as open followers, with no other religious affiliation.

A good part of the rest find nothing inconsistent in attendance at both church and longhouse. Not too many find themselves in the fix of a Mohawk Caughnawaga, with one of whom Joseph Mitchell talked lately. He said he was sitting one night in the graveyard outside the longhouse there, listening to Good Message followers inside,

. . . singing Mohawk chants that came down from the old red-Indian time. I thought I was all alone in the graveyard, and then who loomed up out of the dark and sat down beside me but an old high-steel man . . . He said to me, "You're not alone up here. Look over there." The bushes were full of Catholics and Protestants who every night crept up to listen . . . so I said, "The longhouse music appealed to me. One of these days I might possibly join." I asked him how he felt about it. He said he was a Catholic . . . "If I was to join the longhouse I'd be excommunicated, and I couldn't be buried in holy ground, and I'd burn in Hell." I said to him, "Hell isn't Indian." He didn't reply. He sat there awhile—I guess he was thinking it over—and then he got up and walked away. [Mitchell, 1949, pp. 39, 52.]

The Jesuits established Caughnawaga and nearby St. Regis for their converts well over two centuries ago. As communities they never had an Indian religious tradition. When Good Message longhouses arrived within the last 25 years the sacred tobacco, the ceremonial wampum and rattles, and the rituals themselves had to be procured from older establishments. Old Good Message hands (especially from New York Onondaga and Canadian Oneida, because of language affinities) spent years there training both people and local preachers. For the first time in history, Caughnawaga and St. Regis delegates made appearance with the others for the round of "Six Nations meetings" that starts every fall at Tonawanda, going once every other year to the other nine longhouses on a circuit completed once a biennium.

Where did the Good Message get this vigor? Why has Handsome Lake's message not gone the way of the many others brought back from other worlds by Indian dreamers? A few—as that of Handsome Lake's contemporary, the Shawnee Prophet—had influence equal to his; but they lasted for a day or two and were gone. Hundreds of others must have been stillborn.

Part of the answer is in the time and the place out of which the first "words" of the Good Message were spoken; and the local audience

to which they were addressed. Another is in the personal, accidental, and official auspices that fortified their authority, and helped spread them, and (to an extent acceptable at least to most Iroquoians) syncretize them into a body of doctrine. But most important for its viability and its continuing healthy life is its ancestry. The Good Message was born of a miscegenation of Quaker with old Seneca stock. Genetically the two were compatible. The hybrid was fertile, and of a disposition so generous that it made itself at home wherever it went even when it went into other Iroquoian communities with superficially different traits.

It will be the limited purpose of this paper to examine very briefly the background of the Good Message; to give some contemporary accounts of its birth and early days; and to point to a few reasons for its growth and influence.

The Burnt House of 1798—when the first Quakers arrived to establish their work there—was a peculiar community. In July 1795, Pennsylvania had surveyed it and transferred it to Handsome Lake's younger half-brother Gaiänt'wakä (The Cornplanter: John Abeel, O'Bail, Obale, etc.) as one of three separate tracts on the Allegheny, each of about a square mile, given this most influential of all the Seneca at the time for his services to the Commonwealth in its land negotiations with the natives. Cornplanter got patent title to these pieces, which meant that he held them in fee, as his private personal property. He sold the tract at West Hickory; and was later swindled out of the second tract at Oil City. This third parcel, the Burnt House, lay on the west side of Allegheny, a few miles below the New York-Pennsylvania line. Much Quaker help and legislative effort over the years have gone into keeping out the White predator. Cornplanter's heirs still own and occupy it. As one goes north on the east side of Allegheny from Kinzua to Corydon in Warren County, Pa., highway markers point across to Cornplanter's grave, and to the former home of Handsome Lake on what is now denominated "The Cornplanter Grant" by the Whites, but still called the Burnt House by the Seneca (Deardorff, 1941).

Cornplanter's unique fee title to this piece had a lot to do with the fact that in 1798 almost all the Indians on Allegheny were gathered round him thereon. They felt safe there. Over the line in New York surveyors were daily expected, to start laying off what is still the Allegany Reservation "agreeably to treaty of last Summer . . . to contain 42 square miles"; and they would lay off the other "reservations," too, held out of the sale of Seneca title to most of western New York by contract between them and Robert Morris at Big Tree, September 15, 1797.

Now they heard that Morris was in jail; and that he had not bought the land for himself, anyhow, but for some others called "the Holland people." They were afraid they would lose their money. No one knew where the survey lines would fall nor what would happen when they fell, with these uncertainties in the picture (Pierce, Ms. 1798,³ May 21-22 entries).

A few lived at Long John's new settlement well up toward present Salamanca, N. Y., where one usually turned away from the Allegheny to go over to the other Seneca on Cattaraugus, Tonawanda, and Buffalo Creeks. Only three or four families remained at the old largest townsite, 9 miles above Burnt House (Sharples, 1798, May 21 entry).

Befitting his position as bearer of the biggest federal chief's name among the Allegheny Seneca, Handsome Lake's mark stood third on the list of 52 Big Tree contract signers. It was he who noted that the square mile about the old Cuba, N. Y., oil spring, which the Indians had intended to keep, had not been included in the contract list of reservation; and to him Morris gave the separate paper under which over a half century later the Seneca were able to maintain their title to it (Donaldson, 1892, p. 28).

At this treaty the Seneca accepted at last the consequences of their wrong guess when they joined the British side in the Revolution.

The Genesee-Allegheny half of the Seneca had opposed taking sides at all. Such old chiefs as Kiasutha (Hodge, 1907, p. 682) remembered well what had happened in the 1750's when they had been caught in the middle between warring French and British; then they had guessed wrong. Later these western Seneca had held out against Sir William Johnson's persuasions. In their Genesee-Allegheny valleys they had maintained a sanctuary for dispossessed Indians of diverse origins and kinds, from all quarters. Many of these alien Indians had remained among their hosts to be easily assimilated in the Iroquoian way. Few Whites were voluntarily admitted to this refuge. The exceptions were some officials; adoptive Indians, as Moravian David Zeisberger in 1767; and those traders, such as John Abeel (the Albany Dutchman who fathered Cornplanter), who were themselves Indian in almost all but blood.

The eastern Seneca, about Seneca Lake, had no such background. For a long time they had been much dependent on the favors dispensed by Johnson, and by his Mohawk agent, Joseph Brant. When Sir William died (1774) his nephew, Guy, and his son, Sir John, inherited his influence if not his abilities.

It was natural, then, that when the Johnsons called the Six Nations to a great council at Oswego in July 1777, to meet St. Leger and his

³ A list of the manuscripts consulted in the preparation of this paper is appended to the bibliography.

army, which had come over from Canada, the response of the eastern Seneca should be prompt. Brant urged all to sign up with the British. Mohawk, Cayuga, and the eastern Seneca were ready to accept. But the Genesee-Allegheny contingent held out. They had met the Americans several times at Fort Pitt; they had listened to their official solicitation to neutrality, and they considered it sensible. At Oswego, Cornplanter and Handsome Lake argued this position; but they were overborne. Characteristically, once the issue had been decided by the council, all acquiesced. Cornplanter (accompanied by his young assistant, Governor Blacksnake) and Handsome Lake went with the others against the American fort at Rome, N. Y., and continued service with the British. Cornplanter, Brant, and old Sayenqueraghta of the eastern Seneca (Hodge, 1910, p. 482) were the war leaders, elected by the Indians and commissioned "captains" by the British. Handsome Lake, fought as a "common warrior." Only the Oneida and some of the Tuscarora remained to the Americans, due largely to the influence of their missionary, the Rev. Samuel Kirkland (Seaver, 1918, pp. 65-67; Blacksnake, MS., 1845-46, pp. 16-32; Blacksnake, MS., 1850, pp. 28 ff; Ketchum, 1864, vol. 2, pp. 421-422).

The year 1779 was a bad one for the Seneca. Sullivan's expedition to the Genesee displaced the entire Indian population of western New York toward British Fort Niagara. Brodhead's independent foray from Fort Pitt up the Allegheny burned the flats between Kinzua and Corydon, including the main town—which even before this event was called Burnt House. The numerous good houses and the 500 acres of fine corn at which Brodhead marveled argue population well in excess of 1,000 (Fenton, 1945, pp. 89-93).

Handsome Lake and Cornplanter, of the Wolf Clan, were natives of the Seneca town near Avon, N. Y., to which Governor Blacksnake (also a Wolf) was brought by his mother when he was 2. In the face of invasion their families retired to Tonawanda. About 1780 they all moved down to the Allegheny, to establish themselves permanently (Fenton, 1945, pp. 94-196; Blacksnake, MS., 1850, p. 78).

