



*A miniature of Chief "Good Peter"
of the Oneidas (1792) by John Trumbull.*

ELOQUENCE OF CHIEFS

It has been a long-standing criticism of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leather Stocking* novels that in them he romanticized and exaggerated the virtues of Indians.¹ Upon reflection, this comes as a somewhat curious charge; seeing how just about no one appears to have faulted him for romanticizing whites as well. Yet the plain and simple truth seems to be that every now and then there are, indeed, wise, honorable and heroic people in real life -- even if more rarely than one could wish; and who and what Cooper wrote about did have some fair basis in fact. Furthermore, it was often observed in the rising decades of the Republic how the Natives had become much degraded following the successive incursions of white settlers, culture, and ways of living (not least of which the imbibing of alcohol) onto what were once Indian lands. How very ironic it is then to reflect on how many modern whites have, in some respects, significantly declined from what *their* ancestors once were.

In the interest of giving our readers of what the *authentic* Noble Savage of old was actually like, we reproduce here five speeches given by chiefs from the 17th and 18th centuries as recorded by American chroniclers and amateur anthropologists. The first three of these occur as appendices to "A Discourse Delivered Before the New-York Historical Society, on 6th December, 1811"² by DeWitt Clinton (1769–1828), son of Maj. Gen. James Clinton and nephew of Gov. George Clinton of N.Y., himself Mayor of New York City (establishing the New York Historical Society in 1804 while serving in that office); Lieutenant Governor of N.Y.; anti-war candidate for President against James Madison in 1812, and finally Governor of N.Y. His "Discourse" is itself informative and stimulating (if at certain times dubious in its facts and inadequately weighed assertions) as both a reflection of contemporary sensitivity to Indian concerns and as one of the earliest survey histories of the Five Nations;³ which latter tribes Clinton extols as being superior, not least of which in their eloquence, compared to other Natives and for the decidedly Republican character of the Iroquois' joint-tribal government.

Monsieur De La Barre's Speech, addressed to Garangula, an Onondaga Chief, the Indians and French officers at the same time forming a circle round about him.

¹ One of the first to have imputed this charge being author-frontiersman William Joseph Snelling (1804-1848) in his *Tales of the Northwest; or, Sketches of Indian Life and Character* (1830).

² *Collections of New York Historical Society* (1814), vol. 2, pp. 37-98; available at <http://www.archive.org/details/collectionsnewy02socigoog>

³ The first was *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, Which are dependent on the Province of New York, etc.* (1747) by New York physicist, scientist, farmer, colonial envoy to the Indians, and Lieutenant-Governor Cadwallader Colden (1688-1776). Colden was also a stern Deist, and scientific correspondent and colleague of Franklin's.

“The king, my master, being informed that the Five Nations have often infringed the peace, has ordered me to come hither with a guard, and to send Obguesse to the Onondagas, to bring the chief sachems to my camp. The intention of the great king is, that you and I may smoke the calumet of peace together; but on this condition, that you promise me, in the name of the Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, and Mohawks, to give entire satisfaction and reparation to his subjects, and for the future never to molest them.

“The Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas, and Mohawks, have robbed and abused all the traders that were passing to the Illinois and Miamies, and other Indian nations, the children of my king; they have acted, on these occasions, contrary to the treaty of peace with my predecessor. I am ordered, therefore, to demand satisfaction; and to tell them, that in case of refusal, or their plundering us any more, that I have express orders to declare war. This belt confirms my words. The warriors of the Five Nations have conducted the English into the lakes, which belong to the king, my master, and brought the English among the nations that are his children to destroy the trade of his subjects, and to withdraw these nations from him. They have carried the English thither, notwithstanding the prohibition of the late governor of New-York, who foresaw the risk that both they and you would run. I am willing to forget those things; but if ever the like should happen for the future, I have express orders to declare war against you. This belt confirms my words. Your warriors have made several, barbarous incursions on the Illinois and Miamies. They have massacred men, women, and children; they have made many of these nations prisoners, who thought themselves safe in their villages in time of peace. These people, who are my king’s children, must not be your slaves: you must give them their liberty, and send them back into their own country. If the Five Nations shall refuse to do this, I have express orders to declare war against them. This belt confirms my words.

