

l'étude des autres tribus des Noirs Réfugiés auront publié leurs travaux, on pourra confronter les divers témoignages, et formuler des conclusions sûres.

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Tom Pahbewash's Visions.

For the last three years an Indian Leadership Conference has been held in the spring at the University of Western Ontario. All the Indian bands in southern Ontario south of the French River have sent delegates to it. The author attended each year in the dual capacity of advisor and critic. In 1962 the author met an Ojibwa delegate Tom Pahbewash, elected Chief of a Band located near Nobel in the Parry Sound district on Georgian Bay. In May 1963 he returned again and at the first opportunity took the author to his room to reveal that he had for some time been in direct communication with "the great god" who had revealed to him the structure of the universe and a plan for human redemption, and charged him with the responsibility of spreading the good news and carrying out the necessary acts to ensure the salvation of all mankind. Trembling with excitement Tom produced three pages of notepaper covered with drawings and a stone he said contained treasure. Using the drawings he explained the revealed nature of the universe and, when that was done, related his apocalyptic vision. Later in the week the author had him repeat the story again and persuaded him to part with two of the sheets of drawings — but he would not part with a money stone or the third sheet which was a map showing how to get to the source of the money stones. Let us first examine the drawings.

Figure 1-A represents the Heavens. The larger circle in the center is the Earth and from it rises the ladder of knowledge to the Sun, which is represented by the smaller circle. The circle of dots between the Earth and the Sun was called by Tom the "Circle of the Stars". Between the Earth and the Sun rises the ladder of knowledge. The mark just short of halfway up, the third rung of the ladder, represents the limits that one may attain by education. Beyond that, so far as could be ascertained, one proceeded by a kind of spiritual experience up to the large platform at the top of the ladder upon which is another little platform that comes very close to the Sun. According to Tom, only one man besides himself has ever reached this level. This man was an unnamed President of the United States, probably Washington or Lincoln. The figures to the left of the Sun, as one looks at the page, represent the twelve Apostles. A small difficulty arises here because of course the figures number thirteen. Tom said that he was really unsure of their number, although he did identify these figures with the twelve Apostles and said there might easily be more. Tom several times mentioned the danger inherent in achieving to the third platform that is nearest to the Sun. He said more than once that he was in danger of falling over, but "He held me up" and by "He", Tom evidently meant "the Great God" as he referred to the Deity.

Figure 1-B is a typical piece of Northern landscape. At the bottom we have an underlayer of clay and the heavier line above the clay represents the top soil. Out of this grow the six trees that are typical of the area, cedar, pine, balsam, birch, ironwood, and ash. To the extreme right of the figure and indistinctly represented are three stones. One is a stone with special magnetic properties, and the other two are "telephone stones" which permit communication between their possessors over a very great distance.

Figure 1-C, the beehive-shaped figure, represents the White population. When asked why it was arranged in a beehive and whether the figure was supposed to represent a hierarchal ordering of white society, Tom said it was simply a representation of numbers. This Figure is intimately identified with Figure 1-D which represents the Indian people. Tom has no clear idea of how many Indian people there are or of how many white people there are for that matter; he simply knows that their numbers are very different. Somewhere about the middle of Figure 1-C, there exists a group of people, perhaps twelve to fourteen in number, who correspond in some way that he couldn't clearly explain to the thirteen figures in the Spirit World to the left of the Sun in Figure 1-A. These are the white men who are to be selected to work closely with Tom in the development of a spacecraft, later to be described, and in bringing a message of peace and hope to the World. The author was somewhat startled to learn that he is among these thirteen or fourteen people and somehow or another identified with the twelve Apostles.

Figure 1-E is of course a bow and arrow, but a bow and arrow of unusual qualities. Tom, using the three magic stones in Figure 1-B arrived by a method of computation I could not understand at the year 542 in the Christian era in which, he said, there had been a great war among the Indian people in his area. During the war some warrior had invented a magic arrow. Its head was baked out of clay represented in Figure 1-B, and in it was imbedded a magic stone that was somehow identified with one of the magic stones in Figure 1-B. More can now be said about these stones. One of them has properties which perhaps should be described as magnetic although it will be seen later they are not precisely that. The other two represent stones which permit of communication between people at a distance to which the human voice will not carry. Tom called these telephone stones and they, too, play a part in the story to be told later.