To Cornplanter from Kiasutha, his old uncle, at once fell active leadership of the local Indians. In the difficult spot where the pro-British Iroquois found themselves after the Revolution, Cornplanter at first became spokesman only for the Genesee-Allegheny Seneca. What the new United States needed was a strong native character to head what it hoped to convert into a pro-American Indian party to oppose the pro-British faction under Brant, whose influence was paramount among the Mohawk and the western Indians. It was natural that Cornplanter, as leader of the powerful Seneca element which had a long tradition of action independent of the League, should be selected for the purpose; and that he should lend himself to

elevation by the Americans into their spokesman and favor-dispenser to the aborigines. He was always opposed, when it seemed safe, by those of the eastern Seneca who had not gone off with Brant to Canada. The latter had their headquarters for the most part at Buffalo Creek, where Farmers Brother and Young King were their leading figures. This element was to oppose Handsome Lake as prophet, too.

During this period we hear little of Handsome Lake and much of Cornplanter. Not until Jay's Treaty settled the status of British occupation along the Great Lakes, and Wayne settled the Indians themselves at Fallen Timbers, Ohio, in 1794, did the Indians know which side would prevail. Cornplanter was constantly on the go—to the western Indians to attempt pacification; to Buffalo Creek to argue with his own people; and to New York, Albany, and Philadelphia to consult with American officials, State and Federal.

He was made much of on those city visits. He spoke no English; but he talked war and politics long with Knox, Pickering, and Washington, and he discoursed on religion and education with the numerous Whites who were solicitous to help his people. During his long stay in Philadelphia in the winter of 1790, he attended Quaker meetings with some regularity; and he was so responsive to Rev. Samuel Kirkland and the Moravian Ettwein that they considered him as good as converted (Kirkland, MS., letter December 20, 1790; Hamilton, 1940, pp. 93, 126).

In February 1791 he addressed to the Quakers a request that they bring down for education his oldest son, Henry, and two other boys, to which they agreed.⁴ The project was temporarily delayed when, on his return home, Cornplanter found that the Americans had sent him a teacher in the person of Capt. Waterman Baldwin, who had been Cornplanter's prisoner during the Revolution. Baldwin came out with Proctor⁵ in March 1791 (Proctor, 1876, pp. 557 ff.). He brought horses, a plow, and a Bible. Ostensibly he was sent to help the Indians learn farming, reading, and writing. Actually he was a spy for the Americans, as were all of his kind at the time (Baldwin, MS., 1791).

The Friends met Cornplanter again during treaty proceedings at Canandaigua in 1794; and their interest revived. On January 5,

⁴ Friends Historical Association, Philadelphia, has the original of Cornplanter's letter of February 10, 1791. It and the Friends' reply thereto of June 2, 1791, are printed in the *Bulletin of the Friends Historical Association*, vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 86-87, 1936. Further MS. correspondence in the matter is in the Friends Archives, 3d and Arch Sts., Philadelphia.

⁵ A facsimile of Thomas Proctor's autograph in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (vol. 4, Philadelphia, 1880) clearly spells his name "Proctor." In citing his works, however, it has seemed best to adhere to the spelling used in them, i. e., "Proctor."—M. H. D.

1796, they issued a circular letter, asking what Indians might like their services. The Oneida and Cornplanter were among the first to reply. Quaker work at Oneida was started in 1796 and continued to 1799 (Anon., 1805, pp. 5-11). By 1798 Quaker interest had shifted to the Allegheny Seneca.

During the 3 years of relative quiet between 1795 and 1798 following the Canandaigua treaty, contacts between these Indians and the Whites were common. Cornplanter had a sawmill above his town, and a "Dutchman" to run it for him. This was the first mill on the upper Allegheny. Its boards went to the Army at Franklin and Pittsburgh; and into the Holland Company's storehouse at Warren (1796).

Civilization was touching Burnt House but it was still very much an Indian town when the five Quakers arrived May 17, 1798. Joshua Sharples and John Pierce, older men, accompanied the younger Henry Simmons, Jr., Halliday Jackson, and Joel Swayne to settle them in the work. Sharples and Pierce kept detailed accounts of what they saw. All on the same day Pierce could report for civilization's score "3 horses, 14 horned cattle, 1 yoke oxen, 12 hogs—all private property"; but, next door, a "curious scene"—really an exercise of the local chapter of the False-face Co. (Parker, 1913, pp. 127-128)—a score for the "old Indian" side. Pierce and Sharples tried to find out what was going on. But Henry O'Bail, now home from school complete with the white man's education and bad habits, evaded their questions (Pierce, MS. 1798, May 29 entry).

The Quakers estimated the population at 400 living in about 30 houses, of which Cornplanter's, where they were lodged, was much the largest (Sharples, MS. 1798, May 23, 30 entries). His residence was really two houses, about 10 feet apart, each 16 feet wide; one about 30 feet long and the other 24. It was roofed with bark; and made of round poles set close together "but not churked or plastered." The space between the two sides served for entry (Sharples, MS. 1798, May 23 entry).

This was at once the home of Cornplanter's family (including Handsome Lake), the community guest house, and ceremonial center—the longhouse. Out front stood the "huge block of wood formed into the similitude of a man, and artfully painted; embellished with skins, handkerchiefs, fine ribands, and feathers of a variety of colours" around which the community danced on festival occasions (Jackson, 1830 a, p. 24). Brodhead had overturned a like image at the same place in 1779; and Proctor, on his way out to see Cornplanter in 1791, had passed through the Genesee town of Caneadea where he saw another (Proctor, 1876, p. 565).

Burnt House women worked its 60 acres of cleared land in the old way, while the men passed their days in shooting arrows, pitching quoits, jumping, etc., and their nights in talk. Little game came in at this time of year. The two daily meals of bread or dumplings cooked in bear's oil were frugal, indeed; and Pierce and Sharples were not loath to leave it all June 7.

Before Pierce and Sharples left, they had arranged that Swayne and Jackson should settle about 9 miles upstream at the site of the old town, deliberately off Cornplanter's personal property. Here they were to build a house and a barn for themselves, and establish an agriculture demonstration center for the Indians. They had early observed that an Indian man might be induced to labor if no other Indian man were around to see him. Henry Simmons, better equipped by reason of a year (1796-97) at Oneida, was to live with Cornplanter at Burnt House to teach the children to read and write.

The diaries, correspondence, and reports of these resident Quaker missionaries, their long line of successors in the same posts, and of the delegations from the Friends' Indian Committee, who visited them often until very recent years, afford a continuous and unmatched record of the single Indian community over a period of more than a century.

What follows is, unless otherwise noted, summarized or extracted from the diary of Henry Simmons for the period February 3 to November 7, 1799.

Simmons had got his school started in Cornplanter's home; but it didn't do well. On bad days he might have 30 pupils; on good days, none. The one activity that persisted and which caused him oftenest to "apply my Heart with fervent breathings to the Lord for his aid and support" was what went on every winter night, when the men met at Cornplanter's house. Through Henry, Cornplanter's son, they quizzed Simmons about white men's beliefs and customs.

The subject might be "how the World and things therein were created first." Simmons' answer to this, as to most others, was discretion itself. He was not there to proselyte. He said "it was a hard Question." It and many others were answered in a Book which white men had; and he told them what the Book said. He anticipated their doubts as to how white men knew that the Book was true by saying he knew it because,

the great Spirit pleased to make them [i. e., its truths] manifest in the secret of my heart . . . and told them it was the only way I had to know when I was doing right or wrong, by strictly attending to the great Spirit in my heart, and asked them if this was not the case, when they thought of doing something which they ought not to do, whether they did not feel something pricking at their Hearts, and telling them not to do so. Several of the Chiefs, Cornplanter for one, confessed it was the very truth. I told them it was the great Spirit that thus

pricked, and tells us not to do so, and it is the Devil that urges us to do it . . . Cornplanter informed me that when a young Man, he was a great Hunter, and often thought of the great Spirit, who made the wild beasts and all things, and to be sure he had always very good luck he said . . . I told him that was the only way to receive a blessing, by thinking of, and returning thanks to the great Spirit, even the Farmers were then blest with better Crops of Grain. [Simmons, MS., 1799, Feb. 3 entry.]

Simmons seized these chances to urge them to learn to read so they might find out these things for themselves. Some agreed there was some sense in this; but many were inclined to credit the reports from Buffalo Creek that a little girl up there had dreamed the Devil was in all white people, including the Quakers; and that it was not right for their children to go to school.