“This is what I have to say to Garangula, that he may carry to the Senecas, Onondagas, Oneidas, Cayugas, and Mohawks, the declaration which the king, my master, has commanded me to make. He doth not wish them to force him to send a great army to Cadarackui fort, to begin a war, which must be fatal to them. He would be sorry that this fort, that was the work of peace, should become the prison of your warriors. We must endeavour on both sides to prevent such misfortunes. The French, who are the brethren and friends of the Five Nations, will never trouble their repose, provided that the satisfaction which I demand be given; and that the treaties of peace be hereafter observed. I shall be extremely grieved if my words do not produce the effect which I expect from them; for then I shall be obliged to join with the governor of New York, who is commanded by his master to assist me, and burn the castles of the Five Nations, and destroy you. This belt confirms my words.”

Garangula, after walking five or six times round the circle, answered the French governor, who sat in an elbow chair, in the following strain:

“YONNONDIO,

“I honour you, and the warriors that are with me likewise honour you. Your interpreter has finished your speech: I now begin mine. My words make haste to reach your ears; hearken to them.

“Yonnondio, you must have believed, when you left Quebec, that the sun had burnt up all the forests, which render our country inaccessible to the French, or that the lakes had so far overflown the banks, that they had surrounded our castles, and that it was impossible for us to get out of them. Yes, Yonnondio, surely you must have dreamt so; and the curiosity of seeing so great a wonder, has brought you so far. Now you are undeceived, since that I and the warriors here present, are come to assure you that the Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas, and Mohawks, are yet alive. I thank you in their name for bringing back into their country the calumet which your predecessor received from their hands. It was happy for you that you left under ground that murdering hatchet which has been so often died in the blood of the French. Hear, Yonnondio; I do not sleep; I have my eyes open, and the sun which enlightens me, discovers to me a great captain at the head of a company of soldiers, who speaks as if he were dreaming. He says that he only came to the lake to smoke on the great calumet with the Onondagas; but Garangula says that he sees the contrary; that it was to knock them on the head, if sickness had not weakened the arms of the French.

“I see Yonnondio raving in a camp of sick men, whose lives the great spirit has saved by inflicting this sickness on them. Hear, Yonnondio: our women had taken their clubs; our children and old men had carried their bows and arrows into the heart of your camp, if our warriors had not disarmed them, and kept them back, when your messenger Ohguesse came to our castles. It is done, and I have said it. Hear, Yonnondio; we plundered none of the French but those that carried guns, powder and ball to the Twightwies and Chictaghicks, because those arms might have cost us our lives. Herein we follow the example of the

Jesuits, who stave all the kegs of rum brought to our castles, lest the drunken Indians should knock them on the head. Our warriors have not beaver enough to pay for all these arms that they have taken; and our old men are not afraid of the war. This belt preserves my words.

“We carried the English into our lakes to trade there with the Utawawas and Quatoghies as the Andironocks brought the French to our castles to carry on a trade, which the English say is theirs. We are born free. We neither depend on Yonnondio nor Corlear.

“We may go where we please, and carry with us whom we please. If your allies be your slaves, use them as such. Command them to receive no other but your people. This belt preserves my words.

“We knocked the Twightwies and Chictaghicks on the head because they had cut down the trees of peace, which were the limits of our country. They have hunted beavers on our land. They had acted contrary to the customs of all Indians; for they left none of the beavers alive: they killed both male and female. They brought the Satanas into the country to take part with them after they had concerted ill designs against us. We have done less than either the English or French, that have usurped the lands of so many Indian nations, and chased them from their own country. This belt preserves my words.

