

January 15, 1985

Dear Niece Eliza:

It was good to hear from you and to know that everything is going well for all of you. I will be coming back for Andrew's feast, so I will see you then. Levi is getting along fine. I think he likes it out here. I nearly fell over about what you said you heard at the Redbird stomp ground in the Fall. So far as I know Jesus had nothing to do with establishing the Seven Clan (Keetoowah) Rule. Even Andrew Dreadfulwater, who was both a strong Nighthawk and a strong Baptist, would have laughed at such an idea. I will tell you my understanding.

In the beginning the Cherokees were a simple and natural people, so that they didn't have a strong rule, just four things to help them - the fire, water, herbs, and words. Finally, Cherokees and the other timber Indian tribes in the east began to grow smarter. They constructed great burial mounds, developed crops, made weapons, built houses and towns. Then, God felt like he had to give them a strong Law - the Four Mother's Law. This law was given to all the woods Indian tribes - Creek, Iroquois, Winnebago, etc. - and fitted to their own condition, so it was a little different in each eastern woods Indian tribe. At this time, the Cherokees received the pipe and tobacco. The Four Mother's Law was given before the time of Jesus. This Law lasted for a thousand years with the Cherokees, but finally they began to make war against four tribes Delaware, Iroquois, Wyandot, and Mingg; and were driven south. Here they started to fight with the Creeks and the Catawbias, too. Cherokees were just destroying themselves.

God decided to give the Cherokees another chance and an even stronger law; one that was based on the old Four Mother's Law, but stronger in some ways for Cherokees. God summoned seven medicine men, one from each clan, to the top of Cling man's Dome in the Smoky Mountains, and revealed the Seven Clan Law to them, about 700 years ago.

However, once again Cherokees began to stray away from God's law, this new rule called the Seven Clan (Keetoowah) Law. The Seven Clan Law had almost died out when, finally, Redbird Smith revived it. (I don't think that Redbird Smith was able to revive all of it, and that there is lot still missing that those North Carolina Cherokees know about.)

Jesus had nothing to do with any of this in so far as I know. As I understand it, Jesus came to fulfill the old Jewish Law, the Law of Moses. He came to make it strong again in a bad time for the Jews, and to explain how a person could be saved and have eternal life. The last part was something new for the Jews, or anybody else for that matter.

The Jews in Palestine didn't pay much attention to Jesus because he didn't lead them in driving the Romans out of their country, Palestine. However, there was a big difference between the Jews and the Gentiles. Jesus' message had a big effect on the Gentiles. But the Gentile nations had lost their original Law from God, or else it had just become miss-used for witchcraft and war medicine. Therefore, Jesus' message had nothing to build on in the Gentile nations. All they can do is gather in a house and read and preach about Jesus' message. I guess it does do some good, and the notion of salvation does give them hope for a better life in another place. I

guess if Jesus could preach to the Indians now he would say to keep our old Law from God strong, and to accept him if a person wants salvation. I am not very interested in salvation myself, so I don't accept Jesus. That is my choice, whether or not to accept Jesus. The Seven Clan Law is my birthright. I have to go by that. I have no choice.

However, I don't see anything wrong with an Indian being a Christian as long as he keeps up our Law, too. Jesus message is not a law. It is simply a message (good news), a promise of salvation for a person. I don't know if you can make a whole religion out of a message by itself. But that's all the whites have, so I guess they have to make do. The Indians have a Law, a real religion. We are more fortunate.

I don't see any real conflict between Christianity and the Seven Clan Law, myself. Each serve different purposes, and each focuses on different things. The Seven Clan Law teaches us how to live here and now with our fellows, how to keep healthy, how to keep spiritually clean and prolong our live, how to have good weather and bountiful land, how to keep North America an Island of Peace, how to preserve the Cherokee people as a distinct and lasting nationality, and so on. Jesus' teachings talk to how to treat our fellow men, but for the rest I guess he expected the old Jewish Law to do the same job for the Jews as the Seven Clan Law does for the Cherokees. Modern Protestant churches focus on that part of Jesus' message that has to do with salvation and life after death. I don't see how there can be any conflict between our earthly religion and one that focuses on life after death.

As I say, I don't see anything wrong with an Indian being a Christian as long as he keeps up the Indian Law as well. Maybe he will be a better person and benefit the rest of us that way. However, I am a little leery of bringing Jesus into the camp ground or the Fire into the church. We might be able to have them side by side. (I know that when the Cherokees started up the Fire in the 1890s, they first put the Fire right next to the church house, and danced all night and went to church the next morning.) But I think Cherokees ought to be careful, at this time in history, of mixing them up. I think we should keep them separate for the time being. The whites are strong and we are weak. Whites have too much to say in Christian Indian affairs now, plus whites are dumb about religious matters. Christianity, as it is practiced now by the Baptists, might just cause us to neglect our Law.

It is true that the Papagos and Yaquis here in Arizona bring their old religion and dances into Catholic worship. However, the Catholic church is open to different nationalities making it their own. That is not so true of Protestant churches, particularly the Baptists. Besides, Cherokees are too weak spiritually now to do that. We might just get swallowed up. Of course, all of this is just my understanding, for what it is worth. But I do know that Jesus doesn't have anything to do with the Seven Clan Law. That's all I know about that subject. I am enclosing some flyers about our pow-wow. I'll send you a poster when they are ready. Let me know when to send the \$500.00 for your travel out here and back for the pow-wow in March.

I am, also, enclosing a magazine which has a speech by Andrew in it and a memorial by Ken Fink. I have told the National Indian Youth Council to send the \$300.00 along to Robert for Andrew's feast. I am telling everybody that the feast will be Saturday night, February 16, at the

Community Hall in the south part of Tellaquah. I hope that's right. If not, call me collect right away and I will phone around and correct my error, if I'm wrong.

I hope that you can get the news around of Andrew's feast maybe on the radio and in the newspaper. Make sure that Clifton is invited, and get word to those Kenwood people. I am enclosing a list of organizations that Andrew served as an officer, along with possible speakers at the feast.

See you soon.