Typical questions asked him were: Is it right for Indians and Whites to marry? Do both go to the same places when they die? Do all speak one language there? His answers were not evasive, for a Quaker; but he was not dogmatic.⁶

⁶ Indians raised questions such as these early in their contact with Whites. They were asked in October 1767, of Moravian David Zeisberger when he came down the Allegheny for a first short visit to the three Munsee settlements about West Hickory, Forest County, Pa., called collectively Goschgoschünk. Goschgoschünk was about 50 miles below the Burnt House site, and under jurisdiction of the up-river Seneca. It had been settled in the spring of 1765 by Indians emigrant "from Wihilusing on the Susquehannah as well as from Assininnissink and Passikachkunk on the Tiaoga" (Hulbert and Schwarze, eds., 1912, pp. 14, 15, 20, 22).

With Zeisberger was Papunhank, who had been chief at Wyalusing before his Moravian baptism June 26, 1763. As early as 1752 he had come under Quaker influence. In 1758 he removed his adherents to Wyalusing and established there a town that was in many ways like the Allegheny Seneca settlements of 1800-10 under Quaker-Handsome Lake influence. John Hays and Christian Frederick Post visited Wyalusing in May and June 1760. Post described at some length the good houses and the sober, industrious people: "their religion chiefly consists in strictly adhering to the ancient customs and manner of their forefathers" (Post, MS. 1760, May 19 entry); but they listened eagerly to what the Moravians and Quaker John Woolman had to tell about the Creator and the Hereafter, even if they would receive no further instruction from white people. The Pennsylvania authorities (1760) distinguished the Wyalusing people as "the Quaker or religious Indians" (Pa. Arch., 1853, 1st ser., vol. 3, p. 743).

Zeisberger returned to stay at Goschgoschünk from May 1768 to April 1770. The local "preacher," Wangomen, was a Munsee from Assininnissink who had heard Zeisberger preach at Wyalusing in 1763. He was one of a class of native preachers whose emergence about 1750 De Schweinitz, the biographer of Zeisberger, attributed to Moravian influence (Schweinitz, 1871, p. 265). Zeisberger, who had long experience with them and who thoroughly disapproved of their teachings and practice, thought otherwise. He says, "all these preachers trace the beginning of their efforts to the Quakers, claiming that these had told them they were on the right way and that they should continue therein" (Hulbert and Schwarze, eds., 1912, p. 52).

These Munsee and their descendants remained about West Hickory and on the Allegheny above, always in close association with the Seneca, until the last of them were resettled among the Cattaraugus Seneca in 1791 (Proctor, 1876, pp. 580, 594). Some moved on to Munceytown, Canada, with the Oneida; those who remained have merged with the Seneca. The presence of these Quaker- and Moravian-influenced Indians on the Allegheny must be considered an important, if undefined, part of the background for Handsome Lake.

Especially among the "church Senecas," Handsome Lake is accounted for by referring his inspiration to the Bible, via either Henry O'Bail, Cornplanter's oldest (and educated) son, or a white-haired man who lived in a house in the hills back of West Hickory. They say that Handsome Lake used to take off by himself in a canoe, down the river, to be gone for weeks at a time. Some curious followed him on one such trip. He landed near West Hickory and went off up the mountain to a cabin. The spies saw him sitting at a table

Other problems were not so easily disposed of, however. For instance, toward the end of February he once again found the Cornplanter ménage in uproar with tremendous preparations for a feast and a dance going forward. Once again he had to turn the scholars loose. To let off steam he went out in the woods and chopped down a tree. But his gage was still registering high when he got back to the house, where the dance was in boisterous progress. He found Cornplanter, Henry O'Bail, and some of the family sitting in an apartment by themselves; and Simmons let go at the old man with almost un-Friendly violence for allowing such things to go on in his house. Cornplanter said "he could not say much about it, at the present; but would converse on the subject the next day" (Simmons, MS., 1799, Feb. 27 entry).

Next day there was a big council. At its conclusion Cornplanter informed Simmons that "they had concluded (although they did not all see alike) to quit such Dancing Frolicks, for some of them thought it must be wicked, because they had learned it of white people, as well as that of drinking Rum or Whiskey and getting drunk, which they knew was evil, but they had a Hussleing kind of play and dance too twice a year of their own production originally, which they thought to continue in the practice of."

Worst of all were the community drunks which occurred when the men got home from Pittsburgh, where they took the winter's furs. That of 1799 started about the middle of May. It lasted for several weeks. Some died from fighting and exposure. When the liquor was gone and remorse had set in, Simmons sent up river for Swayne and Jackson, and asked Cornplanter to call the council. The three Quakers attended, and sternly admonished the Indians. After the usual interval, Cornplanter spoke for all when he acknowledged the great fault to be their own; that they had taken "a resolution not to suffer any more whiskey to be amongst them to sell, and had then chosen two young men as petty chiefs, to have some oversight of their people in the promotion of good among them" (Simmons, MS., 1799, May 26 entry).

Simmons witnessed the Worship Dances around the "wooden image, or God"; and "a great feast, after their ancient custom, by way of remembrance of their dead . . . the present one being made on account of the old Chief's daughter who had been dead upwards of 4 months." He witnessed, too, the killing of a witch with knives,

on which lay a book from which an old man in a black coat read to him. The book, they say, was the Bible. They have no name for the old man. All the evidence indicates that Handsome Lake did not live on the Allegheny until long after Zeisberger's day there, and that no other white preacher was resident on the upper river until the Quakers came in 1798. It is possible that a vague recollection of Zeisberger is incorporated in this "origin legend" for Handsome Lake's teaching.

done by three men at the command of the Old Chief. "However worthy of death she might have been I know not, but I took her to be a bad woman" (Simmons, MS., 1799, June 13 entry).

The local dreaming seemed to reflect something of Simmons' influence. For instance, a young man told a dream he had when out hunting. He thought an Indian struck him with a knife, and he thought he must die. Soon he found himself on an upward path, where were tracks of many people. At length he came to a house inside of which "he beheld the beautifullest Man sitting there that ever he saw in his life." He could not accept the invitation to sit down; but passed out a door opposite the one he came in. After some further travel he came to another building with an uncommon large door, "in which a man met him, who looked very dismal, his Mouth appeared to move in different shapes." Here he saw a lot of drunken, noisy Indians, some of whom he recognized as having been dead several years. "Amongst them was one very old white-headed woman, whom they told him was dying, and when she went, the World would go too." Their "officiator," the man who had met him, offered him some stuff to drink, "like melted pewter, which he told him he could not take, but he insisted he should, by telling him he could drink Whiskey and get drunk, and that was no worse to take than it, he then took it, which he thought burnt him very much." He saw people being punished for their earthly wrongs. He was himself charged with wife beating. At the end, though, he was told that if he forsook all evil practices which he had been guilty of, he should have a Home in the first house which he entered. He woke up crying. Now "he confessed in the Council that he had been guilty of all these actions above mentioned," and said he intended to do better.

Simmons said he thought this dream was true; that the old grey-headed woman was the Mother of Wickedness. When she was dead the Worldly Spirit would go too. Cornplanter remarked that even the Devil would die if all tried to do good (Simmons, MS., 1799, Feb. 27 entry).

It is important to note that many of the reforms usually ascribed to Handsome Lake himself had actually been instituted in his own community before June 15, 1799, the date of his first visions. The community had decided there should be no more whiskey at Cornplanter's town; had appointed two young chiefs to see to it that this resolution was enforced and to have general supervision over local morals. It had been determined that all of their miscellaneous festivals and dances should go, as being merely invitations to riot, and taken from the Whites, anyhow, together with their whiskey; but that the Worship Dances should be kept, since they were native and

always had been religious. Witch killing was approved; confession practiced.

Questions about theology and morals had been referred to Simmons, and answered in the Quaker way: Look inside. You have a Light in there that will show you what is good and what is bad. When you know you have done wrong, repent and resolve to do better. Outward forms and books and guides are good; but they are made by men. The Great Spirit himself puts the Inner Light in every man. Look to it. Learn to read and write so that you may discover for yourself whether or not the white man's Book is true. Learn to distinguish good from evil so that you may avoid the pricks of conscience in this world and prosper; and that you may avoid punishment in the next.

Local Indians before Handsome Lake had gone to the other world in their dreams and returned with a conviction of sin that was relieved by repentance and resolution to reform. Dreaming such as this could be matched in many times and places, among many Indians. The important point here is that Simmons could unreservedly approve of it, and pronounce it true, with no quibbling over its theological implications. No one but a Quaker could have done so at the time.

During all this, Handsome Lake had lain in the house of Cornplanter, a very sick man. A dissolute life had worn him out.