“Hear, Yonnondio; what I say is the voice of all the Five Nations: hear what they answer. Open your ears to what they speak. The Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas, and the Mohawks, say, that when they buried the hatchet at the Cadarackui (in the presence of your predecessor) in the middle of the fort, they planted the tree of peace in the same place, to be there carefully preserved, that in place of a retreat for soldiers, that fort might be a rendezvous for merchants; that in place of arms and ammunition of war, beavers and merchandize should only enter there.

“Hear, Yonnondio; take care for the future, that so great a number of soldiers as appear there do not choke the tree of peace planted in so small a fort. It will be a great loss, if after it had so easily taken root, you should stop its growth, and prevent its covering your country and ours with its branches. I assure you, in the name of the Five Nations, that our warriors shall dance to the calumet of peace under its leaves, and shall remain quiet on their mats, and shall never dig up the hatchet till their brother, Yonnondio, or Corlear, shall, either jointly or separately, endeavor to attack the country, which the great spirit has given to our ancestors. This belt preserves my words; and this other, the authority which the Five Nations have given me.”

Then Garangula, addressing himself to Monsieur La Main, said, “take courage, Ohguesse, you have spirit, speak -- explain my words; forget nothing; tell all that your brethren and friends say to Yonnondio, your governor, by the mouth of Garangula, who loves you, and desires you to accept of this present of beaver, and take part with me in my feast to which I invite you. This present of beaver is sent to Yonnondio on the part of the Five Nations.”

[*Collections of New York Historical Society* (1814), vol. 2, pp. 99-104]

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*Speech of the Mohawk Chiefs to the Magistrates of Albany, on the 25th of March, 1689-90,<sup>4</sup> after the destruction of Schenectady.*

“Brethren,

“The murder of our brethren at Schenectady by the French, grieves us as much as if it had been done to ourselves, for we are in the same chain; and no doubt our brethren of New England will be likewise sadly affected with this cruel action of the French. The French on this occasion have not acted like brave men, but like thieves and robbers. Be not therefore discouraged. We give this belt to wipe away your tears.

“Brethren,

“We lament the death of so many of our brethren, whose blood has been shed at Schenectady. We don’t think that what the French have done can be called a victory, it is only a farther proof of their cruel deceit. The governor of Canada sends to Onondaga, and talks to us of peace with our whole house, but war was in his heart, as you may now see by woeful experience. He did the same formerly at Cadarackui, and in the Senecas country. This is the third time he has acted so deceitfully. He has broken open our house at both

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<sup>4</sup> [Edit. Note. The massacre and burning of Schenectady carried out by French and Indian raiders occurred on Feb. 8-9, 1690.]

ends, formerly in the Senecas country, and now here. We hope, however, to be revenged of them. One hundred of our bravest young men are in pursuit of them; they are brisk fellows, and they will follow the French to their doors. We will beset them so closely, that not a man in Canada shall dare to step out of doors to cut a stick of wood; but now we gather up our dead to bury them, by this second belt

“Brethren,

“We came from our castles with tears in our eyes, to bemoan the blood shed at Schenectady by the perfidious French. While we bury our dead murdered at Schenectady, we know not what may have befallen our own people, that are in pursuit of the enemy: they may be dead. What has befallen you may happen to us; and therefore we come to bury our brethren at Schenectady with this third belt.

“Great and sudden is the mischief, as if it had fallen from Heaven upon us. Our forefathers taught us to go with all speed to bemoan and lament with our brethren, when any disaster or misfortune happens to any in our chain. Take this belt of vigilance, that you may be more watchful for the future. We give our brethren eye water to make them sharp sighted. (Giving a fourth belt.)

“We now come to the house where we usually renew the chain; but alas! We find the house polluted with blood. All the Five Nations have heard of this, and we are come to wipe away the blood, and clean the house. We come to invite Corlear, and every one of you, and Quider, (calling to every one of the principal men present by their names) to be revenged of the enemy, by this fifth belt.

“Brethren,

“Be not discouraged; we are strong enough. This is the beginning of your war, and the whole house have their eyes fixed upon you at this time, to observe your behaviour. They wait your motion, and are ready to join in any resolute measures.