Figure 1-F represents graphically the story of this magic arrow. The straight line indicates a distance of a mile and a quarter (and it is marked off in that way) over which the magic arrow flew to its target without losing any height at all. That is to say with an absolutely flat trajectory. The arrow also represents a spaceship that is going to take two people to the Moon. The head of the spaceship is made out of clay and in the head is embedded a magic stone with "magnetic" properties and it is this stone that furnishes the motive power of the spacecraft. The body of the craft — the shaft of the arrow — is to be made out of the six native words and to be capable of holding 200

people although but two will ride in it. The craft, according to Tom is simply pulled to the Moon by the attraction that the moon exercises upon the magic stone.

Figure 1-G labelled "M" by Tom is his graphic representation of the Moon. The rather book-like form that it takes is not observable to the human eye. All that we see from the Earth is the shining central part of the moon represented by the rather feathery circle somewhat towards one end. In the center of the shining circle is a square with a small dot on it and the square represents a trap-door into Hell. It is through this trap-door that according to Tom are dropped the souls of the wicked, especially those who have committed murder. Tom explained the phases of the Moon by the use of reflection. He said we don't see the Moon, not even the bright part of it directly, and he seemed to believe that the light goes directly from the Sun to the Moon. It is reflected back to the circle of the Stars and from the circle of the Stars to the Earth and, depending upon the relative position of the Moon, the Earth and the Sun, we have the various phases of the Moon, and when Sun, Earth and Moon are in the direct line, we have the dark of the Moon.

On the second sheet (Figure 2) is Tom's conception of an orbit (Figure 2-A) and of the planet Venus (Figure 2-B). Tom appeared to think that the orbit is a kind of heavenly body that floats around somewhere outside the circle of the Stars within about 200 miles of the planet Venus. He was remarkably unclear as to the nature of the orbit. The author didn't think to ask what, to him, the phrase "in orbit" meant, although it might be assumed from its shape, that to Tom being in orbit really meant being inside a figure of this particular shape. Since the Americans have recently put a space probe very near to the planet Venus, I imagine this is why that particular planet was in Tom's mind. He went on to explain the *real* importance of this figure; not only does this represent Venus, it also represents a kind of control tower that Tom will use to direct the flight of the space craft using the telephone stones to communicate when the craft is in flight.

The lower rectangle represents simply a hut or room with an open door not represented. In it at the time of the flight to the Moon and back will be the twelve or fourteen people from the White Pyramid (Figure 1-C), people who in Tom's mind are characterized by great learning. They have something unspecified to do with the success or failure of the mission. Tom at one time referred to them as his helpers, but was unable to say how they help. The square above the rectangle is a vast television screen upon which Tom will be able to view the course of the spacecraft going to the Moon and coming from it. The dome-like affair above the television screen is made out of a kind of fungus that grows on stumps, according to Tom. It is very likely one of the fungi that grow in shelf-like layers on tree stumps and glow with a mild phosphorence at night that is quite like the screen of a television set with the power on but no station tuned in. Tom could give it no name. The line going up from the top of the Dome to the rather indistinct figure above it (this is not certain), simply shows the connection between Venus as it looks in Tom's

mind and Venus as seen from the earth. In short, we have here at the very top, Venus as it appears to the naked eye and Venus as Tom apprehends it. The story that is illustrated by all these figures is as follows:

Beginning with Figure 1-A Tom said that the United States and Russia have been putting rockets into orbit for a long period of time now. If they continue to do so, within a period of three years, the rockets of one or other of these nations will break the circle of the stars. If that happens, pieces of the stars will come tumbling down to earth and many millions of people will be killed or injured. Without doubt, this represents Tom's conception of radioactive fall-out. "The Great God" has spoken to Tom and told him that he must construct a space ship in which two people, a White man (who may be the author) and an Indian, to be selected by Tom, will go to the Moon. The space-craft will take off from somewhere near the foot of the ladder of knowledge, it will then curve back inside the circle of the stars, follow along the inside, and break out through this permeable circle somewhere around seven o'clock. Outside the circle of the stars it passes between orbit and the planet Venus, (about a hundred miles from each) and ultimately lands upon the shiny part of the Moon. Once arrived, the two people get out of the space craft and take the magic stone out of the baked clay head and place it on the trap-door through which the souls of the wicked are dropped. This closes Hell forever, which doesn't matter because wickedness is to disappear anyway. They then pick up another stone on the Moon which has the same qualities as the one that took them there, except that in this stone the power of attraction is to the Earth. They put the stone in the head of the spacecraft and return to the earth in a somewhat Messiah-like fashion. They announce their return to the world (Tom's role in this was unclear) and it would seem that a state of primitive communism immediately ensues while the two races are in some way amalgamated. There will no longer be any real necessity to work, according to Tom, and each will be provided with all the goods and services that he needs. This is possible, because Tom has been made the custodian of what he called treasure stones. It was revealed to him in another vision that the early French explorers had left great treasures around the part of Ontario in which Tom lives and the way to discover these money stones was revealed to him too.

He had drawn a rather complicated map in which the major impression was one of a three-leafed clover. He had found one of these money stones and at one point showed it to me. It was about eight inches long, about five inches through, roughly oval in shape, and looked as if it had been to some degree water worn. It looked as if it might have been a sort of sand-stone or shale. It was very heavy in proportion to its size. Inside it, according to Tom, lay the treasure in the form of gold coins or gold. Tom had not yet discovered the way to open the stone although he was sure there was a way to do it. He was reluctant to break the stone, although it seemed evident that he had at least pried at some of the cracks and lines in it. The locations of money stones, Tom said, was to be progressively revealed to him, and it was his function in the world to come to distribute money from these money stones to all the

people in the world as they needed it. Tom must have had the essentials of his vision at least two years ago because the author learned he had told his story to some of the Indian people at the Indian conference in May, 1962. One of the men that he had talked to — a Chippewa from the Caradoc Agency — had given a verbal undertaking to construct the spacecraft according to Tom's direction and possibly was to be the Indian who flew in it.

Tom was finally given about fifteen minutes to explain his message to the delegates to the Indian Conference. He was handicapped by his inability to communicate. The most he could do was to show his money stone and telephone stones and the two sheets that are now in the author's possession and try to explain what their significance was. He proved unable to tell the story coherently so that his auditors were left without any real notion of what Tom was talking about at all. Insofar as they did understand it, the response was one of scepticism. How real this scepticism was, of course, is very difficult to say. However, it should be pointed out that the delegates to the conference came almost entirely from Bands and Reserves in southern Ontario. Most of them have had the advantage of some education and even those without formal education have become quite secular people by virtue of their exposure to radio and television, and a fairly free contact with the white community in southern Ontario. Of course, as is quite well known, most of the Bands do at least have a remnant of people who try to cling to the old ways and among these, Tom's story, if he were able to tell it, might have considerable impact. He told me he intends to travel around from Reserve to Reserve in Ontario telling his story to the Chiefs and Councillors so that they will be ready for the great event when it does take place.

A search of the literature reveals that the Ojibwa are not strangers to messianic cults. According to Mooney (1896) citing Warren and Tanner there was a great revival among them in 1808. It was inspired by the revelations of TENSKWATAWA the Shawano prophet and communicated via the Shawnee. It promised a revival of the dead and the return of the old way of life. In the 1890's a revival of religion traceable to Kanakuk the Kickapoo prophet is reported. Mooney makes it evident that time and again the Ojibwa were involved in religious movements that spread rapidly from tribe to tribe. Clearly Tom Pahbewash's vision is in the great messianic tradition of the North American Indian. The borrowing of many items from modern white culture and the fusion of these with native items into a coherent pattern is quite characteristic of the many post-contact revivals reported by Mooney and others. It has not yet been possible to discover if the native items, such as the magic arrow and the magic stones, are taken from Ojibwa folk history or are part of the revelation.