Sixth Month, 15th. The Cornplanter being from home about three-fourths of a mile, where he had men employed to build him a house . . . an express came to him that his Brother or Step Brother was dying (who had been on the decline of life for several years) he straightway went, and found a number of his people convened and his Brother laying breathless for the space of half an hour, but in about 2 hours after he came to himself again, and informed his Brother how he was and what he had seen, which was thus, as he lay or sat in the house, he heard somebody call to him out of the house, he immediately arose and went out, his daughter seeing him asked where he was going he told her he would soon be back, and as he stood without, he saw three men by the side of the house, he then fainted and fell gently to the ground without being any sick, and the men had bushes in their hands with berries on them, of different kinds, who invited him to take some and eat, and they would help him, and that he would live to see such like berries ripe this summer he thought he took one berry off each man's bush. They told him the great Spirit was much displeased with his people getting drunk, but as he had been sick a great while, he had thought more upon the great Spirit, and was preserved from drinking strong drink to excess, and if he got well he must not take to it again for the great Spirit knew (not only what people were always doing) but also their very thoughts, and that there was some very bad ones among them, who would poison others, but one of them was lately killed, yet there still remained one like her who was a man. He requested his brother to call his people in council, and tell them what he had said to him, and if they had any dried berries amongst them, he wished all in the Council might take it if it was but one piiece, which was done accordingly the same day, where myself and companion (Viz) Joel Swayn, attended, at the request of Cornplanter when a large number of them assembled with shorter

notice than ever I had seen them before. [All seemed moved, including Simmons.]

NOTE.—The three persons aforesaid told him there was four of them, but one did not come, expecting to come to see him [some] time hence. And he often told his Brother Cornplanter, he expected that person would soon come. As he continued in a poor state of health for many weeks after. One night he dreamt the absent person came (who appeared like the great Spirit) and asked him if he did not remember the three men who came to him some time before, and told him there were four of them altogether, but one of them stayed behind and intended to come some time after, and he was the very one, now come to take him along if he was willing to go as he pitied him seeing he had suffered very much; He did not give him any answer . . . but in the morning when he awoke he said he would go and put on his best clothes, then wished to see his Brother, and was afraid he should not get to see him before he would be gone, as he was some distance off, a messenger went immediately to inform his Brother thereof, who when he came, attended pretty steadily with him through the course of the day, and about evening he fainted away, which held him but for a short space of time, after recovering he told his Brother not to put any more clothes on him, or move him, if he did go. Soon after he said he was now going, and he expected to return, but thought he should go as far as to see his Son who had been dead several years, and his Brother's Daughter who had been dead about 7 months.

He then fainted or fell into a trance in which posture he remained 7 hours, his legs and arms were cold, his body warm but breathless, he knew not how he went out of the world, but soon perceived a guide going before him, who appeared to have a bow and one arrow, and was dressed in a clear sky colour. His guide told him to look forward. When he did, behold the two deceased ones before noted, were coming to meet him, dressed in the manner of his guide, and after embracing each other, they turned aside to sit down to converse together wherein the daughter expressed her sorrow, in frequent hearing her father (viz) Cornplanter and brother Henry disputing together some time so high as to get very angry at each other, her brother thinking he knew more than his father . . . The young man then addressed his father in this way, being much concerned that he had suffered so much and that his own son then living had taken so little care of him, but would go out of the way when his father grew worse for fear of having some trouble . . . Guide said every Son ought to do good for their father. [Simmons, MS.]

The guide then told Handsome Lake that they had one fault to find with him, his drinking. He must do it no more and "he must quit all kinds of frolicks and dancing, except their Worship Dance, for that was right, as they did not make any use of liquor at the time, etc." The guide told him the great Spirit made liquor to use, not to abuse. Those who got drunk need not expect to come to "that happy place." He was told to look round toward the river. There,

he saw many canoes loaded with kegs of whiskey, and also saw an ugly fellow whom the guide told him was the D. C. going about very busy doing and making all the noise and mischief he could amongst the people. Guide told him they often dreamt, and some times their dreams were true from the great Spirit; but they would not believe it was from him, but from the Devil, and when the D. C. have told them something, they have concluded it was the great Spirit, and that pleases the D. C. he being thought the greatest and most honored, having the most people on his side.

Further told him that white people were come into their towns to instruct their children, and that is right if they can all agree to it, but many of them are not willing, but will keep to their old habits of living, well that may be right too" [but they must not drink whiskey].

[Guide expressed sorrow that a great sickness was about to smite their village unless they mended their ways and thought more on the great Spirit.] His people must collect together in worship, and cook a white dog and every one eat thereof, as a preventative against the sickness. [Simmons, MS.]

The guide then told him to return; he would not see them any more until he died, and perhaps not then, unless he did right as long as he lived.

After Cornplanter heard all this he called a council, and sent for Simmons. They asked the Quaker what he thought of it. "I told them there had been instances of the same kind amongst white people even of the Quakers, falling into a trance, and saw both the good place, and bad place, and saw many wonderful sights which I did believe." Henry said he didn't see why the same could not be true among them, since they and the Quakers were of one flesh and blood. He warned, though, that Handsome Lake may not have reported exactly.

The same day they prepared the White Dog Feast, of which all partook.

Next day Simmons found Handsome Lake much improved. He was told that the Indians liked some of the white people's ways very well, and some Indian ways very well. It would take some time to lead the Indians out of their set ways. Meanwhile, they would keep many of their old things, as their Worship Dances, as the only way they had of worshiping the great Spirit. He remarked that the white people had killed their own Saviour. Simmons was astonished at this: "how he had heard about our Saviour I know not"; and he was human enough to retort that it was the Jews that had killed the Saviour and "neither did I know but what the Indians were their descendants."

The long passage beginning with the word "Note," is inserted in the diary between that for June 15 and that for August 11, as of which date preparation began for the forthcoming Green Corn Feast, which is their fall Worship Dance. This festival started August 28. Nearly 200 danced around "their wooden image, which had a white dog hanging on it, with some wampums, ribands, and paint about him." Two men at his feet beat the time with turtle rattles. Simmons describes, without naming it, the Great Feather Dance, the Creator's own dance. The festival closed with "A Husleing or Lottery play," the Great Bowl Game.

When, soon after, Simmons left for home, Halliday Jackson's diary takes over. Jackson remarks on March 1, 1800, that the In-

dians generally had collected at Cornplanter's Town to perform their yearly sacrifice. So zealous were they to have everyone get there that they hauled lame people 13 or 14 miles on deerskins. Jackson went down at the Indians' request to write down some visions of Cornplanter's brother. Jackson himself left June 17 (Jackson, MS., 1800). His "Manners and Customs of the Seneca Nation of Indians, in the year 1800" is the best summary we have of the situation at Cornplanter's Town. He mentions Handsome Lake's name once in this account.

We may take it that the culture which Jackson describes is what he and his friends found in 1798. He says the Indians believe in one all-wise being they call How-wa-nee; an evil spirit, Nish-she-o-nee; and a place of happiness for the good. He mentions no equivalent of Hell. Twice a year preliminary to their Worship Dances an examination of men, women, and children takes place, "whether they have committed any offenses or evil acts. Of these it is often the case that the offender makes confession, the design of which is, that all wrong things may be done away and reconciliation take place . . . and a promise on the part of the aggressor to try to do better for the future; which done, the council then assembled forgive them." He describes "the Harvest Dance" and the Personal Chant, "the thanking or cheer songs." These two, with the Great Feather Dance and Bowl Game, constitute the Four Sacred Ceremonies of the Good Message. It is notable that all four were associated originally with the two sober Worship Dances, rather than with their "frequent banquets, in which they regale themselves with strong liquors, and pass whole nights in singing, dancing, and music" (Jackson, 1830 a, pp. 23-31).

In his "Civilization of the Indian Natives," however, Jackson gives an account of the activities of Handsome Lake for the years 1800-1802 (Jackson, 1830 b, pp. 42-45). He had acquired considerable influence over the nation. In his zeal against witchcraft he had accused some of the Munsee at Cattaraugus of responsibility for illness in Cornplanter's family, which brought on a quarrel between them and the Seneca which was, however, peacefully adjusted. He was advising against schools for the children. The Indians might farm a little, and build houses; but they must not sell anything they raised, but give it away to one another . . . in short, enjoy all things in common. Some of the younger men were dissatisfied; but his stock was generally high. In "Account of a visit made by Penrose Wiley, John Letchworth, Anne Mifflin, Mary Bell & Company to the Seneca Indians, settled on Allegany River, 10 mo. 1803,"⁷ Cornplanter re-

⁷ MSS. of Mary Gilbert in Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.

sponded to the usual Quaker admonitions by saying that it was the first time any women had come to see them. What they had said "agrees with what our Prophet has told us, therefore, it must be true. He has told us that we should live in peace and goodwill, and that if we drank whiskey we should never go to Heaven." Cornplanter's sister confirmed the fact that these Indians had left off drinking whiskey "this four years; and are resolved to drink it no more."