“Our chain is a strong chain; it is a silver chain; it can neither rust nor be broken. We, as to our parts, are resolute to continue the war.

“We will never desist, so long as a man of us remains. Take heart; do not pack up and away;\*<sup>5</sup> this will give heart to a dastardly enemy. We are of the race of the bear; and a bear, you know, never yields, while one drop of blood is left. We must all be bears. (Giving a sixth belt)

“Brethren,

“Be patient; this disaster is an affliction which has fallen from Heaven upon us. The sun, which hath been cloudy, and sent this disaster, will shine again with its pleasant beams. Take courage, courage -- (Repeating the word several times as they gave a seventh belt)

*(To the English)*

“Brethren,

“Three years ago we were engaged in a bloody war with the French, and you encouraged us to proceed in it. Our success answered our expectation; but we were not well begun, when Corlear stopped us from going on. Had you permitted us to go on, the French would not now have been able to do us the mischief they have done -- we would have prevented their sowing, planting, or reaping.

“We would have humbled them effectually, but now we die. The obstructions you then made now ruin us. Let us after this be steady, and take no such false measures for the future, but prosecute the war vigorously. (Giving a beaver skin.)

“The brethren must keep good watch, and if the enemy come again, send more speedily to us. Don't desert Schenectady. The enemy will glory in seeing it desolate. It will give them courage that had none before. Fortify the place; it is not well fortified now: The stockades are too short; the Indians can jump over them. (Gave a beaver skin.)

“Brethren,

“The mischief done at Schenectady cannot be helped now; but for the future, when the enemy appears any where, let nothing hinder your sending to us by expresses, and fire great guns, that all may be alarmed. We advise you to bring all the River Indians under your subjection to live near Albany, to be ready on all occasions.

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<sup>5</sup> \* [DeWitt Clinton's note:] This was spoken to the English who were about removing from Albany.

“Send to New-England; tell them what has happened to you. They will undoubtedly awake, and send us their helping hand. It is their interest, as much as ours, to push the war to a speedy conclusion. Be not discouraged; the French are not so numerous as some people talk. If we but heartily unite to push on the war, and mind our business, the French will soon be subdued.

“The magistrates having returned an answer on the twenty-seventh, to the satisfaction of the Indians, they repeated it all over, word by word, to let the magistrates see how carefully they minded, and then added.

“Brethren,

“We are glad to find you are not discouraged. The best and wisest men sometimes make mistakes. Let us now pursue the war vigorously. We have a hundred men out; they are good scouts. We expect to meet all the sachems of the other nations, as they come to condole with you. You need not fear our being ready at the first notice. Our ax[e] is always in our hands; but take care that you be timely ready. Your ships, that must do the principal work, are long a fitting out. We do not design to go out with a small company, or in skulking parties; but as soon as the nations can meet, we shall be ready with our whole force. If you would bring this war to a happy issue, you must begin soon, before the French can recover the losses they have received from us, and get new vigour and life, therefore send in all haste to New-England. Neither you nor we can continue long in the condition we are now in: we must order matters so that the French be kept in continual fear and alarm at home; for this is the only way to be secure, and in peace here.

“The Scatikok Indians, in our opinion, are well placed where they are (to the northward of Albany;) they are a good out-guard; they are our children, and we must take care that they do their duty: but you must take care of the Indians below the town; place them near the town, so as they may be of more service to you.”

[*Collections of New York Historical Society* (1814), vol. 2, pp 105-109]

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Substance of the Speech of Good Peter⁶ to Governor [George] Clinton and the Commissioners of Indian Affairs at Albany, on the occasion referred to in the discourse.

Brother Governor of the State of New-York, and all the other great chiefs of the state of New-York, open your ears, and all you chiefs of the Wife Nations here assembled, open your cars.

The business we have now met about is of the greatest importance: how happy must we all be if we can arrange it for our mutual good.

