

CHAPTER 2 - AUTHORS WHO MENTION THE BAHÁ'Í WRITINGS ABOUT AMERICAN INDIANS IN THEIR BOOKS

The Priceless Pearl, Rúhíyyih Rabbani. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, London. 1969

The sympathy which all the Prophets of God have shown towards the downtrodden, the meek, and poor and the outcast, singling them out for particular succour, protection and loving encouragement, was always manifested in the Guardian's acts and words. But we must not confuse this attitude with the fundamental truth that many groups of people who at present fall into these categories not only deserve to receive special attention but have within themselves reserves of power and spiritual greatness needed by the entire world. Take, for example, the Indians of the Western Hemisphere. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had written: "You must attach great importance to the Indians, the original inhabitants of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who prior to the Revelation of Muhammad, were like savages. When the Muhammadan Light shone forth in their midst, they became so enkindled that they shed illumination upon the world. Likewise, should these Indians be educated and properly guided, there can be no doubt that through the Divine teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined. "Throughout his ministry Shoghi Effendi never forgot these words and repeatedly urged the believers throughout Canada and the Americas to enlist these souls under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh. Some of the last letters he wrote, in July 1957, to various National Assemblies in the Western Hemisphere, again forcibly stressed this subject and referred to the "long overdue conversion of the American Indians". I quote excerpts from these instructions written by his secretary on his behalf:

The paramount task is, of course, the teaching work; at every session your Assembly should give it close attention, considering everything else of secondary importance. Not only must many new Assemblies be developed, as well as groups and isolated centers, but special attention must be focused on the work of converting the Indians to the Faith. The goal should be all-Indian Assemblies, so that these much exploited and suppressed original inhabitants of the land may realize that they are equals and partners in the affairs of the Cause of God, and that Bahá'u'lláh is the Manifestation of God for "them."

He was particularly happy to see that some of the Indian believers were present at the Convention. He attaches the greatest importance to teaching the original inhabitants of the Americas the Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has stated how great are their potentialities, and it is their right, and the duty of the non-Indian Bahá'ís, to see that they receive the Message of God for this day. One of the most worthy objectives of your Assembly must be the establishment of all-Indian Spiritual Assemblies. Other minorities should likewise be especially sought out and taught. The friends should bear in mind that in our Faith, unlike every other society, the minori-

ty, to compensate for what might be treated as an inferior status, receives special attention, love and consideration...pp. 136-137.

Why did he hang on the walls of the Mansion in Bahjí a picture of the first Pygmy Bahá'í, and the first descendant of the Inca Indians to accept the Faith? Surely it was not as curiosities or trophies but rather because the beloved Josephs of the world were come home to the tent of their Father. pp. 367-368.

"First all red Indian Assembly consolidated Macy Nebraska" he cabled triumphantly in 1949. Constantly remembering 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* to "give great importance to teaching the Indians, i.e., the aborigines of America", Shoghi Effendi pursued this objective until the last months of his life, when he wrote, in July 1957, to the Canadian National Assembly, that the "long overdue conversion" of the American Indians, the Eskimos and other minorities, should receive such an impetus "as to astonish and stimulate the members of all Bahá'í communities throughout the length and breadth of the Western Hemisphere". p. 368.

The first dependency ever to be erected in the vicinity of a Bahá'í Temple was likewise to be undertaken by this Community [United States and Canada]; in addition, it was to purchase two sites for future Houses of Worship, one in Toronto, Canada, and one in Panama City, Panama; translate and publish Bahá'í literature in 10 Western Hemisphere Indian languages, and achieve many other goals besides. (p. 415)

... to all peoples - to the tribes of Africa, the Eskimos of Canada and Greenland, the Lapps of the far north, the Polynesians, the Australian aborigines, the red Indians of the Americas. p. 423.

The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Rúhíyyih Khánum. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1988

Take, for example, the Indians of the Western Hemisphere. p. 60.

Some of the last letters he wrote, in July 1957, to various National Assemblies in the Western Hemisphere, again forcibly stressed this subject and referred to the "long overdue conversion of the American Indians". p. 61.

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the Eskimos and other minorities, should receive such an impetus "as to astonish and stimulate the members of all Bahá'í communities throughout the length and breadth of the Western Hemisphere. p.188.

Minority Groups and Races with which contact has been established by Bahá'ís likewise listed by name: in 1944 there were 9, but in 1952 they had risen to 15 -- 12 of which were **American Eskimo and Indian tribes**. p. 204.

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... everywhere -- in the Arctic Circle, in the deserts, the jungles, the isles of the cold North Sea and the torrid climes of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. p. 222.

... to all peoples -- to the tribes of Africa, the Eskimos of Canada and Greenland, the Lapps of the far north, the Polynesians, the Australian Aborigines, the red Indians of the Americas. p. 222.

Thief in the Night, William Sears. George Ronald, London. 1981

While Mr. Sears does not mention the Bahá'í Writings on American Indians, he does say; in the late 1800's, the conviction became very strong among the American Indians that the Messiah had already appeared and was on earth. Throughout the Western Hemisphere, the great majority of Indians had for centuries been awaiting the appearance of their promised Redeemer. p. 22.

To make things more difficult, I had to wade through a maze of conflicting prophecies. Many of these prophecies had originally pointed to the period round 1844, but when Christ did not come down from heaven in the clouds as expected the prophecies were rearranged to fit events which had been known to have happened: World War I, the great depression, World War II, and a possibly greater conflict yet to come. There was still a strong feeling of expectation for a Messiah in many parts of the world, but I realized that it would be extremely difficult to identify Him since He was expected to be white in Europe, black in Africa, yellow in the Far East, brown in the Islands, and red among the American Indians. p. 32.

Haifa Notes (Pilgrims Notes)

Do you remember what the Master said about the American Indians? He compared them with the Arabs at the time of Muhammad. (Shoghi Effendi in Gayle Woolson, *Haifa Notes*, 1956)

As to how to attract the Indians, he said: "**Attract them through friendliness and kindness. Give them preference in everything; not only equality but preference, preferential treat-**

ment. Teaching the **Indians** is very important. Not only establish contact but convert them. Then they must take part in the administrative activities of the Faith. Do you remember what the Master said about the American Indians? He compared them with the Arabs at the time of Muhammad. **The Indians must be given preferential treatment. The Bahá'ís must treat them just the opposite of the way the others treat them. Amongst the Bahá'ís, the minorities in any country must be given preferential treatment. If there is a tie between two believers for anything, and one is of a minority group, there must not be a second vote. Preference must be given to the believer of the minority group.** The Spanish and Portuguese speaking people must not monopolize the field (he said with humor). The **Indians** must be attracted. This is very important. In North America, the minority groups are the Negroes and the **Indians**. In Latin America, the only minority group is the **Indian**. (Gayle Woolson, Haifa Notes, 1956)

'Abdu'l-Bahá The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, H. M. Balyuzi. George Ronald; London. 1971

H.M. Balyuzi tells of wondrous promises 'Abdu'l-Bahá made for various regions such as Panama, Greenland, and Canada, for the American Indians and the Eskimos, and most especially for the American believers and all who would arise in this Day to serve the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. p. 424.