From their first meeting the Quakers had urged on Cornplanter the necessity for teaching his people to farm with the plow, and to keep domestic animals. Game was growing scarce; and would get scarcer. Cornplanter agreed to this, and solicited their help for the instruction. This was a main object of the Quaker mission to his town. The Iroquois were farmers by inheritance; but the plow required manpower where the hoe had been the women's implement. It was part of their fixed belief that the bond between women and the crops was so close that only women could make them grow. Before Handsome Lake's advent as prophet, the council had agreed (1799) to see what the men could do with the plow. They experimented cautiously in the spring of 1801. "Several parts of a large field were ploughed, and the intermediate spaces prepared by women with the hoe, according to former custom. It was all planted with corn; and the parts ploughed . . . produced much the heaviest crop." Cattle stocks increased beyond the feed supply. Fields and pastures were fenced; good houses, with shingle instead of bark roofs, were built. Visiting Friends were justifiably delighted with the progress they saw (Jackson, 1830 b, pp. 40-46).

When the Indians went down to Pittsburgh twice a year with furs, moccasins, deer hams, bearskins, and tallow, they returned with clothing and provisions, instead of whiskey. The Pittsburgh merchants took to keeping jugs of sugar-water on their counters for the customary "treat," since the Seneca refused whiskey (Wrenshall diary, MS., 1803).

In early 1802 Handsome Lake, with Seneca and Onondaga associates, came home from Washington bearing letters expressing President Jefferson's approval of the Prophet and his teachings. Jefferson advised the Indians "to open your ears to the council of Handsome Lake, to listen to his advice and to be governed by his precepts." He consented to Handsome Lake's appointment of Charles Obeal (Cornplanter's son) and Strong as the two young men the "four angels" had told the Prophet to select to care for his "business." Jefferson took pains to send Cornplanter assurance of his continued confidence.

Joseph Elkinton, the resident Quaker at Tunesassa, found the originals of these letters cherished in the possession of Governor Black-

snake at Allegany, and copied them in his journal for June 20, 1827. The Indians regarded them (and they still do) as the Government's endorsement of Handsome Lake and his teachings. The letters were of the greatest importance in establishing Handsome Lake as a Prophet, and putting him beyond effective reach of the faction that opposed both him and Cornplanter. The opposition came mostly from the Buffalo Creek quarter, but loud echoes reached Burnt House, too. The objection was not so much to Handsome Lake as to the Quaker influence over him, which was growing. These official endorsements elevated him to a position above even that of Cornplanter, up to then about the only Seneca able to command such credentials.

Cornplanter was an Indian. As such he understood the Indian, Handsome Lake. He could and did value the good he was doing; and there is no evidence of an open break between them. But Cornplanter did not go along with his brother's zeal against witches and schooling.

These and other factional divisions at Burnt House resulted in a gradual exodus starting about 1803, and led to the eventual repopulation of the Allegheny higher up. In 1803 the Quakers consulted with Cornplanter and his council about establishing a new and much larger farm on a Tunesassa Creek tract, east of the river and outside of the Allegany Reservation line, where they planned to erect mills and a boarding school. Their project was approved.⁸ Coldspring, not far from Tunesassa but west of the river, became the new Indian center with a new council house, which Jackson describes as of September 15, 1806 (Jackson, MS., 1806).

Handsome Lake's influence was dominant at Coldspring, though he was still resident at Burnt House in 1809. During the summer of 1806 he visited some of the Seneca towns on the Genesee "to dissuade them from the use of strong drink, and to encourage them in habits

⁸ Work on the Tunesassa project started in 1803. The large building which housed the boarding school was torn down a few years ago and most of the farm sold. Extension of public-school facilities to Allegany Reservation seemed to make these phases of the work, in which so many Indians had received elementary and vocational training, no longer necessary.

The long line of resident Quakers who worked out here their "calls to service" spent much time in the early days assembling and copying down all matter they could find relating to relations between the Friends and the Indians; and, especially, to these local Indians.

The bound volumes which contained thousands of pages of this valuable material were removed when the building was wrecked. Many had previously been copied by the Pennsylvania Historical Project, WPA, and are at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg. The originals are in the Department of Records of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends of Philadelphia and Vicinity under the Representative Meeting, 302 Arch Street, Philadelphia. There are several sets of hand-copied "Indian Records" there: one set of 10 volumes; another of 5; and one entitled "Indian Records" but subtitled "Joseph Elkinton's Journal." The 5-volume set and the Elkinton Journal were received at the Department of Records in 1943. The 5 volumes are a partial duplication of the 10-volume set. Quite possibly the 5-volume set and the Joseph Elkinton set came to them from Tunesassa, since the description fits.

of industry" (Jackson, 1830 b, p. 51). He and the Quakers were now in such close accord that, after the Quaker delegation of 1806 had delivered its usual counsel—to love the Lord and one's neighbor, listen to the Inner Voice in trouble, live harmoniously with families, permit no liquor, cards, or gambling—Governor Blacksnake could reply for the Indians, in Handsome Lake's presence, that, "your young men and us are like one. When we want anything done we consult them and they assist us and our Prophet tells us what to do and so we get instruction from both" (Jackson, MS., 1806, September 15–16 entries).

In 1807 another witch was killed on the Allegheny, at the Prophet's direction (Turner, 1849, p. 509).

Erastus Granger, Indian agent, writes the Secretary of War from Buffalo Creek, August 25, 1807, that, "the old Prophet, whom you once saw at Washington . . . has acquired an unbounded influence over the Six Nations—his fame has long since reached some of the western Indians, and for two years past they have been sending messengers to him . . . the delegation which I mentioned in my last, consisting of Shawonees⁹ and others, came on purpose to see him." Granger proposes that this influence be capitalized for the United States by sending him, with Cornplanter and other friendly Seneca, to persuade the western Indians to peace. Accordingly, a pass was issued August 20, 1808, to Kon-a-di-a, Cornplanter and others "about taking a journey to the Westward . . . The object of their Journey is that of a friendly nature, as it respects the people of the United States. They expect to meet the western Indians in council" (Babcock, 1927, pp. 23–25).

War was brewing. The New York Indians knew it, and wanted none of it. The Oneida, Onondaga, Stockbridge, and Tuscarora met in council at Onondaga September 28, 1812, and addressed a letter to the President saying they saw trouble coming between the United States and the British. Washington had told them at the close of the Revolution to be sober and stay out of wars. "Our good prophet of the Seneca tribe, who is now with us in this council, has given us the same advice and our tribes have entered into a league to follow that advice" (Ketchum, 1865, vol. 2, pp. 424–425).

⁹Note that Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee Prophet living in nearby Ohio, had his first vision late in 1805; that it was almost a duplicate of Handsome Lake's; that his original teachings were regarded by the Shakers who knew him very well as "Christian"; that those of the nearby Tippecanoe absolved him from all blame for what happened there. Most contemporary accounts of him and his teachings and activities have come down from sources either unfriendly or second-hand and partial, as Forsyth (1912, pp. 273–278) usually heavily relied on; or via observers of his teaching and practice among Indians other than his own Shawnee, as most of those cited in Mooney (1896, pp. 670–700). (See Dean, 1918, p. 308; and MacLean, 1903, pp. 213–229, for the other side of the picture.)

The Amerians piously professed to want only neutrality out of the Indians. Actually, they actively enlisted them wherever and whenever they could. Handsome Lake was neutral as a Quaker throughout this war. It is significant that most of the Indians who finally joined the Americans in July 1813 at Buffalo were from Buffalo Creek. Few or none came from Tonawanda, Allegany, and the other strongly Handsome Lake communities. Red Jacket, Cornplanter, and Blue Sky talked against participation. When Jasper Parrish forwarded from Canandaigua the few Onondaga recruits he was able to get, he told them to go straight to Buffalo and "not to call on the old Prophet, for he must not interfere with the wishes of our great chief." The Indians said they would go to see him on the way, but it was for a religious purpose (Ketchum, 1865, vol. 2, pp. 424-425, 432-433).

Handsome Lake was now at Tonawanda after 10 years' ministry at Burnt House, 2 at Coldspring, and a short stop at Cattaraugus. The messengers had told him he must "take four steps from Burnt House." He took the last in 1815, when he went to Onondaga. These same messengers had told him he must never be alone; but, as he neared Onondaga, he missed his favorite knife. Leaving his companions in camp, he retraced his steps to look for it. When he returned, his friends saw that all his strength had gone from him. They helped him to the town. The people there did what they could, but he died soon after, on August 10, 1815. They buried him at Onondaga. The senior federal chief, by a figure of speech, deposited the "horns of office" on top of his grave until another Handsome Lake should be installed (Parker, 1912, pp. 9-13, 78-80, pl. 9; Morgan, 1878, p. 96).

His words never died. Even modern Good Message followers (who read the books) are likely to say that they were lost for awhile until the people at Tonawanda asked Handsome Lake's grandson, Jimmy Johnson (Soshéowa') to recall them, about 1840 (Morgan, 1851, p. 230). This is a mistake.