We have this day assembled, and smoked our pipes in peace. That you may know the reason of my addressing you, I would inform you that my brethren, the Cayugas, and my children, the Senecas, requested me to be their mouth on this solemn occasion, and understanding that it is agreeable to the great chief of New-York, I now stand here. You will possess your minds in peace, for I have no disposition to oppose you in any respect, but shall move forward in the strait path.

Brother Chief,

In the first place, I would inform you, that last spring we were invited to a treaty at Muskingum -- where your voice also called upon us to attend -- some of our nation went there, and have not yet returned.

When our uncles, the chiefs, left our council fire, their only business at Muskingum, was the establishment of a good peace. This mission was agreeable to us all -- even the warriors; for although the clouds blacken in the south, and the winds sometimes blow, yet as long as our sachems labour for a peace, the minds of our young men are composed.

⁶ [*Edit. Note.* Peter was a chief of the Oneidas. Although Peter was not himself a warrior, the tribe had sided and fought side by side with the Americans in the Revolutionary War; most notably at the battle of Oriskany in 1777.]

This, great chief, I only observe to open the way for what is to follow. Shortly after, the cloud from the south began to rise; we again saw the effulgence of the sun; but as soon as we saw it, an evil spirit commenced its work, threatening the annihilation of our territory.

Brother Governor,

Although I observed to you, that an evil spirit had invaded our peace, yet do not suppose that the Five Nations were disposed to cherish this enemy; we were deceived: we believed it to be a good spirit, sent by the great council of the state, and we thought that we should not injure ourselves by opening our ears to their voice. This was indeed new to us, for never before had the Five Nations such a meeting with any of our brethren of this island. We had invariably conferred together according to ancient and settled usage.

It would be tedious to go into detail, and state at large the means by which we were misled. We cannot see but a small depth into the heart of men, and can only discover the work of his tongue, it appears that you then sensibly sympathized with us in our situation, and looking back to ancient times, endeavoured to discover a method of recovering our sinking territory.

Soon after this the Oneida nation heard your voice. Although it was small at first, yet it gave us life, to find that you would extend your arm, and save our country. It informed us, that you would kindle a council fire at Fort Stanwix, inform us of our situation, and relieve us from our difficulties. It also directed us to send it on to the other nations, which we did. At the council fire at Fort Stanwix, but one nation, the Onondagas, attended; there was a strange bird that flew about your voice, and related strange stories. This bird kept flying about while you held this council fire. After your patience had been exhausted in waiting several days, you then determined to take us, one by one, as we came to the council fire; and with this we were content.

When you had finished with the Onondagas, you then showed the agreement to us, the Oneidas, pointed out the true path, and opened our eyes. We then comprehended your sentiments as they were laid before us. You raised us from sinking into an unfathomable gulph, and placed us on a high mountain; you erected a fortification around us, so that no evil spirits, or strange birds, could fly over and disturb us; you completed an agreement to our mutual satisfaction: it is firm and unalterable; no evil spirit shall be able to erase the lines. We are now fixed, and dwell in peace.

I need not enlarge upon the council, at Fort Stanwix, and the proceedings at that place. You remember you saw a few Senecas there. You welcomed them, although they were neither invited, nor sachems, but little children; they then told you with what difficulty they leaped over the mound at Canasake.

You also remember, that when those Seneca young men left you, you gave them good advice. As your patience was not yet exhausted, and your love for the Five Nations continued in full force, you invited the Senecas, through them, to meet you at Albany this winter, to consult upon subjects connected with their welfare. You also requested their attendance from the remotest parts of the nation. They again heard your voice: you opened their eyes; and it pierced them to the heart to see their territory sinking, and that by and by the warriors would not be at liberty to hurt upon their land, and to provide for their women and children.

Soon after this, the headmen and warriors deliberated on our message, and determined that it would be for the good of the Five Nations, and prevent our utter destruction, to repair to this place. Although some of our sachems have not returned from the southward, yet we are persuaded that our deliberations and proceedings will meet their approbation.