Cults come and go with bewildering rapidity in the lower reaches of modern urban society. It is quite possible that in proportion they are born and die as rapidly among native peoples. There is not much reason to suppose that Tom will be successful in spreading his gospel and founding another enduring group such as Longhouse, but there is always the possibility. Should

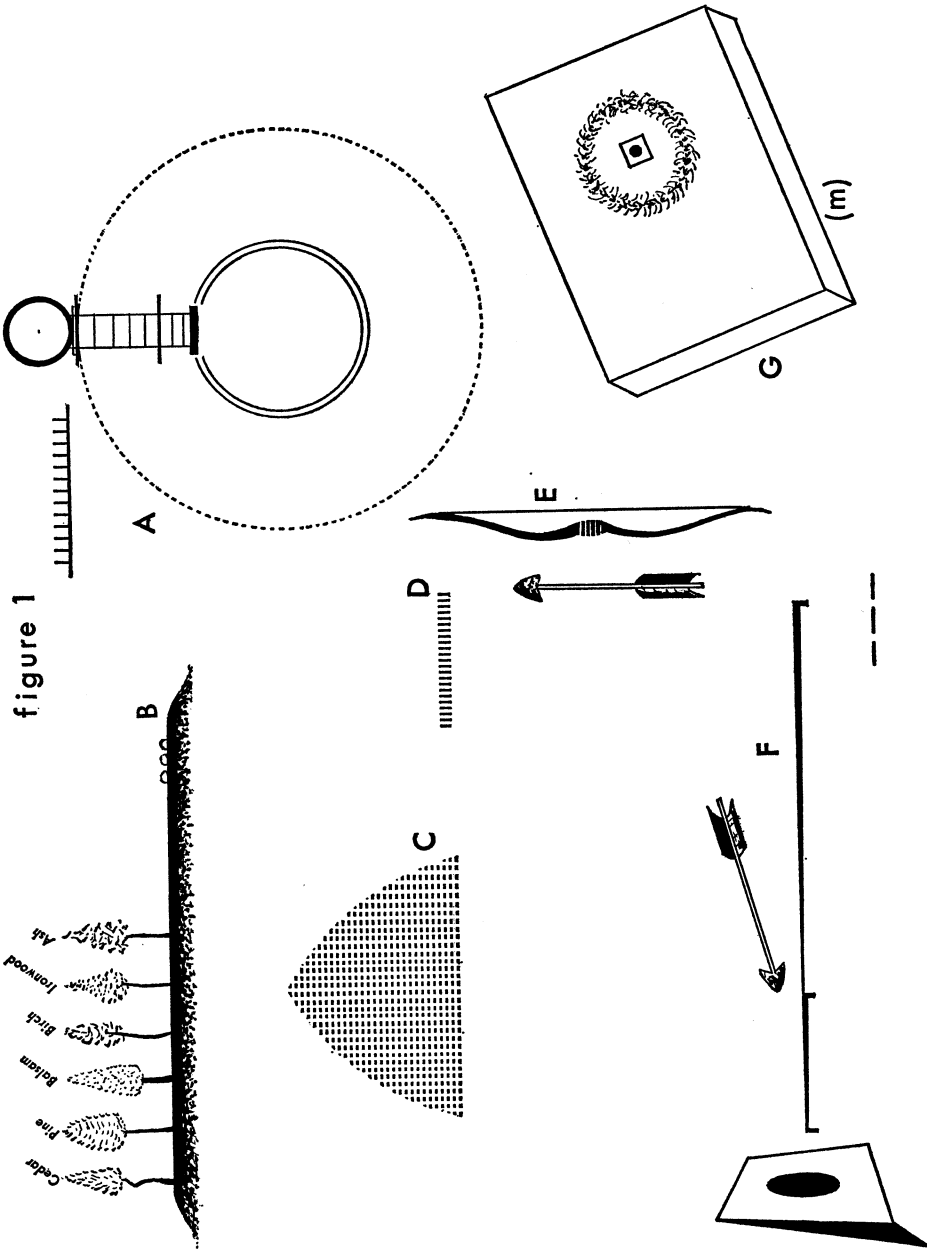


figure 1

there be even a modest and local acceptance, it would still provide an almost unique opportunity to study a messianic movement at first hand from its earliest period. The author hopes to be able to report again.

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REFERENCE

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figure 2