Timothy Alden, president of Allegheny College, on one of his frequent visits to the Seneca, reached Cattaraugus July 10, 1818. Few were home. They said many chiefs of the Seneca, Oneida, and Cayuga were meeting at Tonawanda "upon the same business you are on," and the people were there. Alden spent July 16 and 17 at the Tonawanda council. The local white teacher, Jabez Hyde, was with him. From Hyde's narrative we get our best picture of what was going on (Hyde, 1903).

In spite of heroic efforts to keep them out, evangelical Christian missionaries were infiltrating the Seneca. Their insistence on their own one true way of salvation (on which no two agreed), on Sabbath-keeping, and a dozen other alien dogmas were issues the Quakers had

never required the Indians to resolve. Their long tradition of unanimous action had led to a series of Indian councils at Tonawanda, to find whether all views could not be reconciled. Various compromise plans were tried. But about 1820 the permanent division into two camps was effected. One party (mostly about Buffalo Creek, Tuscarora, and Oneida) went its way to "church"; the other stayed in the Quaker-Handsome Lake longhouse, with the Good Message.

It was one of these councils that Alden attended, in 1818. Its "great object . . . was to revive the moral instructions formerly received from . . . Konnedieyu, the prophet, as he was called . . . Many speeches were made, in which the lessons inculcated by the prophet, were recounted, and their importance urged . . ." John Sky, a Tonawanda chief, spoke for 3 hours, summing up with: "You must not do anything bad; you must not say anything bad; you must not think anything bad; for the Great Spirit knows your thoughts, as well as your words and actions. This is what the prophet taught us. You know it—and this is according to the word of God!" Alden saw a public confession; heard relation by one Kasiadestah of a typical dream; and a "preaching to repentance" . . . still the essential ingredients of a general "Six Nations Meeting" (Alden, 1827, pp. 53-62).

Friend Joseph Elkinton had to contend with "an old Prophet" at Allegany in 1825-27, who—in Handsome Lake tradition—said "a snake would go down the river and the water would not be fit to drink for a day" unless the people repented (Elkinton, MS., 1827, May 2 entry).

In 1838 there were two great prophets at Tonawanda and Buffalo Creek. "The former states that there are four angels which are annually sent to him by the great spirit . . ."; and so on, as though it were Handsome Lake himself speaking (Dearborn, 1904, pp. 55, 90-91).

Young Ely S. Parker—later U. S. Grant's military secretary—wrote down and translated Jimmy Johnson's October 2 and 3, 1845, Good Message recitals at Tonawanda (Parker, 1919, pp. 251-261). G. S. Riley of Rochester was with him, and described what they saw (Parker, 1916, pp. 126-132). Ely again made notes of Johnson at Tonawanda October 4, 5, and 6, 1848. These form the basis for Morgan's account of Handsome Lake's gospel (Morgan, 1851, pp. 233-259). Morgan followed Ely's notes faithfully in reporting what Johnson said, but he departed widely from Ely's glosses on it and its ceremonial accompaniment (Fenton, 1941, pp. 151-157). The correspondence between Morgan and Parker shows that if Morgan had listened more carefully to Ely he might have avoided the general criticism of his "League" made by Seneca who read it: "There's nothing actually wrong in what he says, but it isn't right either. He doesn't really understand what he is talking about."

Any discussion of the Good Message with Seneca friends elicits the remark: "Everything else the Iroquois do is different from one community to another—sometimes even from one house to another. But Gai'wio' is the same at all longhouses." There is as much and as little truth in this as there is in, "Christianity is the same everywhere."

Fenton's and Speck's reports on the annual ceremonial cycles at the Coldspring and Newton Longhouses (within a few miles of one another) and at Canadian Sour Springs Cayuga exhibit the great diversities that obtain (Fenton, 1936 and 1941; Speck, 1949).

The inference in Parker's statement (Parker, 1913, pp. 7-8) that a Coldspring Meeting of Cattaraugus chiefs settled "forever the words and form of the Good Message," with a certain canonized text resulting therefrom is mistaken. There is no one text of the Good Message. Versions vary from preacher to preacher; from one longhouse to another; and from time to time. Parker's Good Message took 3 days for recitation. The common allotment now is 4; but at Sour Springs in 1949 the preacher found 5 necessary to complete his version, which contained material that the delegates there from Coldspring had never heard before.

Nor is it correct to suppose that the only legitimate inheritance of all the Good Message is through Owen Blacksnake to Johnson to Stevens to Edward Cornplanter (Parker, 1913, p. 19). The version now heard at Coldspring, from DeForest Abrams, came to DeForest from Oscar Crow, who learned it from Jackson Titus, who might have heard it from Handsome Lake himself. The language in which it is couched contains so much obsolete Seneca—"big, dictionary words," they say—that DeForest himself doesn't know exactly what some mean. When he appeared before the Sanhedrin of chiefs at Tonawanda to make his 4-day trial recital of the Good Message in September 1949, Chief Heenan Scrogg, the oldest Seneca "preacher" present, was appointed to judge its orthodoxy, since he had the best chance of understanding it. When DeForest finished, Chief Scrogg said that he didn't get all of it, but in what he did he heard nothing wrong. So DeForest passed, and was qualified to preach the Good Message on the 10 longhouse circuit of "Six Nations Meetings."¹⁰

¹⁰ Good message followers think and speak of the Tonawanda Longhouse as gajus' towanen, usually translated, "central fire." Literally, "big light," "big brightness," its application to the place is an extension of its specific use as a name for the strings of wampum lodged there.

The story is that Handsome Lake died at Onondaga possessed of these strings; that they were returned to Tonawanda by his companions on his last trip.

This palladium of the Good Message is variously described. It seems to consist of about 30 strings and several large belts. The strings are combined into about 10 strands. On some the beads are of one color; on others, of several colors. The belts bear "pictures

Before this ordination he might recite only at Coldspring. Each longhouse has its staff of local preachers. For the local biennial "Six Nations Meeting" attended by delegates from all the others, an outside preacher must be called. Those eligible for such calls must have been accepted at Tonawanda in the manner described. Comparison of the various versions that have been recorded from time to time shows that the prophecy and biographical sections have been most expanded. There are changes in the personnel of Heaven and Hell, too. For instance, it was Farmers Brother whom Handsome Lake saw (as reported at Tonawanda in 1845) under the Dante-like sentence of perpetually attempting to remove a never diminishing pile of earth—punishment for his part in Indian land sales (Parker, 1919, p. 260).

or designs and lines around them. . . . No white man has ever seen or handled them, and none ever will as long as Gai'wio' is alive," writes a Seneca informant.

Theoretically, these strings are to be brought out for reading by one of the few who can do it, at each Tonawanda session which starts off the biennial circuit of "Six Nations meetings." Actually, they seldom appear.

In September 1949, a large crowd had gathered to see them on a Thursday afternoon. In the longhouse they spread a table with a clean white cloth to receive them. The delegation of chiefs repaired under bright skies to the house of the current bearer of the title, Ganiodai'io', who is their custodian. By the time they had covered the distance a small cloud had appeared; so they returned without the strings. The prospect, then, that any individual may see and hear the strings is governed by the probability that there will be a perfectly cloudless sky at Tonawanda, N. Y., on a certain afternoon once every 2 years, and that he will be on hand for that occasion.

The strings may not be brought out on any but a clear day. One must think that the chiefs welcome even a little cloud, since they handle the strings at their peril. If a bead should be lost, or harmed in any way, the handler pays the penalty in continuing bad luck for himself and his family.

It is, however, easily possible to find Indians who have seen the strings and who are willing to give a physical description of them. To find one willing or able to give a reliable account of what the strings say when read has, to date, not been possible. Many reasons are given; and, as is usual with Indians, they are good ones, designed to save the face of the inquirer. Only one Seneca friend has come right out and said frankly, "There may be somebody with an evil mind that may try to *get me* for telling secrets I shouldn't. Just like that Wm. Morgan and the Masons. Get my meaning, Brother."

Gajils'towaneh is not for white men—quite properly.

Tonawanda is, then, a Mecca for the Good Message, but each longhouse is a law unto itself when it is at home. It is only when interlonghouse recognition is involved that it must go to Tonawanda. It may have its ha-ta-'ha' ("a talker, speaker")—the "local preacher"—whose doings and sayings need to satisfy only his own folk. But when ha-ta-'ha' wants to become hal-wa-'no'-ta ("a teller, a reciter") he must present himself at Tonawanda for the judgment of his equals, in the true tradition of the Iroquois council. The chiefs who head community moieties when they function for the Good Message purposes need the same confirmation at Tonawanda, if they obtain more than local recognition. At Tonawanda, too, the plans are made for "Six Nations meetings." Conflicts are adjusted; preachers are invited. It is a unifying influence, of course; but in the way that such "international" councils have always been, among the Six Nations.