After frequent conferences with our brethren, the Senecas, we determined to repair to this ancient council fire; we thought it agreeable to ancient usage to take with us two brothers of the Onondagas and Oneidas, as witnesses, to this place, where our ancestors kindled their council fires; the smoke of which reached the heavens, and round which they sat and talked of peace. I observed at first, that I should only touch upon one event after another. But need I call your attention to the councils and treaties held here by your and our forefathers. They then had but one head and one heart; the chain of friendship was made of silver, so that it could not rust. Our ancestors, you know, frequently met to brighten this chain, with a design to see whether any evil spirit that disturbs the peace of brethren, shook it or sat upon it.

But I must leave this pleasant subject, the paths of our ancestors. You have seen some of our brethren of the Five Nations, the Cayugas; you have opened your mind, and encouraged us to believe that you can save our sinking country; and that if any of your people have overleaped the bounds prescribed, you can erase the lines. This has given us great encouragement and universal pleasure.

Brother Governor,

The Cayugas and Senecas, here present, thank you from the bottom of our hearts, that you have communicated freely with us. When we heard your first and second voice we were glad; but now we are quite rejoiced. It convinces us that you remembered and cherished the treaties between you and our forefathers. The great spirit gave our ancestors and us this island; and we know that you are anxious to promote his design, that we should have a place whereon to live. We love our country, and our fathers loved their country.

We said we were glad to meet you and hear your voice, and to feel assured that you are able to save our sinking territory; we now put it all under your power; put your hands over the whole, reserving to us such a dish as you shall prescribe for us. This is perfectly agreeable to the usages of our ancestors, who loved peace, and loved their land; and why? Because they loved their women and their children; and while they loved peace and their land, they enjoyed happy days.

We repeat that we rejoice in this meeting, and in these proceedings. Those we have left behind, and those that will return from the south, will also rejoice at the result of our conferences. Our little ones can now look with pleasure for fish in the streams, and our warriors can hunt for wild beasts in the woods, and feel confident that they will not be driven from their country. (A string of black wampum with six rows.)

Brother,

I have repeatedly said, that I was glad to hear your mind; your words have sunk deep into my heart, and have raised up my land and country, that were about to sink. I entreat you, by this string, to keep firm to your word, and to reach out your hand over my country. Our dish we will reserve. This transaction will rejoice, not only our absent friends, but our children's children, to the latest generation. They will declare with joy, that Aquilanda,*⁷ the governor of New York, has rescued their country from destruction. (A string of white wampum with six rows.)

You have heard our voice; we now entreat you to open your ears, and hear a speech from our sisters, the governesses.

Brother,

Our ancestors considered it a great offence to reject the counsels of their women, particularly of the female governesses. They were esteemed the mistresses of the soil. *Who*, said our forefathers bring us into being -- *Who* cultivate our lands, kindle our fires, and boil our pots, but the women?

Our women say, that they are apprehensive their uncles have lost the power of huntings as they were about destroying their country; but they take this opportunity of thanking you for preventing their fall down the precipice, to which their uncles had brought them.

They entreat that the veneration of their ancestors, in favour of women, be not disregarded, and that they may not be despised: the great spirit is their maker.

The female governesses beg leave to speak, with that freedom allowed to women, and agreeable to the spirit of our ancestors. They entreat the great chief to put forth his strength, and preserve them in peace; for they are the life of the nation; your power cannot be disputed. Those that disturb them are your subjects, and you can punish them. They rejoice, that while their counsellors are settling a peace at Muskingum, and you are here labouring for their good, tranquillity will be spread over the whole country, (Six strings of wampum.)

Then Good Peter added.

⁷ * [DeWitt Clinton's note:] An Indian name given to Governor Clinton, which signifies *rising sun*.

Brother,

Possess your mind in peace. You are sensible that in affairs of importance, omissions may be made, and that a person is allowed afterward to correct them.

You have greatly encouraged us, by promising to watch over our peace, and to provide for our welfare. It is probable, that when we have completed our business here, some bad men may break over the fence you have set around us. There are, excuse us brother, some bad men among the white people of this island; they may not hear your voice as far as our country: we therefore propose that Peter Ryckman, our child, may live among us in your behalf, look at our affairs, and watch over our interests.

You have now heard our minds, and the resolutions we had formed before we left our country. I only act here as an agent, by the request of my brothers, the Cayugas, and I am now released from my engagements.

[*Collections of New York Historical Society* (1814), vol. 2, pp. 110-116]

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*The following comes from Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia (1781-1782), Query 6.*

“Of their [Native American] eminence in oratory we have fewer examples, because it is displayed chiefly in their own councils. Some, however, we have of very superior lustre. I may challenge the whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent orator, if Europe has furnished more eminent, to produce a single passage, superior to the speech of Logan [Tah-gah-jute], a Mingo chief,<sup>8</sup> to Lord Dunmore, when governor of this state. And, as a testimony of their talents in this line, I beg leave to introduce it, first stating the incidents necessary for understanding it. In the spring of the year 1774, a robbery and murder were committed on an inhabitant of the frontiers of Virginia, by two Indians of the Shawanee tribe. The neighbouring whites, according to their custom, undertook to punish this outrage in a summary way. Col. Cresap, a man infamous for the many murders he had committed on those much-injured people, collected a party, and proceeded down the Kanhaway in quest of vengeance. Unfortunately a canoe of women and children, with one man only, was seen coming from the opposite shore, unarmed, and unsuspecting an hostile attack from the whites. Cresap and his party concealed themselves on the bank of the river, and the moment the canoe reached the shore, singled out their objects, and, at one fire, killed every person in it. This happened to be the family of Logan, who had long been distinguished as a friend of the whites. This unworthy return provoked his vengeance. He accordingly signalized himself in the war which ensued. In the autumn of the same year, a decisive battle was fought at the mouth of the Great Kanhaway, between the collected forces of the Shawanees, Mingoes, and Delawares, and a detachment of the Virginia militia. The Indians were defeated, and sued for peace. Logan however disdained to be seen among the suppliants. But, lest the sincerity of a treaty should be distrusted, from which so distinguished a chief absented himself, he sent by a messenger the following speech to be delivered to Lord Dunmore.

“I appeal to any white man to say, if ever he entered Logan's cabin hungry, and he gave him not meat; if ever he came cold and naked, and he clothed him not. During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan remained idle in his cabin, an advocate for peace. Such was my love for the whites, that my countrymen pointed as they passed, and said, ‘Logan is the friend of white men.’ I had even thought to have lived with you, but for the injuries of one man. Col. Cresap, the last spring, in cold blood, and unprovoked, murdered all the relations of Logan, not sparing even my women and children. There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called on me for revenge. I have sought it: I have killed many: I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country, I rejoice at the beams of peace. But do not harbour a thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? -- Not one.”

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Red Jacket (c. 1752-1830), also known as Sagoyewatha after 1780, was a Seneca who allied with the British in the Revolutionary war, but afterward made his peace with the Americans, including being

⁸ [Edit. Note. Believed actually to have been of Cayuga/Iroquois origin.]

received by Presidents Washington and John Adams. Of all the speeches reproduced here by us, this, in which he addresses some missionaries, is possibly the most famous and well known; and can be found in The Life and Times of Red Jacket (1841) by W. L. Stone. Although some might loosely interpret Red Jacket's address as a wholesale rejection of Christianity, this is evidently mistaken as he seems more correctly to find blame with certain kinds of hypocrites, well meaning or otherwise, instead. Indeed, it is perhaps a little touching how in the use of the titles "Brethren" and "Brother" (found in most of these speeches), Christianity would appear to have helped play a positive role in bringing whites and Indians together in peace. That certain putative members failed to live up to the basic tenets of their faith, or else worse used it for ulterior ends, of course will surprise no one.