The 1949 circuit schedule arranged at the Tonawanda meeting (September 24–30, 1949) was:

- Caughnawaga, starting October 1 (Saturday).
- St. Regis, October 8.
- Onondaga Castle, N. Y., October 15.
- Coldspring, October 22.
- Canadian Onondaga, October 29.
- Sour Springs Cayuga, November 5.

The 1950 schedule will be set at the initial Tonawanda meeting and will include Cataugus in New York and Seneca, Lower Cayuga, and Oneidatown (sometimes called Munceytown) in Canada.

Red Jacket is substituted for Farmers Brother in the Edward Cornplanter version (Parker, 1913, p. 68). DeForest now sticks closely to the text as he remembers it. He is coached in it and helped by his family and the Good Message "elders." If he runs true to form, as he gets older and easier in the role of preacher he will add to or subtract from it. This is what Henry Redeye, Oscar Crow, Wesley White, Hiram Jacobs, and all the other preachers at Allegany did when they got old, they say.

We find the same diversity in doctrinal interpretation that has been noted in Good Message services and text. The Sour Springs Cayuga chiefs officially approved Speck's statement of their creed (Speck, 1941). This form could have obtained no such approval at any other longhouse, very probably. For instance: The Cayuga seem completely to have assimilated Jesus. They have equipped him with the origin legend, so necessary to establish his status, in "The Fatherless Boy" story (Speck, 1949, pp. 3, 31, 127-129, 141). None of the longhouse folk at Coldspring who have read it has ever heard it. Jesus' status there is very different; and differently based.

Perhaps widest doctrinal variation occurs in the practice and conception of confession—as much difference as there is between Holy Roller and Catholic. We should expect Catholic-rooted St. Regis to accent the element of satisfaction, absolution in a "sacrament" superficially so like the one they have known in church. At Coldspring the emphasis is on the pledge taken either privately or openly to quit the confessed sin "forever, as long as I live." Some require shouting, in a camp-meeting style public rehearsal, from the penitent. Others frown severely on this and favor confession silently, by brief formula any time and anywhere. Any consideration of Iroquoian confession, then or now, that regards it as a single sacrament with universal entire function—therapeutic, penal, magic, or otherwise—must miss some of its meanings for various Iroquoians (Jackson, 1830 a, pp. 23-27; Morgan, 1851, pp. 170, 187-188; Myrtle, 1855, p. 49; Parker, 1913, pp. 28, 44, 45, 57, 69; Fenton, 1936, p. 16; 1941, pp. 152-155; La Barre, 1947, p. 307; Speck, 1949, pp. 51-53).

The adaptability of the Good Message was inherent. We can see this best reported in the case of what happened when it reached Oneida in the very early 1800's. The Reverend Samuel Kirkland, long resident there, reports its impact on that heavily missioned community. In 1799 Oneida saw its first White Dog Feast in 30 years. In 1798 a young Grand River Mohawk of high character had a vision in which he talked with "Thauloonghyauwangoo, which signifies Upholder of the Skies or Heavens." That principal figure in the old Iroquoian pantheon complained of neglect by all but the Seneca. His White Dog offering had been withheld; hence the wars, diseases, and

famines. The young Mohawk dreamer got immediate attention. Even Brant had to bow to public opinion and consent to a dog burning, stipulating that it must not be considered anti-Christian.

When word of this reached old Blacksmith, the last surviving pagan chief at Oneida, he gathered the population willing to help and staged his feast, at about the same time Handsome Lake was having his first vision. Blacksmith's participants were warned not to drink rum for 10 days "or they would pollute the sacrifice and informed his adherents that the eating of the flesh of the roasted dog in that ancient rite was a transaction equally sacred and solemn, with that, which the Christians call the Lord's feast. The only difference is in the elements; the Christians use bread and wine, we use flesh and blood" (Kirkland, MS., 1800, February 23, 26, entries).

The first Indians to bring back word of Handsome Lake to Oneida were of the Christian party there. They insisted that Handsome Lake banned the White Dog Feast; gave absolution from sin after confession; taught that those who had the Bible must follow it, and that those who had been baptized must observe all its precepts or they would be lost; and they held their services on the Sabbath Day. Kirkland was quite flabbergasted at this new competition. He kept discreetly quiet; allowed the Good Message preachers to speak at his services . . . and waited to see what would happen (Kirkland, MS., 1806).

We know that Handsome Lake did not ban the White Dog Feast, but enjoined it on his followers; that he had no such Catholic conception of confession; he had the common Indian attitude toward the Bible: it is all right for the Whites, but if it were intended for Indians it would be so fixed that they could read it. We know, too, that for years the distinguishing mark of a "church Indian" on the Seneca reservations was the fact that he kept the Sabbath, while Good Message followers did not.

What happened was that when the Good Message party was forming at Oneida, it had to select from the local stock of ritual and belief what it could use. Its followers decided that their Prophet had got his knowledge from the same source as the Bible. Since they had to make inclination one way or the other, it was toward Christianity which they had known for a long time, rather than toward the recently imported paganism. There was nothing in Handsome Lake's actual doctrine itself that prevented marshaling his authority behind their selection since, to him, things of this sort were accidental rather than fundamental.

What happened at Oneida is what always happens to the Good Message wherever it goes among Iroquoians.

The record bears out the early observation that Handsome Lake did little more than give a certain ethical content to the old Seneca beliefs,

rather than the other position which seems to consider that he invented almost everything in present Iroquoian religious and moral practice (Wolf, 1919). It may be that the Strawberry Feast, now as important as New Year's and the Green Corn Feast in the annual longhouse ceremonial cycle, was instituted by Handsome Lake when he awoke from his first vision (Parker, 1913, pp. 25-26). If so, this is just about the extent of what can be identified as a positive addition to practice prior to the Good Message; and the Strawberry Feast is in no essential wise different from important parts of New Year's and the Green Corn Feast with which it rates (Fenton, 1936).¹¹

Handsome Lake addressed himself at first to the elimination of drinking and witchcraft and the abuses connected with and arising out of them. As he went along he took in more territory; but one cannot escape the fact that his home community had already recognized as evil everything that Handsome Lake originally condemned and had not only resolved to eradicate it, but had set up the machinery with which to do it. Charles Obeal and Strong, the two young men appointed by Handsome Lake at the direction of the "four angels" to look after community morals, are, if not identical in person, the same as the two young men that Cornplanter told Henry Simmons the community had decided to appoint for the same purpose, before Handsome Lake's first vision. The immediate inspiration for these resolutions and actions was Quaker.

At first Handsome Lake opposed the Quakers at some points, but not for long. They valued him as an ally; and it was through them that he got his Government certification. They had come, as one of them put it, to "find out what good thing the *Indians* wanted to do, and then to help *them* do it"; not to proselyte. Their own attitude toward good and bad, conscience, the Bible, and God Himself was not too unlike that of the Indians themselves. It was not long before Handsome Lake was making such accommodations as: It is all right to learn to farm in the white man's way, *but* only that you may grow more to give away to the needy—not that you may have more to sell for profit; reading and writing are not good for Indians, *but* it is well that some of your children learn them so they may deal with the Whites for you.

Handsome Lake's numerous sensible accommodations are the point at which he parts company with most other prophets of his race and kind. As a rule, they advocated a complete turning away from all things White, when they did not actively urge their forcible extermination.

When old John Sky said in 1818 that what Handsome Lake taught was simply: "*Do no evil; speak no evil; think no evil,*" he was reciting

¹¹ These three festivals are the only ones which, in current Coldspring practice, are preceded by full 4-day recitals of the Good Message and public confession.

the universal, generalized moral code. When he added: "*The Great Spirit knows all you do and say and think,*" he supplied the universal, generalized religious sanction therefor.

"*This is what the prophet taught . . . this is according to the word of God,*" confirmed the particular divine inspiration for Handsome Lake and his Good Message—a Prophet and a Gospel. "*You know it*" was the test. As Alden's full account of this meeting shows, the accent was on "*You.*" Each one could look within himself for evidence of the validity of all this . . . the same test of truth that the young Quaker, Henry Simmons, and all of his successors had recommended "when Gai'wiió' was new."

Handsome Lake's function seems to have been to select and prune a strong native stock and to encourage grafting good scions thereon, leaving each gardener to determine pretty much for himself what is "good" since the "bad" will not survive anyhow. The Quakers had taught him how to do it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ALDEN, TIMOTHY.

1827. An account of sundry missions performed among the Senecas and Munsees. New York.

ANONYMOUS.

1805. A brief account of the proceedings of the committee appointed in the year 1795 by the yearly meeting of Friends of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, etc., for promoting the improvement and gradual civilization of the Indian natives. 45 pp. Philadelphia. Signed by Thomas Wistar, Clerk.