FRIEND AND BROTHER -- It was the will of the Great Spirit that we should meet together this day. He orders all things, and has given us a fine day for our council. He has taken his garment from before the sun, and caused it to shine with brightness upon us. Our eyes are opened, that we see clearly; our ears are unstopped, that we have been able to hear distinctly the words you have spoken. For all these favors we thank the Great Spirit; and him only.

Brother: This council fire was kindled by you. It was at your request that we came together at this time. We have listened with attention to what you have said. You requested us to speak our minds freely. This gives us great joy; for we now consider that we stand upright before you, and can speak what we think. All have heard your voice, and all speak to you now as one man. Our minds are agreed.

Brother: You say you want an answer to your talk before you leave this place. It is right you should have one, as you are a great distance from home, and we do not wish to detain you. But we will first look back a little, and tell you what our fathers have told us, and what we have heard from the white people.

Brother: Listen to what we say. There was a time when our forefathers owned this great island. Their seats extended from the rising to the setting sun. The Great Spirit had made it for the use of Indians. He had created the buffalo, the deer, and other animals for food. He had made the bear and the beaver. Their skins served us for clothing. He had scattered them over the country, and taught us how to take them. He had caused the earth to produce corn for bread. All this He had done for his red children, because He loved them. If we had some disputes about our hunting ground, they were generally settled without the shedding of much blood. But an evil day came upon us. Your forefathers crossed the great water, and landed on this island. Their numbers were small. They found friends and not enemies. They told us they had fled from their own country for fear of wicked men, and had come here to enjoy their religion. They asked for a small seat. We took pity on them; granted their request; and they sat down amongst us. We gave them corn and meat; they gave us poison in return.

The white people, brother, had now found our country. Tidings were carried back, and more came amongst us. Yet we did not fear them. We took them to be friends. They called us brothers. We believed them, and gave them a larger seat. At length their numbers had greatly increased. They wanted more land; they wanted our country. Our eyes were opened, and our minds became uneasy. Wars took place. Indians were hired to fight against Indians, and many of our people were destroyed. They also brought strong liquor amongst us. It was strong and powerful, and has slain thousands.

Brother: Our seats were once large, and yours were small. You have now become a great people, and we have scarcely a place left to spread our blankets. You have got our country, but are not satisfied; you want to force your religion upon us.

Brother: Continue to listen. You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his mind; and, if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach, we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right, and we are lost. How do we know this to be true? We understand that your religion is written in a book. If it was intended for us as well as you, why has not the Great Spirit given to us, and not only to us, but why did He not give to our forefathers, the knowledge of that book, with the means of understanding it rightly? We only know what you tell us about it. How shall we know when to believe, being so often deceived by the white people?

Brother: You say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agreed, as you can all read the book?

Brother: We do not understand these things. We are told that your religion was given to your forefathers, and has been handed down from father to son. We also have a religion, which was given to our forefathers, and has been handed down to us, their children. We worship in that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion.

Brother: The Great Spirit has made us all, but He has made a great difference between his white and red children. He has given us different complexions and different customs. To you He has given the arts. To these He has not opened our eyes. We know these things to be true. Since He has made so great a difference between us in other things, why may we not conclude that He has given us a different religion according to our understanding? The Great Spirit does right He knows what is best for his children; we are satisfied.

Brother: We do not wish to destroy your religion, or take it from you. We only want to enjoy our own.

Brother: You say you have not come to get our land or our money, but to enlighten our minds. I will now tell you that I have been at your meetings, and saw you collect money from the meeting. I cannot tell what this money was intended for, but suppose that it was for your minister, and if we should conform to your way of thinking, perhaps you may want some from us.

Brother: We are told that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These people are our neighbors. We are acquainted with them. We will wait a little while, and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good, makes them honest, and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again of what you have said.

Brother: You have now heard our answer to your talk, and this is all we have to say at present as we are going to part, we will come and take you by the hand, and hope the Great Spirit will protect you on your journey, and return you safe to your friends.



*Red Jacket (c. 1828) by Charles Bird King (1785–1862);
shown wearing a medal presented him by Washington.*

William Thomas Sherman

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