BABCOCK, LOUIS L.

1927. The War of 1812 on the Niagara frontier. Publ. Buffalo Hist. Soc., vol. 29, Buffalo.

BEAUCHAMP, WILLIAM M.

1907. Civil, religious, and mourning councils and ceremonies of adoption of the New York Indians. N. Y. State Mus., Bull. No. 113. Albany.

CLARK, J. V. H.

1849. Onondaga; or reminiscences of earlier and later times. 2 vols. Syracuse.

DEAN, THOMAS.

1918. Journal of Thomas Dean: A voyage to Indiana in 1817. Candee Dean, ed. Indiana Hist. Soc. Publ., vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 273-345. Indianapolis.

DEARBORN, HENRY A. S.

1904. Journal of Henry A. S. Dearborn, at Buffalo Creek, 1838. Publ. Buffalo Hist. Soc., vol. 7. Buffalo.

DEARDORFF, MERLE H.

1941. The Cornplanter Grant in Warren County. Western Pa. Hist. Mag., vol. 24, No. 1.

DONALDSON, THOMAS.

1892. The Six Nations of New York. Extra Census Bulletin. Washington.

FENTON, WILLIAM N.

1936. An outline of Seneca ceremonies at Coldspring Longhouse. Yale Univ. Publ. Anthropol. No. 9. New Haven.
1941. Tonawanda Longhouse ceremonies: Ninety years after Lewis Henry Morgan. Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 128, Anthropol. Pap. No. 15.
1945. Place names and related activities of the Cornplanter Seneca. Pennsylvania Archaeologist, Bull. Soc. Pa. Arch., vol. 15, Nos. 1, 2, 3.
1950. The Roll Call of the Iroquois chiefs: A study of a mnemonic cane from the Six Nations Reserve. Smithsonian Misc. Coll., vol. 111, No. 15.

FORSYTH, THOMAS.

1912. Letter to Genl. William Clark dated St. Louis, Dec. 23, 1812. In *The Indian tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and region of the Great Lakes*, by Emma H. Blair (2 vols.). Vol. 1, pp. 273-278. Cleveland.

HAMILTON, KENNETH G.

1940. John Ettwein and the Moravian Church during the Revolutionary period. Bethlehem, Pa.

HAZARD, SAM'L., EDITOR. See Pennsylvania Archives.**HODGE, FREDERICK WEBB, EDITOR.**

- 1907, 1910. Handbook of American Indians north of Mexico. Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 30, 2 vols. (Part 1, 1907; part 2, 1910. Reprinted, 1913.)

HULBERT, ARCHER B., and SCHWARZE, WILLIAM N., EDITORS.

1912. The diaries of Zeisberger relating to the first missions in the Ohio Basin. Ohio Arch. and Hist. Quart., vol. 21, No. 1. Columbus.

HYDE, JABEZ B.

1903. Narrative of Jabez B. Hyde [1820]. Publ. Buffalo Hist. Soc., vol. 6. Buffalo.

JACKSON, HALLIDAY.

- 1830 a. Sketch of the manners, customs, religion, and government of the Seneca Indians in 1800. Philadelphia and New York.
- 1830 b. Civilization of the Indian natives; or a brief view of the friendly conduct of William Penn towards them . . . and a concise narrative of the proceedings of the yearly meetings of Friends, of Pennsylvania, New Jersey . . . since the year 1795, in promoting their improvement. Philadelphia and New York.

KETCHUM, WILLIAM.

- 1864-65. An authentic and comprehensive history of Buffalo. 2 vols. Buffalo.

LA BARRE, WESTON.

1947. Primitive psychotherapy in native American cultures: Peyotism and confession. Journ. Abnormal and Social Psychology, vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 301-307.

MACLEAN, JOHN PATTERSON.

1903. Shaker Mission to the Shawnee Indians. Ohio Arch. and Hist. Soc. Publ., vol. 11, pp. 213-229. Columbus.

MITCHELL, FRANK.

1949. The Mohawks in high steel. The New Yorker, Sept. 17, vol. 25, No. 30, pp. 38-52.

MOONEY, JAMES.

1896. The Ghost-dance religion and the Sioux outbreak of 1890. 14th Ann. Rep. Bur. Ethnol., 1892-93. Pt. 2.

MORGAN, LEWIS H.

1851. *League of the Ho-de'-no-sau-nee or Iroquois*. Rochester.

1878. *Ancient society, or researches in the lines of human progress from savagery through barbarism to civilization*. New York.

MYRTLE, MINNIE (PSEUD.).

1855. *The Iroquois; or the bright side of Indian character*. New York.

PARKER, ARTHUR C.

1913. *The code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet*. N. Y. State Mus. Bull. No. 163. Albany.

1916. *The constitution of the Five Nations; or the Iroquois book of the great law*. N. Y. State Mus. Bull. No. 184. Albany.

1919. *The life of General Ely S. Parker*. Publ. Buffalo Hist. Soc., vol. 23. Buffalo.

PENNSYLVANIA ARCHIVES.

1853. *First Series, Volume 3*. Sam'l Hazard, ed. Philadelphia.

PROCTOR, COL. THOMAS.

1876. *Narrative of the journey of Col. Thomas Proctor to the Indians of the North-West, 1791*. In Pa. Archives, 2d ser., vol. 4, pp. 551-622. Harrisburg. (*Repr.* 1896, pp. 463-524.)

SCHWEINITZ, EDMUND DE.

1871. *Life and times of David Zeisberger*. Philadelphia.

SEAVER, JAMES E.

1918. *A narrative of the life of Mary Jemison, the white woman of the Genesee*. (20th ed.) New York.

SHARPLES, JOSHUA.

1848. *Diary of Joshua Sharples [1798]*. The Friend, Robert Smith, editor, vol. 31, in article headed "Friends and the Indians." Philadelphia.

SPECK, FRANK G.

1941. *An ethnologist speaks for the pagan Indians*. Crozer Quart., vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 213-218.

1949. *Midwinter rites of the Cayuga Long House*. Philadelphia.

TURNER, O.

1849. *Pioneer history of the Holland purchase of western New York*. Buffalo.

WOLF, MORRIS.

1919. *Iroquois religion and its relation to their morals*. New York.

ZEISBERGER, DAVID. See HULBERT, ARCHER B., and SCHWARZE, WILLIAM N., EDITORS; also SCHWEINITZ, EDMUND DE.

MANUSCRIPTS

BALDWIN, WATERMAN.

MS. 1791. *Diaries and correspondence, and photostats of privately owned material in office of Chemung County Historian, Elmira, N. Y.*

BLACKSNAKE, GOVERNOR.

MS. 1845-46. *MSS. dictated to Benjamin Williams, an Indian, at request of Dr. Lyman C. Draper*. Wis. Hist. Soc. Madison. (Draper MSS. 16F109-114.)

MS. 1850. "Conversations" with Dr. Lyman C. Draper, at Cold Spring, N. Y. Wis. Hist. Soc. Madison. (Draper MSS. Coll.)

ELKINTON, JOSEPH.

MS. 1815-64. *Journals (940 pp.) formerly at Tunesassa School, Quaker Bridge, N. Y. Extracts publ. in The Friend, vols. 22, 23.*

INDIAN RECORDS.

MS. 1668-1859. Two MS. volumes (506 pp.) formerly at Tunesassa School, Quaker Bridge, N. Y.; copies of material relating to Friends and Indians, from all sources.

JACKSON, HALLIDAY.

MS. 1800. Some account of my residence among the Indians (continued), by Warner Jackson. Friends Hist. Lib. Swarthmore, Pa.

MS. 1806. Some account of a visit paid to the Friends at Tunesassa and the Indians living on Allegany and Cataraugus Rivers . . . Friends Hist. Lib. Swarthmore, Pa.

KIRKLAND, SAMUEL.

MS. 1800. Journals. Hamilton College Lib.

MS. 1806. Journals. Hamilton College Lib.

PIERCE, JOHN.

MS. 1798. Notes on a visit to the Seneca Nation of Indians, by Joshua Sharples and John Pierce, 1798. Friends Hist. Assoc. Lib. Philadelphia.

POST, CHRISTIAN FREDERICK.

MS. 1760. Journal to Passigachkunk. Friends Hist. Assoc. Lib. Philadelphia.

SHARPLES, JOSHUA. *See* PIERCE, JOHN.

SIMMONS, HENRY, JR.

MS. 1799. Henry Simmons, Jr., his book (2nd book). MS. owned by Mrs. J. Ross Ewing, West Grove, Pa.

WRENSHALL, JOHN.

MS. 1803. Autobiography of John Wrenshall. Hist. Soc. Western Pa., Methodist Coll. Pittsburgh.